
GANZ NOTES - THE FABER SESSIONS, SERIES 7, PART II MONDAY, 7 MARCH 2022

Series 7 – *Portrait of a Literary Artist* – C.S. Lewis

Location: in the homes of the auditors via ZOOM

Presider: Mary Edmonds

Speaker: Rick Ganz

Date: Monday, 7 March 2022, 6 PM to 7:30 PM

Text: *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold* (1956)¹

QUOTES

Walter Hooper offers this quote of C.S. Lewis in a letter Lewis wrote, in reply, to Anne Scott on 26 August 1960 – “You gave me much pleasure by what you said about *Till We Have Faces*, for that book, which I consider far and away the best I have written, has been my one big failure both with the critics and with the public.”

What Lewis wrote in the first English edition of TWHF – “This re-interpretation of an old story has lived in the author’s mind, thickening and hardening with the years, ever

¹ *Wikipedia* - *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold* is a 1956 novel by C. S. Lewis. It is a retelling of Cupid and Psyche, based on its telling in a chapter of *The Golden Ass* of Apuleius. This story had haunted Lewis all his life because he realized that some of the main characters' actions were illogical. As a consequence, his retelling of the story is characterized by a highly developed character, the narrator, with the reader being drawn into her reasoning and her emotions. This was his last novel, and he considered it his most mature, written in conjunction with his wife, Joy Davidman.”

since he was an undergraduate. That way, he could be said to have worked at it most of his life.”²

“The human loves can be glorious images of Divine love. No less than that: but also, no more – **proximities of likeness** which in one instance may help, and in another may hinder, **proximity of approach**. Sometimes perhaps they have not very much to do with it either way.” [Lewis, C. S. *The Four Loves* (1960; originally radio addresses) (pp. 11-12). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.]

Psyche speaking to Orual, Chapter 7 – ‘This,’ she said, ‘I have always – at least, ever since I can remember – had a kind of longing for death.’ ‘Ah, Psyche,’ I said, ‘have I made you so little happy as that?’ ‘No, no, no,’ she said. ‘You don’t understand. Not *that* kind of longing. It was when I was happiest that I longed most. It was on happy days when we were up there on the hills, the three of us, with the wind and the sunshine . . . where you couldn’t see Glome³ or the palace. Do you remember? The colour and the smell, and looking across at the Grey Mountain in the distance? And because it was so beautiful, it set me longing, always longing. Somewhere else there must be more of it. Everything seemed to be saying, “Psyche come!” But I couldn’t (not yet) come and I didn’t know where I was to come to. It almost hurt me. I felt like a bird in a cage when the other birds of its kind are flying home.’ [Lewis, C. S. *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold* (1956). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.]

Psyche speaking to Orual, Chapter 7 - But they chose me. And I am the one who has been made ready for it ever since I was a little child in your arms, Maia⁴ [Orual]. The sweetest thing in all my life has been the longing – to reach the Mountain, to find the place where all the beauty came from – ‘... – my country, the place where I ought to have been born. Do you think it all meant nothing, all the longing? The longing for home? For indeed it now feels not like going, but like going back. All my life the god of the Mountain has been wooing me. Oh, look up once at least before the end and wish me joy. I am going to my lover. Do you not see now –?’ [Lewis, C. S. *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold* (1956). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.]

² See Walter Hooper’s wonderful work *C.S. Lewis: Companion and Guide* (1996), and especially his chapter on *Till We Have Faces* (TWHF) starting on page 243.

³ The *Oxford English Dictionary* at the noun, attested around 1000 CE, “**gloaming**” – “Evening twilight.”

⁴ Alan H. Griffiths in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* at “**Maia**” – “Maia (1) (Μαῖα or Μαῖας), daughter of Atlas, and one of the Pleiades (Od. 14. 435; Hes. fr. 217. 2 M-W Simonides fr. 555 Page, PMG; see Pleiad); her name means simply ‘mother’ or ‘nurse’, and she may once have been a goddess of the Kourotrophos type; but apart from conceiving Hermes/Mercury with Zeus and bringing him to birth in a cave on Mt. Cyllene in Arcadia (*Homeric Hymn to Hermes*), she retains little independent identity.”

Gerard Manley Hopkins, SJ (born at Stratford, Essex on 28 July 1844, the eldest of nine children; died in Dublin, Ireland, 8 June 1889) from his “The Blessed Virgin Compared to the Air We Breathe” (1882) –

Mary Immaculate,
Merely a woman, yet
Whose presence, power is
Great as no goddess’s
Was deemèd, dreamèd; who
This one work has to do -
Let all God’s glory through,
God’s glory which would go
Through her and from her flow
Off, and no way but so.⁵

“If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.” [C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, bk 3, ch. 10.]

PUCCINI’S TURANDOT, ACT III

Giacomo Puccini (born 22 December 1858; died 29 November 1924). *Wikipedia* notes: “His most renowned works are *La bohème* (1896), *Tosca* (1900), *Madama Butterfly* (1904), and *Turandot* (1924), all of which are among the most frequently performed and recorded of all operas.”

This opera in three Acts was Puccini’s last and left uncompleted by his death, but then completed by Franco Alfano in 1926. The opera was then performed for the first time in the Teatro alla Scala in Milan on 25 April 1926. *Wikipedia* notes: “Though Puccini first became interested in the subject matter when reading Friedrich Schiller’s 1801

⁵ See: <https://hopkinspoetry.com/study-guides/individual-poems/study-guide-the-blessed-virgin/> - “This poem was written in Stonyhurst in May 1883, where Hopkins had returned to teach Greek and Latin to the Jesuits preparing for exams at the University of London. The poem originally was intended to be hung near the statue of the Virgin Mary along with other poems in other “tongues” or languages, in celebration of May Day, a feast dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Hopkins wrote his poem in English in the same meter as “Blue in the mists all day” – iambic trimeter couplets – written by his friend Canon Richard Watson Dixon. Instead of couplets, Hopkins, however, sometimes uses triplets. In this poem Hopkins contends that just as the atmosphere sustains our physical life and tempers the power of the sun’s radiation, so Mary sustains our spiritual life and mediates our relationship to God.”

adaptation, he based his work more closely on the earlier play *Turandot* (1762) by Count Carlo Gozzi. **The original story is one of the seven stories in the epic *Haft Peykar* – a work by twelfth-century Persian poet Nizami (c. 1141-1209).** Nizami aligned his seven stories with the seven days of the week, the seven colors, and the seven planets known in his era. This particular narrative is the story of Tuesday, as told to the king of Iran, Bahram V (r. 420–438), by his companion of the red dome, associated with Mars. **In the first line of the story, the protagonist is identified as a Russian princess.** The name of the opera is based on Turan-Dokht (daughter of Turan), which is a name frequently used in Persian poetry for Central Asian princesses.”

Performances: Zubin Mehta, *Puccini: Turandot*, Orquestra de la Comunitat Valenciana: Andrea Bocelli sings “Nessun Dorma”. Also see: Charles K. Davis, *Puccini’s Turandot*, Stadium Symphony of New York, Wilfred Pelletier sings “Nessun Dorma”; Zubin Mehta, *Puccini: Turandot* with Dame Joan Sutherland, Luciano Pavarotti, London Philharmonic Orchestra (1973), Disc 2, Track #6, “Nessun Dorma”.

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

No one must sleep!
No one must sleep...
You, too, o Princess,
in your cold room
look at the stars, that tremble
with love and with hope!
But my mystery is shut within me;
no one will know my name!

No, I will say it on your mouth
when the daylight shines!
And my kiss will break the silence
that makes you mine!

IL PRINCIPE IGNOTO

Nessun dorma!
Nessun dorma...
Tu pure, o Principessa,
nella tua fredda stanza
guardi le stelle che tremano
d’amore e di speranza!
Ma il mio mistero è chiuso in me,
il nome mio nessun saprà!

No, no, sulla tua bocca lo dirò
quando la luce splenderà!
Ed il mio bacio scioglierà il silenzio
che ti fa mia!

WHY WRITE THIS NOVEL?

THE INCONSOLABLE LONGING

The *Oxford English Dictionary* at the German noun *sehnsucht* [ZANE – zookt] –
“Yearning; wistful longing.”

“As dark subjectivism was a pitfall, illumined subjectivism – he often called it romanticism – **could awaken the desire for truth. Lewis would often refer to this desire as joy.** Just as hunger says, “I want food” and thirst says, “I want water,” so informed joy pleads within a man saying, “I want God.” **Theology for C.S. Lewis was more than rational activity; it was *the very burning of the soul not merely to define and explain God but to know Him, to enjoy Him, and yet to remain constantly in awe of Him.*** He comments, “This hunger is better than any other fullness; this poverty better than all other wealth.” **Lewis not only sought to explain Christianity to others, but he also sought to practice it himself.** At the heart of this practice was his own personal devotion to God.”⁶

“In speaking of **this desire for our own far-off country**, which we find in ourselves even now, I feel a certain shyness. I am almost committing an indecency. **I am trying to rip open the inconsolable secret in each one of you – the secret which hurts so much that you take your revenge on it by calling it names like Nostalgia and Romanticism and Adolescence.... Our commonest expedient is to call it beauty and behave as if that had settled the matter.** Wordsworth's expedient was to identify it with certain moments in his own past. But all this is a cheat. If Wordsworth had gone back to those moments in the past, he would not have found the thing itself, but only the reminder of it; what he remembered would turn out to be itself a remembering. **The books or the music in which we thought the beauty was located will betray us if we trust to them; it was not in them, it only came through them, and what came through them was *longing.*** These things – the beauty, the memory of our own past – are good images of what we really desire; but if they are mistaken for the thing itself, they turn into dumb idols, breaking the hearts of their worshippers. **For they are not the thing itself; they are only the scent of a flower we have not found, the echo of a tune we have not heard, news from a country we have never yet visited....** The sense that in this universe we are treated as strangers, the longing to be acknowledged, to meet with some response, to bridge some chasm that yawns between us and reality, is part of *our inconsolable secret....* Our lifelong nostalgia, our longing to be reunited with something in the universe from which we now feel cut off, to be on the inside of some door which we have always seen from the outside, is no mere neurotic fancy, but the truest index of our real situation.”
[C.S. Lewis from *Transposition and Other Addresses*, ch. 2.]

⁶ Jerry Root, “[Following That Bright Blur](#),” *Christian History Magazine-Issue 7: C.S. Lewis: His Life, Thought & Theology* (Worcester, PA: Christian History Institute, 1985).

“INTRODUCTION”, THE FOUR LOVES (1960)

STORGĒ – Affection; empathy; fellow-feeling; duty; love of siblings for each other, for parents, and parents for their children

PHILÍA – Friendship secured in mutual love of a third thing – “You love that too?!”

ERŌS – “Being in love”; preciousness found not in the third thing but in the other

AGÁPĒ – God’s way of loving; distinctly of/from/because of God; **charity**; one of the Theological Virtues; loving others because God loves them ... period

Wikipedia – “*The Four Loves* is a 1960 book by C. S. Lewis which explores the nature of love from a Christian and philosophical perspective through thought experiments. The book was based on a set of radio talks from 1958 which had been criticised in the U.S. at the time for their frankness about sex.”

“And much of what I was going to say still seems to me to be true. **I still think that if all we mean by our love is a craving to be loved, we are in a very deplorable state.** But I would not now say (with my master, MacDonald) that if we mean only this craving, we are mistaking for love something that is not love at all. [Lewis, C. S. *The Four Loves* (1960; originally radio addresses) (p. 2). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.]

“The human loves can be glorious images of Divine love. No less than that: but also, no more – **proximities of likeness** which in one instance may help, and in another may hinder, **proximity of approach.** Sometimes perhaps they have not very much to do with it either way.” [Lewis, C. S. *The Four Loves* (1960; originally radio addresses) (pp. 11-12). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.]

“But when the *craving*⁷ went, nearly all that I called myself went with it. It was as if my whole soul had been one tooth and now that tooth was drawn. I was a gap. And now I thought I had come to the very bottom and that the gods could tell me no worse.” [Lewis, C. S. *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold*. At the end of Part II, Chapter 1. HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.]

⁷ The *Oxford English Dictionary* at “**to crave**” – “**5. transferred.** Of persons (their appetites, etc.): To long or yearn for, to desire earnestly; to call for or demand, in order to gratify a desire or appetite; to have a craving for.”

NEED-LOVE

“But thirdly, we come to something far more important. Every Christian would agree that a man’s spiritual health is exactly proportional to his love for God. **But man’s love for God, from the very nature of the case, must always be very largely, and must often be entirely, a Need-love.** This is obvious when we implore forgiveness for our sins or support in our tribulations. **But in the long run it is perhaps even more apparent in our growing – for it ought to be growing – awareness that our whole being by its very nature is one vast need; incomplete, preparatory, empty yet cluttered, crying out for Him who can untie things that are now knotted together and tie up things that are still dangling loose.** I do not say that man can never bring to God anything at all but sheer Need-love.” [Lewis, C. S. *The Four Loves* (1960; originally radio addresses) (pp. 3-4). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.]

“Thus, one Need-love, the greatest of all, either coincides with or at least makes a main ingredient in man’s highest, healthiest, and most realistic spiritual condition. A very strange corollary follows. *Man approaches God most nearly when he is in one sense least like God.* For what can be more unlike than fullness and need, sovereignty and humility, righteousness and penitence, limitless power and a cry for help? This paradox staggered me when I first ran into it; it also wrecked all my previous attempts to write about love.” [Lewis, C. S. *The Four Loves* (1960; originally radio addresses) (pp. 4-5). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.]

“And this of course is what we ought to expect. **Our loves do not make their claim to divinity until the claim becomes plausible. It does not become plausible until there is in them a real resemblance to God, to Love Himself.** Let us here make no mistake. Our Gift-loves are really God-like; and among our Gift-loves those are most God-like which are most boundless and unwearied in giving. All the things the poets say about them are true. Their joy, their energy, their patience, their readiness to forgive, their desire for the good of the beloved – all this is a real and all but adorable image of the Divine life. In its presence we are right to thank God ‘who has given such power to men’. We may say, quite truly and in an intelligible sense, that those who love greatly are ‘near’ to God. **But of course, it is ‘nearness by likeness’. It will not of itself produce ‘nearness of approach’.** The likeness has been given us. It has no necessary connection with that slow and painful approach which must be our own (though by no means our unaided) task. Meanwhile, however, the likeness is a splendour. **That is why we may mistake Like for Same. We may give our human loves the unconditional allegiance which we owe only to God. Then they become gods: then they become demons. Then they will**

destroy us, and also destroy themselves. For natural loves that are allowed to become gods do not remain loves. They are still called so but can become in fact complicated forms of hatred." [Lewis, C. S. *The Four Loves* (1960; originally radio addresses) (pp. 9-10). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.]

APULEIUS DID NOT UNDERSTAND THE MYTH

Orual speaking in Chapter 21 - "That moment I resolved to write this book. For years now my old quarrel with the gods had slept. I had come into Bardia's way of thinking; I no longer meddled with them. Often, though I had seen a god myself, I was near to believing that there are no such things. The memory of his voice and face was kept in one of those rooms of my soul that I didn't lightly unlock. Now, instantly, I knew I was facing them – I with no strength and they with all; I visible to them, they invisible to me; I easily wounded (already so wounded that all my life had been but a hiding and staunching of the wound), they invulnerable; I one, they many. In all these years they had only let me run away from them as far as the cat lets the mouse run. Now, snatch! and the claw on me again. Well, I could speak. I could set down the truth. What had never perhaps been done in the world before should be done now. The case against them should be written." [Lewis, C. S. *The Four Loves* (1960; originally radio addresses), Chapter 21. HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.]

ON UNGIT (THE FALSE SELF)

The demon within. The *Oxford English Dictionary* at "**demon**" – "**Etymology:** < ancient Greek *δαίμων* god, goddess, divine power, deity, destiny, fate, good or evil genius of a family or person, in Hellenistic Greek also spiritual or semi-divine being, evil spirit < *δαίεσθαι* to divide (see [geodetic n.](#)) + *-μων*, suffix forming nouns."

March 11th, in just four days from now, the COVID Mask Mandate will end in Oregon and Washington. Have you pondered what our nation, or region, our city has been like or felt like during the two years of mask-wearing? Without question, the masks (the right kind) had a significant ability to protect us, and to protect others, from the *unseen* COVID virus. We could be harmed (now six million human beings on Earth were mortally harmed) by something unseen. Yet, have you considered the harm that is caused to us when are false selves more than real selves? False selves make demands on us, sometimes terrible demands on us, such that we cause harm to others and we are *unseen* to ourselves doing it.

She is the goddess of Gloam associated/identified with an ugly stone set in her Temple.

But what finally she represents in *Till We Have Faces* is the “hardened” human heart – the “heart” of the countless false selves and their ways of doing relationships. But without divine grace, without some “showing” or “epiphany” (e.g., an experience of Beauty, or, far more painfully, an experience of oneself as “false”, a “murderer”, a “manipulator”, a “demon”), the false self is not aware of who he or she is.

That is why in the novel, Orual is **both** Ungit (the false self) and Psyche (the real self).

And remember how false selves create and defend false religions and false gods.

“Lightly men talk of saying what they mean. Often when he was teaching me to write in Greek **the Fox would say, ‘Child, to say the very thing you really mean, the whole of it, nothing more or less or other than what you really mean; that’s the whole art and joy of words.’** A glib saying. When the time comes to you at which you will be forced at last to utter the speech which has lain at the centre of your soul for years, which you have, all that time, idiot-like, been saying over and over, you’ll not talk about joy of words. **I saw well why the gods do not speak to us openly, nor let us answer.** Till that word can be dug out of us, why should they hear the babble that we *think* we mean? How can they meet us face to face till we have faces?” [Lewis, C. S. *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold* (1956) From Part II, Chapter 4. HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.]

Ezekiel 36 (NJB) -

²¹ But I have been concerned about my holy name, which the House of Israel has profaned among the nations where they have gone. ²² And so, say to the House of Israel, “The Lord Yahweh says this: I am acting not for your sake, House of Israel, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. ²³ I am going to display the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am Yahweh—declares the Lord Yahweh—when in you I display my holiness before their eyes.* ²⁴ For I shall take you from among the nations and gather you back from all the countries, and bring you home to your own country. ²⁵ I shall pour clean water over you and you will be cleansed; I shall cleanse you of all your filth and of all your foul idols.* ²⁶ I shall give you a new heart, and put a new spirit in you; I shall remove

* 16:60–63; Ps 115:1; Is 48:11; Mt 6:9

* Jn 3:5; 4:1a

the heart of stone from your bodies and give you a heart of flesh instead.* ²⁷I shall put my spirit in you, and make you keep my laws, and respect and practise my judgements.^f ²⁸You will live in the country which I gave your ancestors. You will be my people and I shall be your God.* ²⁹I shall save you from everything that defiles you, I shall summon the wheat and make it plentiful and impose no more famines on you. ³⁰I shall increase the yield of tree and field, so that you will never again bear the ignominy of famine among the nations. ³¹Then you will remember your evil conduct and actions. You will loathe yourselves for your guilt and your loathsome practices.* ³²I assure you that I am not doing this for your sake—declares the Lord Yahweh. Be ashamed and blush for your conduct, House of Israel. ⁸

Psalm 51 (NJB) –

¹ Have mercy on me, O God, in your faithful love,
in your great tenderness **wipe** away my offences;*
² **wash** me clean from my guilt,
purify me from my sin.

³ For I am well aware of my offences,
my sin is constantly in mind.*
⁴ Against you, you alone, I have sinned,
I have done what you see to be wrong,

that you may show your saving justice when you pass sentence,
and your victory may appear when you give judgement,^{b*}
⁵ remember, I was born guilty,

* 11:19f; Jr 4:4a

* Jr 31:31f; Ga 5:22–25; 1 Jn 3:23–24

* 16:61–63

⁸ [The New Jerusalem Bible](#) (New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Auckland: Doubleday, 1990), Eze 36:21–32.

* Ezk 18:23+

* Is 59:12; Ezk 6:9

* Is 59:12  Rm 3:4

a sinner from the moment of conception.^{c*}

⁶ But you delight in sincerity of heart,
and in secret you teach me wisdom.^d

⁷ **Purify** me with hyssop^e till I am clean,
wash me till I am whiter than snow.*

⁸ Let me hear the sound of joy and gladness,
and the bones you have crushed will dance.*

⁹ **Turn away** your face from my sins,
and **wipe away** all my guilt.*

¹⁰ God, create^f in me a clean heart,
renew within me a resolute spirit,*

¹¹ do not thrust me away from your presence,
do not take away from me your spirit of holiness.^{g*}

¹² Give me back the joy of your salvation,
sustain in me a generous spirit.

¹³ I shall teach the wicked your paths,
and sinners will return to you. ⁹

ON DEATH: DIE BEFORE YOU DIE

Till We Have Faces, Part II, Chapter 2 – ‘Do not do it,’ said the god. ‘You cannot escape Ungit by going to the deadlands, for she is there also. **Die before you die.** There is no chance after.’

* Jb 14:4c

* Ex 12:22j; Jb 9:30; Is 1:18; Ezk 36:25; Heb 9:13–14

* 6:2; 35:10

* Is 43:25; 44:22

* Ezk 11:19f; Ep 4:23–24, 24k

* Ws 1:5; 9:17; Is 57:15seq. Rm 8:9, 14–16

⁹ [*The New Jerusalem Bible*](#) (New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Auckland: Doubleday, 1990), Ps 51:1–13.

The death of Ungit in each of us is a death that we are not able to accomplish on our own – a kind of suicide, by which we kill our false self. The false self is too powerful. And so, God sends us divine help.

Till We Have Faces, Part I, Chapter 7 – “‘I see,’ said Psyche in a low voice. ‘You think it devours the offering. I mostly think so myself. **Anyway, it means death. Orual, you didn’t think I was such a child as not to know that? How can I be the ransom for all Glome unless I die? And if I am to go to the god, of course it must be through death. That way, even what is strangest in the holy sayings might be true.** To be eaten and to be married to the god might not be so different. *We don’t understand.* There must be so much that neither the Priest nor the Fox knows.’ This time I bit my lip and said nothing. Unspeakable foulness seethed in my mind; did she think the Brute’s lust better than its hunger? To be mated with a worm, or a giant eft, or a spectre? ‘And as for death,’ she said, ‘why, Bardia there (I love Bardia) will look on it six times a day and whistle a tune as he goes to find it. We have made little use of the Fox’s teaching if we’re to be scared by death. **And you know, sister, he has sometimes let out that there were other Greek masters than those he follows himself; masters who have taught that death opens a door out of a little, dark room (that’s all the life we have known before it) into a great, real place where the true sun shines and we shall meet –**’ ‘Oh, cruel, cruel!’ I wailed. ‘Is it nothing to you that you leave me here alone? Psyche, did you ever love me at all?’”

Till We Have Faces, Part I, Chapter 7 – “‘This,’ she said, ‘I have always – at least, ever since I can remember – **had a kind of longing for death.**’ ‘Ah, Psyche,’ I said, ‘have I made you so little happy as that?’ ‘**No, no, no,**’ she said. ‘**You don’t understand. Not that kind of longing. It was when I was happiest that I longed most.** It was on happy days when we were up there on the hills, the three of us, with the wind and the sunshine . . . where you couldn’t see Glome or the palace. Do you remember? The colour and the smell, and looking across at the Grey Mountain in the distance? **And because it was so beautiful, it set me longing, always longing. Somewhere else there must be more of it. Everything seemed to be saying, “Psyche come!” But I couldn’t (not yet) come and I didn’t know where I was to come to. It almost hurt me. I felt like a bird in a cage when the other birds of its kind are flying home.**’ She kissed both my hands, flung them free, and stood up. She had her father’s trick of walking to and fro when she talked of something that moved her. And from now till the end I felt (and this horribly) that **I was losing her already,** that the sacrifice tomorrow would only finish something that had already begun. She was (how long had she been, and I not to know?) out of my reach, in some place of her own. Since I write this book against the gods, it is just that I should put into it whatever can be said against myself. So let me set this down: as she spoke, I felt, amid all my love, a bitterness.”

ON TIME

One of the clearest signs that “the world is too much with us” (Wordsworth) is that we begin to notice Time, that it presses us, binds us.

It is considered an insight of exceptional importance how the “imaging” of Time changed with the Hebrews/Jews. In classical culture, Time circles. In biblical culture, Time moves forward in a straight line.

But the real insight that finally we need is that **Time runs in both directions**, forward and backward. This happens without us noticing it, usually.

ON TWO WORLDS INTERWOVEN

Read from *Till We Have Faces*, Part I, Chapter 7.

Matthew 6 (NJB) –

⁸ Do not be like them; your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹ So you should pray like this:^d

Our Father in heaven,
may your name be held holy,*

¹⁰ your kingdom come,
your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.*

¹¹ Give us today our daily^e bread.*

¹² And forgive us our debts,

* Rm 8:26–27, 27m; Ilk 11:2–4; Ezk 36:23; Jn 17:6, 26

* 26:39, 42par.; Dn 4:32

* Pr 30:8–9; Jn 6:32, 35

as we have forgiven those who are in debt to us.*
13 And do not put us to the test,
but save us from the Evil One.^{f*} 10

Plato, *Republic*, Book VII – on the allegory of the cave. Notice in this allegory how the false world is *nested* inside of the real world. Lewis in *The Great Divorce* will speak of the false world as a kind of existence so insubstantial that to the real world it is as smoke or diaphanous cloud. And in another place in that book, he describes it as a “world” so vastly tiny such that a “vast canyon” in the false world is in fact in the real world the tiniest slit on the surface of the earth.

OVERVIEW – PETER SCHAKEL (1984)

This book examines the place of reason and imagination in the thought of C. S. Lewis and shows that a shift, not in basic positions or theory but certainly in emphasis and practice, occurs, not at the time of his conversion but in the late 1940s or early 1950s. Prior to that – in *Mere Christianity* and the Ransom trilogy, for example – Lewis relied heavily upon, or put his ultimate trust in, reason (the capacity for analysis, abstraction, logical deductions), with imagination (the image-making, fictionalizing, integrative power) playing a valued but limited supporting role.² **After that, Lewis’s confidence in**

* 18:21–35; Ep 4:32

* 26:41par.; Jn 17:11, 15; 2 Th 3:2

¹⁰ [The New Jerusalem Bible](#) (New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Auckland: Doubleday, 1990), Mt 6:8–13.

² Lewis nowhere defines **imagination** explicitly, and he uses the term in a number of ways: as the image-making power (“imagine two books lying on a table”), the creative or inventive power (“fired the imagination of the *hrossa*”), the power to make up things (“of course one can imagine things”), the power to create fiction (“solely an imaginative supposal”), the mysteriousness and adventurousness of romance (“almost everything the imagination craves – irony, heroism, vastness, unity in multiplicity, and a tragic close”), and “‘Imagination’ in some high Coleridgean sense.”

The essential concept, however, is that expressed by **Tolkien in “On Fairy-Stories”**: “The human mind is capable of forming mental images of things not actually present. The faculty of conceiving the images is ... called Imagination” (*Essays Presented to Charles Williams* [London: Oxford University Press, 1947], p. 66). **That emphasizes imagination’s involvement with the concrete in contrast with reason’s concern with abstractions; with fiction rather than fact; with making up, “creating,” rather than**

imaginative methods increases, and imagination becomes the more striking feature of his work from 1950 on – in the *Chronicles of Narnia*, for example. My purpose is to chart the changes briefly, account for them as fully as possible, and show that in some of his later works, such as *Till We Have Faces* and *Letters to Malcolm*, reason and imagination are, at last, reconciled and unified.

Till We Have Faces has a crucial place in this study. **Not only is it Lewis's finest imaginative work, but it also explores the tension between reason and the imagination as a central theme. Furthermore, *Till We Have Faces* is the culmination of efforts Lewis made in a number of works throughout his life to use similar images and imaginative structures to resolve that tension. One cannot fully understand or appreciate Lewis's thought and work as a whole without a sound understanding of *Till We Have Faces*.** But *Till We Have Faces* is also the most difficult of Lewis's works, one which constantly gives the sense that "something more is going on here than I am comprehending fully." Many readers who enjoy Lewis's other apologetic and fictional works are perplexed and discouraged by *Till We Have Faces*. Because of these difficulties, many readers are denied access to the motif which is the most helpful in pulling together the diverse threads of Lewis's thought and work.¹¹

MYTH

Even one consummate value may redeem an otherwise poor writer. Lewis joyfully spoke of George MacDonald as his literary "master" despite a whole array of faults he found in him. One such fault was the quite common one of unnecessary sermonizing. What Lewis found valuable in MacDonald was "fantasy – fantasy that hovers between the allegorical and the mythopoeic." **Lewis believed that ultimate meanings tend to**

observing; with integration rather than analysis and identification. In a recent article Owen Barfield gives as imagination's concerns "resemblance" rather than a logical nexus, "metamorphosis" rather than sequence and aggregation, "interpenetration" rather than a fixed shape or pattern. The resemblance of these qualities to the "mishmash" of modern relativism and philosophical subjectivism, Barfield believes, accounts for some of Lewis's reluctance to commit himself to a theory of imagination. **Barfield sees a bifurcation between Lewis the logician and Lewis the imaginative writer similar to what I describe but explains Lewis's attitude toward imagination not as distrust but as a "desire to protect ... and insulate imagination, so that it could continue to live its own pure and chaste life"** ("Lewis, Truth and Imagination," *Kodon* [Wheaton College], Winter 1978, pp. 17-26).

¹¹ Peter J. Schakel, [*Reason and Imagination in C. S. Lewis: A Study of Till We Have Faces*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), ix-x.

fall into metaphor, allegory, and myth, types in which a Christian writer should feel he is on “home ground.” Lewis calls myth at its best “a real though unfocused gleam of divine truth falling on human imagination.” He had such an ideal in view in all his creative works, particularly in what he considered his best story, *Till We Have Faces*. Myth, he says, “deals with the permanent and inevitable.”¹²

Robert Johnson, *She* (2009) -

ASIN: B002FQOI5A

Publisher: HarperCollins e-books; Revised ed. edition (July 1, 2009)

Publication date: July 1, 2009

Language: English

Myths are rich sources of psychological insight. Great literature, like all great art, records and portrays the human condition with indelible accuracy. **Myths are a special kind of literature not written or created by a single individual but produced by the imagination and experience of an entire age and culture and can be seen as the distillation of the dreams and experiences of a whole culture.** They seem to develop gradually as certain motifs emerge, are elaborated, and finally are rounded out as people tell and retell stories that catch and hold their interest. Thus, themes that are accurate and universal are kept alive, while those elements peculiar to single individuals or a particular era drop away. **Myths, therefore, portray a collective image; they tell us about things that are true for all people.** This belies our current rationalistic definition of myth as something untrue or imaginary. “Why, that is only a myth; its not true at all,” we hear. **The details of the story may be unverifiable or even fantastic, but actually a myth is profoundly and universally true. A myth may be a fantasy or a product of the imagination, but it is nonetheless true and real. It depicts levels of reality that include the outer rational world as well as the less understood inner world.** [Johnson, Robert A. *She*. HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.]

First, we must learn to think mythologically. Powerful things happen when we touch the thinking which myths, fairy tales, and our own dreams bring to us. The terms and settings of the old myths are strange; they seem archaic and distant to us, but if we listen to them carefully and take them seriously, we begin to hear and to understand. Sometimes it is necessary to translate a symbolic meaning, but this is not difficult once we see how it can be done. [Johnson, Robert A. *She*. HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.]

¹² Clyde Kilby, [“Into the Land of the Imagination,”](#) *Christian History Magazine-Issue 7: C.S. Lewis: His Life, Thought & Theology* (Worcester, PA: Christian History Institute, 1985).

FOLKTALE - A WONDER TALE

From William Hansen, “**Folktale**” in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*.

Wonder Tale

The kind of tale that is commonly known as the *fairytale* is termed *magic tale* or *wonder tale* by folk-narrative scholars, since magic and an atmosphere of wonder are characteristic of the genre, whereas fairies appear infrequently. In the familiar plot of a wonder tale, a young protagonist sets out into the world, encounters the supernatural, overcomes various obstacles, and succeeds by virtue of good qualities such as kindness or perseverance. Marvelous elements such as talking animals, magic objects, witches, and ogres are commonplace, not to mention princes, princesses, and palaces. The wonder tale is the most complex form of the folktale.

Although there are several ancient narratives of magic and wonder that may be classified as fairytales—for example, the tale of the woodcutter and the golden axe¹—**there is only one, the tale of Cupid and Psyche, that fits the classic profile of what is today thought of as that of the fairytale. The story appears in the *Metamorphoses, or The Golden Ass* (4.28–6.24), by the Roman novelist Apuleius.** The tale of Cupid and Psyche is generally agreed to be an ancient version, somewhat allegorised, of an international folktale.² In this widely known tale, **a young woman weds a supernatural bridegroom.** He forbids her to do something, usually to look upon him, but she breaks the taboo, after which he departs. She sets out to find him, coming eventually to the house of his mother, a witch (or, in Apuleius’s novel, the goddess Venus, who behaves like one). The girl’s hostile mother-in-law assigns her a series of seemingly impossible tasks, which she manages to accomplish with the help of her husband and other beings such as kindly animals. In the end the bride and bridegroom are happily reunited.

THE FOX AND STOICISM

The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy – “The Stoic world is an ideally good organism, all of whose parts interact for the benefit of the whole. It is imbued with divine reason (logos), its entire development providentially ordained by fate and repeated identically from one world phase to the next in a never-ending cycle, each phase ending with a conflagration (*ekpyrosis*).... Conventionally, a second phase of the school is distinguished as Middle Stoicism. It developed largely at Rhodes under Panaetius and Posidonius, both of whom influenced the presentation of Stoicism in Cicero’s influential philosophical treatises (mid-first century B.C.). Panaetius (c.185–c.110) softened some classical Stoic positions, his ethics being more pragmatic and less concerned with the idealized sage. Posidonius (c.135–c.50) made Stoicism more open to Platonic and Aristotelian ideas, reviving Plato’s inclusion of irrational components in the soul. A third phase, Roman Stoicism, is the only Stoic era whose writings have survived in quantity. It is represented especially by the younger Seneca (A.D. c.1–65), Epictetus (A.D. c.55–c.135), and Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 121–80). It continued the trend set by Panaetius, with a strong primary focus on practical and personal ethics. Many prominent Roman political figures were Stoics. After the second century A.D. Stoicism as a system fell from prominence, but its terminology and concepts had by then become an ineradicable part of ancient thought. Through the writings of Cicero and Seneca, its impact on the moral and political thought of the Renaissance was immense. [The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy at “Stoicism, Middle Period”. Cambridge University Press. Kindle Edition.]

PETER J. SCHAKEL, “INTRODUCTION”

Peter J. Schakel, [*Reason and Imagination in C. S. Lewis: A Study of Till We Have Faces*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 1–8.

Introduction: The Background

THOSE who come to *Till We Have Faces* after reading the *Chronicles of Narnia* or *Out of the Silent Planet* and wanting more of the same are always surprised and often disappointed. The story lacks, or seems to lack, the simplicity of plot and style and clear embodiment of Christian themes they expect of Lewis. **There is no doubt that this story is different. It offers more to readers than his earlier stories, because of its greater maturity and sophistication in technique and style, but it also demands more of readers, who may therefore require some guidance and helps in dealing with it.** A relatively small amount of background information will do a great deal toward removing apparent difficulties and permitting full enjoyment and appreciation of the work.

1

Lewis first expects his readers to know the story of Cupid and Psyche. From its earliest known version, by the Latin author Apuleius¹ two centuries after Christ, the tale has often delighted readers and has been retold again and again throughout the centuries. Lewis’s book is another retelling of the story, one which brings out far more of its

¹ Stephen J. Harrison, “Apuleius” in *Oxford Classical Dictionary*: “Apuleius, Writer and Orator, born around 125 CE - Apuleius was born of prosperous parents (Apol. 23) at Madaurus in Africa Proconsularis, and educated in Carthage, Athens, and Rome (Flor. 18, 20, 16); at Athens he gained enough philosophy to be called *philosophus Platonicus* by himself and others. He claims to have travelled extensively as a young man (Apol. 23) and was on his way to Alexandria (1) when he arrived at Oea, probably in the winter of 156 CE.... Of Apuleius’s undisputed writings, only the *Apologia* and the *Florida* can be dated with any accuracy; scholars disagree on whether the *Metamorphoses* is a late or early work, though more think it late than early.”

significance and power than any of the earlier versions. Lewis takes for granted that his readers will know the basic plot of his story and will notice and appreciate the points at which he makes changes in the original. A summary of “Cupid and Psyche” may be useful as an introduction to or reminder of the myth his story is retelling:

Stephen J. Harrison in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* at “**Apuleius**” – “The *Metamorphoses*, sometimes called the *Golden Ass*, is the only Latin novel which survives whole. On an epic scale (eleven books) and full of narratological cleverness, erotic, humorous, and sensational by turns, it is a remarkable and fascinating work. The basic story is that of the young man Lucius, who through his curiosity to discover the secrets of witchcraft is metamorphosed into an ass and undergoes a variety of picaresque adventures before being retransformed through the agency of the goddess Isis. This plot is punctuated by a number of inserted tales, which have in fact a close thematic relation to the main narrative; **the most substantial and best-known of them is that of Cupid and Psyche** (‘Soul’ in Greek, see *psyche*), which parallels the main story of Lucius by presenting a character (*Psyche*) whose disastrous curiosity causes troublesome adventures before her rescue through divine agency.”

First, we must learn to think mythologically. Powerful things happen when we touch the thinking which myths, fairy tales, and our own dreams bring to us. The terms and settings of the old myths are strange; they seem archaic and distant to us, but if we listen to them carefully and take them seriously, we begin to hear and to understand. Sometimes it is necessary to translate a symbolic meaning, but this is not difficult once we see how it can be done. [Johnson, Robert A. *She*. HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.]

Our tale begins with the line – Once there was a Kingdom. From this we know that **we will be given vision and insight into that kingdom, which is our own inner world.** If you listen to the old language of the tale you will see into that inner realm, seldom explored by the modern rational mind. A gold mine of information and insight is promised by a few words – Once there was a Kingdom. [Johnson, Robert A. *She* (p. 1). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.]

William Hansen at “**Folktale**” in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* - Although there are several ancient narratives of magic and wonder that may be classified as fairytales – for example, the tale of the woodcutter and the golden axe¹ – **there is only one, the tale of Cupid and Psyche, that fits the classic profile of what is today thought of as that of the fairytale. The story appears in the *Metamorphoses*, or *The Golden Ass* (4.28–6.24), by the Roman novelist Apuleius.** The tale of Cupid and Psyche is generally agreed to be an ancient version, somewhat allegorised, of an international folktale.²

Once upon a time there lived a king and queen who had three daughters, two of them beautiful, but the third, the youngest, so beautiful that people worshipped her as a goddess and neglected the worship of Venus² for her sake. Therefore, although her sisters were married to kings, Psyche (the youngest) had no suitors; because of her beauty and supposed divinity, no man dared aspire to her hand. Her father consulted the oracle of Apollo³ about her marriage and was told that she was not to marry a human: rather, she was to be exposed on a mountain where a dire serpent would take her as his bride. With great sorrow and funeral rites, Psyche was abandoned on the mountain.

² John Scheid at “**Venus**” in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* – “The debate over the original nature of this goddess, who does not belong to Rome's oldest pantheon but is attested fairly early at *Lavinium, has been partly resolved (Schilling 1954). It is now accepted that the neuter †*venus*, ‘charm’, cannot be separated from the terms *venia*, *venerari*, *venenum* (‘gracefulness’, ‘to exercise a persuasive charm’, ‘poison’, against Radke, Götter 311 ff.). How this neuter was transformed into a feminine, a process attested for the Osco-Umbrian goddess Herentas (cf. oscans; umbrians), is ill-understood in the absence of evidence. Schilling thinks that it took place at the federal sanctuary of Lavinium, a city with old and well-attested links with the Greek world and the legend of *Troy. **Whatever the case, from the 3rd cent. BCE, Venus was the patron of all persuasive seductions, between gods and mortals, and between men and women (Venus Verticordia).** Because of her links with the extraordinary power of *wine, Venus is presented in the rites and myth of the *Vinalia as a powerful mediatrix between *Jupiter and the Romans. The first known temple is that of Venus Obsequens (‘Propitious’), vowed in 295 BCE and built some years later. During the *Punic Wars, the tutelary and diplomatic role of Venus grew continually, in proportion to the process of her assimilation to Greek *Aphrodite.”

³ Fritz Graf at “**Apollo**” in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* – “Apollo (Ἀπόλλων, Dor. also Ἀπέλλων), Greek god, son of Zeus and Leto, brother of Artemis, for many ‘the most Greek of Greek gods’ (W. F. Otto). **Among his numerous and diverse functions healing and purification, prophecy, care for young citizens, for poetry, and music are prominent** (see Plat. Cra. 404d–405e). In iconography, he is always young, beardless, and of harmonious beauty, the ideal *ephebe* (see *epheboi*) and young athlete; his weapon is the bow, and his tree the laurel.... **Apollo's interest in music and poetry could derive from the same source, music and poetry having an educational role in Greece** (see education, greek). **Apollo's instrument is the lyre whose well-ordered music is opposed to the ecstatic rhythms of flute and drums which belong to Dionysus and Cybele; according to the Homeric Hymn to Hermes, he received it from Hermes, its inventor.** He is, together with the Muses, protector of epic singers and cithara-players (Hes. Theog. 94); **later, he is Musagetes, ‘Leader of the Muses’,** in Pindar (fr. 91c Snell-Maehler) and on Archaic images. When philosophy takes over a similar educational function, he is associated with philosophy, and an anecdote makes him the real father of Plato (1).... **Apollo's supreme wisdom is beyond human rationality**.... In Archaic and Classical Greece, Delphi was the central oracular shrine (see the quest of Croesus, Hdt. 1. 46).”

Venus, jealous of Psyche's beauty and of the honor given to her, had a different fate in mind for her; she ordered her son Cupid to use his magic arrows to cause the girl to fall in love with the most deformed and ignoble man he could find. Cupid set off to do so, but upon seeing Psyche, fell in love with her himself. When she was left on the mountain, therefore, he had the West-wind carry her to his palace. Invisible servants welcomed her, bathed her, sang to her, and brought her a sumptuous banquet.⁴ That night Cupid came to her and made her his wife, but left before daybreak, having forbidden her to see his face.

After some days, Psyche longed to see her sisters and begged that they might visit her. The god consented reluctantly, warning her of possible consequences, and had the West-wind waft them to the palace. Psyche entertained them with baths, music, and divine delicacies; when they inquired about her husband, Psyche said he was a handsome young man who spent most of his time in the hills, hunting. She loaded their arms with jewels and treasures as they left and urged them to return.

Although to Psyche they expressed delight at her good fortune, inwardly they were consumed with envy, for Psyche's palace, wealth, and spouse were superior to their own. They conspired to destroy her happiness, and found the means upon their next visit, for the simple Psyche (now pregnant, and forewarned that her sisters intended her harm) forgot her earlier story and said that her husband was a middle-aged merchant with grey hair. Realizing that Psyche had not seen her husband and suspecting that she was married to a god, the sisters returned the next day and persuaded Psyche that her mysterious husband must actually be a monstrous serpent who devoured pregnant women. They instructed her to hide a lamp and a

⁴ This reminds me of "imaginary lovers" that we conjure, especially when we are young, daydreaming about how it would be with him or her. They are "invisible"; we are not allowed to know them "in the flesh". There is something thrilling about so disembodied a "relationship" in the imagination, and there is nothing of the hard work of friendship involved.

sharp knife in the room and, when her husband was sleeping, to take out the lamp and by its light to cut off his head.

All this the gullible Psyche, terribly frightened by their words, promised to do. That night she brought out the lamp and saw not a monster but Cupid, sweetest and most beautiful of gods. She gazed on him with insatiable love, until a drop of hot oil from her lamp fell on his shoulder and woke him. He, injured by the burning oil and wounded by her lack of faith, rebuked her, and vanished from her sight.

Psyche, wretched and desolate, first attempted to drown herself; but the river would not let her drown and the god Pan warned her never to try again. Psyche wandered on and came to the city where one of her sisters lived. She told her sister that her husband was Cupid, that he had turned her out for her disobedience, and that he had said he would marry the sister instead. At this the sister hastened to the mountain and flung herself over the cliff from which she had been wafted down before; but the West-wind did not aid her this time, and she was dashed to pieces on the rocks. After doing the same to her other sister, Psyche traveled about the country seeking her husband. She was refused shelter by the goddesses Ceres and Juno, because of Venus's anger toward her.

In despair, Psyche finally decided to seek out Venus, hoping to be reconciled to her. Venus, however, beat her, had Sorrow and Sadness torment her, and set her a series of seemingly impossible tasks. The first, of separating a great heap of wheat, barley, millet, poppy-seed, peas, lentils, and beans into separate piles, was carried out for her by a host of sympathetic ants. Next, she had to get a handful of golden wool from some man-killing sheep; a reed by the river whispered to her that this could be achieved by plucking the wool off the briars amongst which the sheep had been grazing. Then she had to fetch a cupful of water from a fountain fed by the river Styx, at the top of a sheer and slippery rock face guarded by dragons who never slept;

but an eagle came to her, took the cup from her, filled it with the water, and returned it to her.

Finally, Psyche was sent to the world of the dead and told to bring back to Venus a box containing beauty from Persephone, Queen of the Underworld. A mysterious voice told her how to enter the Underworld, make her way through it, and return; it warned her in particular that three times she would be asked for help by people who would seem to deserve her pity, but she must refuse them all. And when Persephone gave her the box, she must above all things not open it to look inside. Psyche obeyed all this and returned to the upper world with the box; but curiosity overcame her, and she looked into it. It contained only an infernal and death-like sleep, which overcame her at once.

Cupid, his injury now healed, and searching for Psyche, found her, put the sleep back into the box, woke her, and sent her on to Venus. He then interceded with Jupiter, who agreed to permit him to marry Psyche and made her a goddess. Venus, no longer having reason to be jealous of Psyche, was reconciled to her, "and thus Psyche was married to Cupid, and after in due time she was delivered of a child, whom we call Pleasure."¹

Readers have always sensed that deeper meaning lay under the simple story. The names invite such a response, of course. *Psyche* is the Greek word for "soul"; **the story from the first has been allegorized as the human soul's quest for love**. It readily lent itself to Christian meanings. The Italian writer Boccaccio, in the fourteenth century, saw Psyche as the rational function of the soul needing to reject the sisters (the lower, physical functions) and be joined to noble love or God himself. William Warburton, in the eighteenth century, interpreted the story as tracing "the progress of the soul to perfection, in the possession of divine love, and the reward of immortality." And Robert

¹ The text and a reliable translation may be found in *The Golden Ass, being the Metamorphoses of Lucius Apuleius*, with an English translation by W. Adlington, Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann, 1915), pp. 184-99. I have drawn here upon the selective summary of Apuleius's story which Lewis appended to the American edition of *Till We Have Faces*.

Graves, in the twentieth century, calls it “a neat philosophical allegory of the progress of the rational soul towards intellectual love.”²

This tale frustrated Lewis, partly because he saw that such interpretations miss the real point and vastly oversimplify the story, and partly because he saw that Apuleius missed the whole point himself. The story was the sort out of which the great myths are made; and myth 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.**³

Apuleius had failed to develop the story’s mythical potential. In particular, he had failed to give the tale the sense of divine mystery or awe – Lewis, using Rudolf Otto’s term, called it “numinousness”⁴ – which is characteristic of myth: for Lewis this failure was epitomized by the fact that the sisters could *see* the palace of the god. From his first reading of the story, he thought that could not have been the way it was.

So, he tried to retell the story the way it should have been told. In his youth he tried to write “a poem on my own version of the Cupid and Psyche story in which Psyche’s sister would not be jealous, but unable to see anything but moors when Psyche showed her the Palace.”⁵ Fragments of two such attempts in couplets remain.⁶ In 1922,

² Boccaccio, *The Book of Theseus*, trans. Bernadette M. McCoy (New York: Medieval Text Association, 1974), p. 201; William Warburton, *The Divine Legation of Moses Demonstrated* (1738; rpt. London: Thomas Tegg and Son, 1837), I, 324 (original in italics); Robert Graves, “Introduction,” *The Golden Ass* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1951), p. xix.

³ For Lewis’s ideas on myth, see pages 122–26 and 137–39. Also Peter Macky, “Myth as the Way We Can Taste Reality: An Analysis of C. S. Lewis’s Theory,” *The Lamp-Post of the Southern California C. S. Lewis Society*, 6 (July 1982), 1–7; Dean Loganbill, “Myth, Reality, and *Till We Have Faces*,” *Man’s ‘Natural Powers’: Essays for and about C. S. Lewis*, ed. Raymond P. Tripp, Jr. (n.p.: The Society for New Language Study, 1975), pp. 55–58. Also, Don D. Elgin, “True and False Myth in C. S. Lewis’ *Till We Have Faces*,” *South Central Bulletin*, 41 (1981), 98–101.

⁴ Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational*, trans. John W. Harvey (1920; London: Oxford University Press, 1923). Lewis summarized Otto’s points in the first chapter of *The Problem of Pain* (London: Geoffrey Bles – Centenary Press, 1940), and more briefly in his reply to H. H. Price’s paper “Is Theism Important?,” *Socratic Digest*, No. 5 (1952), 49–50 (reprinted in *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. Walter Hooper [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1970], pp. 174–75; in Britain, *Undeceptions: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. Walter Hooper [London: Geoffrey Bles, 1971], pp. 140–41).

⁵ From Lewis’s diary entry for 9 September 1923, included in volume VIII, page 150, of the unpublished *Memoirs of the Lewis Family, 1850–1930*, compiled and typed from original documents by Warren Lewis, now in the Wade Collection, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois. Used by permission of C. S. Lewis PTE Limited and the Wade Collection.

⁶ *Memoirs of the Lewis Family*, VIII, 163–64.

according to his diary, he was considering how to make a masque or a play of the story.⁷ Not until three decades later, however, was he able to rewrite the story, and then not as a poem but as *A Myth Retold*, as his subtitle puts it. In a paragraph prefaced to the first British edition, Lewis accounted for it this way: **“This re-interpretation of an old story has lived in the author’s mind, thickening and hardening with the years, ever since he was an undergraduate. That way, he could be said to have worked at it most of his life. Recently, what seemed to be the right form presented itself and themes suddenly interlocked.”**⁸

What interlocked for Lewis was a profound picture of the central elements of Christianity, presented not in the apologist’s form of his early works, enabling readers to “see,” or understand, truths through the reason, **but in mythical form, giving a “taste” of Reality through the imagination.** This represents a significant change in Lewis’s attitude toward and ideas about myth, which will be discussed in the final five chapters of this book: **Lewis, who in his thirties put his fullest trust in reason, came in his fifties to regard myth as one of the best means available for embodying and conveying the Truth.**

2

Other difficulties which readers encounter in *Till We Have Faces* involve the style. A few readers are put off by the sentence structures and word choice. These are, indeed, less simple and direct than those of the Narnian Chronicles or even the Ransom trilogy. The extent to which they are, however, is largely part of the total fiction Lewis is creating. **We are to imagine not Lewis writing this in the twentieth century, but the character Orual writing it more than 2,200 years ago. And we are to imagine she is writing it in Greek, which is a second language for her, and a language for conducting business and legal matters, thus more formal and less flowing for her than if she were writing in her native language.** To give some sense that one is reading an ancient document, in Greek, Lewis slips into a slightly stiff, artificial tone. It may at first require a bit of extra attentiveness in reading, but it is clear and direct and soon should give no difficulty.

Potentially a larger barrier, initially, is the use of an **“unreliable narrator.”** The story is told, or narrated, in the first person by the person to whom it happened. This is a major change from the ancient myth Lewis is retelling. In Apuleius’s version the story was told by a third-person storyteller, an objective reporter who simply described things the way they occurred. **In a brilliant move, Lewis has one of the participants relate the story, which gives a more intimate view of the events. Orual aims to be wholly**

⁷ Lewis, diary entry for 23 November 1922, in *Memoirs of the Lewis Family*, VII, 281.

⁸ Lewis, *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1956), p. [1].

truthful in her account, but it is very important to realize that she fails to understand a good many things about herself and those around her. She will report honestly, reliably, what happens to her; but her interpretation of the meaning of what happens, and her knowledge and understanding of what is happening to other characters, cannot fully be relied on. We are, therefore, required to read critically, to observe to ourselves “She’s rationalizing” or “That may be the way it seems to her, but ...” – as we do when listening to an acquaintance complain of how badly he or she has been treated. **Of course, all the mistakes and self-deceptions are made clear in the end – that in one sense and at one level is the purpose of the book, and part of its greatness: it is the story of a character coming to know herself, to understand how she has treated those around her, and to take the steps needed to put herself right with her god.** For the alert and careful reader, however, the revelations at the end are no surprise: he or she has already seen in Orual what she will come to see for herself.

A final difficulty involves the book’s references to names and ideas which may be unfamiliar – Iphigenia, Antigone, or Stoicism, for example. Their unfamiliarity is to a great extent the result of narrowness, or perhaps shallowness, in modern education; in using such references, Lewis was not attempting to make the book difficult or obscure. For a person with even a much less rigorous education than Lewis had in the classics, literature, and philosophy, the references are generally familiar. Often the meaning of such allusions will be clarified in the text of this study, as part of the explanation of the background or meaning of the section at hand. Other times I will identify them in the notes to avoid interrupting the flow of the text or turning the study into a handbook of entries pertaining to the story.

In sum, one must expect that *Till We Have Faces* will make slightly heavier demands than Lewis’s earlier stories. It requires more alertness, more involvement in the narrative process, more willingness to become informed so that material will be meaningful. It requires, then, an adult level of reading (which, it must be added, some people reach at a very early age, and others never reach), but it will yield, therefore, adult-level understandings of Lewis, of life, and of oneself.⁵

⁵ Peter J. Schakel, [*Reason and Imagination in C. S. Lewis: A Study of Till We Have Faces*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 1–8.

PETER J. SCHAKEL, "PART I, CHAPTERS 1-2"

Peter J. Schakel, [*Reason and Imagination in C. S. Lewis: A Study of Till We Have Faces*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 9-18.

II

Part I, Chapters 1-2: Methods, Motives, Materialism

The death of Orual's mother is followed by the arrival of the Fox, a Greek slave whom the King, Orual's father, purchased to teach the sons he expects to have and meanwhile to teach his daughters, Orual and Redival. Preparations begin for the marriage of the King to a Princess from Caphad, which the King hopes will yield him a son. The young queen dies in childbirth, after giving birth to a daughter, a beautiful child whom the King names Istra, or Psyche. Orual loves her devotedly and tends to her upbringing; she becomes a close companion to Orual and the Fox.

THE key function of Chapters 1 and 2 is to establish the perspectives from which the story is told and to introduce the central characters. With that in mind, the opening paragraphs repay attentive reading and close examination:

I am old now and have not much to fear from the anger of gods. I have no husband nor child, nor hardly a friend, through whom they can hurt me. My body, this lean carrion that still has to be washed and fed and have clothes hung about it daily with so many changes, they may kill as soon as they please. The succession is provided for. My crown passes to my nephew. (p. 3)

I explained in Chapter I the extra task of understanding imposed on the reader by the first-person narration, to which the first word in the book, "I," alerts us. The word "now" is equally important. The narrator is old "now," a signal that the story operates at different levels, or different stages in time. "Now," in the first sentence, is contemporary with the events at the end of Part I; Part I looks back over the events of a lifetime, perhaps six decades. Part II follows Part I by a few weeks at most. **The narrator is always looking back at things after they happen, not simply reporting them as they**

occur, although she generally tries to tell things as they were and to avoid commenting on them. The important thing is that the narrator understands a great deal more at the end of Part II than at the end of Part I, because she learned much in the writing itself. And that has important implications for the reader: **one can understand Part I fully only after finishing Part II.** *Till We Have Faces* is, therefore, a book to be read twice, or three times, or more, for one begins then to appreciate levels of meaning and insinuations and ironies that could not be noticed on a first reading.

From the rest of the opening paragraph, and the one following, we learn a great deal about the narrator: that she is female (“I have no husband”), lonely (“hardly a friend”), of royal standing (“the succession,” “my crown”), and well educated (as the sophisticated style and structure of the third sentence indicate). **We learn that she is unhappy, and blames her unhappiness on the gods, and that her purpose in writing Part I is to present a case against the gods demonstrating the injustice of their dealings with her: “I will accuse the gods, especially the god who lives on the Grey Mountain. That is, I will tell all he has done to me from the very beginning, as if I were making my complaint of him before a judge” (p. 3).** Part I, therefore, will be a mixture of diary and court case (along with romance and myth), and we must remember as we read that although this is at one level an autobiography, an account of the narrator’s life, **it is always told with a purpose – that of building a case against the gods.** Thus, it is written, we are to suppose, in Greek in the hope that the book will sometime be carried to Greece, where wise men will read it and “know whether my complaint is right” (p. 4). **This dates the story some centuries before the birth of Christ – 200-300 BCE, perhaps – and establishes a criterion – Greek thought, rational, objective – by which the narrator intends us to judge what will be said.**

The third paragraph introduces another major change from the ancient myth, in addition to the use of a first-person narrator. In Apuleius’s version the setting is vague, unspecified, and undetailed. Lewis adds greatly to the interest and impact of the story by constructing an imaginary place and time for the story and filling out its scene in detail. **As he put it in a letter to Clyde S. Kilby, shortly after the book was published, it is “a work of (supposed) historical imagination. A guess of what it might have been like in a little barbarous state on the borders of the Hellenistic world of Greek culture, just beginning to affect it.”**¹ Lewis draws on his imagination and his

¹ The letter is dated 10 February 1957, and is found in *Letters of C. S. Lewis*, ed. W. H. Lewis (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1966), pp. 273-74. The imagined location of the setting is not very important. The Kingdom of Glome was, Chad Walsh suggests, “somewhere on the fringes of Asia Minor, ... possibly in what is now Turkey, or near the Black Sea” (*The Literary Legacy of C. S. Lewis* [New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979], p. 161). **But, as Thomas Howard has written, myth requires a world that is remote from us and at the same time rooted in our world:** “We don’t want our myths taking place in 1929, or even 1066, nor do we want them to occur in East Lansing or Gary, Indiana” (“Myth: A Flight to Reality,”

knowledge of ancient times for specific details which bring out, for example, the crudity and cruelty of that world – in the references to the girls sliding on ice formed from “the stale of beasts” in the palace yard, to the sores on the legs of a slave where the irons had been, to the pouring of human blood over the stone statue of the goddess Ungit. **James Como has described Lewis’s method as not demythologizing but remythologizing: the events and characters do not exist in another world and another dimension, but in a real and believable setting in this world.**² *And that has an important effect: it takes the story out of the realm of allegory, in which people and things “stand for” abstract qualities or meanings, and places it firmly in a mode of realism, in which things simply are themselves.* Thus, in the letter cited above, Lewis gently corrected Clyde Kilby on this matter: “The children made mud pies not for symbolic purposes but because children do. The Pillar Room is simply a room. The Fox is such an educated Greek slave as you might find at a barbarous court – and so on.” Lewis had a fine ability to bring a setting to life and enable his readers to enter imaginatively the feelings and experiences of people very different from themselves. That is his initial and basic purpose here.

The most important character, naturally, is **Orual**. Since the entire book is a development of her character, only the initial elements can be laid out here. The main impression created in the early chapters is of a person very honest and fair. That impression starts at the end of paragraph two, as Orual hopes her case will be read and discussed by Greek readers, who will assess its strength: “Perhaps their wise men will know whether my complaint is right or whether the god could have defended himself if he had made an answer” (p. 4). **It is reinforced by her forthrightness about herself, especially her refusal to hide or mitigate the fact of her ugliness.** Some readers suggest that she wasn’t as ugly as she had been made to feel she was, but her ugliness, I believe, must be accepted as literally true: first, because so many parts of the story hinge on it or point toward it, particularly as other characters, characters sympathetic to Orual, say or imply it is so; and second, because her physical appearance later becomes a symbol of her inner, spiritual condition, she must be literally ugly. From the

in *The Christian Imagination: Essays on Literature and the Arts*, ed. Leland Ryken [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1981], p. 203). Lewis’s use of an indeterminate time and place functions nicely to enhance his remythologizing of Apuleius.

² Como, “Till We Have Faces: A Preface to Comprehension,” *CSL: The Bulletin of the New York C. S. Lewis Society*, 7 (November 1975), 3. For a fuller analysis of Lewis’s changes in Apuleius’s tale, see Steve J. Van Der Weele, “From Mt. Olympus to Glome: C. S. Lewis’s Dislocation of Apuleius’s ‘Cupid and Psyche’ in *Till We Have Faces*,” in *The Longing for a Form: Essays on the Fiction of C. S. Lewis*, ed. Peter J. Schakel (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1977), pp. 182–92. Also, Andrew Howard, “Till We Have Faces and its Mythological and Literary Precursors,” *Mythlore*, 4 (March 1977), 30–32; and Gisbert Kranz, “Amor und Psyche: Metamorphose eines Mythos bei C. S. Lewis,” *Arcadia: Zeitschrift für vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft*, 4 (1969), 285–99; see also his *C. S. Lewis: Studien zu Leben und Werk* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1974).

beginning, then, Orual seeks to be open and honest as a person, accurate and trustworthy as a reporter.

Given those aims, the fourth paragraph is striking and significant. “I will begin my writing with the day my mother died, and they cut off my hair, as the custom is” (p. 4). Why should she begin here? Why not earlier, so that we might know something of the formative influence of her mother, or later, with the coming of the Fox? One could attempt to justify this starting point as being where the story really begins, for the King’s first wife must die in order that he can take a second, who will be Psyche’s mother. But the real reason for Orual’s choice of a starting point lies not in what is to come in the story but in her character and attitude. The reason she remembers that episode comes out in two key sentences: “As the shears snipped and Redival’s curls fell off, the slaves said, ‘Oh, what a pity! All the gold gone!’ They had not said anything like that while I was being shorn” (p. 5). **Here is an early expression – perhaps even the beginning – of the rivalry between the two sisters and of Orual’s attitude toward herself. It may mark the first time Orual is made aware of a significant difference in appearance between her and Redival – thus it is that she remembers this particular day and event.** Beginning here shows something more, although she herself may not be aware of it. She is writing a case against the gods because, she believes, they have been unjust in taking Psyche from her and not revealing themselves to her. **What we realize – though she may not – is that her lasting feelings of injustice and jealousy go as far back as this: her later attitudes grow out of a sense of unfairness that Redival should be golden and beautiful, while she is drab and ugly.**

Till We Have Faces is a story of the resolution of Orual’s charges of injustice, but it is also an account of Orual’s movement between the experience and attitudes of the other two main characters, the Fox and Psyche. The Fox’s thought draws mainly upon the philosophy of the Stoics. When the Fox calls the old Greek myths “only lies of poets, lies of poets, child. Not in accordance with nature” (p. 8), or says conception of male children comes not from magic bedsteads but “by natural causes” (p. 10), or asserts that wind and weather “are all part of the same web, which is called Nature, or the Whole” (p. 85), his ideas can be traced back to Zeno, Cleanthes, and Chrysippus, Greek philosophers of the third and fourth centuries before Christ. His scoffing at death, because “at death we are resolved into our elements” (p. 17), and his idea that “all men [are] of one blood” (p. 9), have the same origin. Diogenes Laertius, author of a third-century history of Greek philosophy, summarizes the key aspects of early Stoic thought as follows: “The end [of life] may be defined as life in accordance with nature, ... a life in which we refrain from every action forbidden by the law common to all things, that

is to say, the right reason which pervades all things.”³ To the Stoics, the world is endowed with soul and reason, and nature is either that which holds the world together or that which causes things to come to life: “They hold that there are two principles in the Universe, the active principle [God] and the passive [matter].... God is one and the same with Reason, Fate, and Zeus.... The substance of God is declared by Zeno to be the whole world and the heaven.”⁴ **On this belief in nature as “the Whole” rest the basic Stoic beliefs in an “endless chain of causation” (that is, Fate or Destiny),⁵ in acceptance of natural processes like death, and in the common rational system inclusive of all human beings.⁶**

Stoicism (stō'īsizəm), school of philosophy founded by Zeno of Citium (in Cyprus) c.300 b.c. The first Stoics were so called because they met in the Stoa Poecile [Gr.,=painted porch], at Athens, a colonnade near the Agora, to hear their master Zeno lecture. **He had studied with Crates the Cynic, and his own teaching included the Cynic adaptation of the Socratic ideals of virtue, endurance, and self-sufficiency.** He added to them the explanation of the physical universe given by Heraclitus and something of the logic of Aristotle. The development and organization of Zeno's doctrines into a great system of metaphysics was the work of Chrysippus (c.280–207 b.c.), successor to Cleanthes. Among the acknowledged leaders of the Stoics in the following period was Panaetius of Rhodes, who in the 2d cent. b.c. introduced Stoicism into Rome. He and his pupil Posidonius sought to lessen the attacks of critics by mingling with the Stoic doctrines some of Plato's psychological views. Cicero, a pupil of Posidonius, was indebted to a work of Panaetius for the basis of his own treatise *De officiis*. **The Romans, who had received Stoicism more cordially than they did any other Greek philosophy, can claim the third period as their own. To it belong the philosophers Seneca and Epictetus of Phrygia and the emperor Marcus Aurelius. Stoicism, with its roots in earlier doctrines and theories of**

³ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, VII. 88, trans. R. D. Hicks, Loeb Classical Library, 2 vols. (London: Heinemann, 1925), 2: 195, 197.

⁴ *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, VII.138, 134–35, 148 (2: 243, 239, 241, 253).

⁵ *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, VII.136, 149 (2: 241, 253).

⁶ See Epictetus, *Discourses*, IV.vii. 14–15; and Josiah B. Gould, *The Philosophy of Chrysippus* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1970), p. 165.

the human person and the universe, built up an ideal of the virtuous, wise man. ¹

More important than identifying sources for specific remarks by the Fox, however, is to notice that Stoic philosophy is characterized by rationalism and materialism. The Fox's thinking, therefore, is similar to that of Lewis's tutor, W. T. Kirkpatrick, a rationalistic naturalism grounded in the scientific writings of Darwin and Huxley. Lewis described Kirkpatrick as "a purely logical entity ... a 'Rationalist' of the old, high and dry nineteenth-century type."⁷ He insisted on precise observation and careful inference therefrom and dismissed entirely matters of "belief" and "opinion." That there is much of Kirkpatrick in the Fox has frequently been noted and is pretty much beyond doubt.⁸ But there is also much of Kirkpatrick in Lewis. Lewis was highly impressionable, and there is no doubt that **Kirkpatrick's system of thought and modes of argument left a deep and lasting imprint on him. He ceased to be a rationalist even before he became a Christian, but the love of dialectic and "talking for victory" lasted long thereafter and helped shape his methods in his apologetic works.**⁹ To some extent, then, the Fox is Lewis, who for much of his life was drawn toward rationalistic thinking despite his love of the imagination.

There is much of Lewis in Psyche as well. The non-rationalistic way in which she approached others and the gods also appealed to Lewis and pulled against the rationalist tendencies in him. In Psyche there is a natural, almost intuitive response to God, an inner loveliness and lovingness which is reflected in her physical beauty. The Fox on several occasions compares her to Helen, in Greek legend the most beautiful

¹ Paul Lagassé, Columbia University, [The Columbia Encyclopedia](#) (New York; Detroit: Columbia University Press; Sold and distributed by Gale Group, 2000).

⁷ Lewis, *Surprised by Joy* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1955), pp. 130, 132 (Ch. 9). The Fox's rationalism underlies Charles Moorman's suggestion that "the conflict of faith and scientific rationalism, apparent in all of Lewis's work, emerges as the dominant theme of *Till We Have Faces*" (*Arthurian Triptych: Mythic Materials in Charles Williams, C. S. Lewis, and T. S. Eliot* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960], p. 105).

⁸ See, for example, Clyde S. Kilby, "Till We Have Faces: An Interpretation," in *The Longing for a Form*, p. 179. The Fox's name, Lysias, is mentioned only once in the book (p. 186). According to Edward G. Zogby, S. J., "his name in Greek, ironically, means ransom" ("Triadic Patterns in Lewis's Life and Thought," in *The Longing for a Form*, p. 34). In choosing the name, Lewis might also have had in mind that Lysias was the name of an Athenian orator (5th–4th century B.C.) who spent considerable time in exile.

⁹ Lewis's aggressiveness in argument is a recurring motif of the essays in *C. S. Lewis at the Breakfast Table and Other Reminiscences*, ed. James T. Como (New York: Macmillan, 1979). See Leo Baker, "Near the Beginning," p. 6; John Wain, "A Great Clerke," p. 69; Peter Bayley, "From Master to Colleague," p. 81; and Walter Hooper, "Oxford's Bonny Fighter," p. 142.

woman in the world. Orual says of her, “She made beauty all round her. When she trod on mud, the mud was beautiful; when she ran in the rain, the rain was silver. When she picked up a toad – she had the strangest and, I thought, unchanciest love for all manner of brutes – the toad became beautiful” (p. 22). **In fairy tales, when a princess kisses a frog, it turns into a beautiful prince; in this tale, Psyche’s touch will, eventually, give beauty to an ugly queen, for among the strangest and unchanciest of Psyche’s loves is her love for a brute, Orual.**

In his letter to Kilby, Lewis describes Psyche as having a “naturally Christian spirit.” Her life, characterized by love and by a series of sacrifices, has led some to call her a symbol, or a type, of Christ.¹⁰ Such a reading is suggested, for example, by the fact that she heals the sick, calls herself a “ransom for all Glome” (p. 72), and dies at “a single leafless tree” on a hilltop (p. 98). It is supported also by such lines, referring to the sacrificing of Psyche, as “the victim must be perfect” (p. 49) and “it’s only sense that one should die for many” (p. 61). Lewis himself, however, preferred that she not be interpreted as a symbol of Christ; the resemblances to Christ are important for a different reason, as he said in his letter to Kilby: “She is in some ways like Christ because every good man or woman is like Christ. What else could they be like?”¹¹ In the story Orual says Psyche was “what every woman, or even every thing, ought to have been and meant to be, but had missed by some trip of chance” (p. 22). **We are not to assume, therefore, that Psyche’s loving attitude, self-giving concern for others, responsiveness to spiritual urgings, and understanding of divine matters reflect something unique and unattainable; rather, they exemplify what all of us could be and indeed should be.**

The initial indications of character are enriched by ironies, allusions, and anticipations, literary devices Lewis introduced in these chapters and used throughout the book. Irony enables a writer to be indirect, to convey shades of meaning, to bring out aspects of character subtly and naturally; it demands more alertness and flexibility in a reader than non-ironic prose. The ironic tone employed in much of *Till We Have Faces* is established in the description of Orual’s hair being cut by the slaves after her mother’s death: “While Batta was using the shears many other of the slave women were standing

¹⁰ Clyde S. Kilby, *The Christian World of C. S. Lewis* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1964), pp. 57–58; and Margaret Patterson Hannay, *C. S. Lewis* (New York: Ungar, 1981), p. 124. Evan K. Gibson, *C. S. Lewis: Spinner of Tales* (Washington, D. C.: Christian University Press, 1980), pp. 232, 242–43, lists a number of illustrations, but concludes that Psyche is not a symbol of Christ but “the ideal pattern for the Christian soul” (p. 244). Martha C. Sammons takes the Christian interpretation much further, to a nearly allegorical reading (though she labels the approach “transposition” rather than allegory): “Christian Doctrines ‘Transposed’ in C. S. Lewis’ *Till We Have Faces*,” *Mythlore*, 7 (March 1980), 31–35.

¹¹ *Letters of C. S. Lewis*, p. 274.

round, from time to time wailing for the Queen's death and beating their breasts; but in between they were eating nuts and joking" (p. 5). The ironic contrast, or discrepancy, between their apparent and actual feelings prepares the way for several types of irony later in the book. There is the irony created by the use of a first-person narrator, who often is less fully aware of the implications of what she says than the reader should be. There is also simple verbal irony, where one thing is said but the opposite is meant. When the King arranges to marry the third daughter of the King of Caphad, he believes he has "made a great match" (p. 9); but as the now much older Orual writes these words, she means just the opposite, as she points out a few sentences later. There is a sort of situational irony when the King says to the Fox, "It can't often have fallen to the lot of a mere Greekling to rule the grandson of so great a king as my father-in-law that is to be.... You're all pedlars and hucksters down in the Greeklands, eh?" (p. 9) – irony in the striking discrepancy between the King's estimate of a situation and that of the reader and the rest of the world. And there is irony when the King, having purchased at great expense a bed "made of an eastern wood which was said to have such virtue that four of every five children begotten in such a bed would be male" (p. 10), has another daughter. **The ironies in the book, often humorous, enhance the character of Orual as an incisive, wry, but understanding person.**

Equally important in adding depth to the characterizations are allusions, such as the references to Aphrodite and Anchises (p. 8), and the lines "*Virtue, sought by man with travail and toil*" and "*The Moon's gone down, but / Alone I lie,*" quoted from Greek lyric poems by Simonides and Sappho, respectively.¹² An author expects a reader to recognize such explicit allusions and to draw relevant parts of their original contexts into the story: thus the comparisons of Psyche to Helen (p. 23) are disturbing because Helen was not only beautiful but also a source of discord, the cause of the famous

¹² The poem by Simonides (556–467 B.C.) can be translated as follows: "There's a tale that Virtue dwelleth on a rock hard to climb and with a pure band of Goddesses to watch over it, nor may she ever be seen by eye of mortal, unless heart-devouring sweat come out of one and he reach unto the very top of manliness" (*Lyra Graeca*, trans. J. M. Edmonds, 3 vols., rev. ed. [London: Heinemann, 1964], 2: 321). The poem by Sappho (flourished about 590 B.C.) is,

The Moon is gone

And the Pleiads set,

Midnight is nigh;

Time passes on,

And passes; yet Alone I lie.

(trans. C. M. Bowra – *Lyra Graeca*, 1: 263).

Trojan War (which is alluded to on page 33). But allusions are often less explicit; there may be no more than a key phrase to indicate that the author is pointing toward an external reference and invoking its associations. One such allusion appears in the second paragraph of *Till We Have Faces*. Orual writes,

I will accuse the gods, especially the god who lives on the Grey Mountain. That is, I will tell all he has done to me from the very beginning, as if I were making my complaint of him before a judge. But there is no judge between gods and men, and the god of the mountain will not answer me. (p. 3)

The phrase “there is no judge between gods and men” closely resembles a phrase from the Old Testament book of Job: “There is no umpire between us, who might lay his hand upon us both” (9:33 RSV). The similarity in the wording and situation suggests strongly that, although for Orual this is simply the most effective way to state her point, **for Lewis it is an allusion to Job and thus an initial signal that *Till We Have Faces*, like the book of Job, is a reply to a charge of alleged injustice on the part of God or the gods.** And it suggests that the answer to that charge in *Till We Have Faces* should be considered in relation to that in Job, either as similar to and thus reinforced by it, or as a contrast, probably a dramatic and striking contrast, to it.

Also important to the characterizations are foreshadowings or “anticipations” of later actions or events. Thus, the use of veils as the twelve girls sing a Greek bridal hymn on the King’s wedding day prepares for **the importance of veils later in the story.** Similarly, the first mention of Psyche’s love for the Grey Mountain and the stories she made up about being a queen and living in “a castle of gold and amber ... on the very top” (p. 23) should lead one to expect something of the sort to occur to Psyche, literally or symbolically, in the future. In Chapter 1 a more subtle foreshadowing occurs when the Fox tells Orual a tale of how Venus (Aphrodite) fell in love with Prince Anchises, who was to be the father of Aeneas, the mythical founder of Rome:

She dimmed her glory and made herself like a mortal woman and came to Anchises and beguiled him and they went up together into his bed.... Anchises woke from sleep and saw Aphrodite standing in the door of the hut, not now like a mortal but with the glory. So, he knew he had lain with a goddess, and he covered his eyes and shrieked, “Kill me at once.” (p. 8)¹³

This anticipates the story, later in the book, of Psyche’s marriage to the God of the Mountain: the sexes are reversed, but the same theme of a divine-mortal union, the same emphasis on not looking at a god, are there. Lewis has placed it here partly as a preparation: the strange story to come will seem slightly less strange because it was

¹³ The sources of the story are the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, 45–200, and Hyginus, *Fabula*, 94.

preceded by this one. But it is here also as an initial undermining of the Fox. The Fox, upon finishing the story, hastens to add, “Not that this ever really happened.... It’s only lies of poets, lies of poets, child” (p. 8). **The Fox, as a Stoic and rationalist, will admit into his world only that which is open to scientific explanation. We are introduced here to the first of many mysterious but meaningful occurrences which lie outside the domain of the Fox’s understanding. As the motif of human-divine union recurs, we should recall this episode and the Fox’s inadequate response to it.**²

² Peter J. Schakel, *Reason and Imagination in C. S. Lewis: A Study of Till We Have Faces* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 9-18.



Psyche

Running a website with millions of readers every month is expensive. Not only do we pay for our servers, but also for related services such as our content delivery network, Google Workspace, email, and much more. We would much rather spend this money on producing more free history content for the world. Thank you for your help!

\$5812 / \$21000

♥ DONATE

by **Harrison W. Mark**
published on 21 January 2022

Psyche was the goddess of the soul in ancient Greek and Roman mythology. Born a mortal woman, her beauty rivaled that of Aphrodite (Venus) and inspired the love of Aphrodite's son, Eros, god of desire. After completing a series of seemingly impossible tasks to be with Eros, Psyche was granted immortality and made into a goddess herself.

Although the story of Psyche and Eros (Cupid) can be found depicted in Greek art dating back to the 4th century BCE, the most famous and complete telling of the myth is found in ancient Roman literature, in the 2nd-century CE novel *Metamorphoses*, or *The Golden Ass*, written by Apuleius.

Origins in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*

Metamorphoses is the only ancient Roman novel written in Latin to still survive in its entirety. Written in the 2nd century CE by Apuleius, a writer and philosopher from the Roman province of Numidia, the *Metamorphoses*, also known as *The Golden Ass*, consists of eleven books.

It follows the story of Lucius, a man whose desire to see and practice magic leads him to accidentally transform himself into a donkey. This sets Lucius out on his journey, during which he hears many stories. One of these is the tale of Cupid and Psyche, which is told in full. Apuleius dedicates books four through six



The Abduction of Psyche
William-Adolphe Bougeureau (Public Domain)

of *The Golden Ass* to this tale. Although there is evidence of the story of Cupid and Psyche appearing in Greek artwork as far back as the 4th century BCE, it is through Apuleius' inclusion of the story in his novel that the details come down to modern readers and scholars.

Cupid & Psyche

In an unnamed city, there was once a king and a queen who had three daughters. Although the two eldest were beautiful, the youngest, Psyche, possessed an even greater beauty that was "so perfect that human speech was too poor to describe or even praise it satisfactorily" (Apuleius, 59).

Psyche's beauty became famous, attracting strangers from neighboring countries to come in droves just to look upon her. These pilgrims showered her with gifts and offerings, the kind of homage that before had only been paid to

Venus herself. So many came to worship Psyche's beauty

that they neglected Venus' altars and temples. This greatly offended the goddess of love, who could not bear to suffer the indignation of being eclipsed in beauty and worship by a mortal woman.

Plotting her revenge, Venus summoned her son Cupid (Eros), the god of physical love and desire. Cunning and mischievous, Cupid was known for his arrows which, often aimed randomly, caused those they struck to fall in love. No one, from mortal to god, was immune. Venus explained to her son how she had been scorned and commanded him to make Psyche fall in love with some hideous creature to punish her. In the words of Apuleius:

Irresponsible as he [Cupid] already was by nature, Venus aroused him yet more by her words; and taking him to the city and showing him Psyche...she laid before him the whole story of this rival beauty. Groaning and crying out in indignation, "By the bonds of a mother's love," she said, "I implore you, by the sweet wounds of your arrows, by the honeyed burns made at your touch, avenge your mother-avenge her to the full. Punish mercilessly that arrogant beauty...Let this girl be seized with a burning passion for the lowest of mankind...someone so degraded that in all the world he can find no wretchedness to equal his own." (Apuleius, 60)

Preparing to do his mother's bidding, Cupid took his arrows and went to Psyche's bedchamber as she slept. Seeing her this close, he was overcome by her beauty as he touched her with the point of an arrow. At this touch, she awoke and looked in his direction. Although she could not see him because he was invisible, this startled Cupid, who wounded himself with his own arrow in the confusion. Thereafter, Cupid fell helplessly in love with Psyche.

**VENUS COULD NOT BEAR TO
SUFFER THE INDIGNATION
OF BEING ECLIPSED IN
BEAUTY & WORSHIP BY A
MORTAL WOMAN.**



Statue of Amor & Psyche

Osama Shukir Muhammed Amin (Copyright)

Meanwhile, travelers kept showing up to worship Psyche's beauty. As time wore on, both of her elder sisters were married to princes, but Psyche herself could not find a husband, as it appeared that men were more intent on worshipping her than marrying her. Psyche's parents, disturbed by this lack of suitors, were afraid they had done something to offend the gods and visited the oracle of Apollo. When asked who it was that Psyche would marry, the oracle answered that the girl must be dressed in funeral garb and left on a mountaintop where she would meet her husband, a horrible serpent creature that even the gods feared. According to Apuleius, the oracle spoke:

On mountain peak, O King, expose the maid
For funeral wedlock ritually arrayed.
No human son-in-law is thine,
But something cruel and fierce and serpentine;
That plagues the world as, borne aloft on wings,
With fire and steel it persecutes all things;
That Jove himself, he whom the gods revere,
That Styx's darkling stream regards with fear.
(Apuleius, 61)

Distraught, the king and queen had no choice but to honor the command of the gods. Accepting her fate, Psyche dressed in funeral attire and allowed herself to be led to the mountain peak, where she was left alone to await her husband. As she waited, a gentle breeze blown by Zephyrus, the west wind, carried her to a grove, where she promptly fell asleep. Upon awaking, Psyche found a magnificent palace near the grove, which contained golden columns, silver walls, and jeweled mosaic floors. As she wandered the halls of the palace, a disembodied voice told her to make herself comfortable, and that everything she saw was hers. The voice treated her to a bath and a feast, where she was entertained by invisible singing to an invisible lyre.

This invisible person, who Psyche soon realized was her new husband, would visit Psyche in the palace always during the darkness of night and leave before sunrise, forbidding her to look at him. Although fearful

at first, Psyche gradually came to look forward to her husband's visits and soon even fell in love with him. Yet, her husband would not agree to let her look upon him, telling her that he would rather she "love me as an equal than adore me as a god" (Bullfinch, 84).

The Abandonment of Psyche

In time, as much as Psyche looked forward to her husband's nighttime visits, she would grow sad and lonely during the daytime. One night, she told her husband that she wished to be able to see her sisters so that she could let them know that she was alive. Her husband could not bear to see Psyche in so much sorrow and agreed to let her see them, but he repeated his warning, that no matter what her sisters told her, Psyche was not to look at him. If she did, he would leave her forever. Psyche promised that she would not betray her husband's trust, saying:

I will die a hundred deaths before I let myself be robbed from this most delightful marriage with you. For I love and adore you with distraction, whoever you are, as I love my own life; Cupid himself cannot compare with you. (Apuleius, 65)

Zephyrus carried Psyche's sisters to the palace, and the three siblings were reunited. Psyche showed them around, and after seeing the splendor of Psyche's new home, the sisters were overcome with jealousy. They asked Psyche many questions, specifically about her husband. At first, Psyche told them that he was a beautiful youth who spent the daytime hunting in the mountains, but her sisters continued to press, and Psyche was forced to tell them the truth that she did not know who he was and that she had never seen his face.



Statue of Cupid and Psyche

Carole Raddato (CC BY-SA)

Her sisters then told her of their suspicions, reminding Psyche that it was prophesized that she would marry a terrible beast. They speculated that the serpent was planning to devour Psyche and that she should prepare a lamp and a sharp knife by her bedside. Once her husband was asleep, Psyche was to look upon his face and, if it was the serpent the oracle had foretold, she was to "cut off the monster's head, and thereby recover [her] liberty" (Bullfinch, 85).

Psyche tried to resist these thoughts, but even after her sisters left, their advice remained in her head. The more she thought about it, the more she questioned why her husband concealed himself and her curiosity

grew. That night, after her husband had fallen asleep, she took the lantern and looked upon him. What she saw was not a monster, but the god Cupid, whose beauty she recognized:

She saw a rich head of golden hair dripping with ambrosia, a milk-white neck, and rosy cheeks over which there strayed coils of hair becomingly arranged...On the shoulders of the flying god there sparkled wings, dewy-white with glistening sheen...At the foot of the bed lay a bow, a quiver, and arrows, the gracious weapons of the great god (Apuleius, 73).

As she leaned over to get a better view of his face, a drop of burning oil from the lantern fell on Cupid's shoulder, waking him. Without a word, the god spread his wings and flew out the window, abandoning his wife. Psyche jumped out the window trying to follow him but fell to the ground instead. When she got up, she realized that the grove and the palace had both disappeared and that she was in a field near the city where her sisters lived.



Cupid and Psyche

Giuseppe Maria Crespi (Public Domain)

In tears, Psyche found them and told them what had happened, and her sisters, pretending to grieve at Psyche's misfortune, were actually joyful, believing now that Cupid had abandoned Psyche, he might choose one of them. The next morning, the two sisters went to the mountain where they had been carried to the palace by Zephyrus and leaped from the peak, intending to be caught and carried by the West Wind. But Zephyrus did not catch them, and they fell to their deaths.

Psyche's Trials

Psyche wandered day and night, taking no food or rest, looking for her husband. As Psyche prayed for help, Ceres, the goddess of agriculture, took pity on her. Ceres told Psyche that if she went to Venus and pledged her service, she may be able to win Venus' forgiveness and be allowed to be with Cupid. Venus, meanwhile, had learned about the secret marriage between Psyche and her son and was helping to nurse Cupid back to health following the burn he had sustained.

When Psyche arrived before her, an infuriated Venus had her whipped, beaten, and mocked by her handmaidens, Worry and Sadness, before going to the girl herself. She then took grains of wheat, barley, millet, poppy seed,

WHEN VENUS RETURNED TO

lentils, and beans, mixed them together, and dumped them in a heap before Psyche. Venus commanded that Psyche separate and sort all the grains before evening. After Venus had left, Psyche sat helpless before this impossible task. But an ant who had been watching the encounter took pity on her. He gathered all the other ants in his anthill, and they approached the heap, separating and sorting all the grains neatly into piles before vanishing out of sight. When Venus returned to find the task completed, she was enraged, having expected the girl to not have been able to complete the task.

**FIND THE TASK COMPLETED,
SHE WAS ENRAGED, HAVING
EXPECTED PSYCHE TO NOT
HAVE BEEN ABLE TO
COMPLETE THE TASK.**

The next morning, she gave Psyche another impossible assignment: to cross a river and obtain gold-shining fleeces from the backs of violent rams that grazed on the other side. Psyche approached the riverbank, intending to drown herself rather than risk being gored to death by the rams, but the river spoke to her, saying: "Psyche, tried by much suffering, do not pollute my holy waters with your pitiable death" (Apuleius, 83). The river went on to tell Psyche to hide until the rams became calmed by the midday sun and the soothing breeze of the river. Once they were relaxed, Psyche was able to shear the fleeces from their backs without stirring their anger.

Psyche's third task was to collect the black water from the River Styx. This time, as she pondered how to achieve this, it was Jupiter himself who took pity on her. Jupiter sent a great eagle which retrieved the water for her. Yet, Venus was still unsatisfied and commanded Psyche to complete a fourth and final task. She was to go into the underworld with a golden box, within which she was to obtain a dose of the beauty of Proserpine, queen of the underworld.



Psyche Opening the Golden Box

John William Waterhouse (Public Domain)

Shortly after Psyche set out, she stumbled across a lofty tower, which told her where to find the entrance to the underworld and how to safely find Proserpine. Psyche heeded these instructions and soon found herself in Proserpine's palace. Following the tower's warnings, Psyche refused the goddess' offer of a comfortable seat and rich food, content with sitting on the ground and eating only a crust of bread. She delivered her message from Venus, and Proserpine accepted the request, filling the golden box with her beauty.

As soon as Psyche emerged safely from the underworld, she became filled with curiosity about the contents of the box. The curiosity got the best of her, and she decided to open it. Inside, she found nothing but a dark cloud that made her fall into a deep sleep:

"What a fool I am," said she, "to be carrying divine beauty and not to help myself even to a tiny bit of it, so as to perhaps please my beautiful lover." So saying she opened the box. But she found nothing whatever in it, no beauty, but only an infernal sleep...which when the lid was taken off and it was let out at once took possession of her and diffused itself in a black cloud of oblivion throughout her whole body, so that overcome by it she collapsed on the spot where she stood in the pathway, and lay motionless, a mere sleeping corpse. (Apuleius, 87)

By this point, Cupid's injury had fully healed. Unable to bear being apart from Psyche any longer, he escaped his mother's house in search of his wife. He found her where she was lying, asleep, and closed the box before waking her. Cupid then took the box to Venus before flying to Jupiter, asking him to make Psyche immortal. Jupiter agreed on the condition that Cupid help him whenever a lovely maid caught his eye.

Jupiter held an assembly where he warned Venus from doing Psyche any more harm. He then handed Psyche a cup of ambrosia, the drink of the gods, telling her to "Drink this, Psyche, and be immortal." Psyche was therefore transformed into a goddess of the soul and was officially married to Cupid. A great wedding banquet was held to celebrate. Psyche and Cupid had a daughter together, Voluptas (Hedone in Greek), the personification of pleasure and delight.



Wedding Banquet of Cupid and Psyche
Raphael (Public Domain)

Interpretations & Legacy

The tale of Cupid and Psyche has persisted throughout the centuries, which has naturally given rise to many interpretations. At least as early as the 6th century CE, writers have looked at the story as an allegory about the human soul. The writer Fulgentius, looking at the story from a Christian perspective, compares Psyche to Adam, both of whose sinful curiosities led to banishment from a paradise. Others, such as Giovanni Boccaccio, writing in the 14th century CE, compare the marriage between Psyche and Cupid to the bond between the human soul and God. More recently, the story has been analyzed through different psychological and feminist interpretations.

Thomas Bullfinch, in his *Bullfinch's Mythology*, relays another allegorical interpretation. He notes that the Greek word for butterfly is *psyche*, which is also their same word for soul. Bullfinch writes that there is no better illustration of the soul more beautiful than the butterfly, "bursting on brilliant wings from the tomb in

which it has lain." Similarly, Bullfinch writes, the human soul is purified through suffering and misfortunes and "is thus prepared for the enjoyment of true and pure happiness" (Bullfinch, 89).

Psyche's legacy is also seen through many different works of art and literature throughout the centuries. Rings bearing the likenesses of Cupid and Psyche have been found dating back to Roman Britain, whilst engraved gems from Britain have also been found depicting Cupid torching a butterfly. These finds could suggest that Cupid and Psyche may have had a religious following.

Since then, the story as well as their marriage has been a popular theme for many artists, ranging from Raphael to Goya and Edvard Munch. In literature, the story can be found alluded to in works by many significant writers and poets. John Milton alludes to the story at the end of his *Comus*, John Keats references it in his poem *Ode to Psyche*, and C.S. Lewis's novel *Till We Have Faces* is a retelling of the story from the perspective of one of Psyche's sisters, to name a few examples.

The story of Psyche is one of a mortal woman who, abandoned by her lover due to her own curiosity, completes many seemingly impossible trials to win him back, becoming a goddess along the way. Just as a butterfly or a human soul endures pain and change, so too does Psyche, as many artists and writers have alluded to throughout the centuries.

Bibliography

Apuleius & E. J. Kenney. *The Golden Ass*. Penguin Classics, 1999.

Cotterell, Arthur & Storm, Rachel. *The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Mythology*. Southwater, 2012.

Guerber, H. A. *The Myths of Greece and Rome (Anthropology & Folklore S)*. Dover Publications, 1993.

Thomas Bullfinch & Joseph Papin. *Bullfinch's Mythology The Age of Fable*. Doubleday & Company, Inc, 1968.

About the Author

Harrison W. Mark

Harrison Mark is a graduate of SUNY Oswego, where he studied history and political science.

Cite This Work

APA Style

Mark, H. W. (2022, January 21). Psyche. *World History Encyclopedia*. Retrieved from <https://www.worldhistory.org/Psyche/>

Chicago Style

Mark, Harrison W.. "Psyche." *World History Encyclopedia*. Last modified January 21, 2022. <https://www.worldhistory.org/Psyche/>.

MLA Style

Mark, Harrison W.. "Psyche." *World History Encyclopedia*. World History Encyclopedia, 21 Jan 2022. Web. 22 Feb 2022.

Written by Harrison W. Mark, published on 21 January 2022 under the following license: Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike. This license lets others remix, tweak, and build upon this content non-commercially, as long as they credit the author and license their new creations under the identical terms. When republishing on the web a hyperlink back to the original content source URL must be included. Please note that content linked from this page may have different licensing terms.

BULFINCH'S MYTHOLOGY (1867)¹

Bulfinch, Thomas. *Bulfinch's Mythology* (1867)(Tarcher Cornerstone Editions) (pp. 66-73). Penguin Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

CHAPTER XI Cupid and Psyche

A certain king and queen had three daughters. The charms of the two elder were more than common, but the beauty of the youngest was so wonderful that the poverty of language is unable to express its due praise. The fame of her beauty was so great that strangers from neighboring countries came in crowds to enjoy the sight, and looked on her with amazement, paying her that homage which is due only to Venus herself. In fact Venus found her altars deserted, while men turned their devotion to this young virgin. As she passed along, the people sang her praises, and strewed her way with chaplets and flowers.

This perversion of homage due only to the immortal powers to the exaltation of a mortal gave great offence to the real Venus. Shaking her ambrosial locks with indignation, she exclaimed, "Am I then to be eclipsed in my honors by a mortal girl? In vain then did that royal shepherd, whose judgment was approved by Jove himself, give me the palm of beauty over my illustrious rivals, Pallas and Juno. But she shall not so quietly usurp my honors. I will give her cause to repent of so unlawful a beauty."

Thereupon she calls her winged son Cupid, mischievous enough in his own nature, and rouses and provokes him yet more by her complaints. She points out Psyche to him and says, "My dear son, punish that contumacious beauty; give thy mother a revenge as sweet as her injuries are great; infuse into the bosom of that haughty girl a passion for

¹ Wikipedia - "*Bulfinch's Mythology* is a collection of general audience works by American Latinist and banker Thomas Bulfinch, named after him and published after his death in 1867. The work was a highly successful popularization of Greek mythology for English-speaking readers. Carl J. Richard comments (with John Talbot of Brigham Young University concurring) that it was "one of the most popular books ever published in the United States and the standard work on classical mythology for nearly a century", until the release of classicist Edith Hamilton's 1942 *Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes*."



some low, mean, unworthy being, so that she may reap a mortification as great as her present exultation and triumph."

Cupid prepared to obey the commands of his mother. There are two fountains in Venus's garden, one of sweet waters, the other of bitter. Cupid filled two amber vases, one from each fountain, and suspending them from the top of his quiver, hastened to the chamber of Psyche, whom he found asleep. He shed a few drops from the bitter fountain over her lips, though the sight of her almost moved him to pity; then touched her side with the point of his arrow. At the touch she awoke, and opened eyes upon Cupid (himself invisible), which so startled him that in his confusion he wounded himself with his own arrow. Heedless of his wound, his whole thought now was to repair the mischief he had done, and he poured the balmy drops of joy over all her silken ringlets.

Psyche, henceforth frowned upon by Venus, derived no benefit from all her charms. True, all eyes were cast eagerly upon her, and every mouth spoke her praises; but neither king, royal youth, nor plebeian presented himself to demand her in marriage. Her two elder sisters of moderate charms had now long been married to two royal princes; but Psyche, in her lonely apartment, deplored her solitude, sick of that beauty which, while it procured abundance of flattery, had failed to awaken love.

Her parents, afraid that they had unwittingly incurred the anger of the gods, consulted the oracle of Apollo, and received this answer: "The virgin is destined for the bride of no mortal lover. Her future husband awaits her on the top of the mountain. He is a monster whom neither gods nor men can resist."

This dreadful decree of the oracle filled all the people with dismay, and her parents abandoned themselves to grief. But Psyche said, "Why, my dear parents, do you now lament me? You should rather have grieved when the people showered upon me undeserved honors, and with one voice called me a Venus. I now perceive that I am a victim to that name. I submit. Lead me to that rock to which my unhappy fate has destined me." Accordingly, all things being prepared, the royal maid took her place in the procession, which more resembled a funeral than a nuptial pomp, and with her parents, amid the lamentations of the people, ascended the mountain, on the summit of which they left her alone, and with sorrowful hearts returned home.

While Psyche stood on the ridge of the mountain, panting with fear and with eyes full of tears, the gentle Zephyr raised her from the earth and bore her with an easy motion into a flowery dale. By degrees her mind became composed, and she laid herself down on the grassy bank to sleep. When she awoke refreshed with sleep, she looked round and beheld near by a pleasant grove of tall and stately trees. She entered it, and in the midst discovered a fountain, sending forth clear and crystal waters, and fast by, a magnificent palace whose august front impressed the spectator that it was not the work



of mortal hands, but the happy retreat of some god. Drawn by admiration and wonder, she approached the building and ventured to enter. Every object she met filled her with pleasure and amazement. Golden pillars supported the vaulted roof, and the walls were enriched with carvings and paintings representing beasts of the chase and rural scenes, adapted to delight the eye of the beholder. Proceeding onward, she perceived that besides the apartments of state there were others filled with all manner of treasures, and beautiful and precious productions of nature and art.

While her eyes were thus occupied, a voice addressed her, though she saw no one, uttering these words: "Sovereign lady, all that you see is yours. We whose voices you hear are your servants and shall obey all your commands with our utmost care and diligence. Retire, therefore, to your chamber and repose on your bed of down, and when you see fit repair to the bath. Supper awaits you in the adjoining alcove when it pleases you to take your seat there."

Psyche gave ear to the admonitions of her vocal attendants, and after repose and the refreshment of the bath, seated herself in the alcove, where a table immediately presented itself, without any visible aid from waiters or servants, and covered with the greatest delicacies of food and the most nectareous wines. Her ears too were feasted with music from invisible performers; of whom one sang, another played on the lute, and all closed in the wonderful harmony of a full chorus.

She had not yet seen her destined husband. He came only in the hours of darkness and fled before the dawn of morning, but his accents were full of love, and inspired a like passion in her. She often begged him to stay and let her behold him, but he would not consent. On the contrary he charged her to make no attempt to see him, for it was his pleasure, for the best of reasons, to keep concealed. "Why should you wish to behold me?" he said; "have you any doubt of my love? have you any wish ungratified? If you saw me, perhaps you would fear me, perhaps adore me, but all I ask of you is to love me. I would rather you would love me as an equal than adore me as a god."

This reasoning somewhat quieted Psyche for a time, and while the novelty lasted she felt quite happy. But at length the thought of her parents, left in ignorance of her fate, and of her sisters, precluded from sharing with her the delights of her situation, preyed on her mind and made her begin to feel her palace as but a splendid prison. When her husband came one night, she told him her distress, and at last drew from him an unwilling consent that her sisters should be brought to see her.

So, calling Zephyr, she acquainted him with her husband's commands, and he, promptly obedient, soon brought them across the mountain down to their sister's valley. They embraced her and she returned their caresses. "Come," said Psyche, "enter with me my house and refresh yourselves with whatever your sister has to offer." Then taking their hands she led them into her golden palace, and committed them to the care



of her numerous train of attendant voices, to refresh them in her baths and at her table, and to show them all her treasures. The view of these celestial delights caused envy to enter their bosoms, at seeing their young sister possessed of such state and splendor, so much exceeding their own.

They asked her numberless questions, among others what sort of a person her husband was. Psyche replied that he was a beautiful youth, who generally spent the daytime in hunting upon the mountains. The sisters, not satisfied with this reply, soon made her confess that she had never seen him. Then they proceeded to fill her bosom with dark suspicions. "Call to mind," they said, "the Pythian oracle that declared you destined to marry a direful and tremendous monster. The inhabitants of this valley say that your husband is a terrible and monstrous serpent, who nourishes you for a while with dainties that he may by and by devour you. Take our advice. Provide yourself with a lamp and a sharp knife; put them in concealment that your husband may not discover them, and when he is sound asleep, slip out of bed, bring forth your lamp, and see for yourself whether what they say is true or not. If it is, hesitate not to cut off the monster's head, and thereby recover your liberty."

Psyche resisted these persuasions as well as she could, but they did not fail to have their effect on her mind, and when her sisters were gone, their words and her own curiosity were too strong for her to resist. So she prepared her lamp and a sharp knife, and hid them out of sight of her husband. When he had fallen into his first sleep, she silently rose and uncovering her lamp beheld not a hideous monster, but the most beautiful and charming of the gods, with his golden ringlets wandering over his snowy neck and crimson cheek, with two dewy wings on his shoulders, whiter than snow, and with shining feathers like the tender blossoms of spring. As she leaned the lamp over to have a nearer view of his face a drop of burning oil fell on the shoulder of the god, startled with which he opened his eyes and fixed them full upon her; then, without saying one word, he spread his white wings and flew out of the window. Psyche, in vain endeavoring to follow him, fell from the window to the ground. Cupid, beholding her as she lay in the dust, stopped his flight for an instant and said, "O foolish Psyche, is it thus you repay my love? After having disobeyed my mother's commands and made you my wife, will you think me a monster and cut off my head? But go; return to your sisters, whose advice you seem to think preferable to mine. I inflict no other punishment on you than to leave you forever. Love cannot dwell with suspicion." So saying, he fled away, leaving poor Psyche prostrate on the ground, filling the place with mournful lamentations.

When she had recovered some degree of composure she looked around her, but the palace and gardens had vanished, and she found herself in the open field not far from the city where her sisters dwelt. She repaired thither and told them the whole story of her misfortunes, at which, pretending to grieve, those spiteful creatures inwardly rejoiced. "For now," said they, "he will perhaps choose one of us." With this idea,



without saying a word of her intentions, each of them rose early the next morning and ascended the mountains, and having reached the top, called upon Zephyr to receive her and bear her to his lord; then leaping up, and not being sustained by Zephyr, fell down the precipice and was dashed to pieces.

Psyche meanwhile wandered day and night, without food or repose, in search of her husband. Casting her eyes on a lofty mountain having on its brow a magnificent temple, she sighed and said to herself, "Perhaps my love, my lord, inhabits there," and directed her steps thither.

She had no sooner entered than she saw heaps of corn, some in loose ears and some in sheaves, with mingled ears of barley. Scattered about, lay sickles and rakes, and all the instruments of harvest, without order, as if thrown carelessly out of the weary reapers' hands in the sultry hours of the day.

This unseemly confusion the pious Psyche put an end to, by separating and sorting everything to its proper place and kind, believing that she ought to neglect none of the gods, but endeavor by her piety to engage them all in her behalf. The holy Ceres, whose temple it was, finding her so religiously employed, thus spoke to her: "O Psyche, truly worthy of our pity, though I cannot shield you from the frowns of Venus, yet I can teach you how best to allay her displeasure. Go, then, and voluntarily surrender yourself to your lady and sovereign, and try by modesty and submission to win her forgiveness, and perhaps her favor will restore you the husband you have lost."

Psyche obeyed the commands of Ceres and took her way to the temple of Venus, endeavoring to fortify her mind and ruminating on what she should say and how best propitiate the angry goddess, feeling that the issue was doubtful and perhaps fatal.

Venus received her with angry countenance. "Most undutiful and faithless of servants," said she, "do you at last remember that you really have a mistress? Or have you rather come to see your sick husband, yet laid up of the wound given him by his loving wife? You are so ill-favored and disagreeable that the only way you can merit your lover must be by dint of industry and diligence. I will make trial of your housewifery." Then she ordered Psyche to be led to the storehouse of her temple, where was laid up a great quantity of wheat, barley, millet, vetches, beans, and lentils prepared for food for her pigeons, and said, "Take and separate all these grains, putting all of the same kind in a parcel by themselves, and see that you get it done before evening." Then Venus departed and left her to her task.

But Psyche, in a perfect consternation at the enormous work, sat stupid and silent, without moving a finger to the inextricable heap.

While she sat despairing, Cupid stirred up the little ant, a native of the fields, to take compassion on her. The leader of the ant hill, followed by whole hosts of his six-legged



subjects, approached the heap, and with the utmost diligence, taking grain by grain, they separated the pile, sorting each kind to its parcel; and when it was all done, they vanished out of sight in a moment.

Venus at the approach of twilight returned from the banquet of the gods, breathing odors and crowned with roses. Seeing the task done, she exclaimed, "This is no work of yours, wicked one, but his, whom to your own and his misfortune you have enticed." So saying, she threw her a piece of black bread for her supper and went away.

Next morning Venus ordered Psyche to be called and said to her, "Behold yonder grove which stretches along the margin of the water. There you will find sheep feeding without a shepherd, with golden-shining fleeces on their backs. Go, fetch me a sample of that precious wool gathered from every one of their fleeces."

Psyche obediently went to the riverside, prepared to do her best to execute the command. But the river god inspired the reeds with harmonious murmurs, which seemed to say, "O maiden, severely tried, tempt not the dangerous flood, nor venture among the formidable rams on the other side, for as long as they are under the influence of the rising sun, they burn with a cruel rage to destroy mortals with their sharp horns or rude teeth. But when the noontide sun has driven the cattle to the shade, and the serene spirit of the flood has lulled them to rest, you may then cross in safety, and you will find the woolly gold sticking to the bushes and the trunks of the trees."

Thus the compassionate river god gave Psyche instructions how to accomplish her task, and by observing his directions she soon returned to Venus with her arms full of the golden fleece; but she received not the approbation of her implacable mistress, who said, "I know very well it is by none of your own doings that you have succeeded in this task, and I am not satisfied yet that you have any capacity to make yourself useful. But I have another task for you. Here, take this box and go your way to the infernal shades, and give this box to Proserpine and say, 'My mistress Venus desires you to send her a little of your beauty, for in tending her sick son she has lost some of her own.' Be not too long on your errand, for I must paint myself with it to appear at the circle of the gods and goddesses this evening."

Psyche was now satisfied that her destruction was at hand, being obliged to go with her own feet directly down to Erebus. Wherefore, to make no delay of what was not to be avoided, she goes to the top of a high tower to precipitate herself headlong, thus to descend the shortest way to the shades below. But a voice from the tower said to her, "Why, poor unlucky girl, dost thou design to put an end to thy days in so dreadful a manner? And what cowardice makes thee sink under this last danger who hast been so miraculously supported in all thy former?" Then the voice told her how by a certain cave she might reach the realms of Pluto, and how to avoid all the dangers of the road, to pass by Cerberus, the three-headed dog, and prevail on Charon, the ferryman, to take



her across the black river and bring her back again. But the voice added, "When Proserpine has given you the box filled with her beauty, of all things this is chiefly to be observed by you, that you never once open or look into the box nor allow your curiosity to pry into the treasure of the beauty of the goddesses."

Psyche, encouraged by this advice, obeyed it in all things, and taking heed to her ways travelled safely to the kingdom of Pluto. She was admitted to the palace of Proserpine, and without accepting the delicate seat or delicious banquet that was offered her, but contented with coarse bread for her food, she delivered her message from Venus. Presently the box was returned to her, shut and filled with the precious commodity. Then she returned the way she came, and glad was she to come out once more into the light of day.

But having got so far successfully through her dangerous task, a longing desire seized her to examine the contents of the box. "What," said she, "shall I, the carrier of this divine beauty, not take the least bit to put on my cheeks to appear to more advantage in the eyes of my beloved husband!" So she carefully opened the box, but found nothing there of any beauty at all, but an infernal and truly Stygian sleep, which being thus set free from its prison, took possession of her, and she fell down in the midst of the road, a sleepy corpse without sense or motion.

But Cupid, being now recovered from his wound, and not able longer to bear the absence of his beloved Psyche, slipping through the smallest crack of the window of his chamber which happened to be left open, flew to the spot where Psyche lay, and gathering up the sleep from her body closed it again in the box, and waked Psyche with a light touch of one of his arrows. "Again," said he, "hast thou almost perished by the same curiosity. But now perform exactly the task imposed on you by my mother, and I will take care of the rest."

Then Cupid, as swift as lightning penetrating the heights of heaven, presented himself before Jupiter with his supplication. Jupiter lent a favoring ear, and pleaded the cause of the lovers so earnestly with Venus that he won her consent. On this he sent Mercury to bring Psyche up to the heavenly assembly, and when she arrived, handing her a cup of ambrosia, he said, "Drink this, Psyche, and be immortal; nor shall Cupid ever break away from the knot in which he is tied, but these nuptials shall be perpetual."

Thus Psyche became at last united to Cupid, and in due time they had a daughter born to them whose name was Pleasure.

Bulfinch, Thomas. *Bulfinch's Mythology* (Tarcher Cornerstone Editions) (pp. 66-73). Penguin Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

