

Faceless Man and Infinite God: *Till We Have Faces*  
A Subversion of Greek Anthropocentrism

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**Abstract**

C. S. Lewis's novel *Till We Have Faces* directly subverts the Greek anthropocentric view of both God and man. The Greek myths of Hesiod-Homer and platonic philosophy hold to a view of man being morally superior to the gods. The character of Orual in *Till We Have Faces* represents Greek anthropocentrism. Orual opens the story accusing the gods of stealing her beloved sister Psyche but, through an encounter with the madness of the divine, sees herself as the true destroyer of her sister's face. The illusion of her own moral superiority crumbles away as she sees how her love is vile and selfish defacing the people that become the objects of her love. Lewis deconstructs Orual's viewpoint by revealing that she is guilty of exactly what she accused the gods of doing. Orual realizes the mystery of God is vastly better than the rationality of man. Lewis provides a clear image of humanity as a faceless unrealized being that can only gain true identity in light of knowing and loving its creator.

**Faceless Man and Infinite God: *Till We Have Faces*****A Subversion of Greek Anthropocentrism**

In his novel *Till We Have Faces*, C. S. Lewis retells the Greek myth of Cupid and Psyche and, in doing so, subverts the traditional anthropocentric view of the man found in Greek mythology and philosophy. For the Greeks, Anthropocentrism held mankind as being the most exceptional beings in the universe. Humanity held a moral high ground to the depraved eternal gods. The Greeks believed that the gods were the opposers of man. In countless myths, the gods come against humanity for reasons of vice and self-gratification. Humanity more often than not existed as objects for the enjoyment of the gods. *In Till We Have Faces*, Lewis creates a story of conversion for the character of Orual, who, by the end of the novel, realizes the true nature of both the gods and herself.

The gods are identified by Orual in the opening of the text as the cause of misery in her life. The accusation presented of the gods demonstrates Orual's anthropocentric view as she sees herself as being wronged by the gods. Orual's story opens with an accusation toward the gods, condemning them for the injustices toward her. Orual starts the first letter of the book by writing, "I will write in this book what no one who has happiness will dare to write. I will accuse the gods" (Lewis 3). In the Greek view, man was finite and had a set beginning and end, limiting man's time on earth and making their lives meaningful because life would be taken away one day. Man did not have forever to live out their debaucheries but instead had to make the time they had significant. Man had a mind to think rationally and could appeal to reason in his decision-making, whereas the gods were bound by their carnal passions. Through Orual's slow conversion, Lewis reworks the traditional view of the gods as being the great adversary of man,

proposing instead that man in his finiteness could never begin to understand or comprehend the actions of beings not bound by flesh, the senses, or death. The god of the Mountain, in *Till We Have Faces*, rather than devouring and consuming Psyche, makes her complete by giving her a “face.” The idea of God being the “giver of face” to man is a reflection of Lewis's beliefs and of the God of the Bible.

The Greco-Roman influence can be felt all throughout *Till We Have Faces*. Lewis retells the myth of Cupid and Psyche found in Apuleius's *The Golden Ass* in such a way that it subverts the anthropocentric orientation of the world found in both Greek myth and philosophy. Orual begins and ends both of her letters with an appeal to a Greek reader to interpret her story; “It may someday happen that a traveler from the Greeklands will again lodge in this palace and read the book. Then he will talk of it among the Greeks, where there is great freedom of speech even about the gods themselves” (Lewis 3). The invoking of Greek thought to judge the gods sets the stage for the rest of the story's Greek disposition. In the article “Stoic Rationality and Divine Madness in ‘*Till We Have Faces*’” Dale Sullivan makes the point that “she writes in Greek and calls on a Greek ‘judge’ who may someday read her complaint to judge between her and the gods...she invokes a Greek audience and wishes to be judged in a forum governed by Greek wisdom” (Sullivan 48). Orual's appeal to the Greeks calls upon the judgments of their philosophers as well as their poets.

The myths and philosophy of Antiquity shape the Greek anthropocentric view of the world that is discussed in *Till We Have Faces*. Antiquity appears in various ways ranging from the Fox's red hair and physical appearance mirroring the description of red-haired Menelaus in *The Odyssey* to the King's sacrifice of Psyche being compared to the sacrifice of Iphigenia by

Agamemnon from Aeschylus play *Agamemnon*. The Greek presence that Lewis establishes in this piece can be split into two distinct characters. The character of the Fox represents the Platonic, philosophic side of Greek thought, whereas the character of Bardia represents the Hesiodic, Homeric side of mythology. Orual's worldview lies somewhere in-between these ideologies as she has the Fox's philosophic rationality and Bardia's dread fear of the gods.

Lewis depicts the Fox's interpretation of Greek thought when the Fox dismisses the idea that Psyche's husband is actually a god. The Fox lectures Orual on the nature of Psyche's captor, saying, "A man, a man, of course, What? Are you still a child? Didn't you know there were men on the Mountain?" (Lewis 181). The Fox rationalizes away the notion that it could have possibly been a god. The Platonic view of the Fox can be observed when he says, "Do you think the Divine Nature — why, it's profane, ridiculous. You might as well say the universe itched or the Nature of Things sometimes tumbled in the wine cellar" (181). The Fox in his view of the divine nature embodies platonic thought. The Fox sees the gods as facilitators of nature but not in the anthropomorphized and tumultuous way in which Homer saw the gods.

A platonic view of the gods sees them as beyond the trivial realm of man. The gods act as beings that are innately connected to the universe's functionality separated from the carnal impulses of man. Lewis spoke of the Greek gods in his book *Miracles*, saying, "The gods of Greece were not really supernatural in the strict sense which I am giving to the word. They were products of the total system of things and included within it" (Lewis 308). The Fox embodies this concept as his perception of the gods views them as tied to the operation of the world but that they do not resemble man in his pursuit of carnal pleasure because they are beyond such things. The gods in this view are stripped of their anthropomorphized emotional ties, abstracting

them to man instead of personifying them. In “Plato and the Gods,” Gustav Mueller describes Plato’s view of the gods, saying, “Plato brings some order into this world of divine powers. There are the gods of mother earth, the netherworld of chaos and vegetation, death and life, of blood and family-tradition” (Mueller 462). The gods from the Fox’s view are much more vaguely defined as he says to Orual “The divine nature is without jealousy. Those gods — the sort of gods you are always thinking about — are all folly and lies of poets” (Lewis 37). As a manifestation of the platonic view, like Plato, the Fox believes that the gods are not anthropomorphic but rather moral facilitators of nature that are beneficial for moral education in society.

Bardia, on the other hand, demonstrates the Hesiodic-Homeric dread fear of the gods. Bardia demonstrates this idea by saying that “the less Bardia meddles with the gods, the less they’ll meddle with Bardia” (Lewis 171). The gods to Bardia are to be avoided at all costs as they are a bane to humanity. Bardia, in his worldview, must appease the gods in order to not fall victim to their temper. In this worldview, Bardia echoes Hesiod when he says in *Works and Days* that “well with god and fortune is he who works with knowledge of all this, giving the immortals no cause for offense, judging the bird-omens and avoiding transgressions” (Hesiod 61). In the article “Immortal and Ageless Forever” Jenny Clay demonstrates this view of the gods as she describes the gods, saying, “in Homer, the gods are, above all, defined in opposition to men” (Clay 112). Through the lens of Bardia’s view, the gods are wrathful beings that must be appeased for the well-being of man, as they are temperamental and will invoke their wrath at the smallest offense. Bardia’s fear of the gods can be observed when he chooses to not defend the King from the Priest of Ungit. Bardia makes it clear that “if the King and the gods fall out, you

great ones must settle it between you. I'll not fight against powers and spirits" (Lewis 67). Bardia sees the gods as temperamental and wrathful beings that are to be feared out of self-preservation. Both the Fox and Bardia's different perceptions of the gods demonstrate the Greek Anthropocentric view of the world.

Greek Anthropocentrism as observed in *Till We Have Faces* takes form from the tales of Greek mythology. Greek Anthropocentrism seats man as the center of the moral world as the gods act debaucherously and constantly prove to be immoral. In the article "An Overview of Anthropocentrism, Humanism, and Speciesism in Critical Animal Theory" Adam Weitzenfeld claims that "for several millennia, humans at least those of Western cultures, have assumed a staunch anthropocentric orientation, the effect of positioning humans as the center of meaning, value, knowledge, and action" (Weitzenfeld 4). Anthropocentrism places man into an idealized position where he attains the high ground over both creatures and gods as they are judged by man's standards. Weitzenfeld again defines an anthropocentric society, saying, "Anthropocentrism requires that a society have a concept of humanity, assign privileged value to it, and measure all other beings by this standard. Meaning and value are partial to the idea of humanity" (4). The Greek gods exhibit their character throughout Antiquity as their actions place man in a position of moral superiority. Mankind can grow past ravenous gratification of its vulgar impulses whereas the gods are stagnant forever.

The Greek Anthropocentric view of the world stems largely from the portrait of their gods. The Greek gods are anthropomorphized in that they embody human qualities in their horrible behavior. As they are depicted in mythology, the Greek gods are ageless beings who embody the worst aspects of human nature. Zeus is a depraved womanizing rapist, Hera is a

vengeful monster, and Apollo is a lusty pansexual. The gods act not out of benevolence but only to serve their own selfish ends. In the article “The Greek Anthropocentric view of man” Robert Renehan illustrates this saying “In their conduct, they were, alas, all too human ... Their gods had become too much like men to be accepted as gods” (257). The gods, in their actions, demonstrated the worse qualities of human nature without the accountability of death. By being limited by death, man could grow and create meaning for their short existence by being moral and living just lives. In the article “Immortal and Ageless Forever” Clay describes this saying, “Exempt from death and exempt from the inevitable decay of all vegetative and animal nature, the Homeric gods remain frozen in an eternal prime: ‘immortal and unageing’” (117). The gods of Antiquity are stuck in a Peter Pan type state of infinite stagnation, never growing past the carnal impulses of their flesh.

The Greek creation myth sets the stage for Anthropocentrism as the gods are the source of all suffering and evil for mankind. Hesiod describes the current age of mankind in his *Works and Days*: “For now it is a race of iron; and they will never cease from toil and misery by day or night, in constant distress, and the gods will give them harsh troubles” (Hesiod 42). The story of Prometheus begins this idea as Zeus punishes man for accepting the gift of fire. Hesiod, in his *Theogony*, writes of Zeus’s harsh dealing with man saying, “He boded evil in his heart for mortal men, which was to come to pass” (Hesiod 19). From the moment Prometheus gave mankind the gift of fire, the gods began their opposition toward mankind. Orual demonstrates this idea when she says of the gods that “there is no creature (toad, scorpion, or serpent) so noxious to man as the gods” (Lewis 313). In the Greek Anthropocentric view, the gods are the greatest scorn to man. The gods, more than any creature, have caused pain for mankind.

Zeus, in his wrath, creates the first woman Pandora giving her a box that, when opened, releases horrors onto mankind. In Hesiod's account of the event, Prometheus warns to "never to accept a gift from Olympian Zeus but to send it back lest some affliction befall mortals" (Hesiod 39). When opened, Pandora's box released all kinds of evil into the world. Hesiod claims that "countless troubles roam among men: full of ills is the earth, and full the sea. Sickness visit men by day, and others by night, uninvited, bringing ill to mortals, silently, because Zeus the resourceful deprived them of voice" (Hesiod 40). The king of the gods, whom the Greeks worshiped as the ultimate king, brought onto man evil and darkness.

Mankind being cursed in this way by the gods preserves one thing in which the gods cannot destroy: hope. The only spirit that was left in the box given to Pandora by Zeus was hope. In his rendition of the myth, Thomas Bullfinch presents mankind's plight and hope, saying, "whatever evils are abroad, hope never entirely leaves us; and while we have that, no amount of other ills can make us completely wretched" (20). Hope, being preserved in humans, allows them to retain one thing the gods cannot take away from them: the possibility of positive growth and change. The gods do not change but rather stay in a sense of childlike existence, never having to be held responsible for their actions. In his ability to change and grow past his adolescence, mankind is superior to the gods; he hopes to be better and make much of his time on the earth.

In *The Odyssey*, when Odysseus visits the underworld, he encounters the dead hero Achilles. Odysseus praises Achilles as he believes that he must be worshiped as a god by the dead because of his life as a hero. Achilles answers Odysseus: "Put me on earth again, and I would rather be a serf in the house of some landless man, with little enough for himself to live on, than king of all these dead men that have done with life" (Homer 184). For the great hero

Achilles, it is better to be a poor man on earth who is alive and has hope than a god amongst the dead. In making this claim, Achilles demonstrates the value placed on human life by the Greeks.

The god's antagonistic behavior toward mankind can be observed throughout the literary canon of Antiquity, as repeatedly, the gods are great opposers and defilers of humanity.

Homer's *The Iliad* demonstrates the gods' unmerited wrath toward man. The gods are the main facilitators of a violent and horrible war in which they pin their favorite mortals against each other. In *The Iliad*, Homer depicts the gods as prompters of war; they are vain and play humanity against each other as a child plays with their toys. In the article "Gods and Men in the Iliad and the Odyssey" Wolfgang Kullmann makes the point that "*The Iliad* is dominated by the idea that the gods are also responsible for all evil and irrational events in the world" (10). The gods manipulate the Greeks and Trojans alike in petty quarrels with each other. Kullmann makes the point that "in *The Iliad*, human beings attain a higher moral worth than the gods" (5). An example of this is when the goddess Hera is willing to betray her loyal patron cities to serve her own interest. Hera says to Zeus that "'my own three cities,' answered Juno, 'are Argos, Sparta, and Mycenae, Sack them whenever you may be displeased with them. I shall not defend them, and I shall not care'" (Homer 40). As depicted by Homer, the gods are adversaries of men, using them as pawns for their own interest and causing great trouble to befall all of humanity.

The gods' opposition of man continues into Homer's epic poem *The Odyssey*. In *The Odyssey*, Athena uses Odysseus as a proxy for her rivalry with Poseidon. Poseidon vengefully pursues Odysseus plaguing him in his journey home from war. When Telemachus approaches Menelaus in *The Odyssey*, Menelaus describes Odysseus's plight: "But a jealous god must have thought otherwise, and so decreed that the unhappy man should be the only one who never

reached his home” (Homer 69). Although aided by Athena on his journey home, Odysseus is constantly hindered by Poseidon, god of the sea. The gods are depicted as antagonistic to man in Hesiod when he describes the creation of the Nemean lion. Hesiod’s *Theogony* describes the creation of the lion: “Hera, Zeus’s honored wife, fostered and settled in the foothills of Nemea, an affliction for men” (Hesiod 12). Hesiod also points out the gods’ opposition to man when he discusses the creation of different forces at play in the world. Hesiod shows the birth of several evils stemming from the gods: “And baleful Night gave birth to resentment also, an affliction for mortal men; and after her, she bore Deceit and Intimacy, and accursed Old Age, and she bore hard-hearted Strife” (Hesiod 9). In the myths of Antiquity, the gods, again and again, act as stumbling blocks to humanity. In *Metamorphoses*, Ovid retells the story of Zeus and Io having Io’s father mourn the disfigurement of his daughter by Zeus. Io’s father wails, “Nor can I end this suffering by death; it is a hurtful thing to be a god” (Ovid 916-917). The gods in all of these examples hinder or rob people of personhood.

The defacing of human beings at the hands of the gods is common in Greco-Roman myth as people become play objects to the malevolent gods and lose their personhood. The idea of having “face” or personhood is found in Antiquity as a person can become defaced. Personhood can be stripped away or defiled whether that be from a god or from man. The central area of concern in *Till We Have Faces* is the concept of “face.” Face is something that can be given or taken away as people can be given esteem and agency or can be humiliated and objectified. The Greek view of this concept of “face” can be seen in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* as the gods constantly strip it away from people, in essence, consuming and devouring them for their own desires. Ovid’s retelling of Daphne and Apollo shows the sun god deface Daphne by attempting

to rape her. Daphne's only escape from Apollo's advancements is being transformed into a tree, thus losing her personhood. Apollo ends the tale somewhat grotesquely: "Although you cannot be my bride," he says, "you will assuredly be my own tree" (Ovid 769-770). In the story of Zeus and Io, Zeus, after deceiving and raping Io, transforms her into a cow, stripping away her personhood. Ovid's retelling of Medusa also demonstrates this idea as Poseidon rapes the once beautiful servant of Athena in the temple of her goddess. Athena then turns Medusa into a hideous monster as punishment for Poseidon's offense. Ovid speaks of Medusa, saying, "Her outstanding feature was her hair, but it is said that Neptune ravished her, and in the temple of Minerva ... she turned the Gorgon's hair into foul snakes" (Ovid 183-192). In countless other stories, the gods turn humans into animals or monsters, whether as an act of jealousy or out of some sort of judgment. By transforming man into animals, the gods deface them, removing their humanity and dignity. In the same way, both Orual and Psyche are defaced by their father as they are robbed of their agency.

The Greek perception of women plays a crucial role in *Till We Have Faces*. The Greeks believed that women were a bane to man's existence as the first woman Pandora was given to man by the gods to be humanities undoing. Hesiod establishes this idea in *Theogony* as he accounts that "so, as a bane for mortal men has high-thundering Zeus created women, conspirators in causing difficulty" (Hesiod 21). Women were seen as a burden to man. Man is captivated by her beauty, but her precarious nature brings him only trouble. Hesiod again describes women as "a great affliction to mortals as they dwell with their husbands--no fit partner for accursed Poverty" (20). Women are presented throughout Antiquity as sources of trouble or as an affliction for men ranging from Helen of Troy to Clytemnestra.

The Greek view of women opposes the Christian view where women are a gift to humanity from God as God constructs Eve as a helpmate to Adam. Lewis uses the Greek view of women which is found *Till We Have Faces* to further dehumanize both Psyche and Orual. According to Greek mythology, woman originated as a curse upon mankind, bringing evil and destruction into the world. Edith Hamilton describes this in her retelling of mythology describes the female sex as “are an evil to men, with a nature to do evil” (70). In *Till We Have Faces*, the King can observe this idea as he laments over only having daughters. At the birth of Psyche, the King wails, “Girls, girls, girls! And now one girl more. Is there no end to it? Is there a plague of girls in heaven that the gods send me this flood of them?” (Lewis 22). The King again repeats this sentiment when Orual pleads against Psyche being sacrificed to the god of the Mountain. The King yells, “There’s vixen in your face this minute ... Are gods and priests and lions and shadowbrutes and traitors and cowards not enough unless I’m plagued with girls as well?” (71). In believing his daughters to be a curse, the King begins defacing them. The King sees Redival only as a wanton whore, Orual as an ugly troll, and Psyche as means to retain his power.

The cruel words of the King deface Orual leading her to long for personhood. Orual is defaced in *Till We Have Faces* on the basis of her physical ugliness. Orual recounts from her childhood the first time she understood she was ugly. The King spoke of her appearance, saying, “Do you think I want my queen frightened out of her senses? Veils of course. And good thick veils too ... that was the first time I clearly understood that I am ugly” (Lewis 16). Throughout Orual’s life, the King continually beats her emotionally and physically, causing her to lose face. The king describes her face when beating Orual, saying, “She wonders that I black her eyes! I’ll not say mar her face, for that’s impossible” (76). When Psyche is offered as a sacrifice to the god

of the Mountain, Orual offers herself as a replacement for Psyche to be consumed by the god. Upon hearing Orual's petition, the King takes her before a mirror and says to her, "'Ungit asked for the best in the land as her son's bride,' he said. 'And you'd give her that'" (Lewis 78). Orual is constantly humiliated and dehumanized on the basis of her physical appearance, which ultimately leads to her decision to veil her face as queen, literally removing her face from public view. In the article "Re-Writing Mythology: Greco-Roman and Norse" Kyoko Yuasa describes Orual's decision to wear the veil, saying the veil "hides her true personality both from herself and from others, with her face veiled for another forty years. She must suffer the loss of face to herself and to others" (Yuasa 146). Orual, in her lack of face, defaces others due to her consuming need to fill the void of her own personhood.

Physical appearances, whether that be of ugliness or beauty, lead to the defacement of women in *Till We Have Faces*. The character of Psyche mirrors Orual's own loss of personhood, but Psyche is defaced on account her beauty. Psyche experiences a great deal of defacing as it is central to not just Lewis's version of the character but of Apuleius's version as well. In both iterations of the myth, Psyche is not seen for who she is but rather in light of her physical beauty. In *The Golden Ass*, Apuleius describes Psyche's lonely life as "for all her striking beauty gained no reward for her ravishing looks. She was the object of all eyes...All admired her godlike appearance, but the admiration was such as is accorded to an exquisitely carved statue" (Apuleius 77). Psyche, to her people, was a godlike being as in both versions of the tale, she is worshiped as a god because of her extravagant beauty. Redival mocks Psyche because of her beauty: "It's not me they worship, you know: I'm not the goddess" (Lewis 44). Her father defaces Psyche as he blatantly uses her to regain the favor of his people by not even hesitating to

sacrifice her to The Shadowbrute. The King vocalizes this when he says to Orual about Psyche, “She’s mine; fruit of my own body. My loss. It’s I who have a right to rage and blubber if anyone has. What did I beget her for if I can’t do what I think best with my own?” (Lewis 76). Psyche is nothing more to her father than a commodity to be traded rather than a beloved daughter whom he should treasure.

Orual’s view of Psyche, while more loving than the King, is still one of ownership and possessiveness. While Orual loves Psyche, her love is a possessive kind of love that only seeks the elevation and gratification of her own needs. Orual’s first descriptions of Psyche demonstrate her possessive love of her sister as Orual says: “I wanted to be a wife so that I could have been her real mother. I wanted to be a boy so that she could be in love with me ... I wanted her to be a slave so that I could set her free and make her rich” (Lewis 30). Orual’s love of Psyche is ravenous in that Psyche becomes an object for Orual’s gratification. In the article “On Beauty, Justice and the Sublime in C. S. Lewis’s *Till We Have Faces*,” Carla Arnell states, “Orual is inspired to pursue Psyche, as if possessing Psyche’s beauty will replenish her own lack and help restore a fundamental balance in the nature of things” (Arnell 28). Orual, when faced with the notion that something besides herself is the fulfillment of Psyche’s happiness, is moved to attempt to kill Psyche rather than risk losing her to another.

Psyche’s relationships with her family have devoured her personhood, but her encounter with the god of the Mountain elevates her and gives her authentic love. Through her experience with the god of the Mountain, Psyche is given face by the way she is edified and uplifted by the god. The god of the Mountain, being Lewis’s stand-in for not just Cupid but also the God of the Bible, completes Psyche fulfilling the desire of her inmost being and heart. The god of the

Mountain elevates Psyche giving her the personhood that her human relationships could never afford to give her. The god of love, Cupid or Eros, is the sole being feared by the other gods of mythology as his arrows have the power to move the hearts of men and gods alike. Apuleius describes this, saying, “The other gods for him their terror show, And rivers shudder, and the dark realms below” (78). In Apuleius’s original telling of the myth, Cupid brings Psyche much joy as the presence of her invisible god husband takes away her agony and loneliness. Apuleius describes Psyche’s happiness in her newfound marriage as “this new life in the course of nature became delightful to Psyche as she grew accustomed to it. Hearing that unidentified voice consoled her loneliness” (82). In Lewis’s version of the story, the Grey Mountain is not only a place where Psyche is to be sacrificed but, it is the longing desire of her heart. From childhood Psyche has been drawn to the mountain. Psyche has longed to live on the mountain and to belong to the God for which she was made.

Psyche obtains face in marriage to the god as she encounters the eternal fully realized god of the Mountain who doesn’t objectify her but grants her personhood. Psyche’s heart’s desire is fulfilled by marrying the god of the Mountain. Psyche says to Orual before she is sacrificed, “You remember how we used to look and long? And all the stories of my gold and amber house, up there against the sky ... The greatest King of all was going to build it for me” (Lewis 95). The desire of Psyche’s heart is only met by something beyond the physical world. Lewis speaks to this idea in his book *The Screwtape Letters* saying through the demon Screwtape: “The truth is the Enemy, having oddly destined these mere animals to life in His own eternal world, has guarded them pretty effectively from the danger of feeling at home anywhere else” (Lewis 267).

Throughout her whole life, Psyche has longed for a world beyond her reach, and in marriage to the god of the Mountain, that desire is fulfilled.

Psyche is given a face and is formed into who she really is through a relationship with the god of the Mountain. Her countenance glows as she is further beautified by being in the presence of the god. Upon seeing Psyche for the first time after she is wed to the god of the Mountain, Orual describes her saying: “She was so brightface, as we say in Greek. But I felt no holy fear” (130). Psyche’s experience with the god is not unlike Moses’s experience in the book of Exodus when he stands face to face with God as his face reflects the glory of the Lord as “he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord” (Ex.34.29). Psyche at the end of both *Till We Have Faces* and the original myth have been transformed into a goddess. In *The Golden Ass*, the myth ends with Zeus commanding Psyche to drink ambrosia, saying, “take this Psyche and become immortal. Cupid will never part from your embrace; this marriage of yours will be eternal” (Apuleius 113). Psyche in Lewis’s version is like the original myth inevitably made a god after penance for her transgressions. The deification of Psyche mimics the biblical idea found in the Psalms when it says, “I said, ‘You are ‘gods’; you are all sons of the Most High” (Psalms 82.6). All humanity being made in the image of God as little “gods” only comes to a true understanding of themselves through relationship with their creator.

In direct contrast to the Greek view of the gods, the Christian God does not view humanity as objects for his consumption but little versions of himself that he has created for his glory and for him to love. The Christian God shapes man into His image and desires for them to be elevated whereas the Greek gods disfigure man and act antagonistically towards them. Lewis expresses this idea in his book *The Screwtape Letters*; the demon Screwtape describes God’s

creation of man, saying, “He really does want to fill the universe with a lot of loathsome little replicas of Himself” (207). The Christian perspective of God is given through the god of the Mountain. He edifies and does not tear down and consume like the Greek gods or like Orual. Lewis in *The Screwtape Letters* again adds to this idea through the voice of Screwtape when he says, “The Enemy wants a world full of beings united to Him but still distinct” (Lewis 207). The Christian God grants face and personhood through intimacy with himself. Psyche is given face through her marriage to the god of the Mountain as the god’s love is edifying and does not seek to consume her. Orual is promised by the god that she too will be made like Psyche as she also will be given face.

When Psyche is stripped away from her sister, faceless Orual is left without her source of value and identity. Orual’s journey to “having face” begins when Psyche is sacrificed to the god of the Mountain. Carla Arnell, in the article “On Beauty, Justice and the Sublime in C. S. Lewis's *Till We Have Faces*” speaks to the nature of their relationship: “Psyche is not so much objectified as she is used in order to fulfill Orual's desire for personal well-being” (Arnell 30). In Psyche’s beauty, Orual finds a means of escaping her ugliness. She seeks to possess and own Psyche in a way that strips her of her freedom and personhood. In Orual’s mind, if she cannot be Psyche’s source of happiness, then no one should be. Orual begs her to leave her newfound home with the god of the Mountain; Psyche responds, saying, “Dear Maia, I am a wife now. It’s no longer you that I must obey” (Lewis 161). Orual is distraught by Psyche’s new loyalty to the point that she sets out to ruin Psyche’s happiness by causing her to betray her new husband. Kyoko Yuasa, in the article “Re-Writing Mythology: Greco-Roman and Norse” speaks of Orual's affection for Psyche, saying, “Orual is proud of her motherly love toward Psyche and confident

that no one understands Psyche except her, she aggressively demands her possessive right to Psyche” (Yuasa 156). If Orual cannot possess Psyche’s affection, she does not want anyone to have it.

Orual gives Psyche an ultimatum to break up her union with the god of the Mountain. Orual says to Psyche that if she does not look upon the god’s face, she will “first kill you and then myself” (Lewis 208-209). Orual cannot live with the idea of Psyche being someone else’s other than her own. Psyche’s betrayal of the god is based on her desire to preserve Orual’s life, not her own. In the article of “C. S. Lewis and René Girard on Desire, Conversion, and Myth: The Case of *‘Till We Have Faces’*” Curtis Gruenier speaks of Psyche’s temptation as “Orual, in tempting Psyche to disobey the god, scandalizes her by insisting that she imitate Orual's own desire, which is essentially a narcissistic self-love” (Gruenier 256). Orual only loves Psyche in what Psyche can offer her. Gruenier claims that “it keeps her from seeing that Psyche could love Orual all the more now that she loves the god first, or that the god could love them both” (257). Orual’s love reflects what she suspects about the gods. Orual loves for her own edification and not of others. Orual believes that her destruction of Psyche’s happiness is justified because she believes herself to be acting in love. In the article “*Till We Have Faces: An Epistle to the Greeks*” Albert Reddy claims, “Even after she destroys Psyche’s happiness, Orual is convinced that she acted only out of love: the gods are to blame because they deceived her” (Reddy 155). The gods to Orual are the cause of Psyche’s destruction and Orual’s sadness.

Orual, in her condemnation of the gods, condemns them for not fully unveiling themselves to men. A central aspect of her complaint to the gods is the idea that the gods shroud themselves in mystery and do not reveal themselves or their plans to mortal men. Orual declares

that “the gods deal very unrightly with us. For they will neither (which would be best of all) go away and leave us to live our own short days to ourselves, nor will they show themselves openly and tell us what they would have us do” (Lewis 313). The gods, according to Orual, have unjustly acted toward her by robbing her of the one joy they gave her. Orual’s judgment of the gods places herself in the place of moral superiority when in fact, she has acted viciously. Lewis, in his book *God In The Dock*, addresses this line of thought in man: “Really, we are hard to please. We treat God as the police treat a man when he is arrested; whatever He does will be used in evidence against Him” (27). Orual accuses the gods of stealing Psyche away and placing the deciding action of Psyche’s happiness in her hands, but she fails to recognize the nature of her own love.

The love that Orual has to give stems from the selfish desires of her own heart. Orual’s love tears down and consumes others as they act as objects for her happiness. Orual, in the way she loves Psyche, is not so different from the gods she condemns. The novel presents a direct comparison between Orual and Ungit. Lewis compares Orual’s hiding of her face to the dark indiscernible face of Ungit in the temple. Orual, like Ungit, does not possess a face but is hidden away in her own darkness. After accepting the position of Queen of Glome, Orual begins to veil her face, hiding away the source of her insecurities and hiding away her real persona in that of the Queen. Orual expresses her inner turmoil that “If Orual could vanish altogether into the Queen, the gods would almost be cheated” (253). Orual, while being a good queen, hides herself away from the whole kingdom, defacing herself. In “Re-Writing Mythology: Greco-Roman and Norse,” Kyoko Yuasa says Orual “hides her true personality both from herself and from others, with her face veiled for another forty years. She must suffer the loss of face to herself and to

others” (Yuasa 146). For example, in the opening of her book, Orual describes Ungit, saying, “Ungit sits there alone. In the furthest recess of her house where she sits, it is so dark that you cannot see her well. She is a black stone without head or hands or face” (Lewis 6-7). Orual and Ungit are both two faceless beings that consume the lives of others.

Orual’s ravenous style of love and attachment is further shown in her romantic love for Bardia as the queen uses her soldier, draining him of his life for the sake of her love for him. Orual being romantically in love with Bardia, who is married to another, drains him of his life through his military service to her as queen. When Bardia dies, Orual goes to visit his wife, who confronts Orual with the reality that Orual is “gorged with other men’s lives, women’s too: Bardia’s, mine, the Fox’s, your sister’s — both your sisters” (Lewis 330). The Queen just like the gods she accuses has fed on the lives of others for the sake of her own happiness. In her destruction of Bardia, Orual resembles Ungit again as she consumes and destroys the lives of her subjects. Orual is confronted with the reality that her love for Bardia consumed him taking him away from his wife, his kids, and ultimately lead to his death. Yuasa, in the article “Re-Writing Mythology: Greco-Roman and Norse,” says this of Orual “she becomes gradually and painfully aware that she is the deformed god, Ungit as if she were a queen spider who rules Glome like a web and devours men's lives” (151). In her attempt to love Bardia, she only brings about his ruination, consuming his life for her pleasure. After being painfully confronted by Bardia’s wife, Orual reflects that “My love for Bardia (not Bardia himself) had become to me a sickening thing. I had been dragged up and out onto such heights and precipices of truth, that I came into an air where it could not live” (Lewis 333). Orual is awakened to her true nature and to the nature of the gods.

After her ruining of Psyche's happiness, Orual stands face to face with the god of the Mountain. The god of the Mountain gives what appears to be judgement to Orual speaking over her that "You, woman, shall know yourself and your work. You also shall be Psyche" (Lewis 219). Orual takes this as a curse believing, that now some horrible fate will befall her but to her surprise, no terrible fate comes but quite the opposite. After returning to Glome, the entire kingdom becomes her possession as she is crowned queen. Orual is a just and fair queen bringing prosperity to Glome, and no awful curse befalls her like she had believed it would. In the article "Stoic Rationality and Divine Madness" Dale Sullivan describes Orual's encounter with the god of the Mountain: "she admits that she has known all along that the gods exist but had hoped they were ugly; however her vision of the god when Psyche is banished from her valley revealed that the gods are beautiful" (50). The god's words that she would be like Psyche carried an implication that she could not have ever imagined. Orual like Psyche would be restored and given a face.

Face is given to the bitter old queen through divine surgery that removes her believed superiority to the gods showing her the state of her own heart. Orual is confronted with her lack of face through a stream of dream visions that put her face to face with her own wickedness. In her first dream, Orual is confronted by her wicked father, who digs metamorphically deep into her inner being, showing her a mirror that reflects her true self. Orual is faced with the realization that "it was I who was Ungit. That ruinous face was mine ... that all-devouring womblike, yet barren, thing. Glome was a web — I the swollen spider, squat at its center, gorged with men's stolen lives" (Lewis 344-345). This dream vision makes Orual painfully aware of her own nature, stripping her of the persona of queen which she has used to mask her own vile heart.

In the article “Stoic Rationality and Divine Madness in ‘*Till We Have Faces*’” Dale Sullivan describes the revelation of Orual’s true nature stating, “These revelations produce a seeing of the self, and this seeing opens the way to divine surgeries, through which the gods sever from her those things that are not essential to her identity” (49). Through this initial dream vision, Orual begins the process of not just gaining a face but also belief.

Her first dream leaves Orual grappling with the reality of her own ugly soul. Lewis uses this to spark Orual into heart change and inevitably to give her a face. Orual, by the time of her next dream, is determined to make her soul beautiful, saying, “I should change my ugly soul into a fair one. And this, the gods helping me, I would do” (Lewis 351). Orual, in her next dream vision, completes various tasks that assist Psyche in her quest for reconciliation with her god husband. Orual’s task in part fulfills the god of the Mountain’s deeming of Orual as being like Psyche. In these visions, Orual also slowly becomes aware of the true nature of the gods as she remarks to herself that “the Divine Nature wounds and perhaps destroys us merely by being what it is. We call it the wrath of the gods; as if the great cataract in Phars were angry with every fly it sweeps down in its green thunder” (Lewis 354). Orual, at this point, still holds on to the notion that even though she is “Ungit” and that she devoured Bardia, she truly loved Psyche, and the gods were wrong to take Psyche from her. In “On Beauty, Justice and the Sublime in C. S. Lewis’s ‘*Till We Have Faces*,’” Carla Arnell writes of Orual’s conviction, saying, “A justice of mere ‘rights’... is often an expression of the human personality’s clamoring for its own selfish good, rather than of the human soul’s seeking sacred Goodness” (27). Orual believes her actions are out of a place of love rather than out of the selfishness of her heart. At this point, Orual still believes that her deeds, which only sought out good for herself, were for ultimate good.

Orual, while still holding this conviction, is taken in another vision to bring her accusation of the gods to court. Orual in the court of the gods is forced to air her complaint against them, and in it, she is truly faced with the wickedness of her accusation. Her complaint brings forth a cathartic realization of her own vile nature. Upon hearing her own wicked ramblings, Orual is shown that the gods are not the evil stealers of face that she had believed them to be but that she is the real monster. In her rambling, Orual says, “What should I care for some horrible, new happiness which I hadn't given her ... It would have been better if I'd seen the Brute tear her in pieces before my eyes” (Lewis 364). Orual laments that she would have rather the gods be the horrible monsters she had perceived them of being rather than them be beautiful. She is distraught that something so beautiful could take away Psyche, whom she regarded as her own possession, and also not reveal itself to her. Lewis speaks of this kind of love in his book *The Four Loves*: “God is the great Rival, the ultimate object of human jealousy; that beauty, terrible as the Gorgon's, which may at any moment steal from me my wife's or husband's or daughter's heart” (49). After being exposed to the vile nature of her own heart, Orual is asked by the god if she has obtained the answer to her complaint. Orual, after seeing the true state of her soul, sees the error of her claim against the gods as she is the ravenous consumer and taker of face. In the presence of the giver of face her facelessness is clearly observed.

In the final episode of her dream visions, Orual is truly made like Psyche and given a face. The titular quote of the novel comes from Orual's realization of her own wickedness as she makes a claim that “I saw well why the gods do not speak to us openly, nor let us answer ... How can they meet us face to face till we have faces?” (Lewis 366). Orual, in the last stage of her dream, is guided by the Fox through a gallery of pictures that depict Psyche's redemptive

journey back to her husband. Along with Psyche, Orual faces the god of the Mountain, who reminds her of his words over her that “you also are Psyche” (383). Orual sees a reflection of two Psyches in a pool of water, one being Psyche and the other being herself. She was made like Psyche and given a face before the god she had condemned as a ravenous destroyer. Orual sees that the answer to not only her claim against the gods but also of all of the pain of her life was found in the god. Orual reflects that “I ended my first book with the words no answer. I know now, Lord, why you utter no answer. You are yourself the answer” (384). In Orual’s change, Lewis’s ultimate subversion of the Greek anthropocentric worldview is demonstrated. Lewis depicts man as the ravenous consumer of face and the gods as the givers of real love.

In the original myth, the sisters of Psyche are killed by Psyche in revenge for ruining her happiness. In Lewis’s version of the tale, the rightfully damnable Orual is redeemed, edified, and given “face.” Orual is not consumed for her wickedness but shown mercy and given personhood. In the article “On Beauty, Justice, and the Sublime in C. S. Lewis's *Till We Have Faces*” Arnell claims that “the transcendent presence of the Divine allows her to discover an infinite beauty that she can both reflect and share. And through this sublime experience, she is changed and comforted” (31). Orual comes face to face with the god and, in that, realizes the truth of her own nature. Lewis in his book *A Grief Observed* makes this claim: “Heaven will solve our problems, but not, I think, by showing the subtle reconciliation between all our apparently contradictory notions. The notions will all be knocked from under our feet. We shall see that there never was any problem” (Lewis 686). In facing the fully realized eternal god of the Mountain the answer to the question at the center of Orual’s heart reveals itself. Only in relationship to the god of the

Mountain can Orual receive edifying love that grants her the personhood she has longed for her whole life. Faceless Orual is given a face, being made like Psyche, despite her wicked nature.

In *Till We Have Faces*, Lewis undermines Greek Anthropocentrism by removing the place of moral superiority upon which Orual believes herself to be standing, revealing her real nature as well as his own. The notion of man's alleged superiority of the gods is dismissed as Orual's conversion shows how finite man cannot grapple with a fully realized eternal God. In his attempts to make sense of the Divine, man cannot come to terms with a fully realized eternal being. Humanity is a constantly changing, hungry, carnal creature bound to the dirt from which they came, always striving to understand who and what they are roaming the earth without a "face". For Lewis and ultimately for Orual, God is the only giver of face while man constantly takes it away from themselves and others. Man can only approach God when he is given His face.

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