“How Can They Meet Us Face to Face?”:

The Faith-Reason Debate in C. S. Lewis’s *Till We Have Faces* and Medieval Dream Visions

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This thesis titled

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“How Can They Meet Us Face to Face?”: The Faith-Reason Debate in C. S. Lewis’s *Till We Have Faces* and Medieval Dream Visions (88 pp.)

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C. S. Lewis’s novel *Till We Have Faces* was written and published in the twentieth century when science and reason had begun to discredit faith as irrational. Lewis grew in reputation as a defender of Christianity as eminently reasonable, and many critics look to his last novel as an examination of the interaction between reason and faith. But, as such, in *Till We Have Faces*—his favorite novel—he was not presenting new arguments in support of faith but rather arguments that had originated in early and medieval Church history. In dream visions like those of Julian of Norwich, dreamers effectively combined faith and reason, destroying modern and medieval ideas of a distinct difference between these two concepts. As a medieval scholar, Lewis drew on this medieval literary convention in *Till We Have Faces* to effectively convey his proof for reason’s claim on faith. For Lewis and medieval dreamers, faith and reason were never to be considered separately or in conflict but rather as continually in unison.

Approved:

_______________________________________________________
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Introduction

“Be Brave and Enter on the Path of Reason”: How Revelation Became Faith, and Faith the Enemy of Reason

The Oxford English Dictionary has numerous definitions for faith, but these are only slight indications of the full weight and heft of the word. Two are specifically religious in content, as distinguished from definitions that discuss vows and trust; they lend insight into the way thinkers and debaters have begun to view religion itself. The first such definition is as follows: “Belief in the truths of religion; belief in the authenticity of divine revelation (whether viewed as contained in Holy Scripture or in the teaching of the Church), and acceptance of the revealed doctrines.” The following definition elaborates on the use of faith to refer to religion as a whole: “A system of religious belief, e.g., the Christian, Jewish, Muslim, etc., faith.” The first use of the word in this manner is recorded in 1325. The use of an element of religion—faith—to define its entire nature, however, has become widespread in the twenty and twenty-first century. Of the many attacks on religion, it is this same element of faith that is so often targeted as well. Faith has become synonymous with religion.

Especially in the last ten years, authors like Sam Harris and Christopher Hitchens have written best-selling books that condemn religion as a thoughtless and irrational pursuit that leads only to division and chaos. Integral to their arguments is the notion of faith as a concept inherently opposed to reason. Therefore religion, often considered as a matter of faith and faith only, is a ludicrous fantasy to them. They do realize, despite this, that the idea of faith is a matter that must be considered and discussed (and then they hope later dismissed). Hitchens writes early in his God is Not Great about faith’s importance: “The argument with faith is the foundation and origin of all arguments, because it is the
beginning—but not the end—of all arguments about philosophy, science, history, and human nature” (Hitchens 12). According to Hitchens, however, faith ought to be discounted in our modern age, with the advantage of technology and science at our disposal: “All attempts to reconcile faith with science and reason are consigned to failure and ridicule” (Hitchens 65). Sam Harris, writing three years earlier, expresses the same sentiments. He attempts to debunk the idea that faith and reason are now at peace and that modern intellectuals have proved they can coexist intelligently (Harris 15). Rather, he claims this peace only appears to be true because “the church has been politically hobbled in the West” (Harris 16). Both writers take on the voice of intelligent and angry concern within their texts, desiring to disillusion the deluded followers of religion since it is directly opposed to all rational thought. Faith, as both a common synonym for and a central tenet (if not the whole foundation) of religion, is also then placed in the opposite corner to reason. The conflict of faith and reason has become one of the primary and tension-filled dichotomies of the twenty and twenty-first century, but it is hardly a new one.

C. S. Lewis, who grew up as an atheist, became a Christian within an academic setting and was fully aware of the presentation of faith and reason as incompatible, a viewpoint that probably grew out of the scientific and technological boom at the beginning of the century (Wheat 21). As a result, Andrew Wheat explains, he became a vigorous defender of religion as a rational (Wheat 21). Consequently, many of his literary works deal with just this issue—how faith and reason interact and complement each other. These include The Pilgrim’s Regress, The Chronicles of Narnia, and Till We Have Faces. As a medieval/renaissance scholar as well as a Christian, Lewis reflects in his texts not only the modern debate in which he was engaging but also layers of a similar and older debate that
stemmed from the origin of the Church itself and from its forefathers such as Augustine and Anselm.

The terms of this older debate are similar to the present one. Essentially, the key words are still faith and reason, but are used in a slightly different context—in the conflict between religious adherents and secular ones, rather than between thinkers within the church. In that context, the meaning of a debate between faith and reason differs. The patristic medieval assumption is not that the two concepts are inherently antithetical. Rather, the concern is to what extent the two can mingle. And first and foremost, it is understood that faith rules over all other aspects of religion. Augustine, writing his treatises “On Free Will” and “The Usefulness of Belief,” clearly expresses an appreciation for the rational and intelligent mind but, even more, emphasizes faith as the ground for all other understanding. He notes that there is nothing more superb than “a wise and rational mind” in dialogue format in “On Free Will” (Augustine 125). In “The Usefulness of Belief,” however, he insists on the importance of valuing faith over reason and warns against the danger of those who might present reason as a false allurement: “Things must first be believed of which a man may later achieve understanding if he conduct himself well and prove himself worthy” (Augustine, “Usefulness” 308). But despite his respect for the mind’s workings, he values faith as a foundation and cornerstone of religion from whence reason could work. From this position, he admonishes his readers: “Be brave and enter on the path of reason trusting in piety” (“On Free Will” 120). The debate within the early church, then, is never that of faith versus reason but rather how and in what amount reason should inform faith.

The alternative from which to gain information, support, and evidence for faith is revelation. Both of these paths to knowledge, however, are sheltered by the wings of faith,
not set in opposition to it. Edward Grant neatly sets forth the framework under which reason and revelation interact in the medieval religious debate:

One cannot approach the use of reason in the Middle Ages without simultaneously thinking of its opposite activity, revelation. Strictly speaking, revelation, that is, the articles of faith, is not subject to reason. Revelation is true because it embraces truths that are believed to come directly from God, or from his revealed work in Holy Scripture. (9)

Scholars of the Middle Ages—mostly religious thinkers—functioned with the knowledge of this division between reason and revelation. They understood them as significantly different, but most also saw them as important aides to each other (Marrone 34).

In the development and use of reason to support faith the Church fathers began to consider and adapt the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. From these influences, writers like Anselm and Aquinas developed proofs and rational dialogues arguing for the existence of God. Within revelation were dreams and visions narrated by Augustine and later writers like Julian of Norwich. And for centuries afterwards, religious thinkers did not have to concern themselves so much with the attacks of outsiders as with potential heresies, the task of converting, the structure of the Church hierarchy, and internal conflicts between the uses of reason and revelation. Modern writers, though, like Hitchens and Harris, and modern readers, like those who launched their books onto the bestseller lists, have changed the nature of the debate. They have redefined faith, and since faith serves so commonly as a synonym for religion, they have discounted both as irrational.

Critics have set faith, no longer considered a structure of belief supported by both reason and revelation, in opposition to reason, and as such, left it entirely in the domain of
revelation. Revelation and faith have become synonymous, and writers consumed only with scientific knowledge and progress easily discount them both. Hitchens makes this obsession with science clear as he continually discounts religion: “It comes from the bawling and fearful infancy of our species . . . the least educated of my children knows much more about the natural order than any of the founders of religion (Hitchens 64). Hitchens also considers Church fathers, like Augustine and Aquinas, worthy of ridicule: “These mighty scholars may have written may evil things or many foolish things and been laughably ignorant of the germ theory of disease or the place of the terrestrial globe in the universe” (Hitchens 7). The only moments of revelation Hitchens is willing to accept are those which cause humans to abandon faith, those which he considers “more rationally and more morally justified” than those of religion (Hitchens 5).

The early Church debate between revelation and reason thus became very similar to the debate between faith and reason now, only argued between entirely different players. Whereas the Church fathers were concerned about the best way to understand Christianity, modern debaters are concerned about whether Christianity, or any religious faith, is true at all. Ultimately, the question rests on how believers can support or provide evidence for their beliefs. In the modern debate, the term revelation is synonymous with faith, and Lewis and other Christian thinkers are forced to confront this new definition. Their task, placed on the forefront of this debate between faith and reason, is to reclaim faith as a belief supported not only by revelation but also reason. To effect this reclamation, however, they must not sacrifice revelation or they sacrifice the part of their faith that lifts a soul above earthly concerns to spiritual ones. They must synthesize the two—revelation and reason—to reconsider faith in its original understanding.
The aim of this thesis is to take a fresh look at the patristic and medieval debate and at Lewis’s attempt to participate in it and to explore it for a new audience. Dream visions, so often relegated to the revelatory aspect of faith, have been too often neglected for their rational content. Visionaries, especially Julian of Norwich, provide accounts that potentially redefine the relationship between reason and revelation for the age in which they wrote and for modern participants in this debate. In the dream landscape, where boundaries and thresholds are less clear than in the waking world, reason and revelation become something more even than partners in bolstering faith; they become one. Lewis’s *Till We Have Faces* offers the same ground for analysis, structuring the second book of his novel as a series of dream visions. Through such visions, Lewis offers a new and combined understanding for reason and revelation. Both Julian and Lewis are ultimately concerned with instruction and are highly aware of genre conventions and choices that make this instruction clear and welcome to their readers.

Paul himself was Saul until his vision on the road to Damascus, and the Church has obtained its definition of faith from the revelation and change of heart that he experienced. In Hebrews 11, he provides a simple and yet powerful definition for faith, a definition more significant to believers than any the *Oxford English Dictionary* can offer. For him, faith was not something divorced from reason or consumed by emotion, but rather so powerfully supported by reason that it was the reason, or evidence, for things man and woman cannot see: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11.1 KJV).
Chapter 1
“Fides Quaerens Intellectum”: The Dialogue Between Faith and Reason in Medieval
Scholasticism

The names of Augustine, Boethius, Anselm, and Aquinas are among the first
countered in the study of medieval Christianity and religious philosophy. If asked to point
to someone of equal influence today, many Christian readers might rather point to C.S.
Lewis. No matter one’s denomination or affiliation, Lewis has become the representative of
the thinking Christian. Though such broad acceptance may mute his accomplishments for
some, Lewis’s intellectual rigor cannot be ignored. In much of his work, including The Great
Divorce, Mere Christianity, and Till We Have Faces, Lewis actually inserts himself within the
tradition of medieval scholasticism, working out his faith under the influence of
philosophers like Plato and Aristotle and exploring the current debate between faith and
reason within both his fictional and theological works. Since Lewis was both a medieval
literary scholar and a Christian, the thought-process of his authorship may have been
inevitable, and in order to truly grasp his work and his last novel Till We Have Faces, a
discerning reader must first understand the ages-long debate in Christianity between faith,
revelation, and reason, a debate that flowered as the Roman Empire crumbled.

This debate was one (and still is one) that was intimately linked with the very
foundations of the Christian faith. How were Christians to learn about God? Should they
learn solely from personal revelation and Scripture, or should they employ God-given reason
to learn about Him also from the world around them and the nature of their own bodies,
souls, and minds? Medieval theologians began to craft a religious philosophy in which they
synthesized revelation and reason, though debate and controversy surrounded the extent to which reason should be allowed to illuminate faith and vice versa. It was not until the end of the medieval era that the Church began to entertain a notion of eliminating reason entirely from the way Christians could know God (Rubenstein 258). Before this, theologians avoided pure rationalism but, otherwise, attempted to balance revelation, true because it descended directly from God, with reason, which became a tool to analyze revelation (Grant 9, 15). The debate was, at times, a heated one, but was ultimately grounded in the works of men who had reasoned even before the birth of Christ.

The debate between faith and reason ultimately stems not from the Bible but from the classical philosophers Plato and Aristotle. As a fledgling religion organizing itself in the shadow of a sometimes oppressive Roman culture and government, educated Christians were aware of the ancient thinkers upon whom Roman philosophy was built and were forced to confront how and in what way these thinkers and their ideas could be accommodated with a Christ-centered mode of thought. Plato and Aristotle approached the world around them and knowledge in entirely different ways, and depending on which thinker the medieval theologians turned to, the extent to which they embraced reason and engrafted it with faith differed. The most important difference lay in the way each philosopher approached the acquisition of knowledge. Plato theorized the eternal forms, upon which he then based a system of abstract thought; he distrusted the senses and empirical data (Grant 162). His philosophy lent itself to a theology that elevated faith-driven reason. Aristotle, on the other hand, derived knowledge from the concrete world around him, speculating and generalizing based on the specific and empirical knowledge that he gained from his senses (Grant 162). Theologians and thinkers who would later develop an
Aristotelian school of thought were also those who more highly emphasized reason in the faith-reason relationship. The acceptance of either philosopher’s viewpoints within the Christian faith was a controversial and fluctuating decision. For those who thought Aristotle would provide a good framework or schemata within Christianity, there were those in opposition who thought including ancient philosophy within theology was potentially heretical (Fitzpatrick, Haldane 303).

Some leaders, like Tertullian, ca. 200, vehemently held that a pagan world-view could in no way be assimilated into Christian theology (Rubenstein 50). Those who disagreed, like Clement of Alexandria, appropriated the concept “handmaids to theology” to express the idea of using philosophy to support faith (Grant 33). This metaphor was closely related to the reasoning that using classical philosophy was akin to the Israelites plundering the Egyptians (Grant 33). In essence, Clement argued that Platonist and Aristotelian philosophy was not inherently anti-Christian but was rather used by God to prepare minds for Christ (Rubenstein 51). A hundred years or more removed from this clash, Augustine (354-430) seemingly served as a living example of Clement’s claim, proposing in his own *Confessions* that it was through the intervention of Platonist books that his mind was turned toward Christianity, a faith already embraced by his mother (Matthews 78).

Influenced, then, by his own conversion experience, Augustine embraced a Platonic, or Neo-Platonic school of thought, believing that if Plato was no Christian, he was still “divinely inspired” (Marrone 43). Continuing in the tradition of philosophy as the theological handmaiden, Augustine advocated the use of reason as a tool submissive to faith (Schunk). He was careful, though, to look to faith as the ultimate guide, coming himself from a Manichean background that largely derided faith as a starting point (Cushman 285).
In contrast, he believed that reason, as tied to sinful humanity, had been corrupted by the Fall (Cushman 272). Therefore, humans must first submit in faith to God’s existence in order that reason may function reliably (Cushman 272, 283). Reason is still crucial, though, as “faith seek[s] understanding,” hoping to derive new truths from ones known (McKeon 431). Writing from this perspective, Augustine sometimes even imitated the philosopher he admired, setting out arguments in *On the Immortality of the Soul* much like those of Plato himself (Matthews 67). Through his writing, a Platonic school of thought was passed down, largely shaping the foundation of the medieval Christian church.

Less than a century later, Boethius wrote within the same Platonic school as Augustine, though he clung to reason more emphatically (Pieper 26). His work is regarded as the “first fruits of the scholastic method,” though his dedication to reason left the realm of the academic and theological and became very personally comforting (Pieper 36). Awaiting his execution, Boethius wrote *Consolation of Philosophy*, which greatly emphasized logic, his guide within this dream vision being Lady Philosophy herself (Grant 44). It is reason within this work that resigns him to his fate. This text and his work with classical translations guaranteed that the Platonic school was sustained even through the turbulent period between the fifth and tenth centuries, when much of ancient philosophy and logic was lost (Grant 41).

Interest in Boethius was renewed alongside the rediscovery of philosophers like Aristotle and the infusion of Arabic ideas and translations into European thought (Marrone 20). The rediscovery came about through knights who felt the call of God and land to push the Muslims from the Iberian Peninsula (Rubenstein 13). During the twelfth century, as they reclaimed land in the name of Europe, they gradually took over central areas of culture and
education where European scholars came across lost texts of Aristotle that had been studied and translated by the Muslims (Rubenstein 13, 16). In reading and understanding Aristotle anew in his own words rather than through early theologians, the interest in the debate between faith and reason was refueled. Since the realm of education was largely under the authority of the Church now as well, the newly discovered philosophy was studied under the supervision of cathedrals, naturally affiliating these classical philosophers with Christianity (Grant 26). This made sense, anyway, since after the fall of Rome, philosophy had been included as theological instruction in Church education, largely as it was found in Augustine’s texts (Schunk). In the late thirteenth century, Church leaders became more uneasy with these philosophies, and Pope Gregory IX attempted to condemn them (Schunk). The works of Aristotle and Christian writers who derived their knowledge from him, however, were too entangled with the theology to be that easily plucked out (Schunk). Hellenistic thought had become invaluable to Christianity.

The rediscovery of Aristotle seemed to spur Christian thinkers to become philosophers in truth. Anselm (1033-1109) was one such thinker, though he still adhered to the Platonic school (Matthews 78, 81). “Fides quaerens intellectum” is often viewed as Anselm’s motto, as he believed reason could be used to “construct rational demonstrations for articles of faith” (McKeon 431; Grant 56). He was eager enough in this pursuit that he laid the foundation for theology to move into the realms of science in later centuries (Grant 56). His eagerness stemmed from a personal conviction that humanity’s purpose and preferred reaction to its earthly condition “is to grasp what is beyond reach” (Adams 34). A human could, therefore, reach God through the intellect, but here Anselm was hesitant to accord reason too much responsibility (Adams 36). He was concerned that the Church
would err too much on the side of reason or too much on the side of faith; he called for a productive balance (Adams 52). Faith was required to humble the believers so that they could then reason effectively and could therefore further illuminate their faith (Adams 51; Grant 38). In this case, though, faith was still first and took precedence over reason (Barnwell 1; Grant 38).

Therefore, Anselm, in *Proslogion* 2, prays in faith for God to illuminate his reason:

“Well then, Lord, You who give understanding to faith, grant me that I may understand, as much as You see fit, that You exist as we believe you to exist, and that You are what we believe You to be” (Anselm 87; Matthews 65). He then sets out a logical proof for God’s existence. He basically insists that if one can imagine in one’s mind or recognize the name of God to mean “something than which nothing greater can be thought,” one must inevitably believe that God truly exists in the real world. Otherwise, the fact that one can imagine a true God existing makes this first supposition impossible because a real God would be greater than an imagined one. But if the God one is imagining is a real God that exists in the real world, then one has truly reasoned out “something than which nothing greater can be thought” (Anselm 87-88). This argument is cited as one of the first ontological arguments, spurring thinkers to create rational proofs for God (Marrone 23). Despite this emphasis on reason, however, Anselm could not resist warning that reason alone, untempered by faith, can lead humans to sin, providing the devil as an example of just such a corruption (Barnwell 8).

Following philosophers and thinkers began to divide themselves into yet sharper camps. Adelard of Bath (1080-1152) set revelation or supernatural assistance aside almost entirely, advocating the use of reason in every case unless absolutely impossible (Grant 72).
He said God would not have given reason if it were not to be used (Grant 72). Alan of Lille (1128-1202) was instrumental in classifying theology as a science (Grant 66). William of Auvergne (1190-1249) embraced Aristotle because he knew he would need philosophical ammunition to debate with pagans (Schunk). In the same century or so, however, opponents to the use of reason as the primary means of knowledge rose up, many from monastic backgrounds, among them, Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153). These scholars thought reason stemmed from pride, accounted it dangerous, and insisted on faith as a starting point for all reasoning (Grant 63). Bernard especially prized the experience of ecstatic communication with God (Grant 63). This was a communication uniquely personal, unable to be shared with others (Grant 63). John of Salisbury (1120-80) also argued that logic or reason should not be used to understand “divine mysteries” (Grant 51).

In this atmosphere, Albert the Great (1200-80) took under his wing a student who would become one of the most well-known Christian thinkers, and one who became a strong proponent of reason. Thomas Aquinas (1225-74), because of his large frame and silent demeanor, was ridiculed in school, known as the “Dumb Ox” (Rubenstein 195). Albert quickly stepped to his defense, proclaiming that “You call him a Dumb Ox; I tell you this Dumb Ox shall bellow so loud that his bellowings will fill the world” (Rubenstein 195). Albert’s prediction would prove true as Aquinas’s *Summa Theologica* became the crowning work of Scholasticism (Barnett). Unlike Augustine or Anselm, Aquinas derived most of his philosophy from the work of Aristotle and, in turn, wrote his own works based on pro and con discussions with students, not directed at the lay audience (Barnett). His works were so reason-based, however, that he incurred condemnation in the thirteenth-century
proclamations of the Pope alongside the Pope’s desire to remove Classical philosophy from schools (Marrone 35).

Aquinas refused to believe that reason and revelation were incompatible; he insisted that God grants both (Barnett). In fact, Thomas Aquinas is considered to be one of the most influential thinkers to move theology into the realm of science (Grant 208). For him, reason was the starting point and one followed its progress as far as it would go and then one’s intelligence would be supplemented by revelation (Barnett). Because he believed that the world was primarily intelligible, Aquinas could not work within the framework of a priori evidence that Augustine had set up (McKeon 437-38). He posited that it is impossible to take God’s existence as an a priori fact (McKeon 438). Rather, scholars learn of God from the evidence around them, and in this way, Aquinas subscribed more naturally to the Aristotelian school of thought than the Platonist (McKeon 438). Even so, he was able to embrace the idea of the chain of being from Plato and combined this with Aristotelian ideas like the purposive nature of the world to create a hybrid and rationally based view of the world (Barnett). Only three months before his death, however, he suddenly declared that nothing he had written was worthwhile (Barnett). The cause for this change is unknown, though it is speculated he could have had a vision (Barnett).

After Aquinas’s death, the time of medieval Scholasticism shortly came to an end. William of Ockham, born in 1287, came on the scene as a harsh criticism of reason and of Thomas Aquinas. He is considered the last Scholastic, burning the bridges behind him and entering a new era of Church history (Pieper 39). Where Aquinas had embraced the ideas of Aristotle that told him he could learn of God from the nature around him, Ockham denied that humans could understand God with mortal minds (Rubenstein 253). Instead, he argued
for the simplicity of a mystical God. Thus, following thinkers know of Ockham’s Razor which asks that “conceptual entities ought not to be multiplied unnecessarily” (Rubenstein 252). Thus, by the end of the fourteenth century, Scholasticism had passed, and by the time the Renaissance had arrived, classical literature had taken on new significance (Fitzpatrick, Haldane 301). The new approach to these philosophies was to study them for their own sake and to place them within their own cultural context (Fitzpatrick, Haldane 301).

It would be impossible to say that the debate between faith and reason was over in the fourteenth century as the Church moved on to a less reason-based approach to religion. Lewis, as a modern religious thinker, essentially participated in the same debate in his own literary career. His own background, much like Augustine and other classic thinkers, was firmly grounded in a rational and logical education. When he converted to Christianity, he did not leave his rationality behind. Rather, he looked for ways to employ it in defense of his faith. In Till We Have Faces, he reflects many of the same viewpoints that the early Christian fathers held. Even as Augustine embraced the pagan philosophy of Plato to illuminate Christianity, accepting it as divinely inspired, Lewis looked to myth (as did many of his friends, including J.R.R. Tolkien) for holy truth (Bassham 255).

The use of the Cupid and Psyche myth is the perfect setting for a study of the medieval and long-term debate between faith and reason. Its connection to Hellenistic thought brings Plato and Aristotle to the forefront. With them comes all the weighty baggage of the medieval debate. In Till We Have Faces, then, Lewis creates the perfect stage upon which to act out his own difficulties and questions about faith and reason.
Chapter 2

“Yet One Must Be False”: The Dialogue Between Faith and Reason in

Till We Have Faces

In The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe Susan and Peter approach the professor whose house they are living in to ask him if their sister Lucy is crazy for claiming the existence of a fantastical land named Narnia. The professor responds unexpectedly, believing Lucy’s tale, and leading the children through a logical exercise to reach the same conclusion: “There are three possibilities. Either your sister is telling lies, or she is mad, or she is telling the truth. You know she doesn’t tell lies and it is obvious that she is not mad. For the moment then and unless any further evidence turns up, we must assume that she is telling the truth” (Lewis, The Lion 52). The gruff professor can easily be read as C.S. Lewis himself, with his adherence and dedication to logic, which is to be used in understanding even the most incredible stories. So, when the professor exclaims in frustration at the children’s queries, “Logic! . . . Why don’t they teach logic at these schools?” the reader hears one of Lewis’s greatest concerns—the necessity of emphasizing the role of reason in supporting faith (Lewis, The Lion 52). It is a concern that dominates his most popular theological works, like Mere Christianity, in which he asks readers to look at the empirical evidence of their inclinations and habits of society to prove God’s existence instead of referring to the Bible or scriptural revelation. Not surprisingly, Lewis’s last and most favorite novel, Till We Have Faces, reflects a lifetime’s musing on the interaction between reason and faith.

The debate between these two concepts within the novel is represented by the protagonist Orual’s struggles. As Charles Moorman explains, her character’s journey parallels Lewis’s own progression toward faith: “The rest of the novel presents in fictional terms the
theme of Lewis’s autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*—the search of Orual for what Lewis calls ‘joy’ and the final capitulation of an honestly skeptical and questioning reason before the force of God” (Moorman 106). Moorman’s book *Arthurian Triptych* was published in 1960, merely four years after the release of *Till We Have Faces*, but his summation of the faith/reason debate seems reductive. In Moorman’s view, faith and reason are in a pitched battle: one must needs fall to the other. More recent scholarship has proposed a much more synthetic approach wherein reason complements faith, and vice versa. Ralph C. Wood notes that Lewis was a firm believer in the use of rationality to convert since he himself was so converted (Wood 812).

When looking at *Till We Have Faces*, however, critics note that reason is incomplete without faith. David Landrum discusses three disparate elements within the novel that Lewis argues are reconciled within Christianity: the ritualistic beliefs of Ungit’s old priests, the innocent belief of Psyche’s priest, and the rationality of Arnom, the new priest of Ungit (Landrum 66-67). John H. Timmerman also finds these elements of reason and belief symbolized by different people within the text. Orual is cast as the Platonic and reasoning king, Psyche as the courageous believer (Timmerman 501). Jean Marie Chard also analyzes Orual’s nickname, Maia, as that of the mother of Hermes, who is linked with rationalism as well (Chard 16). Within the novel, however, these two characters are merged into one person and the boundaries between them become unclear.

Timmerman argues, though, that Lewis’s goal is more delineated in a desire to grant credibility to faith in the light of the Western notion, drawn from Plato, that reason is everything: “Lewis’ wish is not to simply reverse this popular notion, but to define the function and limit of reason and belief in Christian epistemology” (Timmerman 501). Lewis
does not, however, wish to vilify reason, according to Timmerman: “Reason does grant us conveyance down the path of belief; it just doesn’t take us far enough” (Timmerman 502).

Peter J. Schakel, one of the best recognized Lewis scholars, interprets *Till We Have Faces* in a similar manner. He contextualizes the novel within Lewis’s biography. Schakel notes again how Lewis arrived at Christianity through reason, valuing faith for its use in supporting evidence of the senses: “Faith is important to him, but important in *adhering* to the truth one has seen” (Schakel, “Seeing” 88). In the 1950s, though, he says Lewis had become more expansive in his views, influenced by a lost debate, a rare occurrence in his life (Schakel, “Seeing” 90). Schakel echoes Timmerman: “Lewis acknowledges his own realization of the limitations of rationalism and of the need to be open to the mythical and the imaginative as avenues to Truth” (Schakel, “Seeing” 94). In *Till We Have Faces*, he says it is the character of the Fox who embodies this misguided rationalism (Schakel, “Seeing” 94).

Albert F. Reddy reads Lewis’s efforts to reconcile reason and belief as an “Epistle to the Greeks” in all readers (Reddy 156). The setting of *Till We Have Faces*, a small pagan nation existing in the same time as the Grecian empire, reproduces the historical climate in which rationalistic Greek thought infiltrates a barbarous state (Reddy 156). This theme within the book is underscored by the fact that Orual writes her own book specifically to a Greek reader. The novel, according to Reddy, is a “defense of primitive religion” (Reddy 159).

All of this is to say simply that critics have read *Till We Have Faces* as an attempt to unite reason and faith, though emphasizing the latter in the light of the former’s shortcomings. Most attention has been paid to Lewis’s mellowing in the 1950s and the softening effect of his marriage, leading to a new inclination towards belief over reason.
Reason, for the critics, if anything, leads to faith. However, this conclusion minimizes the role that reason played in the bulk of Lewis’s career and in his own conversion experience. To so clearly divide faith and reason into two separate camps, and then to belittle one to serve the other—as the critics do—is to undermine their ultimate union. Rather, *Till We Have Faces* sets up the conflict between faith and reason only to synthesize them into one concept, in the same way that the divisions between Orual and her sister Psyche dissolve so that they are essentially one and the same. The revelation of Orual (the representative of reason) at the conclusion of the novel is that she is synonymous with her sister (the representative of faith): “You also are Psyche” (Lewis, *Till* 308). This illumination comes at the end of a vision, and, ultimately, the dream vision becomes the perfect setting for a synthesis of reason and faith because it functions based on an intricate relation between these two concepts.

Lewis’s goal, then, is to destroy the dichotomy between faith and reason. This purpose is underscored by the parallel merging of history and myth. The Fox, the same character within the novel who advocates reason in all things, is also the character who denigrates myth and story, dismissing them as frivolous. As Doris T. Myers points out, though, he loves them more than the philosophy he considers truth (Myers, *C. S. Lewis* 203). When he tells the story of Aphrodite and Anchises, the Fox’s voice “deepened and lilted” in tender affection for the story, but he later explains away its value: “‘Not that this ever really happened,’” the Fox said in haste. ‘It’s only lies of poets, lies of poets, child. Not in accordance with nature” (Lewis, *Till* 8). Lewis shows that by the end of the novel, though, history is not dismissed in favor of myth. Rather, myth sheds light on real life—reversing the roles usually granted reason and faith. In subverting their roles, Lewis destroys the
boundaries between them. Myers speculates that one purpose of myth for Lewis is to prepare the ground for future harvests: “A third purpose of myth, the one Lewis espouses, is to foreshadow the coming of Christ and to build up metaphors and mental pictures through which pagans can understand the significance of the Incarnation when they hear of it” (Myers, C.S. Lewis 210-11). Even leaving aside the Christian metaphors, myth serves to enlighten Orual on her own history.

The priest of Psyche’s budding religion tells Orual the myth that has developed from her own history and, in so doing, accuses her of jealousy. She reacts angrily: “Jealousy! I jealous of Psyche? I sickened not only at the vileness of the lie but at its flatness” (Lewis, Till 245). Later, though, Orual comes to a new realization. In her angry confession or testimony at the court of the gods (within a vision) she realizes that she resents the gods for taking Psyche away, jealous of Psyche’s love: “the son turning his back on the mother and the bride on her groom, stolen away by this everlasting calling, calling, calling of the gods. Taken where we can’t follow . . . . We’d rather they were ours and dead than yours and made immortal” (Lewis Till 291). In this case, myth/belief leads the devotee on the road to reason, not vice versa.

Jerry L. Walls writes that for Lewis this synthesis of myth and history found in Christianity satisfied the two parts of his mind—one fascinated by myth and the other hopelessly dedicated to reality and rationality (Walls 18). But myths are not just the opposite of reality: Kreeft explains that they are “based on a solider reality than we dream, but are at an almost infinite distance removed from their base” (Kreeft 24; Lewis, Perelandra 201). Moorman states this point more directly: “Myth itself represents an ultimate and absolute reality” (Moorman 125). Myth is reality. What seems at first a dichotomy is no such division.
The same thing applies to reason and faith. Faith is perhaps a more solid rationality. Myers points to Plato in “Browsing the Glome Library” as the only author in whom any remnants of Stesichorus’s poetry is left, one of the poets over whom Orual passes lightly, especially compared to her approving commendation on the book about drenching horses: “In fact, Orual’s description of the Globe library is a key to her state of spiritual blindness at this point. Her quick dismissal of Plato reminds us that she has consistently rejected the possibility that there is a realm beyond the squalid, shadowy kingdom of Glome” (Myers, “Browsing” 71). This mention of Stesichorus also foreshadows Orual’s ultimate retraction of her first memoir because the poet issues an apology for his own falsehoods, advocating truth (Myers, “Browsing” 70). Orual must ultimately come to understand the truth, a truth at which Plato hints.

Plato’s philosophy is aptly summed up by Michael P. Muth, another Lewis critic. He says that physical things of earth are mere shadows or copies created by gods in imitation of greater and eternal Forms (Muth 237). Lewis describes Heaven and the eternal truths in much the same way in The Great Divorce (also written in the dream-vision format), in which Heaven is much more solid and concrete than earthly life. In Till We Have Faces, then, Plato—the father of Western religion—is closely linked with the afterlife and all that Orual rejects. This opposition again destroys the clear dichotomy of reason and faith. Orual is the embodiment of reason, yet she rejects Plato. Instead Plato is aligned with Psyche and faith. Plato and faith are in the same camp; they are united as one even as Orual and Psyche later become one. Reason and faith are unified. So when Orual declares, upon deciding whether Psyche has been kidnapped by robbers or raped by a god-like monster, essentially being
called upon to decide between the rationalism of the Fox and the faith of Bardia, “Yet one
must be false,” the reader must ultimately realize that she is mistaken (Lewis, *Till* 151).

Orual must realize that both of her advisors are ultimately torn between faith and
reason, firmly in neither court despite their insistence. In coming to her erroneous
conclusion that one must be right, Orual reviews her own mental process: “I now saw that I
had, strangely, taken both Bardia’s explanation and the Fox’s (each while it lasted) for certain
truth” (Lewis, *Till* 151). But neither view is enough on its own. Bardia has a hard time
viewing the gods as anything concrete: “I don’t well know what's really, when it comes to
houses of gods” (135). He also assumes that the god must be horrible, a Brute, as his
tradition has taught him (136). Even as the representative of faith, however, Bardia echoes
the Professor in *Till We Have Faces*, observing that Psyche is “obviously not mad” (135).
Those who know Lewis can recognize this statement as a one of reasoning. Even the most
unalloyed representative of faith within the novel cannot be completely without reason. The
Fox’s extreme is no better. He believes a man, an outlaw, has deluded Psyche into believing
her old dream of the gold and amber palace on the mountain (143-144).

Of the three of them, only Orual has first-hand information regarding the situation.
Despite her disbelief in Psyche’s tale, Orual sees her sister’s palace when she goes to the
river in the middle of the night: “There stood the palace, grey—as all things were grey in that
hour and place—but solid and motionless, wall within wall, pillar and arch and architrave,
acres of it, a labyrinthine beauty” (132). This sighting is empirical proof of Psyche’s tale,
which Orual later chooses to disbelieve in preference to the Fox’s solution. She must
discount facts in order to believe in the Fox. The reason that is represented by the Fox is
supported by her faith and desire that he must be correct. Reason and faith are mingled, if only in error.

The Fox, as the representative of this erroneous reason, appears at first to be the most misinformed character within the novel. Orual often comments that she dislikes it when her old friend acts contemptuously toward those without Greek philosophy: “the Fox often nettled me with his contempt for very brave and honest people if they had no tincture of his Greek wisdom” (146). This sharp inward reproach comes after the Fox labels Bardia a fool. Though it no doubt stems in part from her love for the soldier, it also reads as a judgment on those who do not value faith. The old priest of Ungit also highly disapproves of the Fox’s reasoning. Their disagreement comes to a head over the sacrifice of Psyche. When the Priest explains to the King how the Great Offering must be done and who will be required for it, the Fox protests, “Do you not see, Master,” he says, “that the Priest is talking nonsense?” (49). The Priest’s answer is sharp and unavering:

“We are hearing much Greek wisdom this morning, King,” said the Priest.

“And I have heard most of it before. I did not need a slave to teach it to me. It is very subtle. But it brings no rain and grows no corn; sacrifice does both . . . Much less does it give them understanding of holy things. They demand to see such things clearly, as if the gods were no more than letters written in a book . . . Holy wisdom is not clear and thin like water, but thick and dark like blood.” (50)

The Priest’s analysis is ultimately supported by the Fox himself, speaking as a dead man in Orual’s last vision. He pleads to the gods that it is his own fault that Orual knows no better or dares to judge the gods: “I made her think that a prattle of maxims would do, all
thin and clear as water. For of course water's good; and it didn’t cost much, not where I grew up. So I fed her on words” (295). Water is insufficient to quench a holy thirst. Orual, however, wants to cry out in protest. Granted, she is still in a deluded state concerning her own righteousness, but she defends the Fox, saying that he supported her with love, not words (296).

The Fox’s role within this last dream vision, however, adds a counterpoint to his own admission. Though his reason may have been largely in error, his mistakes do not discount reason entirely. And it is he who is chosen as her guide within the vision. As the conventions of dream visions dictate, the dreamers usually has a guide who leads them to understand a spiritual truth. This guide is often associated with rationality. For example, in Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy*, the guide is the figure of Philosophy herself, and she comforts Boethius largely on the basis of rational argument. The Fox can be seen as an equivalent figure. As this guide, the Fox is still able to remind Orual of some of his old teachings—teachings that have not been proven false, but rather still hold true. When Orual first embraces him eagerly at the end of her hearing, she is surprised to find that he is warm and concrete. She refers to Homer’s idea that the dead are only shadows. The Fox responds, referring to his old adage: “One thing that I told you was true. The poets are often wrong” (296). In the past when he discussed the poets in this disparaging manner, the Fox was explaining how superior philosophy and reason were to the poems and lyrical writings that he also enjoyed. By having the Fox telling Orual that this part of his teaching is not necessarily false, Lewis is again drawing the reader into the debate between myth/faith and history/reason. In adhering to his opinion that the poets are often wrong, the Fox preserves a place for reason within the religious journey and experience.
Despite his claims, the Fox supports reason by his role as guide to Orual. After explaining his view on poets to Orual, the Fox then disclaims everything else he has ever taught her: “But for all the rest—ah, you'll forgive me?” (296). However, he quickly goes on to reject this admission. While analyzing Psyche’s toils as shown in the chamber of paintings, he reminds Orual of another truth from his teaching. When he explains to Orual that her own suffering was, in one way, a substitution for the pain Psyche would otherwise have had to suffer in her struggles, he says: “That was one of the true things I used to say to you. Don’t you remember? We’re all limbs and parts of one Whole. Hence, of each other. Men, and gods, flow in and out and mingle” (301). This statement hearkens back to the repeated emphasis the Fox laid on the order of Nature that controlled all. He had used this same reason to explain the fortuitous results of Psyche’s sacrifice when he had refused to admit that her death brought rain to relieve the famine: “They and it are all part of the same web, which is called Nature, or the Whole. The weather of the whole world would have to have been different from the beginning if that wind was not to blow. It’s all one web; you can’t pick threads out nor put them in” (85). Though this last application of the Fox’s reasoning is proven wrong by the reality of Psyche’s sacrifice, the theory itself is not wrong. The Fox still holds to it in the last vision, only applying it more correctly—his reasoning is now clarified by the revelations death has granted him.

The end of *Till We Have Faces* advocates faith. Orual watches Psyche’s tasks in the painting. The last and harshest of these requires Psyche to fetch a casket of beauty from the Deadlands. When returning, she must not pay attention or speak a word to anyone beseeching help from her on her way. She must have faith that these petitioners are mere figments; she must not pay attention even to the convincing specter of her own sister Orual
(303). She must trust in the fact that the admonition that she pay no attention is both important and true. It is not this action, however, that casts Psyche in the role of faith for the novel. As the bride of the West Wind, Psyche is asked to not shed a light on her husband, to take his concern for her well-being on faith. When she succumbs to her sister’s request, her sister who reasons that gods are highly unlikely husbands, and wakes her husband with her light, she is thrown into a number of toils by Ungit. She suffers for her lack of faith, for her lack of adherence to the god’s orders. When she wins through her trials, though, and at last presents the casket of beauty to her sister Orual, the two sisters are united.

Reason, in the form of Orual, takes a different path from Faith, in the form of Psyche. As Psyche accomplishes her tasks, Orual accomplishes the same tasks in her visions. In so doing, Orual “bore the anguish. But [Psyche] achieved the tasks” (301). They completed the same journey, though fulfilling different roles. In the same way, both Reason and Faith are needed to complete the journey. And in the end both become one soul, one Psyche. The last words that Orual hears within her vision are those of the god’s: “You also are Psyche” (308). She realizes that all her questions are now answered upon seeing the god’s face: “You are yourself the answer. Before your face questions die away. What other answer would suffice?” (308). The god provides the one thing that reason always strives for, an answer, and fulfills the yearning that accompanies faith. He satisfies both the insatiable Fox and his philosophy and Psyche’s desire for a gold and amber palace on the mountain.

The very last sentence in the novel is the same that defines Orual’s audience: “The Priest who comes after me has it in charge to give up the book to any stranger who will take an oath to bring it into Greece” (309). The audience that Orual designates at the end of the
second part of her testimony is the same that she requested at the beginning of the first part of her book:

I write in Greek as my old master taught it to me. It may some day happen that a traveler from the Greeklands will again lodge in this palace and read the book. Then he will talk of it among the Greeks, where there is great freedom of speech even about the gods themselves. Perhaps their wise men will know whether my complaint is right or whether the god could have defended himself if he had made an answer. (4)

Though Orual initially asks for the rational and wise Greeks to read her work so that they might justify her claim against the gods, she does not abandon this audience at the end. Even though she has settled her own argument and come to peace concerning the gods, Orual still values the Greek audience. It may be that she hopes to temper their extreme rationality with the faith she has herself learned, but she values their starting point. It was the same point that she herself started, and, in her journey, she does not abandon reason. Reason is not to be belittled by the infusion of faith, as critics of Till We Have Faces seem to suggest. Even though Lewis may have softened and valued faith more in his later writings than in his earlier works, he still valued the reason that first converted him. In fact, faith and reason are not opposing concepts. They are fused in the Christian faith, even as myth and history are for Lewis.

The medieval works that contextualized and created Lewis’s career show this same concern, the use of reason to understand faith, the crucial value of reason. Dream visions springing from this same context exhibit a similar fusion of faith and reason. Within the supernatural and spiritual vision, the guide and the knowledge are often reasonable and
carefully reasoning, and the convention itself is a deliberate method used to persuade readers and listeners. Reason becomes just as religious a figure as faith.
Chapter 3

“And I Understood By My Reason”:

Seeking Reason in the Dream-Vision Genre

One cannot escape Plato, even in dreams. The philosophical debate between reason and faith, between induction and deduction, between Aristotle and Plato, also defines the way in which medieval thinkers approached the use and origin of dreams. Scholar Kathryn Lynch notes that those who wrote and imitated dream-visions in the Middle Ages were at the same time referring to and studying Greek and Roman texts (Lynch 51). She even states that the “first significant medieval vision poems formed part of a movement to revive Platonism” (Lynch 70). Though Biblical visions such as Revelations and the vision of Saul are the ultimate origin of the dream-vision genre, it is in these Hellenistic texts that the West found great inspiration. Cicero ended his Republic with a vision in response to Plato’s Republic (Spearing 9). The Apocalypse of St. Paul, an elaboration of the apostle’s encounter with God on the road to Damascus, was written in the third century and in Greek; it is one of the first Christian religious-visions (Spearing 13).

As dreams and their narratives became a more prominent aspect of medieval secular and religious life, they required classification. As C. S. Lewis comments in “Imagination and Thought,” “medieval man was not a dreamer nor a spiritual adventurer; he was an organizer, a codifier, a man of system” (Lewis, “Imagination” 44). Macrobius, a contemporary of Augustine, provided a clear taxonomy in Commentary on the Dream of Scipio for the identification of dreams that ranged from insomnium, the nightmare, to visio, the vision (Hieatt 27). He was also a Neo-Platonist, engaging in the philosophical tradition that Augustine later synthesized with Christianity (Gunn 133).
In fact, as Kruger explains, the Neo-platonic world-view informed the very way in which medieval believers thought they could be approached by God—through a series of intermediate steps (Kruger 33); dream visions provided this intervening ground upon which God and humanity could communicate. Dream narratives, after all, are intrinsically linked to Platonism—Christian or not. In *Metamorphoses*, written by Apuleius (whom Augustine later contemptuously called The Golden Ass, a nickname whose origins are unsure), Platonic themes are widespread (Gollnick 22). The human concern with reaching God and the divine is no doubt universal, but in the Western mind, it is also specifically Platonic (Gollnick 22). This theme is ever-present in the *Metamorphoses* (Gollnick 22), but it is the driving force of most revelatory dream visions, if not also the later allegorical romances.

In the Middle Ages, to understand and reach God was first and foremost a matter of faith, but within that, of revelation. Revelation provides a more immediate and intimate connection with both truth and God. Dreams—and revelation as well, however, have often been linked with emotion both in classical and modern texts, which complicates the discussion of reason within dream-visions. Even Plato drew a connection between dreams and emotion in his *Republic*, noting that, in sleep, passionate and even dangerous emotions are free that are normally suppressed during wakeful hours dominated by reason (Plato 218; Kruger 18). For modern readers, willing to conflate dreams and dream-visions, the emotional connotation of dreams in general affects a consideration of the reason within them. The acceptance of dream visions as a revelatory, imaginative, and possibly emotional genre, however, was natural to readers and listeners of the Middle Ages. As medieval scholar Carolly Erickson notes, “The visionary imagination, long a disquieting embarrassment to rationalistic historians, was in the medieval period not aberrant but mundane” (Erickson 30).
Work on “The Dream of the Rood,” written in the seventh or eighth century, showcases the preoccupation of modern critics with looking at the intimate and revelatory nature of dream visions forcibly divorced from the reason within them. Anthony Grasso suggests the vision’s main purpose: “Its aim appears to be to reinforce faith and to evoke an interior conversion, an individual response” (Grasso 23). It is far too simple, however, to dismiss dreams as purely individual and private. Their revelatory nature is rather sometimes purposefully constructed for a wider audience using reason. Some scholars recognize that there is an interaction between revelation and reason within the visions, even if they explore more heavily the revelation aspect: reason is used to explain and comprehend the unexplainable. This position sets up yet a further inquiry, however. At what point do revolution and reason merge? Is it when they are used to explain, comprehend, and understand the same image, the same vision? Dream visions, rather than serving to support the medieval Church’s dichotomy of revelation and reason within religion, instead integrated the two means of truth into a new and stronger religious character.

As the Middle Ages, between 1000 and 1400, was a period in which the creation, exploration, and destruction of dichotomies was prolific, there were parallel unions to that of revelation and reason, even within the dream-vision context. As translations of Arabic medical texts became available in the eleventh century and, in the hundred years following, texts by Aristotle and Avicenna, medieval thinkers discussed the body in more Hellenistic and scientific terms and as a result, discussed the soul in contrast with its housing (Kruger 69). The dichotomy of body and soul became significant in the discussion and analysis of dreams: it was important to distinguish where body and soul separated. Lynch explains the way in which dreams contributed to this effort: “Because dreams occur while man is in the
body and yet seem to lead him to a knowledge that transcends bodily limitations, they have a
special relevance to the thinker who seeks to explore the threshold between body and spirit”
(Lynch 64).

Julian of Norwich’s dream visions serve as perfect examples in which to explore this
dichotomy of soul and body. In 1373, she reported a series of sixteen revelations, resulting
from three requests she had made of God: “The first was recollection of the Passion. The
second was bodily sickness. The third was to have, of God’s gift, three wounds” (Julian 177).
To understand God better, she said that she wanted not only to see and understand God
through sight, but also to experience his suffering. Illumination is a two-fold process for her,
complete only if she feels as well as views. Laurie Finke explains how important it was to
Julian that readers understand her visions as twofold: “Julian insists that her visions are
both external and internal, corporeal and spiritual; they involve both body and the imaginative
faculties” (Finke 170).

Similar to the body and soul dichotomy was the struggle between heavenly and
earthly desires—in Biblical language especially, the earth was often associated with the body,
the temporary shell. Steven Kruger depicts a twelfth century in which men and women
struggled with two natures and desires, one upper and one lower (Kruger 81). Lynch also
speaks to the desire the Middle Ages had to reconcile these two competing needs: a
“synthesis of heavenly and earthly” matters (Lynch 76; Kruger 81). As a result of this
attempt at reconciliation, medieval thinkers believed that spirit and matter were linked and
that spirit could be illuminated by matter, and in a very concrete way, as Lynch explores:
“the possibility of knowing spirit through matter, not as something separate from it that
merely casts its shadow back over this world” (Lynch 61). All of these dichotomies, at root,
seem to be a rephrasing of the same central concern. Soul and body. Heaven and earth. Spirit and matter. Revelation and reason. Are they one or two? Marsha Dutton explains Julian of Norwich’s dream visions as an injunction to Christians to use reason in understanding faith (Dutton 100). This goal seems to echo that of using matter to understand spirit; even as spirit and matter can be much more than shadows of each other, separate no matter how equally balanced, so faith and reason can be joined, casting the same light on the religious journey. Dream visions, in just this way, redefine the reason-revelation dichotomy, reconciling concepts long set in opposition to each other.

Even as the debate between revelation and reason wavered between extremes regarding practical and everyday theology and the study of Scripture, so their respective roles within dream visions have varied, though in general, the use of reason has been far more accepted within dreams than within debates between the church fathers. Indeed, most critics seem to accept reason as an acceptable and expected element within 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 (Lynch 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 visionary and reader of the vision to struggle in grasping the extended knowledge, making the acquisition of reason valuable to all (Gunn 31). As Dutton explains, referring specifically to the visions of Julian, any knowledge gained through personal revelation must eventually be re-understood through the lens of reason (Dutton 113).
The presence of reason within these dream visions is not merely implied or expected, however. It is also explicitly represented by characters and guides within the dream or referred to in observations from the narrator. Boethius’s *The Consolation of Philosophy*, written in 524 A.D., offers as a guide to the disconsolate Boethius the figure of Philosophy herself. Though he is within the Christian tradition, Boethius, as A. C. Spearing makes clear, was indeed writing about philosophy, not theology (Spearing 23). In support of this position, Spearing points to the structure of the vision. Set up as a dialogue, *Consolation* refers to Plato’s dialogues, calling on a long tradition of reason to support its claims (Spearing 19). Philosophy’s very figure calls to mind the Platonic idea of intermediates: “At the lower edge of her robe was woven a Greek Π at the top the letter Ø, and between them were seen clearly marked stages, like stairs, ascending from the lowest level to the highest” (Boethius 4). As this stern yet beautiful figure of reason and philosophy, she is quick to turn away the Muses, who would encourage Boethius to indulge his grief and emotion: “Wounded Muses tell me what I must write, and elegiac verses bathe my face with real tears” (Boethius 3).

Lynch explains that the figure of Philosophy or Reason appearing within a vision is not unique to Boethius; figures like Genius and Reason make frequent allegorical appearances in both religious visions and courtly love visions (Lynch 7). In fact, Constance Hieatt says that the use of the dream genre within love poetry was specifically modeled on Christian poetry, subsumed for the service of the God of Love (Hieatt 21). Hieatt notes, though, that later religious works seemed to draw on many of the romantic conventions in return (Hieatt 21). Within the expanded genre of the dream vision, then, Reason still remained a central figure more than six hundred years after *Consolation of Philosophy*. Spearing remarks that the allegorical *Roman de la Rose*, which was written over the course of the
thirteenth century, nods to both religious and romantic concerns, incorporates the voice of Reason as “the image of God in the human soul” (Spearing 29). In the fourteenth century, Reason and philosophy make numerous appearances, for example, in Piers Plowman, in which Reason directly addresses the narrator’s questions (Spearing163). And yet later, in the fifteenth century, King James I of Scotland begins his own dream vision, The Kingis Quairis, with the mention that he is reading Boethius’s Consolation, a reference that also places his narration within the tradition of reason-dictated spirituality (Spearing 182). Other fourteenth-century dream visions, such as that of Nicole Oresme, use characters like Geometry and Arithmetic to present intellectual debates (Hieatt 14).

From its consistent appearance in visions, Reason appears to be a crucial part of the dream vision. The presence of this intellectual element within moments of such spiritual transcendence—whether fictional or biographical—can be traced back even to Augustine and his Platonic roots. The forefather dictated that spiritual visions must, by necessity, be accompanied with intellectual visions (Kruger 41). Even before Augustine, St. Paul advised that not all in the Church can speak in tongues. Some must translate: “He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified” (1 Cor. 14.5b). Revelation must be joined with reason before either can function effectively.

Many authors of dream visions also purposefully construct their narratives to encourage specific responses or thought processes on the part of the reader or listener. Even early visions like the Old English Dream of the Rood (7th - 8th c.) that strike modern readers as primarily concerned with the heavy visual imagery and truth descending directly from God cause scholars to analyze possible intentions in both wording and structure. In the Dream of
the Rood, the second sentence places immediate emphasis on the extravagance of the image: “It seemed to me that I saw a most rare tree reach high aloft, wound in light, brightest of beams. All that beacon was covered with gold” (Dream 27). Gradually, as the image grows more tragic, bloody with Christ’s suffering, the narrator is moved to suffering himself: “I was all afflicted with sorrows, I was afraid for that fair sight” (Dream 27). Moved so by the dream, the dreamer is open to the instruction from the Cross that it is from him that humanity will learn: “but through the Cross shall the kingdom be sought by each soul on this earthly journey that thinks to dwell with the Lord” (Dream 29).

Despite this emphasis on the revelatory nature of the dream, however, Anthony Grasso looks at the progression of images within the Dream of the Rood and notes a deliberate construction—its similarity to the construction of the Nicene Creed:

Like the Creed, the poem moves from the concept of God as Light through the death, resurrection and Second Coming of Christ, even echoing phrases from that prayer which would be familiar to any Christian. Just as the pattern of the Creed proceeds from a summary of the tenets of faith to focus on the believers gathered at worship, the poem treats the salvific event and then emphasizes the individual response of the rood and the onlookers to that event. (Grasso 24)

Though Grasso goes on to emphasize that the ultimate point of this parallel is forcefully to remind listeners to hold to faith (Grasso 24), one must credit the writer with deliberate reason and sage purpose. Reason is employed in this poem to bring readers to a spiritual revelation or reform.
Written in the eighth century as well, Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* also presents a dream vision that seems purely concerned with revelation, but contains slight hints of Platonic reason as well. When the dreamer encounters a beautiful meadow filled with parties of happy people, he asks his guide whether this is Heaven (Bede 287). The guide disillusions him of this notion, leading him on to the true heaven (Bede 287). The dreamer’s description of the real heaven echoes Plato’s eternal Forms, far more concrete than any earthly equivalent:

> I saw ahead of us a much more lovely light than before, and heard in it a sweet sound of people singing, while a scent of such surpassing fragrance emanated from the place that the earlier scent that I had thought so wonderful now seemed quite trifling. And even the wonderful light that had flooded the flowery meadow seemed thin and dim when compared with that now visible. (Bede 287)

St. Anselm (1033-1109), archbishop of Canterbury, inverted the progression from reason to revelation that occurs in the *Rood* and had a more explicit rational outcome than the vision in Bede. Eadmer writes that when Anselm was constructing his highly rational *Proslogion*, which sought to provide proofs for God’s existence, he was enlightened by a vision from God that later helped him to construct his logical text (Erickson 42-43). Later even than these authors, Margery Kempe (1373-1438) dictated to scribes her encounters with Jesus. Her emphasis was largely on the revelatory experience of her visions, and she was reputed to arouse ill will with her overwhelming emotional responses, namely loud weeping and crying (David, Simpson 383).
Margery Kempe’s weeping was largely cued by the extreme emotional, even erotic, nature of her dreams (David, Simpson 383). In one instance, Jesus instructs Margery that he will be all to her, husband and son: “And therefore thou mayst boldly take me in the arms of thy soul and kiss my mouth, my head, and my feet as sweetly as thou wilt” (Kempe 392). Even within this context, however, reason is still present. Kempe acknowledges that it is Jesus who brings Margery back from a great sickness and as a result of his appearance her reason and wits are restored: “our merciful Lord Christ Jesu . . . appeared to his creature . . . And anon the creature was stabled in her wits and in her reason as well as ever she was before” (Kempe 385). Though the use of “creature” seems significant in characterizing Margery, it does not eliminate the presence of reason. It is Jesus who brings reason and sanity—not who takes it away.

In Julian of Norwich’s text—equally controversial to Margery in terms of her theology—the synthesis of reason and revolution becomes crucial for her own goal within the text. It would be a mistake to ignore the great amount of reason she both encourages her listeners and readers to employ and also the rational approach she takes in constructing her narrative. The presence of both a shorter text and a longer revised text of her visions supports an idea of Julian’s deliberate utilization of revision and reason to allow her message to reach the greatest amount of people. Medieval scholar Marsha Dutton notes that whereas in the first version Julian encourages the acceptance of Church doctrines, she rewrites her text to encourage independent use of reason on the part of her readers (Dutton 100). As a woman and therefore held to be of less import within the church, Finke says, Julian would have had to be meticulous in her own use of reason as well (Finke 169).
Dutton emphasizes that Julian was quite aware of the literary genre within which she was writing—well enough aware to manipulate it to articulate her own theological views (Dutton 104-5). This form includes a dialogue format that imitates philosophers like Plato and later writers who were also influenced by philosophers—dream narrators like Boethius (Dutton 99). The dialogue format raises certain expectations in the audience. The audience is prepared to employ reason and follow a logical train of thought from question to answer. One of the most famous Julian passages involves a crucial question that provides a key to the rest of the *Showings*.

And in this he showed me something small, no bigger than a hazel nut, lying in the palm of my hand, as it seemed to me, and it was as round as a ball. I looked at it with the eye of my understanding and thought: What can it be? I was amazed that it could last, for I thought that because of its littleness it would suddenly have fallen into nothing. And I was answered in my understanding: It lasts and always will, because God loves it; and thus everything has being through the love of God. (Julian 183)

Within this passage, Julian first asks a question concerning the nature of what turns out to be the creation of God’s love. She expresses her doubts and inquisitiveness. She finds her answer within her own understanding or reason. In her last chapter, Julian echoes the same language, emphasizing that the answer to one of the first questions in her vision is one that highlights her entire text: “And from the time that it was revealed, I desired many times to know in what was our Lord’s meaning. And fifteen years after and more, I was answered in spiritual understanding, and it was said: What, do you wish to know your Lord’s meaning in this thing? Know it well, love was his meaning” (Julian 342).
Though the love of God is hardly controversial or in opposition to Church teaching, Brad Peter notes that the other theology Julian presented, ostensibly with the authority of God was much more controversial—namely, her idea of sin (Peters 369). When presenting these ideas, then, she had to be extremely careful in how she proffered them to a potentially resisting public; logic became crucial. Peters outlines three rhetorical techniques that Julian employs in selling this most difficult point: metanoia, backing off from a statement only to return to it circuitously and restate it differently, demonstratio, providing demonstrations of her points, and argumentum ex concessis, conceding and building from an accepted truth to arrive at a point sometimes in opposition to it (Peters 368). Julian’s view on sin is controversial because it honors rather than condemns sin: “God also showed me that sin is no shame, but honour to man, for in this vision my understanding was lifted up to heaven” (Julian 154). Though her statement is unorthodox, Julian is quick to pair it with heavenly authority. She is also careful to place her statement in the context of earthly authority as well.

In the use of the argumentum ex concessis, Julian jumps works from Augustine’s position regarding sin as “nonbeing” in contrast to God’s deeds, which are unfailingly good (Augustine, “On Free Will” 193; Peters 369). She then subverts Augustine’s argument, however, to support her own—that the existence of sin is doubtful (Julian 197-98; Peters 369): “I was compelled to admit that everything which is done is well done, for our Lord God does everything . . . . And I was certain that he does not sin; and here I was certain that sin is no deed, for in all this sin was not shown to me” (Julian 197-98). For Julian, sin does not truly exist.

Therefore, what Julian claims to be revelatory knowledge, understanding that she links with prayer and faith, is also inextricably tied to reason. If not for reason, Julian’s
attempt for others to accept her revelation fails. Though Julian touts herself as a “simple, unlettered creature” (Julian 177), Dutton notes that Julian’s Showings are a call for all believers to use reason in addressing their faith (Dutton 102). Reason, in Julian’s teaching, is not a mere faculty but a gift from God (Dutton 102). By repeated mention of the word, Julian makes it clear, after all, that it is her reason which guides her through these visions. Already in the third chapter, she explains that her reason allowed her to understand that the pains she felt would result in her death: “And I understood by my reason and the sensation of my pains that I should die; and with all the will of my heart I assented to be wholly as was God’s will” (Julian 179). Julian has established her way of life as one of reason; reason helps her to interpret the sensory world around her (Julian 179).

Despite this emphasis on reason, critics are eager to explore the revelatory nature of Julian’s visions apart from the reason. Jean Leclercq is quick to remind modern readers that, despite the heavy influence of reason in Julian’s visions, the mystical aspect must not be forgotten. The very basis of her vision, after all, is that of a mystical experience: “Julian presents us with a typical example of a theology based on mystical experience, which certainly does not exclude the activity of reason but which can in no way be reduced to the rational” (Leclercq 5). The revelatory nature of the vision cannot be ignored, but as usual, Leclercq sets up the relationship between revelation and reason as inherently distinct. He places reason in opposition to revelation or mysticism. For Leclercq and other critics, reason cannot be calculated into the study of revelation and the sense of faith in a dream vision’s personal connection.

The insistence on this dichotomy, however, flies in the face of all that narrators like Julian of Norwich were attempting. From the very language that Julian employs, it is clear
that she did not somehow consider reason to be opposed to her mystical experience, but rather as an important and crucial piece of it. In fact, she seems to defend its presence to readers: “I contemplated with reverent fear, greatly marveling at the sight and the feeling of the sweet harmony, that our reason is in God, understanding that this is the highest gift that we have received, and its foundation is in nature (Julian 340). Reason is not simply a tool to understand God—it is within him. As God contains all that is good and is the origin of all earthly experience and creation (especially within Julian’s text, wherein sin itself is, in a roundabout way, attributed to God as a badge of honor rather than a token of shame), so reason is essentially mingled with the very vision and mysticism that defines her revelatory experience. As if she realizes the conventional dichotomy of revelation and reason, Julian addresses that these two concepts should rather be joined as one, even in the way that a man and a woman legally and spiritually become one person:

In this matter I had touching, sight and feeling of three properties of God, in which consist the strength and the effect of all the revelation. And it was seen in every revelation, and most exactly in the twelfth, where it says repeatedly: I am he. The properties are these: life, love and light. In life is wonderful familiarity, in love is gentle courtesy, and in light is endless nature.

These three properties were seen in one goodness, to which goodness my reason wanted to be united and to cleave with all my powers. (Julian 339-340).

She continues in this same passage to equate faith to light, one of the properties to which reason wanted to cling. This light, in turn, descends directly from God, who, as she
has earlier declared, is the origin of reason (Julian 340). For Julian, reason is of one piece with faith, light, and goodness. All are defined within the nature of God.

Julian is not alone in her deliberate attention to reason. Returning to Boethius and his guide, Philosophy, readers can note that near the end of the vision, Boethius’s guide addresses the issue of knowledge gained by reason versus knowledge gained by the senses or imagination. Philosophy informs Boethius that senses ought ultimately to submit to reason’s superiority: “But if we, who are endowed with reason, could possess the intelligence of the divine mind, we would judge that just as the senses and imagination should accede to reason, so human reason ought justly to submit to the divine mind” (Boethius 114). She emphasizes that the divine intelligence transcends even reason and is even absorbed within it. The divine intelligence, though, encompasses more than just reason or those things that reason can comprehend: “Let us rise, if we can, to the summit of the highest intelligence; for there reason will see what in itself it cannot see: that a certain and definite foreknowledge can behold even those things which have no certain outcome” (Boethius 114). For the human mind to contemplate uncertain outcomes, it must employ faith. Boethius, via his lovely guide, however, shows that this idea of faith is encompassed and submissive to the divine intelligence in the same way as is reason. They are absorbed into one overarching intelligence.

Rather than viewing reason as a concept diametrically opposed to faith, imagination, or the senses (no matter how crucial its presence), dream visions seem to point to a more synthetic consideration of reason and faith’s respective roles. Narrators and guides within the visions are often representatives of, or closely tied to, Reason. In accordance with Augustine’s necessary “intellectual vision,” the presence of Reason is not optional but
absolutely required and intrinsic to actually useful visions. Without its aid, access to the revelation is impossible. Because of necessity, reason is not merely a chosen method or lens, but rather a component of revelation. Its different characteristics do not set reason in opposition to faith or revelation. It would be impossible to argue that revelation and reason are the same in the way that the hands of two strangers are the essentially the same. I do not intend to. But it is possible to argue that revelation and reason are the same in the way that a hand and an arm are part of the same limb. Reason is not a stranger’s hand lifting a fallen comrade. It is a hand connected to an arm by inseparable nerves and flesh, both pushing together against the ground, rising together. The way in which modern critics and analysts observe the faith and reason debate of the early church or the way in which they interpret dream visions seems to imply that no matter how well the two concepts of faith and reason work together, they are intrinsically different, intrinsically separate. Some of the church fathers would seem to agree with this view because they so vehemently opposed philosophy’s intrusion into theology.

The authors of dream visions, however, offer readers a different picture. Perhaps their redefinition of reason was not so intentional that they realized the full extent of their task. But the very nature of their texts and their genre presupposes a blending, a liminal space where new truths are found, where revelation illuminates the mind. As Susan Gunn notes, the dreamer who returns to waking life returns with new views, his old having been “thoroughly shaken” (Gunn 134). This liminal space seems out of the control of even the dreamer. It is, in fact, a place of contradictions. The dream narrative is carefully structured and yet springs from a spontaneous revelation. When later poets, like Chaucer, turned to the dream narratives as a recognizable convention for their own tales, they turned to a medium
that Constance Hieatt describes as intrinsically confusing: “a setting where the unreal and the imaginative, because they are possible, cannot be judged by the standards of waking reality. It is a device to lend credence to the marvelous” (Hieatt 18). It is also often a deliberate and logical choice. It is a spiritual experience for both the dreamer and the reader. And the very nature of the genre offers the authority of God behind its teachings (Hieatt 20).

For the medieval thinker, and for many moderns as well, the dream is more than a mental or psychological blip; it is the crossroads of mind and soul, reason and faith. It is where they join and lead in one united direction. James Gollnick elaborates on Tertullian’s views of dreaming and the soul in a way that highlights the great importance of dreams in evaluating the medieval view of human nature. For Tertullian, Gollnick explains, dreams were evidence of human immortality, of human divinity and connection with God (Gollnick 37). For the dream vision, this divinity was far more complex than any mere dichotomy could explain. In the medieval dreamscape, faith and reason clove unto each other.
Chapter 4

“I Read as a Native”: Contextualizing Lewis and *Till We Have Faces* in Medieval Conventions

When the first edition of *Till We Have Faces* was released, C. S. Lewis explained the desire he had harbored for years to write the novel: “This re-interpretation of an old story has lived in the author’s mind, thickening and hardening with the years, ever since he was an undergraduate. That way, he could be said to have worked at it most of his life” (Lewis, *Till* front matter). It seems safe to say, then, that the ultimate form of the completed novel was a product of Lewis’s occupations and changing interests throughout his entire adult life. Therefore, it was also his favorite piece among all he had written, though the public did not receive it so cordially (Mattson 82). For him, this tale encompassed a large number of crucial and compelling themes: “the straight tale of barbarism, the mind of an ugly woman, dark idolatry and pale enlightenment at war with each other and with vision, and the havoc which a vocation, or even faith, works on human life” (Lewis, *Till* front matter). The novel explicitly deals with dichotomies of light and dark, but it also illuminates ancient and well-studied dichotomies like those of faith and reason, and myth and history.

For such a weighty work, Lewis knew he needed the right form and was willing to wait for just such a form: “In the spring of 1955, what seemed to be the right form presented itself and themes suddenly interlocked” (Lewis, *Till* front matter). Because Lewis placed such a high value on the right form for the right narrative (Schakel, *Longing* xi), it is crucial to analyze the forms he did choose and to understand why and how they work within his text, illuminating the content and theme.
The familiarity Lewis had with the texts that were his life study, as a professor of Medieval and Renaissance at Cambridge, was no brief or fleeting one. He comments in his essay “De Descriptione Temporum,” self-disparagingly, that he is so entrenched within his field that he no longer reads its texts as an outsider: “One thing I know: I would give a great deal to hear any ancient Athenian, even a stupid one, talking about Greek tragedy. . . . Ladies and gentlemen, I stand before you somewhat as that Athenian might stand. I read as a native texts that you must read as foreigners . . . . who can be proud of speaking fluently in his mother tongue?” (Lewis, “De Descriptione” 13). When a reader opens Lewis’s books, therefore, and notes that a passage recalls a dream-vision or a theme calls to mind medieval concerns, it is impossible to think other than that he purposely incorporated these elements or was at least inherently aware of the significance of these forms and topics. For he was, in the truest sense, a Renaissance man.

Lewis’s concerns when addressing medieval and Renaissance texts were largely grounded in the philosophical concerns and overarching mindset of the writers of those eras. As the Middle Ages rediscovered Plato and other Hellenistic thinkers, thinkers began to structure the world within the framework of these philosophers’ ideas and to adapt classical philosophies to Christianity. In large part, this process revolved around Plato’s forms and the distinction between real truth and mere shadows. Lewis inserted himself into this discussion, updating it for modern readers and students. He explored the comparative reality of myth and history, the reality of God in an increasingly rational world that deemed religion a fantasy. Lewis advocated an approach to literature wherein the readers immerse themselves in the world of the text: “By study of things outside the poem, by comparing it with other poems, by steeping yourself in the vanished period, you can then re-enter the poem with
eyes more like those of natives” (Lewis “De Audiendus” 3). He urged others to become as familiar with the texts they read as he himself was. His own approach to literature seems to offer sufficient excuse for a critic approaching *Till We Have Faces* to truly dig into the medieval, philosophical, and mythical background that helps in order to view it with knowledgeable eyes.

Given the novel’s classical setting and Lewis’s background, the discussion of Platonic thought and early church history is clearly the context of this novel. Many of Lewis’s novels and works leading up to *Till We Have Faces* concern themselves with the same quandaries. As Andrew Wheat explains, *The Pilgrim’s Regress* (1933), the first Christian novel Lewis penned in an attempt to work out the perils and philosophical struggles of the Christian life, was concerned with many of the same dichotomies as were people of the Middle Ages: “Though some enemies were irreconcilable, many apparent adversaries, Lewis discovered, needed to join forces: among them, intellect and intuition, reason and revelation, progress and regress, art and instruction, duty and desire, authoritative tradition and individual experience” (Wheat 22). Since *Pilgrim’s Regress* also clearly attributed its format and method to John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*—a dream vision—Lewis entered early into the tradition of dealing with philosophy within the liminal dream-vision state. By the time he penned *Till We Have Faces*, Lewis had progressed beyond arguing that opposed forces be joined to actively merging and synthesis of apparent dichotomies. John H. Timmerman declares *Till We Have Faces* to be the most philosophical of Lewis’s work (Timmerman 501).

The philosophical nature of *Till We Have Faces* is apparent not only in the content, but in the form as well. The subtitle of *Pilgrim’s Regress* is “An Allegorical Approach for Christianity, Reason, and Romanticism.” The subtitle for *Till We Have Faces* is something
quite different: “A Myth Retold.” Nathan Comfort Starr presents a letter from Lewis to Fr. Peter Milward that emphasizes the importance of this distinction:

A good myth (i.e. a story out of which ever varying meanings will grow for different readers and in different ages) is a higher thing than an allegory (into which one meaning has been put). Into an allegory a man can put only what he already knows; in a myth he puts what he does not yet know and could not come by in any other way. (Starr 31-32)

In this definition of myth, Lewis describes a genre that functions much like the dream vision, whose narrator is unsure and needs the vision in order to understand in a way no other medium can allow. Wheat provides Lewis’s opinion that myth “gives us more or less direct access to transcendent reality” (Wheat 23). It is appropriate that Lewis merges these two forms within *Till We Have Faces*. By his great respect for myth, then, Lewis also places this last novel far above *Pilgrims’ Regress* in terms of its insight. His definition of the form dictates such an elevation. On this plane, Lewis can express a loftier union between reason and revelation, as well as between myth and reality.

Though in his afterword for *Till We Have Faces* Lewis distances himself from Apuleius, the recorder of the Eros and Psyche myth upon which he bases his novel, he cannot entirely avoid Apuleius’s influence. He explains in an afterword the distance he creates between his own work and the original: “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” (Lewis, *Till 313*). He further separates himself from Apuleius, citing him not as an “influence” or
“model” but merely a “source” (Lewis, *Till* 313). Even a source, however, provides him with the basic plot points of his novel.

Gollnick explains that the plot of the Eros and Psyche myth also mirrors the dream vision. He labels the myth an archetypal dream within the framed narrative of Lucius’s religious journey (Gollnick 9). Serving in this capacity, the dream both predicts the future and places the past in new perspective (Gollnick 9). It is expertly placed within the text to illuminate the story as a whole—much as Orual’s visions in *Till We Have Faces* provide new meanings for all the events that have come before (Zimmerman 3). Written in the second century, the Eros and Psyche myth as found in *Metamorphoses* was first appropriated into Christian allegory in the fifth century by Fulgentius (Gollnick 81). Though influenced by Christian concerns, Lewis retrieves the pagan Eros and Psyche myth from allegory, elevating it to myth once again—a story of real people, real emotions, and real choices. In doing so, he discusses the issues of faith versus reason in a broad manner: it is not only a Christian concern, it is a human one.

Lewis’s devotion to myth was not a trivial or passing one. He, along with fellow Inklings such as J. R. R. Tolkien, revered myth as more than a story. For them, Schakel says, myths merely presaged the truth—prepared the way for people to accept greater revelations like the coming of Christ (Schakel 31). When that myth becomes truth, when the Dying God myth becomes Jesus, it still remains myth as well—it is this concept which entranced Lewis (Lewis “Myth” 66). Beyond myths’ spiritual role, however, Lewis valued myth as good literature, able to maintain listeners’ attention merely for its own sake (Oury 11, 18). Scripture itself he claimed was a blend of myth and realism (Huttar 121). Even as Augustine thought Plato was divinely inspired despite his pagan heritage, Lewis was convinced that
pagan religion—of which myths form a crucial element—was the forerunner of Christianity (Wood 815). In line with this idea, Gwyneth Hood comments on critics who have recognized the morality and divinity of Metamorphoses, even so far as to label it “as moral a work as the Confessions” (Hood 34).

Within The Discarded Image, Lewis looked more closely at Apuleius—the author of Metamorphoses and the Cupid and Eros myth that Lewis would later adopt as his own—not in the light of his myth but in the light of the Platonic knowledge he handed down to the Middle Ages. Lewis discussed one piece of this knowledge as the “Principle of the Triad” (his terminology) (Lewis, The Discarded Image 43). Lewis refers to Plato for the clearest explanation: “it is impossible that two things only should be joined together without a third” (Lewis 43). He goes on to clarify that, within Platonic theory, human and God cannot meet without a bridge—without a third thing (Lewis 43). Dream visions provide this bridge between God and human and appear in both Apuleius’s Metamorphoses and Till We Have Faces.

And as much as his passion for myth drove his texts, Lewis was also highly aware of the medieval genre, the dream vision. In fact, this genre was the focal point of his most popular piece of literary criticism, The Allegory of Love. This critical text deals with the Romance of the Rose, the thirteenth-century dream vision that narrates the Lover’s pursuit of the Rose, a work that Lewis studied in the light of courtly love and allegory. In his analysis of this text, he commented on the idea of symbolism and allegory in the same Platonic manner that he discussed heaven in works like The Great Divorce. The world wherein humans live and which needs allegory is but a shadow of the higher Form and ideas from which allegorists draw their vehicles: “The symbolist leaves the 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 unimagined dimensions” (Lewis, *Allegory* 45). Within the context of the dream vision, then, the dream as allegory can provide a much more concrete and real truth than waking life can. Combined with myth, which transmits reality (“reality is that about which truth is”) as opposed to truth (“truth is always about something”), the dream vision becomes a powerful tool that can deeply affecting and change the dreamer (Lewis, “Myth” 66).

Robert Boenig, discussing Lewis’s *The Great Divorce*, provides basic conventions of the literary dream vision. His points seem to be drawn primarily from texts like *The Romance of the Rose*: “We may summarize the plot of the typical medieval Dream Vision as follows: a first-person narrator falls asleep and finds himself in a springtime garden where he meets a guide who points out the garden’s wonders and reveals, often through allegory, some kind of wisdom, usually somehow associated with love” (Boenig 36). These conventions echo those of the religious dream-visions but are directed toward the discussion of love rather than God. Constance Hieatt notes that, in fact, allegorical romances stole many of their conventions from religious texts (Hieatt 21). Within religious texts, the dreamer does not necessarily have to be asleep, but he or she sees either God or a religious guide who provides a balm to suffering or enlightenment regarding theology or God’s nature.

Lewis clearly valued the uses of this genre, and the rhetorical history that accompanied it, because he employed it in texts before *Till We Have Faces*. *The Pilgrim’s Regress* is a response to John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, which is framed within a fictional dream vision. The partial title of this narrative is *The Pilgrim’s Progress, From This World to That Which is to Come. Delivered under the Similitude of a Dream*. Bunyan begins his allegorical tale with the
following words: “As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place, where was a Den, and laid me down in that place to sleep; and as I slept, I dreamed a dream. I dreamed, and behold, I saw a man clothed with rags” (Bunyan 9). Lewis’s book also has a useful subtitle: An Allegorical Apology for Christianity, Reason and Romanticism. Dream visions are often allegorical in nature (e.g., The Romance of the Rose), so already in his title, Lewis alludes to Bunyan’s original dream vision. The page that introduces Book One also includes epigraphs from Plato and Boethius, forming links between both the philosophical ideas upon which medieval Christianity was in part founded and Boethius’s The Consolation of Philosophy, a fundamental medieval dream vision. Then Lewis echoes Bunyan’s opening lines: “I dreamed of a boy who was born in the land of Puritania and his name was John” (Lewis, Pilgrim’s Regress 3). Though Lewis’s character is not literally in rags, he is in need of spiritual aid.

The narratives of the two dreamers also end similarly. John Bunyan ends his narrative by reiterating that his story has been told as a dream: “Now, Reader, I have told my dream to thee / See if thou canst interpret it to me” (Bunyan 117). Unlike Julian of Norwich, for example, he does not provide interpretation, but since the work is fictional, this omission becomes less critical, a purposeful tactic to engage the reader. Lewis ends his novel by insisting on a dream-like framework as well: “My dream was full of light and noise. I thought they went on their way singing and laughing like schoolboys” (Lewis, Pilgrim’s Regress 196). Though Lewis does not enjoin his readers to interpret the dream, he does distance himself from it. As if the dream were an element existing on its own, not within his narrator’s mind, the dreamer describes the way in which the boys react but is not entirely sure of these actions. This legitimizes the dream as wisdom descending from a higher place—this works in
Bunyan’s tale as well. If the vision were solely contained within the domain of the narrator’s mind, he would know all of the vision; it would have no life of his own.

Lewis later wrote a more original dream vision, largely influenced by Platonic themes—*The Great Divorce: A Dream* (1944). Robert Boenig examines the parallels between the standard medieval dream vision and Lewis’s construction:

The similarities to and differences from the plot of *The Great Divorce* should be apparent: there a first-person narrator, already asleep, finds himself in the nasty, twilight city which is Hell. He takes a bus ride through space to a springtime, garden-like landscape, the outskirts of Heaven. There he witnesses confrontations between his ghostlike fellow travelers and the Bright People who try to convince them to stay—incidents with evident allegorical interpretations. He also meets a guide who points out not so much the physical wonders of the garden, but the moral, and through this confrontation the Dreamer learns, before he wakes up, wisdom about heavenly, not earthly love. (Boenig 36)

Though Boenig compares *The Great Divorce* to a romantic allegorical vision, Lewis’s work fits much more neatly with religious dream visions, which also employ reason and conventions to convince readers to believe their visions and their doctrines. He has a guide who eventually leads him to spiritual knowledge, not romantic knowledge. When the narrator observes his shadowy companions in contrast to the Bright People, he calls these companions ghosts. The work as a whole heavily draws on the Platonic theory of forms. The real heavenly landscapes and people far surpass the purgatorial characters in both beauty and concrete reality.
Lewis is very familiar with the dream-vision genre, then, having incorporated it into two of his novels and elaborated upon the form within his best known critical work. Consequently, it is no stretch to suppose that he might incorporate this form into the novel he preferred of all his work. *Till We Have Faces* is the culmination of Lewis’s study of all things medieval and Christian. It incorporates myth, and allegory within that myth, dream visions, the Platonic philosophy, which the Church frequently used as support, and, most important, the debate between faith and reason, for which, as Wheat explains, Lewis became a Christian spokesman (Wheat 21).
Chapter 5

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

Apuleius’s *Metamorphoses* features numerous dreams and visions to the extent that the dream element permeates the entire narrative, defining its tone and purpose. Vered Lev Kenaan points out the presence of dreaming within the novel as its basic structure (251), and Gollnick, author of *The Religious Dreamworld of Apuleius’ Metamorphoses*, also notes the importance of this pervasive feature, explaining that it enables Apuleius to make sense of contradictions within his novel (2). Drawing on *Metamorphoses* for the plot of *Till We Have Faces*, C. S. Lewis also borrows this sense of the dream-world to create a liminal space where reality and imagination are not easily separated and where the imagination can instead become more real than the reality. Within this space, he explores the way in which faith and reason should be merged into one conglomerate, contrary to the rational and anti-god viewpoint of the narrator Orual, who clings eagerly to the reason-only teachings of the Fox and the Greeks.

Making the most of his medievalist training, Lewis employs the medieval and classical format of the dream-vision in the second book of his novel so that Orual can become aware of how reason can work in tandem with faith and revelation. In doing so, he often incorporates the very voice and mood of the medieval dream. More specifically, he seems to mimic the voice of Julian of Norwich, one of the most notable mystics of the Middle Ages. Writing to his friend Owen Barfield, in 1940, Lewis admires Julian for her ability to incorporate and use reason within her writings: “This is from Lady Julian of Norwich whom I have been reading lately and who seems, in the Fifteenth century, to have
rivalled Thomas Aquinas’ reconciliation of Aristotle and Christianity by nearly reconciling Christianity with Kant” (Lewis, *Letters*). The dream vision, after all, as recognized by Lewis and proven by Julian, turns out to be the perfect and appropriate genre for the discussion of reason and faith. It is already a place that “pits imagination against reason, image against significance” (Lynch 76). Lewis takes topics already treated within the dream vision and explores the way in which they work together rather than fight each other. In doing so, Lewis advances the medieval Church’s argument about the conflict between revelation and reason into the late twentieth century so that he contributes to the argument between faith and reason initiated by the skeptical minds of a new and extremely reason-oriented populace.

Much like Apuleius in *Metamorphoses*, Lewis sets up a world largely defined and overwhelmed by dreams and dream-imagery before presenting actual dream visions within Book II. Book I places great emphasis on the importance of and religious truth inherent in dreams. The number of times in which the topic of dreams and dreaming appears indicates that its presence is central to the plot. Lewis uses the dream references for two purposes: to show the nature of communication between the gods and mortals in the Glome religion and to show how characters confuse or blend a rational and an imagined world, creating a new reality.

In two important places within the novel, characters provide insight into the role of dreams within Glome’s religion by casually mentioning their function. When the king has agreed to sacrifice his youngest daughter, he reacts to the distress of Orual and his counselor the Fox with irritation: “What would you do yourself, Fox, with all your cleverness, if you were in my place?” (58). The Fox responds with numerous suggestions, including advice to fake a vision, knowing that the temple of Ungit would respect such a revelation: “I’d say I’d
been warned in a dream not to make the Great Offering till the new moon” (59). For the immortal to communicate with the mortal via a dream is a realistic method in Glome.

The second such occasion occurs when Orual is queen and 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). Again, Lewis shows that the gods communicate truth (or even selective falsehood) with mortals through dreams.

Often, though, throughout Book I Lewis mentions dreams and dreaming to indicate the way in which the characters tread a line between fantasy and reality, between appearance and truth. These references become significant for framing the later dream vision in Book II because, as they raise the question of what is truth, they also lessen the need to distinguish between imagination and reality. They set up the dream as a liminal space wherein dichotomies are destroyed. Most of these references also occur in discussions with or about Psyche, usually when Orual doubts her sister’s trust in her god-husband.

Psyche expresses belief in the reality of dreams despite her sister’s disapproval. For Psyche, a dream is a real thing to be believed in, not just a figment of imagination. When Orual first encounters Psyche after her sacrifice, she is eager for her to narrate her entire story. Psyche does so, explaining first of all her experience of being 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 fails 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). Even though Psyche’s faith in the dream fails her for a short time, she soon finds all her dreams realities.

Orual expresses a much more Greek-like reason and skepticism concerning dreams. She cannot believe in Psyche’s fantastic story. 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 (111). Her sister, now, has changed tack entirely. She responds, “Oh, it was no dream. One can’t dream things like that, because one’s never seen things like that” (111). Though Psyche insists that the god can be no dream, he still fulfills and enhances her original dream: the dream that she initially believed as a young girl. In Glome, then, a dream is not merely an imaginative realm; it is a surrogate for reality, sometimes a pointer to reality not yet seen.

Reminiscent of both Plato and Lewis’s *The Great Divorce, Till We Have Faces* sets up the dream—or what is labeled the dream by outsiders—as the greatest reality of all, the ideal Form. Orual cannot accept this, though, entrenched in reason as she is. She is still not satisfied with Psyche’s story. She repeats, “You must have been dreaming!” (112). Since it is later made clear that Psyche is telling the truth, Orual’s insistence on classifying the truth of the gods as dream foreshadows the way in which the gods will later be approached—in dream. Dream and reality are becoming less distinct. Psyche emphasizes this blurriness a few lines later: “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). The division between dream and reality has been so obliterated by this point that Psyche thinks what her sister labels as dream is more real than what Orual considers real.

In response then, Psyche herself becomes the dream, and her god’s world the reality: “Don’t you think a dream would feel shy if it were seen walking about in the waking world?” she asks her sister, attempting to explain the way she feels in her husband’s palace (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). 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” (152). Despite her general disbelief in Psyche’s story, she also recognizes the comfort and real sustenance Psyche takes from it.

Later, when she successfully convinces Psyche to test the reality of her husband, the dream-world shatters, but at the same time, Orual receives visual proof of the god’s existence. Reality and dream intersect. She is, however, afraid 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, the representatives of reason within the text consider dreaming to be a contrast to truth, reality, and sanity—a contrast to reason. They relegate dreaming to the realms of faith and revelation, and, whenever Orual is in contact with the gods, she associates that contact with dream, constricting the gods also to the realms of faith and revelation. 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 inspired in her (243). In those small moments when Orual is forced to confront the reality of the god’s existence (as at the riverbank upon her sister’s exile), the revelations come at night, in a liminal state between true waking and sleeping (171-74).

The novel reinforces the role of dreams as truth-bearers yet again. 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 Book II that her final actions towards Psyche were not from love.

Religious truth is also foreshadowed in dreams. Orual repeats the phrase “vile dream” shortly after her bout of jealousy when she is startled by the new priest now wearing the old priest’s garb: “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 sight of the priest’s garb, Orual is reminded 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, in Book II, 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. Orual is later forced to confront the value of the blood and sacrifice associated with Ungit. In Book II she watches an old woman bypass the newer Greek-style
statue of Ungit (introduced by 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” (272).

Orual ends her first argument, 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 Book I is the work of a woman setting out a logical court case rather than a memoir or narrative. She sets out a series of evidence of the gods’ wrongdoing and ends with a “therefore” conclusion. She enjoins her readers to judge her case on the basis of the god’s continually confusing messages and alleged mischeviousness:

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 set 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 on them. 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 mortals. They have harried her because it is their nature, not because she has deserved it. Orual’s tone is defensive, excusing her from blame, as if she feared a higher logic and a higher voice. Then, rather than letting her readers 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).

Book II is essentially the gods’ answer to Book I. The answer comes about through Orual’s reconsideration of her first narrative and through 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 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 of both classical and medieval dream-visions. Gollnick records a more literal sense of the metaphor for a classical audience. Sick or
troubled pilgrims traveled to dream-incubation temples in order to receive a healing or helpful dream. Inside the temples were many inscriptions that wrote of a “god performing surgery on the patient” (Gollnick 32). In De Planctu Naturae, Alain de Lille also writes of Natura healing the Dreamer, a useful metaphor for the medieval audience, as Lynch explains (80).

This traditional metaphor ties together classical and medieval dream-vision philosophy within Till We Have Faces. Ambrosius Aurelius Macrobius, writing two to three centuries after Apuleius and at the height of the dream-incubation temples, compiled a classification system for dreams, identifying five different kinds of dreams—the enigmatic, prophetic, and oracular, the nightmare, and the apparition (Macrobius 88). He defined the enigmatic dream, or somnium, 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). 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” (Lewis, Discarded 64). The dreams that Orual experiences in Book II are somnia—populated by strange landscapes and dead souls—and she needs both her father and the Fox as her guides.

But as somnia, Orual’s dreams also conform to the religious and allegorical dream vision of the Middle Ages. The religious dream vision is usually a first-person narrative, though scribes have recorded some, and, often, they reflect a sophisticated handling of Church doctrine or provide insight into that doctrine. Other times, they provide emotional or 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 one who is almost always asleep and dreaming, but the guide is usually an allegorical figure—for example, Reason or Nature.¹ The topic of the allegorical vision is usually romance or love. As will be seen, Orual’s visions combine elements of both as they pursue divine wisdom and answers through allegorical means.

The first dream that Orual records in Book II appears to be a combination of an insomnium (nightmare) and a somnium. The nightmare, as Lewis explains it, “merely repeats working preoccupations” (Lewis, Discarded 64). This first dream reflects Orual’s 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 Orual’s everyday tasks, an insomnium; it provides a truth not yet understood.

Later, Orual experiences her first somnium and the first clear challenge to her rational worldview. 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 dream 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 again blurs. 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, through which they fall to a rock replica. Her father informs her that “There’s no fox to help you here . . . . We’re far

¹ See chapters 3 and 4 for a fuller discussion of dream-vision conventions and function.
below any dens that foxes can dig” (275). The Fox, Orual’s former tutor, also represents Reason. Still frightened and defensive toward the gods, this dream threatens to deprive Orual of her 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 fully in her failings. She wakes to find that she has been in a dream, though she finds the time left to her interspersed with dreams to the point of confusion: “But I 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 it destroys the tenuous boundaries between reality and dream: in this state all dichotomies are shattered and reason and faith can merge as one. In this new state of religion, Orual can thrive without fear. Her experience in the dream visions allows her to merge her own self—rational and yet ultimately Ungit-ish—with the faith and beauty of Psyche’s.

On waking with fear from this first proper vision, Orual realizes there is no escaping the vision’s truth: “This vision, anyway, allowed no denial” (276). And as she accepts the fact that dreams and visions overshadow her life more and more, she also recognizes the liminal state she has entered. Yet, more important, 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 a 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 she is one step closer to Psyche. This
passage also foreshadows the merger of faith and reason as dream and reality lose definition
as separate elements; the dichotomy between them is merely one of perspective.

In her next vision, Orual is less definitive on the vision’s status as a dream; as the
dreams become more revelatory, they also become more explicitly religious. She expresses
her confusion concerning her relationship with waking and sleeping hours: “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 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 this the upper part of my body began to die” (Julian 180). 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
learns that her pain within this vision enabled her sister to complete her tasks for Ungit and
obtain her freedom. Because she does not yet understand the dream’s 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 for no one else, her last vision comes. It 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, Augustine, or Anselm: “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). Within this vision, her case is to be heard, the logic of her complaint at the end of Book I examined.

In the dream, Orual’s logic is overcome by yet a greater one—a divine one. 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 pitiably 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 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 anyway and is shocked at the truth of her complaint—a repetitious and vengeful diatribe that reveals her own selfish desire to possess even Psyche as her own. The judge orders her to stop and when he asks her if she is answered, she replies simply “Yes” (293).

When she realizes that her speech reflected 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 emphasis on reason rather than on the poets and the dark roots 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 appears in the novel like the figure of Reason in the allegorical visions of the Middle Ages (e.g., *The Romance of the Rose*). His identity as the representative of Greek wisdom (tempered now by the knowledge of the dead) makes the Fox the perfect character to explain away Orual’s confusion regarding what she saw 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 that it is she who suffered the pains while Psyche reaped the benefits of her actions. When the Fox asks if she would 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 Book I and her logical, yet ultimately fallacious, argument. Yet something else also awaits Orual 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: an answer. Whether through *fides quaerens intellectum* or through the development of the ontological argument, an answer is what the Church and what faith ultimately seek through the use of reason.

Orual proposes to the priest Arnom the question, in part, that needs to be answered in her waking life. Still confused about the gods and bitter about their secrecy, which 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, influenced by the Fox and Greek beliefs, answers, as Orual reports, in a way quite different than his predecessors: “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 a carefully constructed metaphor, reason’s way of explaining the goddess’s complicated role: “I think, Queen,’ said he (his voice strange out of the mask), ‘she 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 arranged much like a 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 may explain. Arnom also implies that religion is not for the feeble-minded, but rather for those who can discern the truth within the
allegory—much like Jesus’s explanation of the parables to his disciples: “Who hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Matt. 13.9). Orual, at this point, disregards this reasoning, an opinion that Lewis censures by the form within which he writes. From his use of the myth himself, it is clear that Lewis highly valued circuitous paths to the truth, ones that required the listener to appreciate first the beauty of the story and so later to appreciate its significance. 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 are about. It is then that her soul will be complete, and that she too will be Psyche.

The question that Orual poses to 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 herself 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 once again meets Psyche, 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” (305-6). 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, for the transformation of soul and body. 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). As Orual is forged into a new person, it is not a process of complete destruction. Rather the image portrays her as riddled with holes even as she breathes in new elements. 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 merger, Orual sees herself as a different person. She is Psyche and yet not exactly like her. 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” (307-8).

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 her narration with a brief reflection.
The last paragraph of her narrative portrays the god of the Mountain, whom she now recognizes as Lord, as the final end to reason, the final answer to the mind’s desire for reason. He does not do away with reason, but fulfills it. Orual addresses the Lord directly now too. The dream vision has served as the bridge between her soul and the god’s. Her voice 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, the praise and perfection of God: “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 one to be praised and revered: “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 ultimately seeks 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 who 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).
Conclusion

“Questions Die Away”: Lewis Answers the Critics

In *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis’s foremost theological work for the layperson, he candidly addresses his reader, appealing to his or her reason: “I am not asking anyone to accept Christianity if his best reasoning tells him that the weight of the evidence is against it” (123). F. Harrison, writing a book review on John Beverslius’s work *C.S. Lewis and the Search for Rational Religion*, raises his own doubts concerning the possibility for reason in religion in reaction to Lewis’s statement: “If, in Christianity, all must be reasonable and provable in terms of the general canons of the empirical sciences, then where is there any conceptual room for faith and belief in the religious sense of these terms?” (458).

It is ironic that the question the founding fathers of the Church asked was the opposite: Was there room for reason (as derived from the classical philosophers) in religion? The answer at which both Lewis and church philosophers arrived was that reason and revelation, reason and faith, were not only compatible in religion but were perfected. The dream-vision narratives that appeared in the Middle Ages, both romantic and revelatory, provided the liminal and surrealistic setting in which the interaction between faith and reason could be explored. Lewis consistently appropriated the dream-vision form for his own work as well, arguing that religion could be rational. In fact, according to both dream-vision narratives and Lewis’s work, faith and reason, the twentieth-century debate based on the medieval one between revelation and reason, should no longer be discussed as a dichotomy. Rather, faith and reason should be considered inseparable, two crucial and interlocking pieces of the same religious puzzle.
Lewis, as the “defender” of the Christian faith, thus found his answer to skeptics rooted in the works of Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, and visionaries like Julian of Norwich. *Till We Have Faces* reaps the benefit of these philosophers, of Lewis’s life-long study of medieval philosophy. Of all that he had written, it was his favorite novel and his last addition to an age-long debate.

~ *When the time comes to you at which you will be forced at last to utter the speech which has lain at the center of your soul for years, which you have, all that time, idiot-like, been saying over and over, you’ll not talk about joy of words. I saw well why the gods do not speak to us openly, nor let us answer. Till that word can be dug out of us, why should they hear the babble that we think we mean? How can they meet us face to face till we have faces?*

- *Till We Have Faces*, C.S. Lewis
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