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## Divine Surgeons at Work: The Presence and Purpose of the Dream Vision in *Till We Have Faces*

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### Abstract

Studies the metamorphosis of Orual, the main character of C.S. Lewis’s *Till We Have Faces*, under the “divine surgery” of the dream-visions sent by the gods.

### Additional Keywords

Dream visions; Lewis, C.S.—Characters—Orual; Lewis, C.S. *Till We Have Faces*



DIVINE SURGEONS AT WORK:  
THE PRESENCE AND PURPOSE  
OF THE DREAM VISION IN  
*Till We Have Faces*

ERIN K. WAGNER

*M*ETAMORPHOSES, WRITTEN BY APULEIUS IN THE SECOND CENTURY and the source text for C.S. Lewis's *Till We Have Faces*, features such a large number of dreams and visions within its pages that the dream element permeates the entire narrative, defining its tone and purpose. Vered Lev Kenaan explains the presence of dreaming within the novel as its basic structure (251) and James Gollnick, author of *The Religious Dreamworld of Apuleius' Metamorphoses*, also notes the importance of this pervasive feature, explaining that the dreams enable Apuleius to make sense of contradictions within his novel (2). Lewis, though in some ways eager to distance himself from Apuleius, draws on the dream-like atmosphere of *Metamorphoses* for his own purposes in retelling the Cupid and Psyche myth.<sup>1</sup> Within the novel, he creates a liminal space wherein reality and imagination are not so easily separated and imagination thus takes on a more concrete presence, overshadowing and redefining the nature of reality. As such, the nature of dreams as truth-bearers is forefronted and through doing so, Lewis also makes an argument about the respective roles of faith and reason, using liminality to discuss the necessary convergence of these two processes. Convergence, which seems to be the necessary partner to fragmentation in this novel, provides healing to the broken narrator, Orual.

Lewis calls upon a mixed tradition of antique and medieval sources concerning dreams and visions to inform his novel. In antiquity, especially in extant Greek texts and sources, the role of the dream as prophetic, and therefore a source of truth, was heavily debated and discussed. Some of the most notable philosophers, Aristotle and Cicero among them, thought the opinion that dreams were revelatory was ridiculous (Miller 32-33). Similarly, Plato regarded the dream to be shaped by whatever part of the psyche was most active rather than

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<sup>1</sup> In his afterword to *Till We Have Faces*, Lewis expresses a distaste for other elements of Apuleius's work: "Nothing was further from my aim than to recapture the peculiar quality of the *Metamorphoses*—that strange compound of picaresque novel, horror comic, mystagogue's tract, pornography, and stylistic experiment" (313).

by supernatural influence (Meier 305). Despite this, practices like dream incubation show that not everyone subscribed to the same view of dreams. Those seeking aid from the gods often slept in temples in the hopes of receiving an illuminating message (Miller 26). The practice of dream incubation seems to have withstood both time and contrary opinion, lasting throughout the centuries (Meier 303). By such worshippers as these, dreams were always considered to be supernatural, even if they were not always trusted to bring good news or even revelation (Miller 24). As early as the third century, the dream-vision as fictional genre had been incorporated into Christian literature (Spearing 13). For medieval authors, the fictional dream-vision was a genre that linked them with antiquity, serving often as an attempt to reintroduce Platonism (Lynch 70). As a medieval genre therefore intimately concerned with Platonism and antique philosophy, Lewis would have no doubt found the dream-vision intriguing, as he was both a Neo-Platonist and a medievalist (Wilson 137).

Platonic themes are widespread throughout the *Metamorphoses*, and, in *The Discarded Image*, Lewis highlights the way in which Apuleius transmits these Platonic ideas to medieval readers through his texts (Gollnick 22; *Discarded Image* [Discarded] 43). Within Platonic philosophy, Lewis explains, human and god cannot meet without a bridge (43). Very often, in both classical and medieval texts and culture, this bridge came in the form of a vision or dream, whether purported to be real, as in the case of Saul and his vision on the road to Damascus, or fictional, as in the *Metamorphoses*. *Dream* and *vision* seem to operate as fairly interchangeable terms and concepts as well, serving in the same capacities as bridges in these texts—as is perhaps indicated by their conflation in the name of the genre *dream-vision*. Except, perhaps, in the most literal of cases like that of Saul, even those visions initially perceived to be waking very often become associated with sleep, night, or darkness (Acts 9). Even Saul's vision leaves him blind and forced to stumble in night-like conditions. Lewis's own work, *The Great Divorce*, serves as a good example of this ambiguity. The novel begins *in medias res*, wherein our narrator appears to be awake: "I seemed to be standing in a busy queue by the side of a long mean street. Evening was just closing in and it was raining" (1). The hesitancy of the verb *seemed* here and the mention of evening might raise suspicions of our narrator's condition, but it is not made clear until the end in which he awakes: "I awoke in a cold room, hunched on the floor beside a black and empty grate, the clock striking three, and the siren howling overhead" (146). The very disjointed nature of such visions—unclear until the end whether they be real or no, sleeping or waking—lends itself to their purpose.

Visions and dreams jar the reader from complacent reality into a set of conditions potentially more real. *The Great Divorce*, like so many of Lewis's texts, works within the Platonic philosophy of Forms that does in fact overturn a view

of the world based on sensory perception. Lewis defines the function of symbol and allegory within this philosophy in *Allegory of Love*:

The symbolist leaves that which is given to find that which is more real. To put the difference in another way, for the symbolist it is we who are the allegory. We are the 'frigid personifications'; the heavens above us are the 'shadowy abstractions'; the world which we mistake for reality is the flat outline of that which elsewhere veritably is in all the round of its unimaginable dimensions. (45)

If the waking world is a mere shadow, the dream can access a spiritual reality as well as or better than anything else. This is perhaps why Lewis is so fond of the genre. In addition to the *Great Divorce*, Lewis uses the dream-vision in his early novel, *The Pilgrim's Regress*—naturally enough, since this novel clearly references its forebearer, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, also written as a dream-vision. John Bunyan begins *Pilgrim's Progress* by placing his authorial persona into a dream in which he will see the adventures of Christian and his fellows: "As I walk'd through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place, where was a Denn, And I laid me down in that place to sleep: And as I slept, I dreamed a Dream. I dreamed, and behold, I saw a Man cloathed with Rags" (10). Lewis echoes these opening lines in his own from *The Pilgrim's Regress*: "I dreamed of a boy who was born in the land of Puritania and his name was John" (3). Not only does Lewis cleverly play on the name of the author of his textual inspiration, he also makes himself the dreamer. Clearly, he values the dream and the dream-vision as a means by which to access truth.

The truth which Lewis very often tries to access in his work is the nature of the relationship between faith and reason. A former atheist, Lewis became a Christian within an academic setting which stressed the incompatibility of faith and reason, a stance that Andrew Wheat explains could partly be attributed to the growth of science and technology at the beginning of the century (21). Responding to this environment, Lewis became a vigorous defender of religion as a rational and reasoned choice for men and women to make (21). In his poem, "Reason," Lewis states how important a marriage of these two precepts of faith and reason was to his religious conviction, phrased here as imagination and intellect: "Oh who will reconcile in me both maid and mother, / Who make in me a concord of the depth and height? / Who make imagination's dim exploring touch / Ever report the same as intellectual sight?" (ll. 11-14). Peter Schakel, in his study of *Till We Have Faces*, tracks Lewis's developing ideas throughout his career concerning how faith and reason should interact. In Lewis's last novel, Schakel argues that Lewis, who was once more like Orual and dependent on reason alone, "writes to the whole person," rejecting a separation of faith and reason as disparate elements (x, 162).

The medieval dream-vision was concerned with understanding the same relationship. Kathryn Lynch describes the genre as one that “pit[ted] imagination against reason, image against significance” (Lynch 76). Indeed, most scholars seem to accept that reason is an expected element within medieval dream visions. Lynch comments that these vision narratives are the ultimate “synthesis of reason and revelation,” underlined by the form itself, which brings together poetic and analytical forms (25). The form is difficult precisely because it comes from a liminal space, situated between sensory knowledge and reason; journeying through this liminal state changes the travelers, redirecting their life (Gunn 134). The purposely “unintelligible form” requires both the viewer and reader of the vision to struggle to grasp its extended knowledge, making the acquisition of reason valuable to all (Lynch 31). As Marsha Dutton explains, referring specifically to the visions of Julian of Norwich, the fourteenth-century mystic, any knowledge gained through personal revelation must eventually be re-understood through the lens of rationality (113).

In *Till We Have Faces*, I argue that Lewis is drawing on the specific concerns of the medieval dream-vision to address his own concerns regarding the relationship of faith and reason. He is also, however, clearly nodding to classical perceptions of dreams as potential sources of wisdom and prophecy. Characters such as the Fox, who encourage rationality in Orual to the exclusion of belief in Psyche’s outrageous tale, cannot help but remind the reader of those Greek philosophers who objected to a belief in dreams as revelatory. If Plato believed that dreams were dependent on the psyche, Lewis seeks to redefine the psyche as something intrinsically supernatural and therefore something undeniably linked with a truth that can be accessed by dreams. Lewis draws together the classical and medieval, the rational and the faith-driven concepts of dreams and truth in a Neo-Platonic retelling of the myth of Cupid and Psyche.

Though the second book of *Till We Have Faces* more explicitly thrusts Orual into the genre of the dream-vision, imitating more closely conventions that Lewis would have encountered in medieval texts, dreams and discussions of dreams overshadow the first book as well. The culture of Glome seems to reflect that of the Greeks who believed in the supernatural nature of dreams. The Fox, as a representative of the Greek philosophers, stands largely outside the culture, critical of what he considers superstitious beliefs, but also willing to make use of them where it serves him. An example of these respective positions is found when the king has agreed to sacrifice Psyche, but is irritated by the disapproval of Fox and Orual. He asks what alternative is available to him: “What would you do yourself, Fox, with all your cleverness, if you were in my place?” (58). The Fox responds with numerous suggestions, including the possibility of faking a vision, knowing that the priest might accept such a revelation for truth: “I’d say I’d been warned in a dream not to make the Great Offering till the new moon” (59). Fox,

as indicated by his answer, understands that a dream would be acceptable evidence for the priest, but he also shows his own ultimate reliance on worldly reason, only offering the dream as a means to gain time to think, rather than relying on it entirely.

Orual, as a native of Glome, is torn between reverence and disregard for dreams, due to the ministrations of her tutor, the Fox. After she is queen, in her last years, she takes a tour through neighboring kingdoms and comes upon a small temple dedicated to her sister Psyche. There she hears for the first time the myth that has grown from Psyche's story. She is appalled at much that she perceives as error and blames the gods for creating and diffusing a false story as further torment to her: "So this was the shape the story had taken. [...] How could any mortal have known of that palace at all? That much of the truth they had dropped into someone's mind, in a dream, or an oracle, or however they do such things" (243). Orual recognizes the real possibility of the gods communicating with men by way of dreams, but she evinces what skepticism and anger she can by rejecting the truth of such dreams, subscribing to a view that the gods are manipulative, using their powers for evil.

Orual's ambivalence toward dreams and her anger toward the gods stems from her own former experiences with both in the first book. As Schakel says, dreams, in this novel, are connected to sight and the perception of reality (45). In the first book, dreams are most often mentioned as a means by which to grasp a difficult truth or to comfort one's self in bad times, as stories and fictions as much as real events. The stories and fictions, the means by which to deny the impossible, however, quickly become entwined and confused with reality. Dream and reality become interchangeable, and as such, equivalent. When Orual first encounters her sister after her sacrifice, she is eager for Psyche to tell her entire story. Psyche does so, explaining first of all her experience chained to the sacrificial tree before help came. She tells of the way in which she tried to comfort herself, falling back on her desire to live on the Mountain in a palace until this dream failed her: "At first I was trying to cheer myself with all that old dream of my gold and amber palace on the Mountain . . . and the god . . . trying to believe it. But I couldn't believe in it at all. I couldn't understand how I ever had" (109). For Psyche in that instance, a dream is something akin to a story, something she quickly believes to be only a fiction in the face of harsh reality. When she finds in fact that her story is true, however, and that the god on the Mountain does exist, Psyche's story, in retrospect, is not fiction at all. The dream is at once both story and reality, both imagined and real, and, as a liminal space, the dream allows for this confusion.

Orual, however, is still dedicated to the idea of the dream as a fiction and therefore cannot but deny a crucial part of the dream's nature and liminality. She can think of only one way at first to dissuade her sister from her belief in the

god of the west-wind: She asks "Were you awake, Psyche?," implying that such wonders are only found in dreams, calling on the same fictive nature of dreams as stories that Psyche herself references in the beginning of her tale (111). Psyche, however, has now embraced the more complete nature of the dream—she can no longer return to her doubtful position enchained on the mountain. She responds, "Oh, it was no dream. One can't dream things like that, because one's never seen things like that" (111). While it is seemingly true that Psyche could not have imagined the entire reality in which she now lives, it is impossible to dismiss the fact that her childhood dreams were eerily accurate regarding her present fate, rendering her answer somewhat self-contradictory if understood to dismiss her dreams entirely. It is more in accord with the novel as a whole to understand Psyche's answer as a rejection of her sister's definition of dream as fictive and prompted by the mental state of the dreamer. Rather, Psyche has rejected the fragmentation of dream and reality, a distinction of definition that Orual is yet incapable of understanding. Lewis expresses a similar sentiment regarding prayer and the existence of God in his poem, "Prayer." While painting first a picture of the mockery received for praying—"One talker aping two"—Lewis subverts this mockery to paint instead a reality. Indeed, there is only One, but that One is God: "thus while we seem / Two talking, thou art One forever, and I / No dreamer, but thy dream" (ll. 4, 14-16). What was Psyche's dream is instead that of the god of the Mountain, and that, instead of dream, is reality.

Given her state of non-enlightenment, Orual is not satisfied with Psyche's response. She repeats "You must have been dreaming!" (112). Since it is later made clear that Psyche is indeed telling the truth, Orual's insistence on classifying the truth of the gods as dream sets up a definition of reality as dream while the two states of being become less distinct. Psyche emphasizes this in the very same page: "And if it was a dream, Sister, how do you think I came here? It's more likely everything that had happened to me before this was a dream. Why, Glome and the King and old Batta seem to me very like dreams now" (112). If reality can be classified as dream, and if dream is no longer recognized as such, but as reality, Orual finds herself somewhat lost without the knowledge to which Psyche has access. The reality of Psyche before her becomes as a dream in the face of some greater reality Orual cannot yet believe as Lewis engages in a Neo-Platonic description. Using dream again as a way to explain her position, Psyche describes her experience in her husband's house: "Don't you think a dream would feel shy if it were seen walking about in the waking world?" (114-15). Orual also considers Psyche dream-like, but for the opposite reason. She has departed from the world that Orual knows as real: "Yes . . . oh, my own child—I do feel you—I hold you. But oh—it's only like holding you in a dream. You are leagues away" (121). If Orual could embrace the dream as reality, she could more firmly embrace her sister, but she cannot yet do so. When she cannot at first



convince Psyche to leave with her and abandon what she considers delusion, Orual struggles about whether to try further. She wonders if she should not "leave her to that fool-happy dream," of which Orual clearly feels she has no part (152). Despite her general disbelief in Psyche's story, attributing it to madness, she also recognizes the comfort and real sustenance Psyche takes from it. She cannot entirely ignore that her sister is healthy and looks well; in fact, looks more real than she ever has before.

When she successfully convinces Psyche to test the reality of her husband, the dream-world is shattered, but at the same time, Orual is given visual proof of the god's existence. The proof, though, is offered under circumstances considerably dream-like. Orual awakes from what she believes must have been a faint and becomes lost in thought while waiting for the lights that will signal that Psyche is finding out the true nature of her husband. At one point, she finds herself bewailing the cruelty of her sister and reproves herself for "falling back to the dreams of my sickness" (170). Under these circumstances, Orual experiences the flood and the chaos and the god, her sister's husband. She goes out in search of her sister, but when day breaks, cannot remember the rest of her night (174). She is afraid, also, to tell the Fox of the god, for fear he will think her dreaming: "There was no use in telling him about the god; he would have thought I had been mad or dreaming" (178). Again, dreaming is held in contrast to truth, reality, and sanity—in contrast to reason. Dreaming is relegated to the realms of faith and revelation, and, whenever Orual is in contact with the gods, she associates that contact with dream, consigning the gods to the realms of faith and revelation alone. Even when she hears the priest of her sister's temple tell the "false" story of Psyche's path to immortality, she is roused from a "dreamlike feeling" that the temple has awakened in her (243). Most of the novel is thus taken up with Orual's torture considering her lack of knowledge or belief concerning the reality of her sister's condition. Lewis clearly connects her uncertainty with her inability to believe or accept dreams as truth in the way that Psyche has. The dreams are, in fact, a key to the reality of the story wherever they appear. Orual's dreams in her sickness are a surer indicator of her feelings than her own reasoned expression of them, in the same way that Psyche's palace and her god are real.

As Orual attempts to leave behind Psyche's sufferings and pursue her role as queen with all her strength, she cannot avoid recalling her sister, sometimes in jealousy. Her own jealousy frightens her, recalling to her mind the sickness she suffered after Psyche was sacrificed to the Beast: "For it began to be like those vile dreams I had had in my ravings when the cruel gods put into my mind the horrible mad fancy that it was Psyche who was my enemy" (200). She is repelled by this idea, insisting that she loves Psyche above all else. The dreams, however, are proven somewhat true by Orual's realization in the second book

that her actions towards Psyche at the last were not from love. The novel reinforces the role of dreams as truth-bearers yet again, and it is only when Orual is able to accept the truth of her dreams that she can truly understand her sister's fate and improve her own.

Orual repeats the phrase *vile dream* when she is startled by the new priest now wearing the old priest's garbs: "He wore the skins and bladders, the bird-mask hung at his chest. The sight of all that gave me a sudden shock, like a vile dream, forgotten on waking but suddenly remembered at noon" (205). Long disgusted by the priest's garb, the sight of them reminds her of the old priest and his air of holiness. When she comprehends that it is "only Arnom," the new priest, however, she relaxes: "He would never be terrible like the old Priest" (205). Yet again, though, in the second book, Orual recognizes that Arnom's more rational and tempered approach to Ungit is not fully satisfactory. What seems a dream is often a signal of truth within the novel, and Orual is forced to confront the value of the blood and sacrifice associated with Ungit. In the second book she watches an old woman bypass the newer Greek-style statue of Ungit (parallel with Arnom's new style of worship) to worship the old stone that has long stood as Ungit: "She looked as if she had cried all night, and in her hands she held a live pigeon. One of the lesser priests came forward at once, took the tiny offering from her, slit it open with his stone knife, splashed the little shower of blood over Ungit [...]. The trouble was soothed" (271-2).

Orual ends the first book, though, still thoroughly convinced that she is right in her complaint against the gods. She is a woman who clings to reason, dedicating her writing to the Greeks, and indulging in the Fox's philosophy. So, the end of the first book is the work of a woman setting out a logical court case rather than a memoir or narrative. She sets out a series of evidences of the gods' wrongdoing and ends with a "therefore" conclusion. She enjoins her readers to judge her case based upon the following evidence:

They gave me nothing in the world to love but Psyche and then took her from me. But that was not enough. They then brought me to her at such a place and time that it hung on my word whether she should continue in bliss or be cast out into misery. They would not tell me whether she was the bride of a god, or mad, or a brute's or villain's spoil. They would give no clear sign, though I begged for it. I had to guess. And because I guessed wrong they punished me—what's worse, punished me through her. And even that was not enough; they have now sent out a lying story in which I was given no riddle to guess, but knew and saw that she was the god's bride, and of my own will destroyed her, and that for jealousy. As if I were another Redival. I say 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. [...]

I say, therefore, that there is no creature (toad, scorpion, or serpent) so noxious to man as the gods. (249)

Orual carefully constructs her evidence against the gods, piling crime upon crime. The gods not only stole her sister, but blame her for the loss. They spread false stories about her. They tease mortals. Her conclusion is, then, that the gods hate men. They have harried her because it is their nature, not because she has deserved it. Orual's tone comes across as defensive, excusing herself from blame, as if she fears a higher logic and a higher voice. Then, rather than letting her readers truly judge for themselves from this evidence, she presupposes that the gods cannot answer her charge: "It may well be that, instead of answering, they'll strike me mad or leprous or turn me into beast, bird, or tree. But will not all the world then know (and the gods will know it knows) that this is because they have no answer?" (250).

The second book is essentially the gods' answer to the first. The answer comes about through Orual's reconsideration of her first narrative and more than one dream-vision. At the very beginning, Orual cites her actual writing process as the first step toward illumination: "What began the change was the very writing itself. Let no one lightly set about such a work" (253). It is the writing which readies Orual for the upcoming conviction and transformation: "The change which the writing wrought in me [...] was only a beginning—only to prepare me for the gods' surgery. They used my own pen to probe my wound" (253-54). This metaphor is one that resonates with both classical and medieval dream-visions. In the medieval text *De Planctu Naturae*, Lynch explains, Alain de Lille writes of Natura aiding the Dreamer, appearing like a physician suited to help him (80). James Gollnick also records a more literal sense of the metaphor for a classical audience. Inside the dream incubation temples, there were many inscriptions that wrote of a "god performing surgery on the patient" (32).

This traditional metaphor ties together classical and medieval dream-vision philosophy within *Till We Have Faces*. Ambrosius Aurelius Theodosius Macrobius, writing two to three centuries after Apuleius and the height of the dream incubation temples, compiled a classification system for dreams, identifying five different kinds of dreams—the enigmatic, the prophetic, the oracular, the nightmare, and the apparition (Macrobius 88). The enigmatic dream, or *somnium*, is defined as "one that conceals with strange shapes and veils with ambiguity the true meaning of the information being offered, and requires an interpretation for its understanding" (Macrobius 90). C.S. Lewis redefines Macrobius's definition: "This shows us truths veiled in an allegorical form. [. . .] Every allegorical dream-poem in the Middle Ages records a feigned *somnium*."

Nearly all dreams are assumed to be *somnia* by modern psychologists" (*Discarded* 63-4). The dreams that Orual experiences in the second book are *somnia*—populated by strange landscapes and dead souls, and Orual needs both her father and the Fox as her guides.

But as *somnia*, Orual's dreams also fit within the classification of the religious and allegorical dream vision of the Middle Ages. The religious dream-vision is usually a first-person narrative, though some have been narrated to scribes, and, very often, they reflect a sophisticated handling of Church doctrine or provide insight into that doctrine. Other times, they provide emotional, even physical, solace. Often, God or a close representative speaks personally to the narrator. The allegorical dream-vision, building on some of these same conventions, also has a first-person narrator, though almost always asleep and dreaming, but the guide is usually an allegorical figure—for example, Reason or Nature. The topic of the allegorical vision is usually romance or love. As will be seen, Orual's visions combine elements of both as she pursues divine wisdom.

The first dream that Orual records in Book II appears to be a mix between an *insomnium* (nightmare) and a *somnium*. The nightmare, as Lewis explains it, "merely repeats working preoccupations" (*Discarded* 64). For Orual, this first dream reflects her obsession with "separating motive from motive and both from pretext" within her accusation of the gods, but it ultimately parallels the actions of her sister as well (256). The dream is more than a mere reflection of her everyday tasks, an *insomnium*; it provides a truth not yet understood.

Later, Orual experiences her first *somnium*. Returning from the celebration of the Year's birth, she goes to her chamber to rest and think. She does not record going to sleep, instead saying "I sank into deep thought" (273). The next thing she knows she is opening her eyes to see her dead father. This now is the *somnium* as her father leads her through a series of allegorical motions. As she sets eyes on the old King, she feels as if her "queenship shrank up small like a dream" (273). The boundary between dream and reality is again blurred. Humbled, she obeys her father as he orders her into the Pillar Room where they dig a hole in the paved floor. In a smaller and warmer earthen replica of the room above, they dig yet another hole to fall to a rock replica. Her father informs her that "There's no Fox to help you here. [...] We're far below any dens that foxes can dig" (275). The Fox, Orual's former tutor, is also her representative of Reason. Still scared and defensive toward the gods, Orual views this dream as one that deprives her of prized rationality.

In the last room, the stone one, the King drags Orual to a mirror and forces her to look at her reflection for the first time in many years. There, she sees herself as Ungit, "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" (276). This dream is primal, earthy, like Ungit. It is revelation at its harshest—

Orual sees herself full in her failings. She wakes to find that she has indeed been in a dream though she “must give warning that from this time onward they so drenched me with seeings that I cannot well discern dream from waking nor tell which is truer” (276). The rest of the narrative is so mixed between dream and waking that the tenuous boundaries between reality and dream are utterly destroyed: in this state all dichotomies can be shattered and reason and faith can merge as one. In this new state of religion, Orual can thrive without fear. It is her experience in the dream visions that allow her to merge her own self—rational and yet ultimately Ungit-like—with the faith and beauty of Psyche.

On waking with fear from this first proper vision, Orual realizes there is no escaping its truth: “This vision, anyway, allowed no denial” (276). And as she accepts the fact that more and more of her life is overshadowed by dreams and visions, she recognizes the liminal state she has entered. Yet more importantly, she grows comfortable with this strange space, questioning the true difference between reality and dream:

“Of the things that followed I cannot at all say whether they were what men call real or what men call dream. And for all I can tell, the only difference is that what many see we call a real thing, and what only one sees we call a dream. But things that many see may have no taste or moment in them at all, and things that are shown only to one may be spears and water-spouts of truth from the very depth of truth.” (277)

Orual is willing to accept the dreams as truth and so is one step closer to Psyche. This passage also foreshadows the merging of faith and reason as dream and reality lose definition as actual separate elements and gain a new definition as a composite whole; the dichotomy between them is one of mere perspective.

In her next vision, Orual is less definitive on the vision’s status as a dream: “About this time there came (if you call it so) another dream. But it was not like a dream, for I went into my chamber an hour after noon (none of my women being there) and without lying down, or even sitting down, walked straight into the vision by merely opening the door” (283). The detail with which Orual describes her position upon entering the vision echoes the words of medieval dreamers like Julian of Norwich who take time to describe their physical state upon God’s visitation: “So I lasted until day, and by then my body was dead from the middle downwards, as it felt to me. [...] After that I felt as if the upper part of my body were beginning to die. [...] And suddenly it came into my mind that I ought to wish” (Julian 127-8). Orual’s vision, of course, is not of the cross but of a flock of rams from which she wants to pluck some gold wool (283). She is trampled, though, by their mad dash. It is only later that she finds out her pain within this vision enabled her sister to complete her tasks for Ungit and obtain her freedom. Because she does not yet understand its purpose, Orual

responds in despair, decrying the Divine Nature that hurts without consideration (284). She also gives up hope of losing her Ungit-like nature (284).

Finally, when Orual can find no comfort to cling to other than the thought that she cared truly for Psyche if no one else, her last vision comes. It is one that tears down her last bastions of self-defense and finally opens her to the true possibilities of faith in the divine. It is a vision removed entirely from the realm of dream, closer to the wide-awake visions of Julian: "What followed was certainly vision and no dream. For it came upon me before I had sat down or unrolled the book. I walked into the vision with my bodily eyes wide open" (285). Her visions intrude more vividly into the waking world, fusing dream and reality, imagination and reason as Orual approaches her final answer. Within this vision, her case is to be heard, the logic of her complaint at the end of the first book examined.

Orual is forced to stand naked in front of a crowd of the dead, including both her father and the Fox. Her book is her only defense against the eyes upon her and she finds that it, too, has grown pitifully small: "And too old—a little shabby, crumpled thing, nothing like my great book that I had worked on all day, day after day, while Bardia was dying" (289). She finds the logic within the book less than compelling and refuses to believe that it is truly hers: "It was all a vile scribble—each stroke mean and yet savage, like the snarl in my father's voice, like the ruinous faces one could make out in the Ungit stone" (290). She reads it anyways and is shocked at the truth of her complaint—a repetitious and vengeful diatribe that reveals her own selfishness to possess even Psyche as her own. She is ordered to stop and when asked if she is answered, she replies simply "Yes" (293). Her logic is overcome by yet a greater one.

Upon the realization of her true voice, her true face, Orual is abashed. Her father's spirit offers to teach her a lesson, but the Fox intervenes. He seeks to defend her before the judge, blaming her faults on his own over-emphasis on reason rather than on the poets and the dark theology of Ungit (295). Enlightened as to his own over-dependence on reason, the Fox still stands as a wise figure, explaining to Orual the mistakes of the poets regarding the afterlife and serving as her guide; he is very much placed in the novel like the figure of Reason or Philosophy in the allegorical visions of the *Middle Ages*.<sup>2</sup> His identity as the representative of Greek wisdom (tempered now by the knowledge gained after death) makes the Fox the perfect character to explain away Orual's confusion

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<sup>2</sup> As one of the foundational dream-visions for medieval thinkers, for example, though classical in nature, *De Consolatione Philosophiae* by Boethius features the visit of Lady Philosophy to the imprisoned author. She leads her student to remember the philosophy he has learned before and to find some contentment in his situation through an understanding of true happiness. Lewis ranked Boethius's dream-vision as "one of the most influential books ever written in Latin" (*Discarded* 75).

regarding what she has seen before in her dreams. He leads her to a chamber with painted walls that depict the myth of Psyche.

As Orual watches the history of her sister's tasks, she realizes it is she who has suffered the pains while Psyche has reaped the benefits of her actions. When the Fox queries if she had rather have had justice, she protests: "Would you mock me, Grandfather? Justice? Oh, I've been a queen and I know the people's cry for justice must be heard. But not my cry" (301). Orual's statement nullifies the ending of the first book and her extremely logical, yet ultimately fallacious, argument. Yet as the Fox guides her through the pictures and to her ultimate trial at the hand of Psyche's husband, the god of the Mountain, something else awaits Orual: an answer.

The question that needs answered is one that has been proposed by Orual in her waking life to the priest Arnom. Still confused about the gods, and bitter about their secrecy that she blames for her own actions, she tries to learn of their nature from the priest: "'Arnom,' said I, whispering, 'who is Ungit?'" (270). The priest answers, as Orual reports, in a way quite different from his predecessors, influenced as he has been by the Fox: "This was the new way of talking about the gods which Arnom, and others, had learned from the Fox"—the Fox, the symbol of reason within the novel (270-71). His answer, then, is one of carefully constructed metaphor, reason's way of explaining the goddess's complicated role: "[Ungit] signifies the earth, which is the womb and mother of all living things" (270). Orual is still not satisfied with his answer and holds an extended dialogue with the priest that highlights her concerns:

"If she is the mother of all things," said I, "in what way more is she the mother of the god of the Mountain?"

"He is the air and the sky, for we see the clouds coming up from the earth in mists and exhalations."

"Then why do stories sometimes say he's her husband, too?"

"That means that the sky by its showers makes the earth fruitful."

"If that's all they mean, why do they wrap it up in so strange a fashion?"

"Doubtless," said Arnom (and I could tell that he was yawning inside the mask, being worn out with his vigil), "doubtless to hide it from the vulgar."

I would torment him no more, but I said to myself, "It's very strange that our fathers should first think it worth telling us that rain falls out of the sky, and then, for fear such a notable secret should get out (why not hold their tongues?) wrap it up in a filthy tale so that no one could understand the telling." (271)

Orual's discussion with the priest is set up very much like the question and answer format that Julian of Norwich and other medieval religious writers use in their work: creating questions for the audience so that reason might explain. The discussion also reflects a Platonic dialogue in which the truth can only be reached by means of constant questioning, breaching boundaries and traditions (Gallagher 145).<sup>3</sup> Orual, however, showed a disregard for Platonic and Socratic reasoning earlier in the novel by her flippant treatment of the Socratic dialogues included in her eighteen-book library (Lewis, *TWHF* 232; Myers 71). Despite Orual's resistance to these forms of acquiring knowledge, Lewis has clearly set them up as necessary paths by which to achieve understanding. Both medieval and classical allusions also set up an argument for the importance of reason in religion, and Arnom implies in the conversation that religion is not for the feeble-minded, but rather for those who can discern the truth within the story—much like Jesus's explanation of the parables to his disciples: "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matthew 13:9). Orual, at this point, cannot accept this reasoning. By alluding to classical myth in his novel, however, Lewis is judging this lack on Orual's part. The myth, according to Lewis, is an attempt to convey some "numinous" value, and humans cannot help but to allegorize it and find importance in it (*An Experiment in Criticism* 44). Arnom's explanation also presages the eventual merging of Orual with her sister Psyche. The god of the Mountain is both husband and son; in Glome's religion (and by extension of the metaphor, Christianity) there is little boundary, little division between roles. Orual must learn to accept, in a similar manner, that reason is not only the cold logic critiquing the myth, but the logic used within and expected by the myth as well, the reason coupled with faith that the gods know what they're about. It is then that her soul will be complete, and that she too will be Psyche.

The question that Orual poses the priest is of one piece with her bitterness toward the gods. The priest's answer does not satisfy her or her complaint. However, in her dream vision she is far more amenable to answers. Ashamed and appalled at her presentation before the judge in the underworld and led to understand the relation between her and Psyche during their long absence, Orual is now receptive, led to this point by the reason she prizes. She, the student of reason, enters the courtyard of the god of the Mountain. There she meets Psyche yet again, who has never lost her faith in the face of adversity. Psyche hands her the casket of beauty, the result of her last set task: "You know I went a long journey to fetch the beauty that will make Ungit beautiful" (305-06).

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<sup>3</sup> Gallagher also explains the way in which Hans-Georg Gadamer extends on this concept of Platonic dialogue, saying that the dialogue cannot end until the question no longer exists. This, in some ways, reflects the ending of *Till We Have Faces* in which the question no longer exists—or potentially never has existed, so fulfilling is the answer (145).



Orual also has traveled this long journey and she is now fit to receive Psyche's gift.

Finally reunited, Psyche and Orual wait in eager anticipation for the god, Psyche's husband, to return to his house. At his approach, Orual experiences an entirely new sensation: "The air was growing brighter and brighter about us; as if something had set it on fire. Each breath I drew let into me new terror, joy, overpowering sweetness. I was pierced through and through with the arrows of it. I was being unmade" (307). It is by the process of breaking boundaries, as Orual's physical boundary from the world and her sister—her body—is perforated, that Orual is remade. She is both unmade and a new person; she is, in some ways, both real and a fiction. Reason is pierced by faith and faith rejuvenates reason. All that terrified her before, Orual now accepts despite the fear. As a result of this change, this merging, Orual sees herself as a different person. She is Psyche and yet not exactly alike. She has become a new and complete soul: "Two figures, reflections, their feet to Psyche's feet and mine, stood head downward in the water. But whose were they? Two Psyches, the one clothed, the other naked? Yes, both Psyches, both beautiful (if that mattered now) beyond all imagining, yet not exactly the same" (307-08).

Reason and faith are different, yet they are not separate. Orual is still Psyche, if slightly different, as the god declares: "You also are Psyche" (308). Reason is also part of the soul, part of religion, but it must be fully integrated and entwined with faith. It is at this declaration, this ultimate moment of truth that the vision ends: "I looked up then, and it's strange that I dared. But I saw no god, no pillared court. I was in the palace gardens, my foolish book in my hand. The vision to the eye had, I think, faded one moment before the oracle to the ear. For the words were still sounding" (308). Orual awakes in a garden, a trope of the allegorical dream-vision and, having reached this point of truth, Orual has little else to say. She reports that she is near death and ends with a brief reflection.

The last paragraph of her narrative portrays the god of the Mountain as the final end to reason, the be-all answer to the mind's desire for reason. He does not quench reason, but fulfills. She addresses the Lord directly now too. The dream vision has served as the bridge between her soul and the god's. Her tone echoes again the voice of Julian of Norwich and the mystic experience. Julian writes in her eighty-fifth chapter, the last before she addresses her readers directly: "And then shall none of us be moved to say in any matter: Lord, if it had been so, it would have been well. But we shall all say with one voice: Lord, blessed may you be, because it is so, it is well; and now we see truly that everything is done as it was ordained by you before anything was made" (341). Orual also now views her Lord as both the beginning and the end, preceding the question and anticipating the answer: "I ended my first book with the words *no answer*. I know now, Lord, why you utter no answer. You are yourself the

answer. Before your face questions die away. What other answer would suffice? Only words, words; to be led out to battle against other words" (308).

Reason seeks ultimately an answer, the end to an eager and inquiring question, and Orual's god embodies this answer beyond the mere level of words. All reason is contained within him. Her dream visions allow Orual to understand and accept this point, to reconcile her rational self with faith. She values her dream vision as wisdom enough to send to the Greeks, from which the Fox and her representative of logic came, and entrusts Arnom with the task to give her book to any traveler that may take it to Greece (309). Her questions answered, she, herself, will not live much longer: "The old body will not stand many more such seeings" (308).

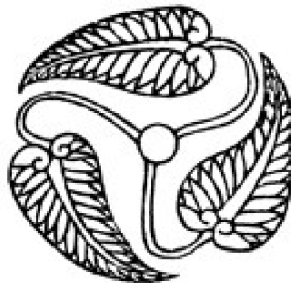
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