

THE REFIGURATION OF BODY AND SOUL: TIME AND NARRATIVE IN C.S. LEWIS'S RETELLING OF THE CUPID AND PSYCHE MYTH

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a reading of C.S. Lewis's *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold* in light of Mikhail Bakhtin and Paul Ricœur's analysis of time's role in transformation. I will focus on the narrative dynamics Lewis achieves by incorporating the temporal into the fabric of his narrative. This approach to temporality contrasts markedly with his source material, Apuleius' *Metamorphoses or the Golden Ass*, which ultimately appears to transcend time and therefore transformation by novel's end. I finish my analysis by arguing that as Lewis moves from his protagonist, Orual's, initial retelling to embracing a more limited version of the myth, instead of the disruptive force it is for Apuleius, the temporal becomes a generative force, transforming and renewing Lewis's narrative along the lines of Ricœur's paradigm of prefiguration, configuration, and refiguration.

KEYWORDS

Ricœur, hermeneutics, *The Golden Ass*, *Till We Have Faces*, Apuleius, C.S. Lewis, Cupid, Psyche, Bakhtin, myth, transformation.

Although Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* provides C.S. Lewis with the source material for *Till We Have Faces*, his innovative reworking of the Cupid and Psyche myth provides a distinctly different view of the nature and role of time and transformation. By the end of Apuleius' narrative, the goddess Isis delivers the book's central character from the transformations to which fortune subjects him. Conversely, for Lewis's protagonist, contact with the divine provides not less but more occasion for transformation. My examination of Lewis's retelling of Cupid and Psyche focuses on this difference. Thus, for Apuleius, it is only once the characters of the *Metamorphoses* have transcended time's iterations altogether that they exchange the capricious and fragmented world of experience for the timeless

blessedness of divine vision. On the other hand, for Lewis, instead of a fall, time and the transformation that comes with it actually undergird the opportunity for further semantic innovation. After placing the *Metamorphoses* in a broader theoretical context, I turn to Mikhail Bakhtin's analysis to elucidate the role time and transformation play in Apuleius' novel. This analysis sets the stage for Paul Ricœur's own examination of transformation. In the paper to follow I argue that although previous application of Ricœur's ideas on metaphor to *Till We Have Faces* provides insight into transformation's role on a more limited scale, applying Ricœur's ideas on time and narrative shows how Lewis's narrative itself plays an integral role in transforming an ancient story into a new and innovative work.

As the title *Metamorphoses* suggests, on many levels Apuleius' ancient novel is in constant flux. For example, not only do the main characters' fortunes change from one adventure to the next, Apuleius' style switches registers, displaying both the sensational and the refined. Over the millennia this protean nature has led to widely divergent interpretations. A near contemporary, Augustine of Hippo, was one of the first critics to give a complex and detailed view of Apuleius' work (see Gaisser 2008: 29). For Augustine, the type of transformation Apuleius renders in his *Metamorphoses* is demonic illusion. As he says, demons "if they really do such things as these on which this discussion turns, do not create real substances, but only change the appearance of things created by the true God so as to make them seem to be what they are not" (Augustine 2007: 681). For Augustine, transformation as illusion hinges on the notion that Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* or the *Golden Ass* as he calls it, to this day the more commonly used title, is understood as autobiographical.

Although Augustine's reading of the *Golden Ass* as autobiography continued to inform medieval perception of the work (Gaisser 2008: 85), by the time of Petrarch the emphasis had shifted from identifying Apuleius' pagan underpinnings to assimilating and reinterpreting it into a Christian framework. In one of his letters, Petrarch reinforces an autobiographical interpretation of the *Golden Ass* by comparing his arrival in Paris to Apuleius' arrival in Hypata (in the *Golden Ass* it is his protagonist, not necessarily Apuleius himself, who arrives in Hypata)¹. However, illuminations on a manuscript transcribed by the Bolognese scribe Bartolomeo de' Bartoli

¹ Petrarch, *Familiarum rerum libri* (1.4.4). The conflation of Apuleius with his protagonist Lucius is an area of considerable debate in contemporary scholarship. For an introduction see Kahane and Laird (eds.) (2001). Also see Harrison (2000: 217-220), and Van der Paardt (1981: 96-106).

around the same time as Petrarch's description visually emphasize an increasingly didactic understanding. The opening decoration of the seven virtues on de' Bartoli's manuscript sets the tone for the illuminations found throughout the rest of his transcription². Also around the time of Petrarch, Boccaccio's *Genealogie* reworks Apuleius' Cupid and Psyche myth into a Christian account of redemption (see Gaisser 2008: 118). Psyche and her sisters are no longer separate characters but faculties of the soul, and most tellingly Psyche is not made immortal by the gods at the end of the story but is immortal throughout, since according to medieval Christian orthodoxy the soul is by definition immortal.

As scholarship became increasingly secular, interest in the *Golden Ass* became less overtly religious. In the Victorian era, Walter Pater's *Marius the Epicurean* portrays a fascination with the work based on its aesthetic merits. By viewing the *Metamorphosis* outside of a religious or didactic framework, Pater frees himself from attempting an appraisal of the work as a whole. Instead he focuses on the episode of Cupid and Psyche as a "gem" amid the "mockeries" and "burlesque horrors" of the main narrative. For Pater, the tale of Cupid and Psyche is "full of brilliant, life-like situations, *speciosa locis*, and abounding in lovely visible imagery (one seemed to see and handle the golden hair, the fresh flowers, the precious works of art in it!)" (Pater 1921: 61). For a reader wanting a larger meaning beyond the story's artistry, Pater says that a "gentle idealism," which he sees permeating the Cupid and Psyche episode, allows the reader to "take it, if you chose, for an allegory" (Pater 1921: 61).

These historical approaches adumbrate much of contemporary scholarship on the *The Golden Ass*. Although he reaches an entirely different conclusion, Harrison, for example, follows Augustine's lead insofar as he places the *Golden Ass* in a biographical context (see Harrison 2004: especially pages 210-59). On the contrary, taking his cue from Walter Pater, Kenny sees not Apuleius' life but the figures of Cupid and Psyche as key to understanding the narrative. Like Pater, Kenny reads the episode as allegory. However, he does not appear to pick up on Pater's implicit dismissal of the rest of the narrative as characterized by mockery and "burlesque horror," preferring instead to view the entire novel as illuminated by the Platonic idealism he sees emanating from Cupid and Psyche (see Kenny 1990: 12-38). Additionally, a view of the book as animated by moral and religious concerns finds contemporary voice in the work of scholars like Tatum. In his article "The Tales of Apuleius", Tatum argues that episodes in Apuleius' narrative

² This manuscript can be found in the Vatican Library (Vat. lat. 2194).

represent “an easily perceivable progression in human degradation” (Tatum 1969: 522). For Tatum the work’s main concern is moral and didactic.

Mikhail Bakhtin’s critical work on the *Golden Ass* provides incisive comprehension of the issues discussed so far and refocuses the analysis back onto the nature and role of transformation. Central to Bakhtin’s examination is his notion of time, which he labels as chronotope, and defines as “the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature” (Bakhtin 2006: 84). For Bakhtin, different historical eras have different chronotopes that characterize each era’s ability to artistically represent the world. The chronotope of adventure-time in classical Greek Romance provides the background for his discussion of transformation in the *Golden Ass*. Distinguished by the central role chance plays, adventure-time renders events in a narrative as a discrete, disconnected series. In such a configuration, although metamorphosis predominates, all the changes characters undergo throughout the course of a narrative leave them fundamentally unchanged. Key to the chronotope of adventure-time is its abstract nature and geographical extension. Once a work becomes grounded in a particular time and place, it becomes subject to a milieu that begins to determine its progression, limiting the scope for possible adventure but also opening the door to processes that convert random change into sequences of events that result in transformation.

By inserting characters into a semblance of the biographical time of everyday life, Apuleius creates the opportunity for distinct personality and moral choice. In so doing he introduces an initiating force. Thus, although Fotis *accidentally* changes Lucius into an ass instead of a bird, and *accidentally* the roses needed to reverse the change are not in the house, just as it is an *accident* that robbers happen to appear at that very moment to kidnap Lucius, it is *not* accident but Lucius’ curiosity that sets these events in motion. As Bakhtin observes this whole sequence of events “is not chance but voluptuousness, youthful frivolity and ‘prurient curiosity’ that urged Lucius on... *He himself is guilty*. He undoes the game of chance by his own prurience. *The primary initiative*, therefore, belongs to *the hero himself* and to his own *personality*” (Bakhtin 2006: 116). By interspersing adventure-time with that of everyday life a new type of adventure-time emerges. “It is not the time of a Greek romance, a time that leaves no traces. On the contrary, it leaves a deep and eradicable mark on the man himself as well as on his entire life” (Bakhtin 2006: 116). However, although Lucius’ choice initiates a sequence of events that in the end transforms him, the continued bifurcation between the time of everyday life and the time of adventure renders events as entirely external to

characters. Lucius' transformation into an ass affects the content of *what* he sees but not *how* he sees.

Bakhtin identifies the pattern this second type of adventure-time gives rise to as that of guilt → punishment → redemption → purification → blessedness. It is a pattern the various episodes of the *Golden Ass* mirror throughout. For example, in the Cupid and Psyche novella one finds Psyche's transgression of her husband's wishes also initiating a sequence of events culminating in her reception into the blessed company of the gods³. However in the *Golden Ass*, adventure-time and everyday-time never fully synthesize into a unified whole. As a result "the separate episodes [...] are rounded-off and complete, but at the same time are isolated and self-sufficient" (Bakhtin 2006: 128). Consequently, the "everyday world is scattered, fragmented, deprived of essential connections. It is not permeated with a single temporal sequence which has its own specific systematization and ineluctability" (Bakhtin 2006: 128). Apuleius concludes the *Golden Ass* with the goddess Isis informing his protagonist of the final sequence of events leading to redemption. By following her directions and casting off his asinine form, Lucius at last exits both adventure-time and the time of everyday life. Ultimately, it is only as Lucius transcends not just adventure-time and everyday-time but all of time's iterations that he attains a vantage point that allows him to look back at the whole of his experience. His final transformation from ass to devotee of the goddess culminates in front of a divine image that affords him a completely integrated and timeless vision⁴. In

³ In book 5 of the *Golden Ass*, Psyche's guilt takes the shape of listening to her jealous sisters and spying on her sleeping husband against his wishes (Apuleius 1994: 83-93). Book 6 treats Venus' punishment of Psyche with different difficult tasks she must accomplish. For example, she must sort a huge pile of different kinds of seeds (Apuleius 1994: 105). For each punishment Psyche is redeemed by different characters. In the seed punishment for example, ants come to her rescue. However, it is Cupid who must ultimately redeem Psyche and bring her into the blessed company of the gods by marrying her (Apuleius 1994: 113). Before doing so, however, Psyche must be purified. Her last guilty act is to look inside Proserpine's box of beauty, which puts her into a very deep sleep, from which Cupid arouses her with a gentle prick from his arrow (Apuleius 1994: 111-112).

⁴ Apuleius of Madauros' *The Metamorphoses* (11.24-25): "Provolutus denique ante conspectum deae et facie mea diu detersis vestigiis eius, lacrimis obortis, singultu crebro sermonem interficiens et verba devorans, aio: 'Tu quidem sancta et humani generis sospitatrix perpetua, semper fovendis mortalibus munifica, dulcem matris affectionem miserorum casibus tribuis. Nec dies nec quies ulla ac ne momentum quidem tenue tuis transcurrit beneficiis otiosum, quin mari terraque protegas homines et deplusis vitae procellis salutarem porrigas desteram, qua fatorum etiam inextricabiliter contorta retractas licia, et Fortune tempestates mitigas, et stellarum nosio meatus cohibes. Te superi colunt, observant inferi, tu rotas orbem, lumnas solem, regis mundum, calcas Tartarum. Tibi respondent sidera, redeunt tempora, gaudent numina, serviunt elementa: tuo nutu spirant flamina, nutrient nubile, germinant semina, crescunt germina. Tuam maiestatem

the *Golden Ass* it is from this divinely whole and unchanging vantage point that meaning and vision flow.

Rather than the completely integrated and timeless vision Apuleius concludes his own work with, C.S. Lewis's letter to Clyde Kilby (see Lewis 1993: 462) suggests he had something much more dynamic in mind with *Till We Have Faces*. Orual, for example, should not be viewed as a symbol but as a "case" of human affection become tyrannical. Similarly, although Glome's religious changes are analogous to the transition between Christianity and Modernism, this comparison should only be understood as a parallel and not as allegorical. Furthermore, in an addendum to *Till We Have Faces* he explains that Apuleius rendering of the Cupid and Psyche episode serves as a source not as a model or even an influence. The perspective these comments suggest about the vision of the world Lewis projects in *Till We Have Faces* can be more clearly expressed in the distinction he draws elsewhere between looking *at* something and looking *along* it. Thus,

A young man meets a girl. The whole world looks different when he sees her [...] Now comes a scientist and describes this young man's experience from the outside. For him it is all an affair of the young man's genes and a recognised biological stimulus. That is the difference between looking along the sexual impulse and looking at it (Lewis 1970: 212).

As Lewis goes on to say, "one must look both *along* and *at* everything" (Lewis 1970: 215). In contrast to the all encompassing divine vision Apuleius gives his protagonist at the end of the *Golden Ass*, for Lewis, it is this dynamic interaction between perspectives that transforms vision and provides the grounds for meaning.

In describing the notion that the dynamic interaction between perspectives strengthens rather than diminishes vision Lewis does not advance beyond analogy and anecdote. To find a more rigorous treatment of the concept and how it applies to *Till We Have Faces*, I now turn to the work of Ricœur. An outline of not only how Ricœur's work on transformation functions, but also how those ideas apply to *Till We Have Faces*, can be found

perhorrescunt aves caelo meantes, ferae montibus errantes, serpents solo latentes, beluae ponto natantes. At ego referdis laudibus tuis exilis ingenio et adhibendis sacrificiis tenuis patrimonio; nec mihi vocis ubertas ad dicenda quae de tua maiestate sentio sufficit, nec ora mille lingueque totidem vel indefessi sermonis aeterna series. Ergo quod solum potest, religiosus quidem sed pauper alioquin, efficere curabo: divinos tuos vultus numenque sanctissimum intra pectoris mei secreta conditum perpetuo custodiens imaginabor".

in the work of Donaldson⁵. In her book *Holy Places are Dark Places*, Donaldson examines how Ricœur's logic of metaphor illuminates an understanding of Lewis's protagonist. According to Donaldson the key to this understanding can be found in what she holds to be the two central metaphors of the book: "holy places are dark places" and "you too shall be Psyche". For Donaldson, interpreting these two statements from within Ricœur's metaphorical framework allows for an interpretation of transformation as essentially meaningful rather than "a course either of random occurrences or of events whose meaning is to be derived from the sequence of their occurrence" (Donaldson 1988: 63). According to Donaldson, Ricœur's "metaphorical logic" that accounts for the transformations in *Till We Have Faces* follows the form of a literal perception of a statement followed by a recognition of the inadequacy of the literal interpretation, which ultimately gives way to transformed understanding. For example, the god's statement to Orual that she also will be Psyche seems to be an assertion of literal identity at first; however, as the story progresses and Orual does not encounter the literal obstacles facing Psyche, like exile, to remain meaningful the statement must be reinterpreted. In a sense, for Donaldson, the project of Lewis's entire book can be seen as the working out of this process of reinterpretation. By the end of the story Orual comes to actually see herself as Psyche in a vision. "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 [...] beyond all imagining, yet not exactly the same" (Lewis 1956: 307-308). For Orual, this scene is the culmination of her quest to be reconciled with her sister. On a more abstract level it also culminates an account of transformation where a literal understanding of a statement becomes recognized as obviously untrue but which subsequently gives way to reinterpretation, the literal identification becoming a relationship of similarity. In other words, as Orual begins "looking along" the statement that she "also shall be Psyche" instead of simply "at it," she gains a refreshed understanding of the divine as well as of herself. Perceptive as Donaldson's application of metaphorical logic to *Till We Have Faces* is, however, her analysis of Lewis's entire book hinges on two statements. To gain a broader understanding of the nature and role of transformation I now turn to Ricœur's analysis of time in his three-volume

⁵ Mara Donaldson's book *Holy Places are Dark Places: C. S. Lewis and Paul Ricœur on Narrative Transformation* (1988) is the only substantial study to date connecting *Till We Have Faces* with Paul Ricœur's thought; also see Alison Searle (2007: 225), which takes a very similar approach to the one Donaldson takes.

examination of time and narrative. I do so in order to show how Lewis's narrative itself plays an integral role in transforming an ancient story into something new.

By Ricœur's own account, his work on time and narrative grew naturally out of his work with metaphor. As he says in his introduction to his three volume series *Time and Narrative*, the projects form a pair:

Although metaphor has traditionally belonged to the theory of 'tropes' (or figures of discourse) and narrative to the theory of literary 'genres', the meaning-effects produced by each of them belong to the same basic phenomenon of semantic innovation (Ricœur 1985, I: ix).

The key point is that Ricœur's work on metaphor and on time and narrative both center on how transformation leads to innovation in meaning.

For Ricœur, the three part – is, is not, is like – process of metaphorical transformation find their counterpart in what Ricœur calls Mimesis 1, Mimesis 2, and Mimesis 3. Ricœur uses mimesis in the Aristotelian sense to refer to the imitation of actions which when taken as a whole form a plot. This part forms the semantic part of his investigation, how actions mean something. Aristotle thus forms one side of the argument, however, Ricœur is interested in not only semantics but also innovation. To inform the innovative side of his argument, Ricœur appeals to Augustine's treatise on time where the past, present, and future, in order to be intelligible, must be understood in terms of each other. In other words, in order for the present to be understood as the present it must be seen in terms of both the past and future. To illustrate, Ricœur summarizes Augustine's argument explained in terms of a resonating sound. "The function of the three celebrated examples of a sound that is resonating, a sound that has resonated, and two sounds that resonate one after the other, is to make this tearing apart appear as that of the threefold present" (1985, I: 16). The notion of a tearing apart that results in the synthesis of a threefold present is fundamental to understanding what Ricœur means by Mimesis 1, Mimesis 2, and Mimesis 3 and consequently his project of providing an account of semantic innovation in terms of time and narrative. To put the two halves of Ricœur's argument together, then, by combining Aristotle's idea of synthesis of an action in plot and Augustine's idea of the passage of time tearing unity into multiplicity, Ricœur brings what he calls the concordant and discordant parts of his argument to bear on the question of semantic innovation. For it is in the crucible of time's tearing unity into multiplicity and narrative's synthesis of multiplicity into unity that

Ricoeur sees semantic innovation and as a consequence transformation in meaning as occurring⁶.

Ricoeur's analysis provides a framework for understanding how both the discordant and concordant elements of time and narrative affect Lewis's treatment of transformation in *Till We Have Faces*. In the first part of his novel, Lewis's protagonist provides her own configuration (instead of mimesis, Ricoeur mostly uses the terms prefiguration, configuration, and refiguration) to what she views as Apuleius' inaccurate version of the Cupid and Psyche story. Thus, at the end of the first part of *Till We Have Faces* a priest's recounting of Apuleius' version spurs Orual to write a more truthful account. However, in the second part of the book, as Orual begins to re-envision, or refigure, her understanding of her own story and of the world she finds herself in, Apuleius' and Lewis's narratives begin to merge. Like Lucius at the conclusion of *The Golden Ass*, as Orual reflects on the completed whole of her narrative she exits a world marked by the passage of time. One day, as she enters a garden and opens her book, she walks into a vision that unmistakably echoes the same mythical journey to the underworld Psyche completes in Apuleius' version.

In Orual's vision, not only is the task she seeks to accomplish similar to one of the tasks Aphrodite gives Psyche in the *Golden Ass* but the passage of time also begins to resemble Apuleius' negation of it. In her vision Orual embarks on a journey where intense light from a sun high and directly overhead illuminates her path so completely it casts no shadows. As she describes it, "I walked in the dry sand up to my ankles, white with sand to my middle, my throat rough with sand [...] I walked for a hundred years" (Lewis 1956: 286). Without markers to indicate movement, the passage of the years begins to mirror the illuminated but unmoving wholeness of divine vision in the *Golden Ass*.

However, in contrast to Apuleius' protagonist, for Orual it is precisely the wholeness and transcendence of her vision that traps her. After walking one hundred years, the huge mountains Orual encounters at the conclusion of her journey represent an insurmountable obstacle. Moreover, in place of the divine blessedness of Apuleius' final vision, the cliffs of the mountains that detain her are rotten and swarming with scorpions and snakes. As the discordant passage of time increasingly fades so too does the possibility of transformation and innovation. Without the multiplicity of possibilities the passage of time brings to a narrative, Orual's vision stalls. Left to itself the

⁶ See Ricoeur (1985, I: 1-27)

concordant power of her narrative grows stronger and her refigured vision of the world turns in on itself. Rather than ascending the mountains into divine vision, with her written work in place of Psyche's mythical bowl, shadowy figures seize and carry her into a cave at the base of the mountains. Instead of transcendence, Orual is forced down and in. Moreover, instead of a unified, divine vision where all is clear, Orual finds herself transported into a courtroom, containing the shades of everyone from not only her past but, it appears, from the span of Glome's history. When finally brought before a judge to read her complaint, hands strip her clothes from her, leaving her body bare for all to see. Sheltered from direct sunlight overhead, the cave's gray light reveals the effects of her hundred-year journey. The brilliance of immortal vision in Apuleius' myth and the earth's inchoate but enduring strength in Orual's counter narrative strikingly converge in the cave's dim light, revealing the shriveled breasts and shrunken limbs of an all-too-human queen.

Thus, Orual's light-drenched journey culminates not in the heavens or the earth but in the deadlands. Moreover, instead of a bowl for the water of death that Psyche uses to achieve release from the confines of the every-day, physical world of experience Orual must read her complaint aloud. However, as she looks at her book to begin reading, she discovers that the journey in her vision has devoured not only body, but book as well: "I looked at the scroll in my hand and saw at once that it was not the book I had written. It couldn't be; it was far too small. And too old – a little shabby, crumpled thing" (Lewis 1956: 289). Consequently, she determines not to obey the judge commanding her to read, but then finds herself voicing the words anyway. As she reads, it becomes clear that the words themselves, like the light outside the cave, illuminate by devouring. As Orual looks at the shape of the words, distinctions begin to dissolve. As such, it becomes impossible to tell what is real and what is only image. Similarly, essential differences between divine and human, temporal and eternal, father and daughter, begin to dissolve in the cave's gray light. Moreover, without her realizing it, as Orual comes to the end of her account she immediately begins reading her narrative again from the beginning. As Orual's narrative turns in on itself, the circularity of everyday time begins to resemble the increasingly still and timeless vision that characterizes the conclusion of both Psyche and Lucius' journeys in the *Golden Ass* but on a smaller and smaller scale.

Lewis, however, does not leave his protagonist's vision stalled. In the midst of her interminable reading, the god presiding over the cave's

courtroom scene interrupts Orual who finally recognizes the diminished state of her narrative⁷. The pictures Orual encounters as she exits the cave in the company of her childhood tutor illustrate how when placed in time her vision recalls its transformative and innovative power. Key to this innovative process is conceiving of textual configuration as *mediating* between prefiguration and refiguration. As Ricœur explains, the hermeneutical arc “is the concrete process by which the textual configuration mediates between the prefiguration of the practical field and its refiguration through the reception of the work” (Ricœur 1985, I: 53). Orual’s statement at the beginning of part two of *Till We Have Faces* that she has gained new insight into her life through the writing of part one suggests that when placed in the context of time, her written text performs just the type of mediating role Ricœur ascribes to the role of configuration in *Time and Narrative*.

The paintings Orual encounters as she exits the cave where her trial occurred, depict the completion of Psyche’s mythical journey to the underworld to obtain a casket of beauty for Venus, who Orual now recognizes as herself. They also summarize part one of her book. Moreover, instead of the meaningless repetitions that characterize Orual’s reading of the book in her cave, the pictures Orual sees make both the task and part one of her story come alive:

Now we were before it and I could see the story it told. I saw a woman coming to the river bank. I mean that by her painted posture I could see it was a picture of one walking. That at first. But no sooner had I understood this than it became alive, and the ripples of the water were moving and the reeds stirred with the water and the grass stirred with the breeze, and the woman moved on and came to the river’s edge (Lewis 1956: 298).

That Lewis uses moving but two-dimensional pictures at the end of part two of *Till We Have Faces* to replace the three-dimensional but unmoving statue Lucius contemplates at the end of *The Golden Ass* suggests a more limited but more dynamic view of art. That is, by reducing the final part of Orual’s vision from Lucius’ divine and all-encompassing vision of eternity to a more limited, temporally bound image, Lewis breaks the absolute but

⁷ Aspects of Lewis’s cave scene resonate with Plato’s: see *The Republic* (517b ss). For both Plato and for Lewis, a cave provides the setting for increased enlightenment. The significant difference, however, is that for Plato enlightenment comes by exiting the cave and embracing a vision of eternal forms, whereas for Lewis enlightenment comes, and Orual exits the cave, only after recognizing her own role in her increasingly diminished story. Plato’s rendering of the cave depicts knowledge as a vision of external forms; Lewis’s rendering depicts Orual’s knowledge as derived from the dynamic interaction between internal and external.

unmoving surface of the myth. The plot's grasping together of disparate elements into a unified whole does not get stuck in a ceaseless cycle of repetition that comes to mirror a static vision of eternity. Instead, Lewis's temporally bound configuration of events mediate between prefiguration and refiguration, as each incomplete image gives way to successive images that deepen and enrich the story. In combining both picture and movement, the synchronic and the diachronic, Lewis brings an Aristotelian concept of plot and an Augustinian notion of time into contact. The result of this juxtaposition is innovation in meaning.

The remainder of the paintings depicts what Orual at first thinks is herself attempting to commit suicide through drowning. As she looks more closely, however, she realizes that the events unfolding are not happening to her but to Psyche: "She was tying her ankles together with her girdle. I looked closer at her. She was not I. She was Psyche" (Lewis 1956: 298). As Orual continues to follow the paintings, since her own narrative prefigures the events she sees depicted, in a sense they represent her own experience as well. Even more deeply, they represent the events depicted in Apuleius' myth. However, as Orual receives the paintings and reacts to them, the time of the events depicted in Orual's narrative and Apuleius' myth distends and contracts. As it does so, the disparate paintings link into a narrative that refigures both accounts. In the frame that portrays the beginning of Orual's journey across the desert, she recognizes herself for the first time, but as a shadow: "In the next picture I saw both Psyche and myself, but I was only a shadow. We toiled together over those burning sands, she with her empty bowl, I with the book full of my poison. She did not see me" (Lewis 1956: 300). When both finally arrive at the mountain, Orual disappears into her cave, but Psyche, in the bowl she has been carrying, receives the water of death from the eagle. The paintings that follow depict Psyche completing her final task of carrying a casket to retrieve beauty from the deadlands. However, as she journeys towards the completion of her task, rather than past Apuleius' mythical landmarks, Psyche progresses deeper and deeper into the events of Orual's written narrative. Moreover, as Orual receives these paintings portraying her sister's journey, her understanding of the role she played in them refigures her conception of her own identity.

As Psyche travels deeper not only into the completion of her task but also into Orual's own story, the final refiguration of her narrative and Apuleius' myth occurs in neither the eternal time of myth nor in a narrated time of the past or future, but in the lived time of the present. As live, sweet voices summon Orual from the antechamber she has been viewing the paintings in, she exits into the brightly colored, illuminated world. Once outside, she finds

herself being led to a court with a pool in its center where Orual finally reunites with Psyche. Lewis describes the scene where Orual reunites with Psyche as she returns from the underworld with her casket of beauty:

The air that came from her clothes and limbs and hair was wild and sweet... And yet (it is hard to say) with all this, even because of all this, she was the old Psyche still; a thousand times more her very self than she had been before the Offering. For all that had then but flashed out in a glance or a gesture, all that one meant most when one spoke her name, was now wholly present, not to be gathered up from hints nor in shreds, not some of it in one moment and some in another. Goddess? I had never seen a real woman before (Lewis 1956: 306).

Thus, at the end of *Till We Have Faces*, the scattered fragments of the story resolve for Orual, not in the final vision of an immobile statue (as they did for Lucius at the end of *The Golden Ass*), but in an encounter with a live woman. What is more, in this courtroom, as the judge enters to pass sentence, Orual feels herself literally becoming refigured: "Each breath I drew let into me new terror, joy, overpowering sweetness. I was pierced through with the arrows of it. I was being unmade" (Lewis 1956: 307). The results of this event do not prompt Orual to bid her reader goodbye (as does Lucius after the transformation he undergoes in the temple of his goddess). Instead, it prompts her to further revelation. As the judge approaches and Orual looks down into the pool of water at her feet, she sees not one, but two images of Psyche reflected.

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 (Lewis 1956: 308).

As the god passes judgment with the words, "You also are Psyche", the pronouncement wakes Orual from her vision, and she finds herself back in the palace gardens with her book in her hand.

Orual's final vision presents, in miniature, the working of *Till We Have Faces* as a whole. In the frame narrative, Orual's last vision precedes her final attempts to revise her book. She dies in midsentence with the words "I might—". In an addendum, the head priest of Glome's religious cult, Arnom, explains that Orual wanted her book taken to Greece where it could be read and discussed. He adds, "This book was all written by Queen Orual of Glome, who was the most wise, just, valiant, fortunate and merciful of all the princes known in our parts of the world" (Lewis 1956: 308-309). Thus, when taken as

a whole, Apuleius' prefiguration of Orual as Psyche's jealous sister becomes configured during the course of Orual's storytelling and finally culminates in the refiguration of Arnom's statement about Orual as the best Queen in his part of the world.

By the end of *Till We Have Faces*, not only has the character of the jealous sister become refigured in the person of Orual, but so has time's role in the unfolding of a narrative. In the *Golden Ass*, to achieve the eternal, Psyche must leave the temporal behind. Similarly, in Apuleius' frame narrative, Lucius only transcends to the divine as he cuts his connections to a world characterized by the divergent movement of time. In contrast, in his retelling of the Cupid and Psyche story, Lewis incorporates the passage of time into the ever changing and expanding fabric of the Cupid and Psyche narrative itself, thereby transforming not only its prefigured paradigms, but also its configured structure. In the vision that results, rather than devouring meaning, the passage of time transforms and refigures, opening up still and timeless narratives to the possibility of new and dynamic horizons.

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