

A MYTHOLOGICAL QUEST: SEARCH FOR SELF, AND DIVINE PRESENCE IN C. S. LEWIS'S *TILL WE HAVE FACES*

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Abstract

What still makes mythology the most frequently visited source by literature today? Is it because they are timeless tales of deciphered wisdom about human? Or is it because they are still able to tell more about human and human nature than all the advancements technology and science brought to our modern age? Whatever the answer is, it is hard to say. However, it is certain that mythology can be perceived in more shapes in literature today than Proteus¹ in Greek Mythology.

This paper analyses C. S. Lewis's mythological novel *Till We Have Faces* (1956) which rewrites Apuleius's myth of Cupid and Psyche within a quintessential framework that amalgamates universality and totality of mythology and subjectivity and immediacy of modern novel. The purpose is to demonstrate that in Lewis' quintessential narration, Orual's subjective quest for self-identity is universalized by the prefiguring pattern of the Cupid and Psyche myth while the myth's allegorical depth is turned into an actual experience over Orual's mythological quest as she searches for self-completeness and divine presence. Consequently, in order to find the divine, she has to find her self, and in order to find her self, she has to primarily elude from all the external effects and find her own true voice, her own true face, and thus her own true self.

Keywords: C. S. Lewis, *Till We Have Faces*, Myth, Mythological novel, Self, Divine presence

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¹ Proteus is a prophetic god, in service of Poseidon in Greek mythology, who is able to get into any shape he wishes to avoid answering questions about future.

MİTOLOJİK BİR ARAYIŞ: C. S. LEWIS'İN *TILL WE HAVE FACES* ADLI ROMANINDA BENLİK VE TANRISAL OLANIN ARAYIŞI

Özet

Mitolojiyi bugün hala edebiyat tarafından sıklıkla ziyaret edilen kaynaklarından biri yapan nedir? İnsana dair bilge öğretilerin çözümlendiği ebedi öyküler olmaları mı? Yoksa hala insan ve insan doğası hakkında teknoloji ve bilimin modern çağımıza getirdiği tüm ilerlemelerden daha fazlasını söyleyebiliyor olmalarından mı? Cevap her neyse, bunu bulmak oldukça zor. Ancak kesin olan mitolojinin bugün hala edebiyatta Proteus'un² Yunan Mitolojisinde girebildiğinden daha fazla şekilde görülebiliyor olmasıdır.

Bu çalışma C. S. Lewis'in, Apuleius'un Cupid ve Psyche mitini, mitin evrenselliğini ve bütünselliğini, modern romanın özneselliği ve dolaysızlığıyla birleştirerek, örnek niteliğindeki bir çerçeve içerisinde yeniden yazan *Till We Have Faces* (1956) adlı mitolojik romanını incelemektedir. Amaç Lewis'in örnek niteliğindeki anlatımında, Orual'ın öznel öz-kimlik arayışının Cupid ve Psyche mitinin önceden fikir veren örüntüsünde evrenselleştirildiğini, mitin alegorik derinliğinin ise Orual'ın öz-bütünlük ve tanrısallığın arayışına çıktığı mitolojik yolculuğu üzerinden gerçek deneyim haline getirildiğini ortaya koymaktır. Sonuç olarak Orual'ın tanrısallığı bulmasının yolu öncelikle kendisini bulmasıdır, bunun yoluysa üzerindeki tüm dış etkilerden sıyrılıp kendi sesini, kendi yüzünü ve böylece kendi özünü bulmasıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: C. S. Lewis, *Till We Have Faces*, Mit, Mitolojik Roman, Benlik, Tanrısallık

Introduction

Myth making is a permanent activity of all men, all man can do is to abandon one myth for the sake of another. (Vivas, 1970, p. 89)

The first half of the twentieth century, which has been designated as “The Mythical Age” by the German novelist Hermann Broch (1955, p. 249), marks a return to myths and mythological motifs in literature and more particularly in novel. Hence, works of the earliest modernist novelists bear a tendency to return to myths which accounts to one of

² Proteus Yunan mitolojisinde Poseidon'un hizmetinde olan ve gelecekle ilgili soruları cevaplamaktan kaçınmak için dilediği her şekilde girebilen kahin bir tanrıdır.

the distinctive features of the modernist novel (White, 1996, p. 357). In his *Till We Have Faces* (1956), the British author Clive Staple Lewis rewrites a classical myth, Psyche and Cupid, to create an alternative version of his own. However, contrary to his contemporaries, instead of adapting the original myth to the modern settings of his time Lewis places his version of the myth in a pre-Christian age beyond time, which is very similar to the settings of the original myth. By placing his version into such an environment, he not only offers an alternative myth to the original version to capture his readers' imagination but also steps away from the tale's long legacy of allegorical interpretation, and through the secret dream-language of myth, leads his readers to a quest for self-knowledge. In fact, the novel per se turns into a device through which the myth indirectly, yet most effectually, guides its readers through a compelling quest to achieve a truth of self. That is, Lewis recognizes and makes use of myths' potential of plunging his readers into an imaginative world which enables them to absorb his quest for truth while at heart looking within themselves for their own. Consequently, as Veda Kadhka also manifests in her "Unveiled: Seeking Self-Knowledge in Myth in C.S. Lewis' *Till We Have Faces*", "drawing on Apuleius as a 'source' of the myth, most untainted by any known interpretation, Lewis evokes the pagan atmosphere of a world before time, in which myth and truth were inescapably linked" (2016, p. 16). Therefore, from its structure to plot, from its character development to style, the novel conveys a search for self-completeness by the protagonist and the narrator of the novel, Orual—the older stepsister of Istra (Psyche in Greek)— who struggles to find her way through a mythical labyrinth contrasting universal themes such rationalism and faith (or imagination), love and selfishness, self and persona.

Lewis by reanimating Apuleius's myth into a perplexing individual's search for self and divine presence moves the myth from its allegorical dimension and turns it into an actual experience which drags its readers behind it. As stated more precisely by Julia H. Gaisser in her article "Cupid and Psyche", "Lewis has put believable flesh on the bones of Apuleius' story" (2017, p. 347). That is, by questioning human nature and divine presence from a very subjective and unreliable way of narration, which is placed into the prefiguring pattern of a classical myth, Lewis provides his alternative myth where modern search of individual for self-identity, meaning and divine presence turns into a universal experience. In fact, Lewis accomplishes this to a great extent by his preference of

rewriting the myth with an imaginary setting and time which are identical to those of Apuleius's original version. By doing so, he remarkably amalgamates the totality and universality of the myth with subjectivity and immediacy of modern novel. Thus, having Orual's subjective and individual story on its centre, the narration is built upon the pattern of the classical myth of Cupid and Psyche. While Orual's story creates the individual experience and subjective immediacy, the prefiguring pattern of myth provides an overall universal appeal and message.

Accordingly, introducing Orual's story to the reader within the pattern of a classical myth which serves as a prefiguration to his novel, Lewis first captures the imagination of the reader and then drags his reader to Orual's subjective story where he questions self-deception, human relationships, and knowledge of the self through a perplexing central character. Having retold the Psyche and Cupid myth from her subjective first-person perspective, Orual, who forces her reader to accompany her on her search for truth of love, meaning and self by continuously asking them "to judge" throughout the novel, proceeds to tell her story of becoming a successful but mysterious Queen with the cost of suppressing her self-identity.

Narration of the book, thus, focuses on her development as she silences Orual—her true self—to death to give life to her persona, the Queen³. As the Queen becomes more powerful, her country, Glome, also becomes more advanced in every field of life and at peace with all the neighbouring countries. However, as the country gets more and more advanced, it becomes "nursed and trained till it almost rule[s] itself" (Lewis, 1956, p. 236). As a result, her persona, the Queen, is no longer required for her people and her country. Consequently, she falls into a kind of existential crisis in which she is reduced to a feeling of nothingness when she is alone with herself; "It was so with me almost every evening of my life; one little stairway led me from feast or council, all the bustle and skill and glory of queenship, to my own chamber, to be alone with myself; that is, with a nothingness" (p. 235). Having reduced herself to only a persona, a social veil, she is reduced to "a nothingness". Eventually, as her persona is required less and less by

³ It is important at this point to note that Elizabeth II, at the age of 25, was coronated as the Queen of England in 1953 after the death of her father. In that sense, it is possible to assume, as Cora Gray also states in her article "Orual's Quest for Identity: C.S. Lewis's *Till We Have Faces* in 1950s British Society", published three years later than Elizabeth II's succession to the throne, Orual's story parallels Elizabeth II's story in various terms (2013, p. 9).

Glome, every day starts to feel like the same to her: “Sometimes I wondered who or what sends us this senseless repetition of days and nights and seasons and years; is it not like hearing a stupid boy whistle the same tune over and over, till you wonder how he can bear it himself?” (p. 236). Hence, at the end of the chapter, she decides to go on a journey to different lands (p. 237). In this regard, her physical journey marks the beginning of her concurrent inner journey to find her true self.

Subsequently, in Chapter twenty-one, on her journey she coincidentally steps into a temple which is built for sister Istra. As the priest in the temple carries on narrating the myth of “Talapal (that’s the Essurian Ungit) and Istra,” Orual perceives that it is her sister Istra’s myth, and she is reduced to a jealous stepsister—which is as originally prefigured in Apuleius’ Cupid and Psyche Myth. Consequently, she realizes that myths and stories are never completely true: “And I saw all in a moment how the false story would grow and spread and be told all over the earth; and I wondered how many of the other sacred stories are just such twisted falsities as this’ (p. 244). Thus, she decides to write her own account of what happened; “That moment I resolved to write this book” (p. 244). Therefore, she challenges the gods and ask readers to judge on who is right: “yet at last, after infinite hindrances, I made my book and here it stands. Now, you who read, judge between the gods and me” (p. 249). Consequently, the end of the first part, i.e., completion of her book, marks Orual’s maturation and beginning of her inner journey to find her true self since by rewriting her past she also starts to question her own story.

Correspondingly, it is not a coincidence that Lewis ends the first part with Chapter Twenty-one because it marks Orual’s initiation to maturity. In fact, according to *Penguin Dictionary of Symbols*, twenty-one is a symbol of maturity (Chevalier, Gheerbrant, & Buchanan-Brown, 1996, p. 1045). Inferentially, Part II, Chapter I opens with not only the news of the completion of Orual’s book but also her implications of her old age and weakness:

Not many days have passed since I wrote those words No answer, but I must unroll my book again. It would be better to re-write it from the beginning, but I think there is no time for that. Weakness comes on me fast, and Arnorn shakes his head and tells me I must rest. They think I don’t know they have sent a message to Daaran. (p. 254)

She desires to re-write the book from the beginning because now she is aware that she does not know the past as well as she had once thought: “The past which I wrote down

was not the past that I thought I had (all these years) been remembering. I did not, even when I had finished the book, see clearly many things that I see now” (p. 254). That is partially because, as the American scholar Gwennyth Hood also remarks in her “Heroic Orual and the Tasks of Psyche”, “Part II is written explicitly to retract the central errors of Part I, and to show how flawed and incomplete her insights had been” (2009, p. 45). Therefore, the last four chapters essentially convey her resolution and metamorphosis into a “Psyche”—which means butterfly as well as soul in Greek (p. 4)—since she is transformed both in soul, voice, and appearance. In that sense, the division of the second part of the novel into four chapters is not arbitrary as well since number four stands for “wholeness” according to *Penguin Dictionary of Symbols* (Chevalier, Gheerbrant, & Buchanan-Brown, 1996, p. 403). Correspondingly, in Part II, Orual reaches to a wholeness by finally achieving to be true to herself and finally come into a resolution with the gods. Consequently, the structure of the novel in a sense parallels the heroine’s quest for the self-knowledge which is torn between rationality and mysticism, love and hatred, self and persona.

1. Meaning, Self and Self-deception

People say that what we are all seeking is a meaning for life. I do not think that is what we're really seeking. I think that what we are seeking is an experience of being alive, so that our life experiences on the purely physical plane will have resonances within our own innermost being and reality, so that we actually feel the rapture of being alive. (Joseph Campbell, *Power of the Myth*, 1991, p.6)

As stated by Campbell above what one seeks from mythology is not a sense of meaning but an experience of being alive. In order to feel the 'rapture of being alive', one first of all must fit into a pattern of any kind in society. However, the protagonist, Orual, does not really fit in any pattern or place because of her ugliness. As a princess, she is part of an archetype which she cannot actualize. Therefore, her father, the King, orders Fox to teach her since he thinks that is the only way she can fit in: “See if you can make her wise; it’s about all she’ll ever be good for” (Lewis, 1956, p. 6). However, Orual—Lewis’s creative individual model with whom the readers can consciously or unconsciously relate—strives for an experience of being alive throughout the novel which leads her to build misconceptions about love, truth, and self.

First, she provides herself a kind of mother figure for Istra, who after a while starts calling Orual 'Maia' which means mother in Greek. This, in a sense, becomes her experience of being alive and fitting into a social structure. In this regard, that is why Orual becomes, as Lewis describes her, "tyrannically possessive" (qtd. in Green and Hooper, 1974, p. 266); "Did you ever remember whose the girl was? She was mine. Mine; do you not know what the word means? Mine! You're thieves, seducers" (p. 294). For her, losing Istra is losing the persona and life experience she has constructed around her. That is in fact the reason she cannot accept letting Psyche go albeit she confesses to know that Istra's husband is actually a God, and she might as well be very happy with him (p. 173). Intriguingly, she does not seem to understand or accept that different stages of life require symbolic deaths even though she is told by Istra; "And there you can see again how little difference there is between dying and being married. To leave your home—to lose you, Maia, and the Fox—to lose one's maidenhead—to bear a child—they are all deaths" (p. 72). However, she does not understand and tyrannically and manipulatively forces Istra to commit the act that would cause her to suffer by going to an exile. Although she is warned afterwards by the god that she should also go through a kind of transformation; "You, woman, shall know yourself and your work. You also shall be Psyche"⁴ (p. 173), she keeps misinterpreting what she is told like Oedipus. After her encounter with the god, she states;

I looked on the things about me with a new eye. Now that I'd proved for certain that the gods are and that they hated me, it seemed that I had nothing to do but to wait for my punishment. "You are all my enemies now. None of you will ever do me good again. I see now only executioners." But I thought it most likely those words You also shall be Psyche meant that if she went into exile and wandering, I must do the same. (p. 175)

She not only neglects the words "you shall know yourself" but also misinterprets his words about being Psyche. That is, while Psyche goes on through a physical quest where she will "hunger and thirst and tread hard roads" (p. 173), Orual shall go through a spiritual one where she will find her true self. However, on the contrary, she refuses her self while she hides under the veil of her persona—the physical veil she decides to put on henceforth (p. 180) also parallels that in a symbolic level—to let Orual die as she

⁴ Although in the original myth Psyche's husband is Cupid, in Lewis's myth he appears as the "God of the Mountain", and by echoing one of the maxims of the Apollo, "know thyself", this line implies that Lewis might have replaced Cupid by Apollo whose symbolic message suits Orual's quest to find her "self".

notes in the following statements, “If Orual could vanish altogether into the Queen, the gods would almost be cheated” (p. 201), “Let Orual die. She would never have made a queen” (p. 210). After a while she comments on it again: “I was mostly the Queen now, but Orual would whisper a cold word in the Queen's ear at times” (p. 205). Thus, she suppresses, Orual, her self, while her persona holds the control of her.

Subsequently, her father dies and after she challenges and kills a prince in a one-to-one combat to save her country from a political crisis and war, she renders her place on the throne safe and gains the support of nobles (p. 220). After many years from that, she utters:

I must now pass quickly over many years (though they made up the longest part of my life) during which the Queen of Glome had more and more part in me and Orual had less and less. I locked Orual up or laid her asleep as best I could somewhere deep down inside me; she lay curled there. It was like being with child but reversed; the thing I carried in me grew slowly smaller and less alive. (p. 226)

She not only suppresses Orual but all what is feminine within herself by “driving all the woman out of [her]” (p. 174). Correspondingly, her suppression is symbolically represented by the well in the palace which at night keeps her awake because of the sounds it makes that she resembles to voice of a weeping girl. Whatever she does she is not able to prevent hearing the sounds;

The first thing I did was to shift my own quarters over to the north side of the palace, in order to be out of that sound the chains made in the well. For though, by daylight, I knew well enough what made it, at night nothing I could do would cure me of taking it for the weeping of a girl. But the change of my quarters, and later changes (for I tried every side of the house) did no good. I discovered that there was no part of the palace from which the swinging of those chains could not be heard; at night, I mean, when the silence grows deep. It is a thing no one would have found out who was not always afraid of hearing one sound; and at the same time (that was Orual, Orual refusing to die) ... (p. 229).

According to Juan Eduardo Cirlot's *A Dictionary of Symbols*, “well” is “a symbol of the soul and an attribute of things feminine” (2015, p. 369). Although, as Mary Whiton Calkins argues in her “Self and Soul”, that the concepts of self and soul cannot be considered to be the same, yet she also admits it is also “evident that the contemporary conception of self is a reaffirmation and amplification of certain central factors of the earlier concept of soul” (1908, p. 265). Thus, albeit not exactly the same yet self and soul are inseparably linked to each other. In that sense, although the Queen represses her

self—or soul regarding that Psyche means soul and she is never sure about if the weeping girl is Orual or Psyche—deep inside, it keeps coming to surface through the well imagery till the Queen builds “thick walls” around the well:

I gave up trying to find a room where I should not hear that noise which was sometimes chains swinging in the wind and sometimes lost and beggared Psyche weeping at my door. Instead, I built stone walls round the well and put a thatched roof over it and added a door. The walls were very thick; my mason told me they were madly thick. ... For a while after that an ugly fancy used to come to me in my dreams, or between sleeping and waking, that I had walled up, gagged with stone, not a well but Psyche (or Orual) herself. But that also passed. I heard Psyche weeping no more. (Lewis, p. 235)

While her first-person affirmative expression “I built stone walls” instead of causative here enhances the symbolic reading of the well as her repression, her “ugly” imaginations in her dreams is the externalization of that repression by unconscious.

Thus, the persona, Queen, swallows her like the faceless god Ungit. She turns into a mask with thousand faces but without an identity. As might be expected people start making up stories to fill under the veil. Some say the face behind her veil is “frightful beyond endurance”, some that it is “a beauty so dazzling that if [she] let it be seen all men in the world would run mad” (p. 228-229). However, the Queen notes that “the best story was that I had no face at all; if you stripped off my veil, you’d find emptiness” (p. 228). Probably, she finds it best because it is the one she feels closest to her experience.

Consequently, what causes her to realize her hamartia is the priest she encounters in the little temple built for Istra who tells her the myth of Istra as it is narrated in its original source, the Roman poet Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*. After hearing the story in which she is delimited to a jealous sister, she decides to write her own account which leads her to reassess her past and notice her flaws. Subsequently, in Part II, through various dream visions, she faces repentance and finally dies after achieving an inner wholeness.

2. Finding the Divine in Human: A Journey to Self

A human being must become real...must be speaking with its own voice (not one of its borrowed voices), expressing its actual desires (not what it imagines it desires), being for good or ill itself, not any mask or veil or persona. (Lewis qtd. at Macaulay, 1964, p. 261)

In his “Hero and the God” Joseph Campbell manifests that “the hero is the symbolical of that divine creative and redemptive image, which is hidden within us all, only waiting to be known and rendered into life” (1996, p. 45). Correspondingly, Lewis reveals this “creative and redemptive image” through the resolution and transformation Orual achieves in Part II of the novel, which starts with informing the reader that Orual’s book is now finished. However, having finished her book, Orual is now very old, and as she gets older, she realizes that she had incomplete knowledge about many things when she had written the book which represents her account of her life course,

Since I cannot mend the book, I must add to it. To leave it as it was would be to die perjured; I know so much more than I did about the woman who wrote it. What began the change was the very writing itself. Let no one lightly set about such a work. Memory, once waked, will play the tyrant. I found I must set down (for I was speaking as before judges and must not lie) passions and thoughts of my own which I had clean forgotten. The past which I wrote down was not the past that I thought I had (all these years) been remembering. I did not, even when I had finished the book, see clearly many things that I see now. (Lewis, 1956, p. 254)

Accordingly, as it has already been referred to elsewhere, the change for Orual begins after she starts writing and thus re-assessing her knowledge of the things and herself as she also states above. Indeed, what her book represents is clearly her life course since she stands in front of gods first to complain and then to defend herself by it. In fact, it is not possible to change the past or re-experience it all over again from the beginning. Thus, being aware of that now, Orual knows it is no longer possible to mend her book just like it is not possible to mend her past but that she can only make some additions, some corrections to it.

Correspondingly, the incidents she adds to her book in Part II exposes realization of her misjudgements about her relationships with people and how she has been perceiving herself. First, she learns from Tarin, a eunuch who is castrated by her father, the King for courting her sister Redival about whom Orual always talks with revulsion in Part I, that she [Orual] actually mistreated Redival by leaving her lonely with the arrival of the Fox, the Greek slave whom the King assigns as the master to teach her, and Istra in the following lines, “oh yes, yes, very lonely. After the other princess, the baby, came. She used to say, first of all Orual loved me much; then the Fox came and she loved me little; then the baby came and she loved me not at all.’ So she was lonely. I was sorry for her” (Lewis, 1956, p. 256). She, thus, learns that she had a major role on the development

of her sister's character, whom she always criticized with contempt, and her misbehaviours. More precisely, she learns a general truth about human nature as Fox once taught her; "We're all limbs and parts of one Whole. Hence, of each other" (p. 302). Considering this notion from Jung's theory of collective unconsciousness, an individual is a part of a bigger system where s/he is constructed out of what s/he is not more than what s/he is. In that sense, the pagan god Ungit, in the book can be interpreted as a representation of the collective unconsciousness. It is the god with thousand faces and her face and shape changes from perspective to perspective. Accordingly, Orual describes Ungit in the following lines,

Then I looked at Ungit herself. She had not, like most sacred stones, fallen from the sky. The story was that, at the very beginning, she had pushed her way up out of the earth; a foretaste of, or an ambassador from, whatever things may live and work down there, one below the other, all the way down, under the dark and weight and heat. I have said she had no face; but that meant she had a thousand faces. For she was very uneven, lumpy and furrowed, so that, as when we gaze into a fire, you could always see some face or other. (p. 272-273)

Ungit is, thus, "the ambassador from whatever things may live and work down there" and unlike the "most sacred stones", which are unearthly "fallen from sky", she comes from the depths of Earth. In that sense, compared to God of mountain who is depicted divinely throughout the novel, it is possible to interpret Ungit as the projection of human nature on gods. Therefore, as Fox utters to Orual; "all, even Psyche, are born into the house of Ungit. And all must get free from her" (p. 301). In line with that, Gwentyth Hood interprets Ungit "as the sad, unfulfilled, ugly side of human nature which Orual (and her people) have projected onto the gods" (2009, p. 46). That is, the pagan goddess of Glome, Ungit with no face and thousand projected faces, is nothing but collective projections of human nature on a divine figure. Therefore, it represents a part of every human being. Accordingly, Orual exclaims "It was I who was Ungit. That ruinous face was mine" (p. 278), "As like Ungit? I was Ungit; I in her and she in me" (p. 280). Inferentially, it can be argued that Ungit represents what is primitive, earthly, animalistic in human nature, while God of the Mountain represents the divine.

Therefore, as indirectly but effectually implied by Lewis throughout novel, an individual has to overcome the Ungit within her/him in order to reach a spiritual wholeness and reveal what is divine in human. Hence, such a task is only possible through

a metamorphosis which is the universal allegory the original myth of Psyche and Cupid contains. Psyche, whose name means “soul” and “butterfly” in Greek and who is correspondingly represented frequently as a young woman with butterfly wings in art (Smith, 2010 p. 323), goes through a metamorphosis by leaving the ugly side of human nature and becoming divine at the end of her quest. Thus, in order to find the divine in herself she has to go through a metamorphosis which entails a symbolic death, for a deathlike experience is the only way to disentangle from the previous lower form and reborn as something higher, something divine. Thus, in the original source of the myth, after suffering through laborious tasks, Psyche goes to the underworld and falls into a deathlike sleep at the end of her last trial. Having suffered enough in the eyes of God, she is finally accepted to Olympus and joins to other divinities. In line with that, having realized she is Ungit, or she has Ungit in herself, Orual attempts to suicide, and she hears the voice of the God of Mountain; “‘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’” (p. 282). That is, by death before death the god refers to a symbolic death, a metamorphosis through which the subject will symbolically die and then reborn as something higher, something divine in Orual’s case.

Consequently, while Psyche goes on a physical journey, Orual goes on a spiritual journey in Part II where she is forced to perceive herself under a different light. Her dreams, in fact, parallels Psyche’s physical tasks on a spiritual level. She writes:

That the continual labour of mind to which it put me began to overflow into my sleep. It was a labour of sifting and sorting, separating motive from motive and both from pretext; and this same sorting went on every night in my dream. but in a changed fashion. I thought I had before me a huge, hopeless pile of seeds, wheat, barley, poppy, rye, millet, what not? and I must sort them out and make separate piles, each all of one kind. Why I must do it, I did not know; but infinite punishment would fall upon me if I rested a moment. (p. 258)

In her dreams she spiritually assists on Psyche’s physical tasks, but for her these tasks bear a different significance since she learns “separating motive from motive and both from pretext”—which probably provides a glimpse of Lewis’s own interpretation of that part of the myth—in her life through them. It is probably why Orual also starts the second part of the book by exclaiming her wish to rewrite her book for, now, she thinks she has been wrong about most of the things she thought she knew.

Eventually, she gets a final vision, a daydream, into which she enters with “her bodily eyes wide open” before she sits down to unroll her book (p. 288). In her vision, she is at last carried to the divine court where her complaint against the gods would be heard. Yet, before she is carried up to the great mountain, she is asked to declare her identity. She exclaims, “Orual, Queen of Glome” (p. 289), putting her persona as a veil again in a verbal level. However, brought to the presence of the divine judge she is stripped off “her veil and every rag [she] has on” by the order of the judge; so that she stands nude with her “Ungit face” in front of the crowd and the judge (p. 291). Thus, she is stripped of her self-deception and stands nude in front of the judge. In that sense, her nudity symbolizes “unconcealed reality and pure truth” (“Nudity”, 2021). Accordingly, she starts reading her book but unlike the book she has written, her complaint is without any “pretexts”, each line expressing her true motives behind her actions and complaints (Lewis, p. 290-292). After reading her complaint, she exclaims,

And now for the first time I knew what I had been doing. While I was reading, it had, once and again, seemed strange to me that the reading took so long; for the book was a small one. Now I knew that I had been reading it over and over; perhaps a dozen times. I would have read it for ever, quick as I could, starting the first word again almost before the last was out of my mouth, if the judge had not stopped me. And the voice I read it in was strange to my ears. There was given to me a certainty that this, at last, was my real voice. (p. 292).

Reading god’s version of her book in which “motives are separated from motives and both from pretext”, she now understands “what [she] had been doing”. Being true to herself for the first time, she is finally certain that it is her “true voice” and her own complaint becomes the answer she was searching for. Thus, she comes to resolution about why gods do not speak to human openly or let them answer back. She exclaims, “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?” (p. 296). Consequently, the message is that to find the divine, the god one must first has to find her/his true-self and to find the true-self one must be true to her/himself. Once that is achieved there remains nothing to be answered because all the questions fade away. Having finally achieved this, Orual, fulfils the gods condition “to know herself” and a great voice pronounces “You also are Psyche” (p. 310). Her vision fades and she is ready to die purified.

Conclusion

Lewis in his mythological novel *Till We Have Faces* revivifies Apuleius's myth by amalgamating it with a complex individual's search for self-identity, self-completeness and divine presence. By doing so, he blends allegorical depth of Cupid and Psyche myth into an actual experience of individual. The novel thus interrogates the relationship of human nature and divine presence from a relative first-person point of view, which is folded into the prefiguring framework of a classical myth. Therefore, Lewis's alternative myth turns modern search of an individual for a self-identity, meaning and divine presence into a universal experience. In fact, Lewis's choice of rewriting the myth into a fictional setting and time which is much the same to those of original version essentially serves to this universal experience. Hence, the novel exceptionally incorporates the totality and universality of the myth to modern novel's subjectivity and immediacy. Thus, placing Orual's subjective and unreliable story in its heart, the narration is built upon the universal framework of the Cupid and Psyche myth. That is, the individual experience is provided by Orual's story while the prefiguring framework of the myth allows creates a universal appeal and message.

Narrating Orual's three phased journey—self-deception, realization, and repentance—through the novel's two-part structure, Lewis explores the relationship of human nature and divine nature, over a perplexing story, where the mythical intermingle with the individual, pagan mysticism blends with divine presence, self-identity with persona, and love with “tyrannically possessive” selfishness. While Ungit represents the projection of human nature and its primitive, ugly, and earthly sides on gods, God of the Mountain represents what is divine in human nature. Thus, in order to reveal what is divine in human nature, one has to get free from Ungit, and to get free from Ungit, one has to abandon self-deception and be true to self. More particularly, in order to find divine presence, one has to reveal her/his true identity and her/his true voice. Consequently, while Orual's quest portrays this process and/or transformation in an individual subjective level, the rewritten Cupid and Psyche myth which serves as the prefiguring framework to Orual's story and experience serves in a universal one.

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