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Orual's Quest for Identity: C.S. Lewis's *Till We Have Faces* in 1950s British Society

While this year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the death of the Oxford professor and Christian apologist C. S. Lewis, his life has left a legacy of literature, lectures, and letters that continue to impact intellectual and Christian circles. Although he is better known for texts like *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *Mere Christianity*, he personally favored his final fictional work *Till We Have Faces*. As he shares in several letters to his friends and fans, he believes it to be “far and away my best book but it has, with the critics and the public, been my one great failure: an absolute ‘flop’” (*Collected Letters* 812, 897, 941, 1040, 1148, 1181, 1214, 1419). Although literary scholars tend to analyze his more popular works, his professed favoritism warrants a closer examination of this often-overlooked text.

Because of his personal attachment to the text, those who do study *Till We Have Faces* most often analyze the text in comparison to Lewis’s life and ideology. Because Lewis published his autobiography *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life* the year prior to writing and publishing *Till We Have Faces*, several scholars have analyzed how the later fictional text correlates to his conversion experience. In a similar manner, scholars often use an intertextual analysis between *Till We Have Faces* and *The Four Loves*, the nonfiction text that he worked on simultaneous to *Till We Have Faces* and published four years later. A few scholars, such as Myers, use the definitions of love from this later text to interpret the characters’ identities and transformations (*Bareface*). Additionally, critics analyze the influence of Lewis’s academic

career as he alludes to contemporary theories in the text. In a couple letters to readers, Lewis acknowledges the appearance of Jungian archetypes in *Till We Have Faces* (*Collected Letters* 794, 1419), which prompted numerous scholars to investigate the various manners Jungianism and other psychological theories shape the text and its implications on the characters' roles. Likewise, other scholars, like Wagner, demonstrate connections between Lewis's profession as a medieval scholar and his themes in *Till We Have Faces*.

However, while literary critics emphasize the role of Lewis's personal background and his intellectual work within *Till We Have Faces*, few scholars have considered Lewis's text in relation to his society. At the time of its publication in 1956, British society was bifurcated between two contrary ideologies – contented traditionalism and disillusioned modernism. These competing claims of reality weave throughout Lewis's *Till We Have Faces*, as he proposes a third understanding of reality; a reality the two claims had suppressed as the traditionalists forgot it in light of England's economic prosperity and the modernists rejected it as primitive in comparison to modern philosophies.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

On one hand, the decade following the cataclysm of the Second World War marked a resurgence of traditionalism for general British society. Popular culture was characterized by a general air of confidence and optimism undergirded by economic prosperity following the war (Hennessy 7). The average individual received more money to spend as Parliament reworked the labor system to double wages and establish full employment (Sandbrook 109). Additionally, the availability of commodities furthered the economic boom with the cessation of the war rations and the standardization of electrical wiring, which enabled the middle and working class to afford electricity and electrical products (106). In fact, between 1950 and 1959, the average rate

of consumption increased by 20 per cent, which was greater than in the economic growth in the inter-war period (106).

Although the economic boom was merely a return to the “consumer boom of the thirties” that the Second World War’s austerity had interrupted with its wartime rationing, the general culture idealized their era as an unprecedented “age of affluence” (Sandbrook 106-7). The media in the fifties, especially by the close of the decade, reflected the masses’ perception of British identity as economically superior and their content desire to maintain the status quo. Popular magazines, such as *Queen’s*, challenged their British readers to “realize” and “enjoy” that they are living “in a remarkable age – the age of BOOM;” an age that is better than their grandparents’ time and “[b]etter, in fact, than any in the history of the world” (qtd. in 106). Likewise, a conservative British party ran and was elected on their slogan appealing to the economic prosperity as “You’ve never had it so good” (qtd. in Hobsbawm 257).

Simultaneous to the content optimism that the economic boom encouraged, the reinforcement of the national myth of British exceptionalism encouraged the masses to take pride in their British identity. The Second World War exemplified on a personal level the superiority of British character through its “glorious tale of Britain standing alone against the Nazi air armada” while the rest of Europe collapsed under Nazi pressure (Sandbrook 46). Although the war ended in 1945, Britain’s success in the war became a dominant theme in the fifties in popular books, shows, films, and even leisure activities – such as museums and historic sites – reminding the people of British strength and bravery (47). Likewise, Britain’s vast imperial heritage confirmed the exceptionalist, “self-image of the British people as hard-working, godly and effortlessly superior” (279). Even though the Empire was beginning to crumble with the

independence of India and Pakistan in 1947, British exceptionalism exuded a confidence that the Empire would regain its strength and be as strong as before if not even stronger (281).

The renewal of British exceptionalism supported in their recent past along with the comfort of newly acquired affluence promoted a general desire for consistency and tradition, which constructs their sense of identity. For the popular culture, one's identity is stable and knowable. Surveys from the fifties revealed that over 90 percent of the population adhered to a social class system that enabled them to concretely define their own position within it without difficulty using its "complicated network of factors: birth, breeding and education, occupation, income, expenditure, accent and deportment, friendships, political and cultural attitudes and values" (Sandbrook 34). Additionally, many contemporary observers of the fifties' atmosphere noted that the decade was characterized by "an underlying mood of consensus and contentment" rather than confusion or discord (59). Ironically, while general society gravitated towards economic prosperity and historical exceptionalism to define British identity, the traditional British identity based upon Christianity became suppressed. Although Christianity was culturally evoked in political ceremonies, like Queen Elizabeth II's Coronation, and popular literature, with the intention of reinvigorating traditional "notions of patriotic duty and Christian" morality (409), Christian personal faith was slowly forgotten as general society was distracted by the optimism and prosperity of their era – as seen by their general preference "to watch football matches and listen to the radio than pray and sing in church" (32).

However, while popular society exuded an optimism and contentment in their identity, a few contemporary critics recognized a problem hidden beneath the fifties' idealization of themselves. Literary scholars in the fifties mourned the artistic silence of their contemporary society. Many "observers claimed that British culture was characterized by a stultifying

conformity and traditionalism reflecting the complacent, materialistic consensus of the nation's" idealism, hindering literary and musical development (Sandbrook 149, 456). The literary silence following the Second World War in comparison to the literary expansion and innovation of the inter-war period prompted literary journals such as *Times Literary Supplement* in 1951 to predict the fifties to be "a difficult and confusing decade,' dominated not by meteoric literary talents but by the gloom of 'A Generation in Search of Itself,'" as the masses sought economic fulfillment rather than internal development (qtd in 149).

In contrast to popular culture's preference to maintain their self-assured identity, unchallenged modernist ideology revolutionized the British intelligentsia. New scientific discoveries, such as the chaotic movement of electrons within an atom and Darwin's evolutionary theory, challenged the traditional model of a higher Divine order stabilizing the universe (Sypher 124). Likewise, new fields developed in scientific research that further reduced the modern self from an outside force rationally ordering the world into an internal participant competing equally with other elements in the world (124-5). These new scientific discoveries and theories "dispel[led] one of the grand illusions of the nineteenth century—the belief that nature is a dynamic, that the self is will" (82). By the close of the Second World War, the British modernist conversation despaired of not only "romanticism but also to every ingrained homocentric view of things" (85).

As scientific studies reinterpreted the natural world to be chaotic, modernists correspondingly rejected the traditional Christian framework of a higher order stabilizing the universe. Modernists, such as Ernst Haeckel, Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, and many others used the scientifically-proven instability and chaos of the natural world to challenge the religious myths of a Christian God (Sypher). Through the influence of modernist ideology, many

intellectuals in the twentieth century “were participating in a crisis of institutional religion and a search for new forms of religious experience” besides Christianity (P. Lewis 19). This secularization of society away from its Christian roots became especially prevalent in the higher academic circles, such as Oxford and Cambridge, where modernist ideology was widely endorsed while Christianity was dismissed as primitive thinking (Fredrick and McBride 5-7).

As modernization fostered the “secularization and the diminished significance of organized religion,” Western societies wrestled with where to find the solution to “traditional religious questions about the human condition” (P. Lewis 19). Without a Christian framework grounding reality into a stable and knowable order, the science of the twentieth century redefined identity for the intelligentsia from individually knowable in and of itself into “a system of relationships” and “statistical probabilities” (Sypher 112). As a result, one’s identity within society eroded from a defined individual into a relational network based on “his economic role, the role he plays in the open market along with other alienated selves, who are also saleable commodities” (72). Through psychologists’ influence, such as Freud, the individual’s identity devolved from a rational and emotional being into a “barbaric self” ruled by unconscious, primitive desires that the individual must master (72). Newly developed artistic styles, such as Cubism and Dadaism, applied the new science’s fragmentation of an object into so many distinct and separate pieces that “eventually [the artwork] deprived the object of identity entirely” (85). Having rejected Christianity as providing an overarching framework to order reality, British academia perceived identity as fragmented and utterly unknowable.

British society in the 1950s was experiencing an identity crisis with the clash of these two frameworks for knowing oneself. On the one hand, popular culture offered a knowable foundation for one’s identity as a British citizen based on the traditional ideology of British

exceptionalism and hid from the instability of their foundation through comforting distraction of affluence and recent political successes. In contrast, the academic world argued, using the new ideology of modernism, that one's selfhood is a fluid network of relationships leaving one fragmented and disillusioned of ever finding a unity. Amidst these competing claims for reality within British society, Lewis rewrote the classical Greek myth of Cupid and Psyche to follow the development of Psyche's oldest sister Orual as she struggles, like his contemporary society, to both forget and reject the gods but fails as the gods continue to interrupt her definition of herself in relation to the divine that she longs to suppress.

THE FEMALE HERO

When discussing the character Orual, Lewis emphasizes his use of a female first-person narrator and protagonist. In one of his letters to his friend Mary Shelburne, an American poet, Lewis shares his excitement that he has “done what no mere male author has done before, talked thro’ the mouth of, & lived in the mind of, an *ugly* woman for a whole book” in a manner that his female readers have supported (C.S. Lewis, *Collected Letters* 716). In another letter, he explains that Orual was his primary interest in his text and that she is a universal model not as “a ‘case’, of human affection in its natural condition ... but in the long run, tyrannically possessive and ready to turn to hatred when the beloved ceases to be its possession” (831). As other critics have noted, “Lewis felt that the female viewpoint was one of the strengths of the novel” (Sammons 190).

According to feminist critics Carolyn Heilbrun, Carol Pearson, and Katherine Pope, it is a significant decision for a male author to use a female protagonist who is seeking her identity. Searching for self-identity is traditionally depicted in literature as a heroic journey in which “the archetypal hero masters the world by understanding it, not by dominating, controlling, or owning

the world or other people” (Pearson and Pope 4-5). The hero’s quest for self-understanding “is a universal ... action” that allows all readers, regardless of age or gender, “to ‘identify’ with the hero” (Heilbrun 132). Thus, it is significant when a modernist male author uses a female hero to meet “the deepest demands of his artistic vision” because it is not what his contemporary patriarchal society expects him to do, as it makes the universal a woman to demonstrate some aspect of the human condition that both men and women experience (133). Often a female hero represents a search to unify both “inner wholeness with outward community,” which requires her to transcend the traditional binaries that had once limited her from being wholly herself – “[s]elf and other, mind and body, spirit and flesh, male and female” (Pearson and Pope 15).

Though using different words than heroic quest, Lewis emphasizes in his letters Orual’s gradual internal transformation as she begins to understand her identity in relation to the gods. Initially in his “pre-Christian days,” Lewis intended Orual’s account to reaffirm her identity and actions, as she “was to be in the right and the gods in the wrong” (*Collected Letters* 633). However after his conversion, Lewis’s purpose shifted to recount “the story of every nice, affectionate agnostic whose dearest one suddenly ‘gets religion’, or even every luke warm Christian whose dearest gets a Vocation,” such as missionary or minister, as he wanted to “sympathetically” depict how they struggle, like Orual does, to understand themselves and their loved one’s passion for Christianity (590). Likewise, Lewis outlined Orual’s conversion as a progression of self-understanding, as “Divine Love gradually conquers, first, a Pagan (and almost savage) soul’s misconception of the Divine (as Ungit), then, shallow ‘enlightenment’ (the Fox), and, most of all, her *jealousy* of the real God, whom she hates till near the end because she wants Psyche to be entirely hers” (1419). For Lewis, Orual’s internal struggle to understand

herself in relation to the divine is one that he experienced when he converted to Christianity and one that he desired his society to likewise understand.

ORUAL AS THE UNIVERSAL FOR BRITISH SOCIETY

As Orual models for Lewis's society the hero's journey for self-identity in relation to the divine, she is a universal archetype that both the popular culture and the intelligentsia can relate to as she embodies the ideals of contented traditionalism and fragmented modernism. For the general culture, Orual's character is relatable as she is a reminder of Queen Elizabeth II who ascended the throne three years before the publication of *Till We Have Faces*. Orual's reaction to her father's death and her own ascension to the throne parallels the press's depiction of Queen Elizabeth II. In contrast to the Prime Minister Churchill who "burst into tears," Elizabeth II, though "pale and solemn, she remained utterly composed" upon hearing the news (Sandbrook 44). Likewise, when Orual learns of her father's fatal illness, she calmly accepts the former king's responsibilities and immediately negotiates treaties and prepares for a skirmish, without emotionally reacting to his death (C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 214). Just as Queen Elizabeth II's coronation caused many to think back to the reign of her namesake, an idealized queen also precedes Orual, and many people in Orual's kingdom romanticize her reign to be like the earlier queen's (227).

Because of Orual's similarities to Queen Elizabeth II, she is further able to relate to traditionalist ideals, as Queen Elizabeth II often symbolized the optimism and confidence of popular British society in the fifties. Her Coronation in 1953 was greeted by politicians, reporters, and the public as the dawn of a "new Elizabethan age," as coined by Winston Churchill, and as the *Daily Express* reported, "a reminder that the old adventurous, defiant heart of the race remains unchanged" (qtd. in Sandbrook 43, 45). For the masses, Queen Elizabeth II

“represent[ed] the happy union of tradition and progress, especially as the country was finally emerging from post-war rationing and austerity and the first glimmerings of an affluent middle-class revival were beginning to become apparent” (44-5).

Another cultural connotation that Orual's female identity imitates in British society is economic prosperity. On one hand, Orual's kingdom experiences technological advancements that improve the economic conditions of her people, which parallel the economic boom that occurred around Queen Elizabeth II's ascension to the throne and was expected to continue through the rest of her reign. Additionally, the 1950s ideal British woman was strongly associated with the economic boom because many of the newly developing commodities were household products, which fell within the woman's traditional role as the “kitchen goddess” and maintainer of her home's respectability (Sandbrook 111). Thus, the female identity and domestic roles stimulated images of economic success, as the media and marketing industries often advertised to the housewife to buy their products (111). Through both of these parallels, political and economic, Orual embodies the ideal of the consumerist society comfortable with their traditions.

Yet at the same time, Orual characterizes the modernist ideology of British intellectuals. As several literary critics have noted, Lewis incorporates a variety of the modernist perceptions circulated in Oxford and Cambridge. Like the recent academic trend, Orual wrestles with the correlation between empirical evidence and intangible faith (Sammons 237-56). The modernists' struggle with Christianity's claims is mirrored in Orual, as she doubts the reality of her society's gods and struggles with the “murky paradoxes of Glomian theology” – such as the Great Offering for the Brute is the Accursed yet the best of Glome or that the Brute is either Ungit, Ungit's son, or both (Holyer 61). Orual's naturalistic and materialistic education with the Fox

forms a stumbling block to her belief, which parallels the popular academic mistrust of the supernatural (Honda 114-5). Likewise, Orual models the modernists' Higher Criticism approach to the gospel as she interacts with two different accounts of the same event – her detailed written account and the myth suggested by the old priest of Essur (Myers, "The Context" 213).

Through her relatability to both groups, Orual becomes the ideal heroic candidate seeking her identity, as both these groups are searching for their own identities. At times, she is content in her society's economic success that religion becomes a vague tradition – like general society – yet at other times frustrated with the complexity of supernatural claims and her desire for empirical evidence. However, Orual challenges their assumed identities, as she opens her text expressing that she is writing her text in Greek in order to share her complaint with the Greeks who have "great freedom of speech even about the gods themselves" – mirroring Lewis as he wrote his text in English for the English people who likewise have freedom of speech concerning religion (C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 3). Orual establishes her book as challenging two ideas "whether [her] complaint is right" – a statement that general culture would have agreed with as it interrupted her happiness – or "whether the god could have defended himself if he had made an answer" – a doubt that the intelligentsia shared with her as the modernist fragmentation undermined religion's traditional presentation of God (3-4). At various points in her narration, the text seems to remind Lewis's audience that they are journeying with Orual in her search for identity as she directly addresses them – "You, who read my book, judge" whether she or the gods act justly (133, 173, 248-9).

As Orual recounts her search to understand her identity and her relation to the gods, she models the stages of the hero's journey identified by Pearson and Pope. Within the female heroic quest for identity, Pearson and Pope identify four key stages: the exit from the garden, the

emperor's new clothes, the woman as her mother, and treasure attained (68). In the first stage, the female hero must first abandon her Eden-like origins, as she leaves her former identity guides – “parents, husbands, religious or political authorities” – in order to attain “freedom and unlimited possibility” (68). However, after leaving the garden with her newly gained freedom, the female hero encounters “a series of seducers of various types—individuals, groups, philosophies—that ultimately leave her disappointed” (143). As she is beguiled by their perceptions on life and learns of their deception, the female hero matures from her virgin-like state, as she experiences the reality of the world, changing “from a state of timelessness to participation in time, from immortality to mortality, from ignorance to knowledge” (142).

When the female hero is almost overcome by despair from the second stage, she enters the third stage where “a nurturing, strong, and independent woman,” often her mother (Pearson and Pope 184), partners with the hero in her journey and “give[s] her a sense of self-worth” and “validate[s] her femaleness,” which is what the female hero searches for, whether actively or subconsciously (192). After completing her heroic journey, the fourth stage depicts her life after attaining her journey's “treasure” of self-identity (223). As she accomplishes “her journey inward[,] the hero overcomes alienation and rejoins herself with the world” (226). She forms an individual community of one as her “self, body and mind” finally unite (230), and at the same time, she transforms the community around her as she provides hope for others to find their individual identities, like she did, and alter society (260).

STAGE 1: EXIT FROM THE GARDEN

Before she can begin her heroic journey, the first half of Lewis's text establishes Orual's Eden-like surroundings of the different models her former identity guides teach her to understand her relationship with the gods. Three characters that play a significant role in teaching her about

the gods and humanity's relation to them are the Priest of Ungit, the Greek slave the Fox, and the captain of the guard Bardia. Like the staunchly dedicated Puritans in England's historic past, the old Priest of Ungit epitomizes the holiness of the gods, as Orual conflates the "temple-smell of blood" that "hung about [the Priest]" to be "the Ungit smell" (C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 11). In contrast to the fear of Ungit that the old Priest causes for Orual, the Fox teaches Orual that the gods do not exist. The Fox teaches Orual that the gods that she believes "are all folly and lies of poets" (28). Balancing between the deeply committed Priest and the atheist the Fox, Bardia is "a god-fearing man" and meticulously follows religious traditions to worship the gods, but he strives not to "meddl[e] with the gods" beyond their assigned place in his daily life (99, 135). Although Orual tries to imagine the Priest as little more than "a mere schemer and politic man who put into the mouth of Ungit whatever might most increase his own power" (54), the Priest's certainty of Ungit, even when his life is threatened, forces Orual to recognize that something exists beyond the mortal like the Fox had taught her (54).

However, while Orual struggles resolve the two extreme positions of the Priest and the Fox as Bardia models, Psyche finds a way to harmonize the two approaches. The night before she is offered to the Brute, Psyche admits to Orual the confusing paradoxes that the Fox has identified as flaws in their religion (C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 70). Yet, at the same time, she also expresses an assurance in the gods' existence as the Old Priest advocates, and she reveals a deep longing to be with the gods, in contrast to Bardia who tries to avoid them (73-4, 102-3). As Orual interacts with Psyche the night before her sacrifice and later on the mountain, Orual is slowly brought to a point in which she must decide for herself who she believes the gods are and who she is. Orual's confusion over which of her childhood philosophies to believe climaxes in her attempt to resolve Psyche's claim to be married to the god. Although she consults the two

opposing viewpoints, the devout Bardia, who believes in the gods' existence like the Priest, and the Greek-minded Fox, Orual confesses that both their opposing "explanation[s] seemed too plain and evident to allow [her] any hope of doubt" (144). Though she cannot discern which philosophy is true to defend her action, Orual acts upon her inner jealousy towards Psyche as she resolves that "It shall not have her" – whether that means convincing Psyche of the possible cruelties of her husband or killing Psyche to protect her from being with him any longer (151-2).

Orual's encounter with the god on the Mountain forces her to exit the garden of others' perceptions of the gods, as she must resolve personally what they mean to her. She realizes that the god of the Mountain exists despite the Fox's empirical dismissal but neither is he the terrifying and monstrous Shadowbrute that the Priest and Bardia worship. Instead, he is so superior and beautiful that Orual's "heart and blood and very brain were too weak" to withstand more than the brief glimpse that she is given of him (C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 172-3). At the same instant that the god of the Mountain subverts all the images she had constructed of his identity, his brief glance challenges her assumptions of herself, that "all [her] doubtings, fears, guessings, debatings, questionings of Bardia, questionings of Fox, all the rummage and business of it, had been trumped-up foolery, dust blown in [her] own eyes by [herself]" to justify her self-centered identity (172-3). As Psyche is physically exiled from the beautiful palace and "must hunger and thirst and tread hard roads," the god of the Mountain sends Orual on an internal journey – a heroic quest in which she "shall know [herself] and [her] work" and that Orual "also shall be Psyche" (173-4). The god's pronouncement forces Orual to leave the identities that her authority figures constructed for her and to instead recognize her true identity.

STAGE 2: THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

After her encounter with the god of the Mountain, Orual begins the second stage of the heroic quest – the emperor's new clothes – as she experiments with a variety of identities to define herself. Her first key act is hiding her face behind a veil, which symbolically represents her suppression of her identity from herself and others. When Orual answers the Fox's questions about what happened on the mountain, she hides from him that she manipulated Psyche with her self-inflicted wound and that she encountered the god of the Mountain (C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 179). During her conversation with the Fox, Orual is filled with shame as she recognizes the hypocrisy of her actions and her lies to Psyche, and she resolves afterwards to “go always veiled,” whether indoors or out (180-181). However, Orual's veil prevents more than the outside eyes of her community from seeing her shame, she also hides from herself as she justifies the veil as “a sort of treaty made with [her] ugliness” (180-181). Though she dismisses her veil as covering merely physical ugliness rather than something deeper, her conversation with the Fox and her suppression of what had happened is the catalyst for her to hide herself –not someone's comment about her physical ugliness – as “[t]he Fox, that night, was the last man who ever saw [her] face” and very few women had seen it afterwards (180-181). Just as her veil hides her shame from society, she uses it to hide from herself.

As she hides herself behind a veil, she becomes empowered to take on a variety of identities to fill the lack of identity. She notices that “as soon as [her] face was invisible, people began to discover all manner of beauties in [her] voice” – ranging from the deepness of a man's to “the voice of a spirit, a Siren” (C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 228). Or, she has the face of an animal or the beautiful face of a goddess that would drive men madly in love if they could see her face (228-9). Likewise, the absence of a visible identity empowers Orual as she can see and know others without them knowing her, such as her violent father (181-2), brave ambassadors (229), or

“seasoned liars” (229). Regardless of what identity they perceive in her, Orual realizes that she “became something very mysterious and awful” (229). “[T]he blank wall of the veil” allows Orual to both hide her identity beneath it and enable a new one depending upon the other’s fantasy that she wishes to use (191).

In addition to physically hiding herself behind her veil, Orual likewise hides her work behind her newly established queenship. In a sense, Orual’s “*persona* of the queenship” creates another veil for her to “hid[e] her real face” from her community and herself (Honda 124-5). As Orual reflects back on her first hours after realizing that her father was fatally ill, she realizes that the “queenship that had [made her forget the god’s sentence]—all those decisions to make” that demand her full concentration and time (C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 201). Likewise, Orual begins to envision her busyness and distraction as a means to challenge the god’s prophecy because “[i]f Orual could vanish altogether into the Queen, the gods would almost be cheated,” as she prevents its fulfillment (201).

With this newfound vision, Orual begins wholeheartedly to suppress her real identity, which she calls “Orual,” in favor of the more abstract and ideal “the Queen,” which can become whatever she needs to be to get what she wants. Orual recognizes the initial difference as she reflects back on the King’s illness and recognizes that “there seemed to have been another woman acting and speaking in my place. Call her the Queen; but Orual was someone different” (C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 199). Within her first several days, Orual recognizes a conflict within herself between the powerful and assertive “the Queen” and the “Orual” who “would whisper a cold word in the Queen’s ear at times” (205). Orual motivates herself to do tasks that she fears as it would allow her to become more “the Queen” and less “Orual” (211). “Orual” is the weak one who dreads the possibility that the Fox will return to Greece (207) and is “a shamed and

frightened” and “bitterly lonely” (223); while “the Queen” is proud and “could laugh loud and drink deep like a man and a warrior, next moment, more madly, answering to Trunia’s doffing, as if her veil hid the face of a pretty woman” (223). In her distraction of becoming “the Queen,” Orual pauses for a moment as she realizes that she had begun to forget her haunting sorrow at the loss of Psych and the god’s prophecy. She describes one part of her recognizing that “‘Orual dies if she ceases to love Psyche.’ But the other said, ‘Let Orual die. She would never have made a queen,’” and she continues her queenly duties preparing for her first battle (211).

Just as the veil empowers her to become a multiplicity of faces, her persona as “the Queen” enables Orual to balance a multiplicity of seemingly contradictory scripts. In her community, Orual both supports the conservation and modernization of religious tradition. Her first act as “the Queen” is to give land over to Ungit and her temple and establish further ties between religion and politics through sharing guards (C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 188). Orual intertwines a traditional religious presence in her political affairs – such as Arnom’s sacrifice to the gods prior to her first battle (217) – and a political presence in traditional religious ceremonies – such as the reenactment of the new year (268-73). Yet at the same time, Orual approves and participates in Arnom’s modernization of religious practices to make it more distant and less intimate. Arnom changes the actual structure of Ungit’s temple as he adds windows and has the blood cleaned up after each sacrifice, which Orual interprets as a weakening of Ungit’s power as the temple “smelled cleaner and less holy” (234). Orual provides Arnom with the funds to purchase a new image of Ungit, which becomes “a marvel to all the lands about and pilgrims came to see her” (234). Orual hopes that this “woman-saped image in the Greek fashion” might defeat the traditional image of “the old, hungry, faceless Ungit,” who terrorized her childhood (234). In addition to changing the image of the gods, Orual notices how “Arnom was learning

from the Fox to talk like a philosopher about the gods” and redefining the gods’ actions within mythic explanations of the world (234). Orual imitates his dismissal of the gods’ power, as she is “near believing that there are no such things” as gods – even though she has seen one herself (245).

While her lack of definition allows her to balance both conservative and liberal attitudes towards religion, as “the Queen,” Orual becomes both the masculine political leader and warrior while at the same time the feminine beauty and domestic nurturer. As political leader for her kingdom, Orual describes that her new “aim was to build up more and more that strength, hard and joyless, which had come to me when I heard the god’s sentence, by learning, fighting, and laboring, to drive all the woman out of me” (C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 184). She rationalizes that since she is “to be hard-featured as a man, why shouldn’t [she] fight like a man too?” (198). She trains herself in the traditional tasks of a man – such as horseback riding and sword fighting (184) – and excels in masculine roles – such as forming policies, negotiating with ambassadors, judging her people, and fighting in battles (227, 229) – and she succeeds to such an extent that even the men closest to her, like Bardia and the Fox, “did not think of [her] as a woman” and instead they “talked with such freedom” as if they were in an all-male company (228).

Simultaneous to developing a masculine script, Orual also adapts a traditional female ideal as domestic, beautiful, and romantic whenever it best furthers her desires. Orual recognizes the necessary balance of her male and female scripts in her role as “the Queen,” as her “sword [was] not yet wiped from the blood of [her] first battle before [she] found [herself] all woman again and caught up in housewife’s cares,” preparing for the feast celebrating the peace between the two kingdoms (C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 221). In a similar manner, she plays with the rumors that she is exceptionally beautiful as she banters back and forth with Prince Trunia, and he even

proposes marriage to her to unify their kingdoms, which Orual redirects to Redival to establish stronger ties between the two thrones and maintain her authority (222-3, 212).

Orual not only adopts a traditional female script to negotiate her power within her society, but she also uses it to deceive herself. Orual secretly fantasizes that she has a romantic relationship with Bardia. As “the Queen,” Orual dreams “the impossible fool’s dream” that Bardia “would have been [her] husband and Psyche [their] daughter,” so that at the end of the day, he would be coming home to her, rather than leaving her for another woman (C. S. Lewis, *TWHF* 224). Orual is jealous of Bardia’s wife Ansit and comforts herself that though Ansit knew Bardia as a wife – “his toy, his recreation, his leisure, his solace” – Orual has “so much of him that [Ansit] could never dream of” because her public role as “the Queen” enables Orual to be “in his man’s life” (233). Although Orual hides her secret love for Bardia from the rest of her community, including Bardia, it becomes another layer to internally further her persona as “the Queen” and suppress the true “Orual,” as she counsels herself that “[a]ll great princes have mistresses or lovers” like she does (224-5).

As she balances her masculine and feminine roles as “the Queen,” Orual ushers her kingdom into a new era of peace and abundance, leaving them with the contented optimism that they had “never had it so good,” like Lewis’s contemporary audience. As a warrior, Orual battles against the different small kingdoms around her – such as Phars (C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 220-1) and Essur (235) – and she is so successful that near the end of her reign, her kingdom Glome is “at peace with everyone,” both the small neighboring territories and the larger distant nations like Greece. At the same time, as a domestic caretaker, Orual proudly declares that “Glome had now been nursed and trained till it almost ruled itself” (237). She initiates technological advancements – such as the breeding of livestock, the construction of cisterns, and the restructuring of the silver

mines (231, 236) – which stimulate an economic boom as Glome has more resources to support themselves and to trade with other nations. Likewise, Orual improves the societal conditions as she establishes procedures for hard-working slaves to be freed (230-1), makes books available to improve literacy rates and knowledge (232), and revises and publishes the laws governing society (236).

However, as Orual negotiates the various scripts she adopts as “the Queen,” she intentionally suppresses her actual identity as “Orual.” As she allows “the Queen” to become dominant in her life, she conversely “locked Orual up or laid her asleep as best [she] could somewhere deep down inside [her]” – like a reverse pregnancy in which “the thing [she] carried in [her] grew slowly smaller and less alive” (C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 226). Despite “all the bustle and skill and glory of queenship,” every evening Orual returns to her chambers “to be alone with [herself]—that is, with a nothingness,” as her persona of queenship is an act to replace the actual “Orual” (236).

Simultaneous to her suppression of her identity, Orual strives to silence her last memory of Psyche and the god’s condemnation of her work. When she realizes that the gods are not going to kill her immediately for encouraging Psyche to disobey, Orual goes to Psyche’s bedroom and restores the room to look like the time when Psyche “was still happy, and still [hers];” Orual burns the Greek hymn to the god of the Mountain that Psyche had copied, as she “did not choose that any of that part of [Psyche] should remain” (C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 183). After repairing Psyche’s room to the way she wants to remember it, Orual puts both a physical lock on the door and an emotional lock in her mind to “put away all thoughts of [Psyche] save those that went back to her first, happy years” and discourages anyone from speaking of Psyche as that would expose the falsity of her narrow memories (183).

Despite the physical lock on Psyche's door, Orual struggles to overcome her last glimpse of Psyche weeping. The clinking chains of the well in the courtyard become a nightly reminder of the moment that Orual is trying to suppress, and Orual begins a battle to silence the memory. Her first act as queen is to shift her quarters away from the well. Despite her numerous moves to try "every side of the house," each move fails to "cure [her] of taking [the chains] for the weeping of a girl" (C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 229). Even at the height of her first victory as "the Queen," having balanced the expectations of masculine and feminine scripts, Orual struggles to forget Psyche, as she hears Psyche weeping outside her window. Orual proudly asserts to what she mistakes to be Psyche her new identity as "a great queen" because she "killed a man" (224-5). But, once Orual recognizes that weeping is the well's chains, Orual repeats her proven willingness to kill to become "the Queen" and declares that "[she'll] kill Orual too" (224-5). When Orual realizes that she cannot move out of the range of the well's weeping, she masters the memory through encasing the well within a "madly thick" stonewall (235). Initially, she dreams that she "had walled up, gagged with stone, not a well but Psyche (or Orual) herself," but the busyness of the queenship creates a distraction as she defeats the nearby kingdom Essur and forgets about the weeping Psyche (235).

While Orual attempts to silence her haunting memory of Psyche and the god's corresponding prophecy, the gods intervene to upset the hard-wrought silence. As she speaks with an old priest in Essur about the new goddess Istra, Orual is forced to remember her suppression of her memories of Psyche. The priest's repetition of Psyche's present state as "wander[ing] over the earth, weeping, weeping, always weeping" forces Orual to remember the sound that she had walled up years ago, and she fights to protect herself from the memory as she "set[s] [her] teeth and [her] soul stood on guard" (C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 245). Through the old

priest, Orual is confronted for the first time that there is another interpretation of what happened on the mountain – that she was jealous of Psyche (245). Orual rejects the gods’ version as it “wiped clean out the very meaning, the pith, the central knot, of the whole tale” – the details that had justified Orual’s loving motivations, in which “[t]he gods themselves would have been able to find no fault in [her]” (234).

After hearing the gods’ version recounted by the priest, Orual finds a new means to support her self-made identity through writing her book as a complaint to the gods justifying her action. Orual’s written account acts as her attempt “to respond to the versions of the story she could not believe (Psyche’s) or accept (the priest’s) and to defend her own” interpretation of the gods (Donaldson 161). Though for many years during her reign her “old quarrel with the gods had slept” as she was distracted with the busyness of “the Queen,” Orual realizes that she needs to “set down the truth” of what she had done in contrast to the gods’ lie (C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 245). Instead of suppressing the weaker “Orual,” as she did before, Orual strives to “[recall] every passage of the true story, dragging up terrors, humiliations, struggles, and anguish,” so as to “writ[e] [her] charge against the gods” for their unjust treatment of her (247). In contrast to “the Queen” who laid “Orual” aside to shrink, like “being with child, but reversed” (226), Orual describes the development of her new obsession in writing her accusation as “[being] with book, as a woman is with child” (247). She abandons the multiplicity of the scripts surrounding “the Queen” and becomes consumed with “letting Orual wake and speak, digging her almost out of a grave, out of the walled well,” in order to justify the Orual that the gods had condemned from the beginning as they initiated her journey for identity (247-8). In a sense, Orual’s book becomes her defense of her actions and motivations in order to protect herself from the gods’ version that “threatened her [innermost] self-deception” (Bartlett 188).

STAGE THREE: THE WOMAN AS HER MOTHER

After leaving her empty identity as “the Queen,” Orual begins the third stage of the female heroic quest – the woman as her mother. In this stage, the female hero encounters “a nurturing, strong, and independent woman,” who is often but not limited to her mother, who guides the hero in understanding her self-worth (Pearson and Pope 184). The gods use Orual’s encounters with four different women to strip her of her self-delusions in order to see the depravity and utter-selfishness of her true identity, as foreshadowed in the god’s prophecy that Orual “shall know [herself] and [her] work” (C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 174).

Orual’s sister Redival is the first woman who challenges the self-deception of Orual’s various scripts suppressing her true identity. In the concluding paragraph of the first book of Orual’s charge to the gods, Orual emphasizes that she does not act from jealousy like her sister Redival (C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 249). However, within days after completing her charge, Orual learns from Redival’s first lover that Redival was lonely as a child because Orual stopped loving her in favor of the Fox and then Psyche (256). Through seeing Redival in a new light, Orual is confronted that others may have felt differently than she remembered. As Orual returns to mend her charge against the gods, she internally begins “labour of sifting and sorting, separating motive from motive and both from pretext” (256-7). This haunts her nightly dreams as she sorts “a huge, hopeless pile of seeds” with the tormenting thought that “it could conceivably be done” despite the vast odds against it (256-7). As the revelation about Redival’s loneliness forces Orual to reevaluate her perception of her memories, Orual recognizes that “[t]he past which [she] wrote down was not the past that [she] thought [she] had (all these years) been remembering” (C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 253-4). She confesses that through the process of writing and mending her charge, she now “know[s] so much more than [she] did about the woman who wrote it” (253). Through

returning to edit her charge against the gods in light of others' motivations, she learns more about the identity that she had been suppressing when she was "the Queen."

Although there may be different motives that she had missed in her account, Orual comforts herself that she is justified because she knows how to love sacrificially. The day she finishes her book for the second time with the same conclusion that "*they have no answer,*" Orual learns how gravely ill Bardia is (C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 257). Although she only notices Bardia's sickness because it keeps her from writing, Orual interprets her neglect as proof of "how wholly the gods kept [her] to" mending her book rather than a reflection of the character of her love (257). She reluctantly concedes to Arnom's recommendation that she stays away from Bardia, which she uses to reinforce her sacrificial love as she suffers emotional turmoil waiting for him to return to health (258). After Bardia dies, Orual wishes to "have gone to him and whispered in his ear, 'Bardia, I loved you'" or to be able to show some public sign of deep mourning – like his wife Ansit does – in order to extravagantly demonstrate through self-wounding how greatly she loved him (258-9).

However, when Orual comforts Ansit after the customary three days of grieving, Ansit challenges Orual to reevaluate her perception of love. Ansit accuses Orual of having worked Bardia to death with all of her demands on his time and energy (C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 261). When Orual briefly removes her veil during the conversation, Ansit recognizes that Orual had loved Bardia too. However, Ansit distinguishes between her love for Bardia as she allowed him "to live the life he thought best and fittest for a great man—not that which would most pleasure [her]" and Orual's self-interested approach to love (264). Ansit accuses Orual that she has the mythological love of the gods – both "loving and devouring" – and that she is "[g]orged with

other men's lives, women's too: Bardia's, [Ansit's], the Fox's, [Orual's] sister's—both [her] sisters” (264-5).

As “those divine Surgeons” work in Orual, she recognizes the truth of Ansit's accusations (C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 266). Orual realizes that she “had heaped up needless work to keep him late at the palace, plied him with questions,” and used “[a]nything to put off the moment when he would go and leave [her] to [her] emptiness” (266). In fact, the love she had once prided herself in, her “love for Bardia (not Bardia himself)[,] had become to [her] a sickening thing ... a gnawing greed for one to whom [she] could give nothing, of whom [she] craved all” (267). After recognizing that her love is a self-deception, Orual defines herself as “a gap” where “[her] whole soul had been” before being removed (267). Although Orual is beginning to recognize the lies of the multiple identities that she had constructed for herself, she has yet to remove the veil of her self-deception to see her actual identity.

Within a few days of her conversation with Ansit, Orual encounters the third woman, a young peasant, who challenges Orual's understanding of herself in relation to the gods. During the celebration of the new year, Orual begins to feel dissatisfied with her intellectual dismissal of the gods in mythic distant forms that confuse the truth rather than explain it (C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 271). As she waits for the religious ceremony for the “Year's birth,” Orual watches a young peasant woman sacrifice a pigeon and weep before Ungit. Yet rather than leaving Ungit's presence distraught and empty, like Orual does, Orual emphasizes that the woman leaves “calm, patient, able for whatever she had to do” (272). When asked, she explains to Orual that “Ungit has given [her] great comfort” (272). Likewise, Orual is “amazed” by the joy of the people at the reenactment of the Year's birth (273).

After Orual realizes that there is something different in her relationship to the gods and the peasant woman's, the gods give Orual another dream that further challenges her self-made identity as "the Queen." In the vision, her father the King comes to her and takes her unveiled to the Pillar Room where she digs through the normal Pillar Room into a smaller one made of dirt and an even smaller one made of "living rock" – paralleling her internal progression as she recognizes her self-delusions (C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 276). After reaching the bottom most layer, Orual looks in the giant mirror and sees Ungit's face reflected back where her own unveiled face should have been. Or rather, Orual sees her self-formed identity as the fluid multiplicity of Ungit's face, as Ungit "had a thousand faces" depending upon how one looked at the "very uneven, lumpy and furrowed" stone (276, 270). Orual realizes that her self-characterization as "the Queen" is a "many-selved, many-faced" façade hiding her "all-devouring womblike, yet barren" identity, whose work is "gorged with men's stolen lives" (Payne 60; C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 276).

While Orual is beginning to understand her work as the god prophesied, she continues to see herself as justified. Once Orual recognizes the similarities between herself and Ungit – that "[she] *was* Ungit" – Orual wrestles with the tension of how she should now live in light of her new insight (C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 278). Initially, Orual tries to stop being Ungit through drowning herself, but the god's voice interrupts her plan and warns her that she "cannot escape Ungit by going to the deadlands" (279). After further meditation, Orual recognizes that her identity as Ungit demonstrates that she "was as ugly in soul as [Ungit]," so Orual strives to change her work through "practic[ing] true philosophy, as Socrates meant it" and correspondingly "change [her] ugly soul into a fair one" (281-2). Despite her resolve, every morning within thirty minutes, Orual "would find that [she] was back (and knew not how long [she] had been back) in some old

rage, resentment, gnawing fantasy, or sullen bitterness” (281-2). As Orual begins to despair that she “could mend my soul no more than my face” (282), the gods give her a new vision of golden rams whose fleece would give her the beauty she so greatly desires. However, despite her best efforts, in her dream, the rams trample Orual while another mortal woman following her succeeds and collect the fleece, “[winning] without effort what utmost effort would not win for [Orual]” (284). Yet, despite her new identity as the life-gorged, ugly souled Ungit, Orual comforts herself that she “had at least loved Psyche truly” and the gods, in this instance, were in the wrong (285).

When Orual sits in her garden to reread her book justifying to herself her love for Psyche, the gods give her one final vision, which outlines her journey for identity as she works through the different levels of her self-deceptions. After opening her book, Orual finds herself “walking over burning sands, carrying an empty bowl,” which she must “fill it with the water of death” and return to Ungit, who she was a slave for – paralleling her emotional state when she began the first stage of exiting the garden as the god of the Mountain recognizes and judges her perception of her identity (C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 285-6). When an eagle demands to know her identity, Orual divides herself as “Orual, Queen of Glome” (287), mimicking her hiding of her real identity within her persona as “the Queen” in the second stage. Just as the third stage of “woman as her mother” strips Orual from her self-deception, Orual is stripped of her veil as she stands before the judge, and she sees herself as “[t]he old crone with her Ungit face” and her “great book that [she] had worked on all day, day after day, while Bardia was dying” as merely an old, “little, shabby, crumpled thing” in the gods’ presence (289). In the silence following the judge’s interruption of her reading her book, Orual recognizes for the first time the voice uttering her complaint against the gods – though it sounded “strange to [her] ears” – “at last, was [her] real

voice” (292). She realizes that her detailed account of the events and her cry for justice are “the speech which has lain at the center of [her] soul for years, which [she] [has], all that time, idiot-like, been saying over and over” – a constant selfish murmur that “[Psyche] was mine. *Mine*” (294, 301, 292).

Now that Orual recognizes her true identity – having a face to meet the gods’ face (C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 294) – she is able to “know [her] work” that she had suppressed within her complaint against the gods. Through looking at a wall of paintings, Orual watches Psyche relive Orual’s life – preparing to drown herself, sorting the seeds, gathering the ram’s golden wool, carrying a bowl through the desert. Yet, in the final painting, Orual sees how she attempted to passionately manipulate Psyche with her love to get Psyche to disobey Ungit’s task (297-304). Orual realizes that she was in the wrong rather than the gods, and when she meets Psyche, she asks for Psyche’s forgiveness rather than demanding the gods’ justice (305).

While Psyche reveals to Orual that her very cry for justice was merely a whining complaint, she also prepares Orual to receive a new identity. When Psyche comes back from the deadlands, Orual emphasizes that Psyche is even more solid in her identity before, “a thousand times more her very self than she had been before the Offering;” in fact, “all that one meant most when one spoke her name, was now wholly present, not to be gathered up from hints nor in shreds, not some of it in one moment and some in another,” as Psyche is confident in her identity (C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 306). Psyche gives Orual the casket that she journeyed to the deadlands for in order “to fetch the beauty that will make Ungit beautiful” (305-6).

Although Orual had completed her journey for identity and, for the first time, knows the depravity of herself and selfishness of her work, the gods are not done with her yet. After Psyche gives Orual the casket she retrieved from the deadlands, Orual realizes “that all this had been

only a preparation” (C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 307). As “[t]he god comes to judge Orual,” Orual describes that “[she] was being unmade” into “no one,” and that Psyche who had been Orual’s central pillar of her identity “was, in a manner, no one” (307). Instead, Orual’s foundation for her identity is shifted from her selfish desires to the god of the Mountain, as she realizes that “all that was or will be, existed for his sake” (307). At the god’s approach, Orual looks down at the edge of the pool of water, and in the reflection she sees “[t]wo 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). The god affirms her transformed identity, as he repeats his prophecy with a small twist; instead of the future tense, the god declares “You are also Psyche” (308).

STAGE FOUR: TREASURE ATTAINED

As the vision vanishes and Orual finds herself back “in the palace gardens” once again with “[her] foolish book in [her] hand” (C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 308), she begins the final stage of the heroic quest – that of living in light of the treasure attained from the journey. Although this section is the smallest portion of the text – covering the final three paragraphs of the novel – Orual’s newly attained identity is reflected in a sense of unity within herself and with her community. Orual’s internal unity emerges from her transformed perception of the gods. During her search for identity, Orual refers to them distantly and bitterly as “the gods” or “the god of the Mountain.” However, once the god unmakes her into something new, the god become personal to Orual as she dies while addressing him as “Lord” and “you” (308).

In addition to overcoming her internal relationship with the gods, Orual’s new identity allows her to become unified with her community. Simultaneously resulting from “her journey inward[,] the hero overcomes alienation and rejoins herself with the world” (Pearson and Pope 226). Upon waking, Orual has a new perception of the community around her and sees them for

who they are rather than her desires they represent. She finds it “strange” that Arnom and her women are weeping, as she realizes that she has not done anything sacrificially “to please them” (C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 308). Likewise, she longs “to have had Daaran here and learned to love him and taught him, if [she] could, to love” her people (308).

Paralleling Orual’s security in her new identity, her community reflects back her identity. Rather than “the Queen” and “Orual” dichotomy dividing Orual’s identity, Arnom identifies her as a unity of the two, “Queen Orual of Glome” (C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 308). Likewise his epitaph for Orual proves the god’s prophecy that she shall be Psyche, as Orual not only sees a new image of herself like Psyche reflected back in the water but also the people value her just as they did Psyche, as “wise, just, valiant, fortunate and merciful” (Rowe 149; C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 308-9). But her newfound identity extends even farther than her small kingdom of Glome. Orual’s book waits to be sent with the next “stranger who intends the journey to Greece” to challenge them to consider the gods in light of her experience, which reinstates her opening intention for her audience in Greek, or more literally Lewis’s audience in England (C.S. Lewis, *TWHF* 308-9, 3-4).

CONCLUSION

As a female hero searching for her identity, Orual’s quest challenges British society’s understanding of their identity. On one hand, Orual’s journey critiques the contented traditionalism of popular culture as the economic prosperity has allowed them to forget Christian truths. Although identity is stable and knowable like they define it, it is not the idealized British exceptionalism or one’s position in the social hierarchy but an ugly identity as a self-centered, devouring Ungit. Like the old priest in Essur, Orual’s heroic quest is a reminder for them to once again hear the suppressed memories of Psyche weeping, of difficulties in their past, and to

recognize the depravity of their fallen identity, like the weak “Orual,” that their economic prosperity had allowed them to hide.

On the other hand, her heroic journey addresses the modernist fragmentation of the intelligentsia. While it is true that identity can seem fluid and unknowable as individuals experiment with different scripts, there is an undergirding identity beneath the multiplicity – there is a face beneath her veil. Like the old priest in Essur, Orual’s search for identity is a reminder of the Christian truth that they had rejected, as they, like Orual, try to dismiss as a myth. Orual’s account challenges the modernist to consider the Divine’s existence and participation in the world rather than limit experience to a chaotic naturalism.

While Orual’s quest for identity encompasses two competing claims of reality in British society, Lewis offers the same solution – a return to the Christian foundation that they had forgotten or rejected. Although sixty years have passed since Lewis wrote *Till We Have Faces*, his bifurcated society has become further separated and remains in desperate need of the hope that he offers with his universal female hero – the hope of a transformed identity in Christ.

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