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SEEING, KNOWING, AND LOVING: AN EXPLORATION OF THE NEO-PLATONIC INFLUENCES UNDERLYING C. S. LEWIS'S *TILL WE HAVE FACES* AND GEORGE MACDONALD'S *PHANTASTES*

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Abstract

The goal of this thesis was to explore how and to what extent the Neo-Platonic influences underlie George MacDonald's Cosmo Story in *Phantastes* and C. S. Lewis's *Till We Have Faces*. In Lewis's autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*, he describes *Phantastes,* a fantasy work by the Scottish author MacDonald, and the impression it made upon him when he read it for the first time. Four of Lewis's personal letters demonstrate his interest in the Cosmo story in particular. Lewis was also familiar with Neo-Platonism, and he explains some aspects of Platonic and Neo-Platonic thought during the Middle Ages in his influential work of intellectual history, *The Discarded Image*. After I established Lewis's interest in the Cosmo story and in Neo-Platonism, I discussed Neo-Platonism and its history in greater detail. I explained the Neo-Platonic notion of salvation. In this notion, the Soul recognizes that it is a self, and in recognizing itself—discovering or remembering its true essence—it returns to the One. I researched and discussed the importance of mirror imagery in Neo-Platonism. Frederick T. Goldin in his *Mirror of Narcissus and the Courtly Love Lyric* illustrates how the ambivalent mirror can be thought of as playing a crucial role in Neo-Platonic salvation. In my conclusion, I discussed Edward Moore's comment that describes the Neo-Platonic Soul's individual journey as parallel to the journey of the Cosmos. I explained how Moore's comment helps us to understand Cosmo in *Phantastes* as a universal everyman figure and Orual in *Till We Have Faces* as a particularized Soul. That Cosmo's and Orual's recognition enables their realization of return, or unification, with deity demonstrates the shared Neo-Platonic elements in George MacDonald's Cosmo Story and C. S. Lewis's *Till We Have Faces*.

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Thesis Body

Introduction

In *C. S. Lewis: A Biography*, A. N. Wilson remarks on the powerful influence of George MacDonald's *Phantastes* on Lewis, while emphasizing the connection between *Phantastes* and Plato:

> The reading of *Phantastes* had suggested . . . that the imagination, as Plato had believed, gave to human beings the chance to penetrate other worlds, to recover earlier states of being, and ultimately to see God. All exercises of memory . . . thus became voyages of not just self-discovery but discovery of the nature of things (210-211).

Wilson not only illustrates that Plato's view of the imagination is the link between *Phantastes* and Lewis, but also that this Platonic concept is significant to self-discovery and to seeing God. Discovery of the self and face-to-face seeing of God are motifs crucial to *Till We Have Faces*, Lewis's last work of fiction, and to a particular story in *Phantastes* involving the character Cosmo and a magic mirror.[1]

C.S. Lewis may be best known as the writer of the *Chronicles of Narnia*, but beyond being a children's book author, he was a literary critic and a Christian apologist. Lewis, a fellow at Magdalen College at Oxford University for thirty years in the Languages and Literatures Department, was also a professor of Medieval and Renaissance Studies at Magdalene College at Cambridge. Lewis had been delighted by fantastic elements in literature since his childhood. In his autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*, written in 1956, he describes his fascination with *Phantastes,* a fantasy work by the Scottish author MacDonald, and the impression it made upon him when he read it for the first time at the age of eighteen in 1916, forty years earlier. He shares

that he enjoyed this work because of its similarity to the books that he had previously read, and he expresses the presence of a unique quality in this fantasy by MacDonald:

> I met in there all that had already charmed me in Malory, Spenser, Morris, and Yeats. But in another sense all was changed. I did not yet know (and I was long in learning) the name of the new quality, the bright shadow, that rested on the travels of Anodos. I do now. It was Holiness . . . That night, my imagination was, in a certain sense, baptized; the rest of me, not unnaturally, took longer. I had not the faintest notion what I had let myself in for by buying *Phantastes* (179; 181).

He not only enjoyed the novel, but he eventually wrote the preface for *George MacDonald: An Anthology*, a collection of three-hundred and sixty-five excerpts from various works by MacDonald, chosen by Lewis. In this preface, he says that when he first read *Phantastes,* he ". . . knew that he had crossed a great frontier" (xxxiii).

Considering Lewis's fascination with fantasy and the life-long impression that *Phantastes* made upon him, it is no surprise that the ability of MacDonald that evokes the highest approbation from Lewis is MacDonald's skill in writing fantasy: "What he does best is fantasy—fantasy that hovers between the allegorical and the mythopoeic. And this, in my opinion, he does better than any man" (*George MacDonald* xxvi). Lewis specifically highlights his own admiration for MacDonald's skill in writing fantasy when Lewis was writing fantasies of his own. Lewis wrote this preface in 1946—one year after completing his *The Deep Space Trilogy*, (*Out of the Silent Planet* in 1938, *Perelandra* in 1943, and *That Hideous Strength* in 1945), two years before publishing the *Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*, and ten years before writing *Till We Have Faces* (1956).

Both Lewis and MacDonald, British authors from the Modern and Victorian periods, present fiction in which the social or empirical world is less important than the metaphysical world depicted through fantasy in literature. More familiar Victorian and Modern writers—Charles Dickens or Virginia Woolf, for example—use social realism or stream of consciousness to emphasize the empirical world. Arguably, MacDonald and Lewis's concern with metaphysics is attributable to a strong strain of Neo-Platonic thought in these two writers' works. Indeed, the goal of this thesis is to explore how and to what extent the Neo-Platonic influences underlie MacDonald's and Lewis's works of fantasy and how they help to explain the similar imagery and symbols in these two authors' works. Others have researched Lewis's dependence on MacDonald, acknowledged by Lewis himself; others have also researched Christianity and Neo-Platonism in Lewis's works. My argument is specifically that understanding the influence of Neo-Platonism in MacDonald and Lewis's works is crucial to comprehending Lewis's fiction, his imagery of mirrors and faces, and the relation between Lewis's *Till We Have Faces* and MacDonald's Cosmo story in *Phantastes*.

Lewis's Fascination with the Cosmo Story and with Neo-Platonism

In his autobiography *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis remarks on the deep impression that *Phantastes* made upon him. His indebtedness to MacDonald is a well-known fact often mentioned in critical works about Lewis's fiction and in biographies about Lewis.[2] However, when these works mention Lewis's interest in *Phantastes*, they do not address his singling out of the Cosmo story itself. Lewis demonstrates that this particular story arrested his attention by mentioning it in several of his personal letters to his friend, Arthur Greeves. For example, in Lewis's letter to Greeves in 1916, he strongly suggests that his friend read *Phantastes*. When

passionately describing what he enjoyed in this book and why Greeves should read it, Lewis refers to the Cosmo story:

> . . . when you have followed the hero Anodos along that little stream to the faery wood, have heard about the terrible ash tree and how the shadow of his gnarled, knotted hand falls upon the book the hero is reading, when you have read about the faery palace— just like that picture in the Dulac book— and heard the episode of Cosmo, I know that you will quite agree with me. (*Collected Letters* 170)

Cosmo is the last story that Lewis mentions to his friend, indicating perhaps that it stood out as oneof the most significant stories in the book. In fact, of the four episodes that Lewis mentions in the previous passage, two set the stage for the Cosmo story: Anodos thinks about reflections as he drifts down the river, which leads to the "faery palace," the place where Anodos finds the library and reads the story of Cosmo (*Collected Letters* 170). A few months later, when he recommends *The House of Seven Gables* to Greeves, Lewis remarks: "There is also a very good 'story in a story'— curiously resembling the Cosmo one . . ." (*Collected Letters* 258); this quote illustrates Lewis's recognition of the Cosmo story as a frame story. In May of 1917, Lewis informs Greeves about Gautier's *Un Trio de Romans* and says: "It is really excellent; one story rather reminds me of the Cosmo episode in 'Phantastes'" (*Collected Letters* 300). This quote emphasizes again that Lewis thought recurrently about the Cosmo story. A month later, Lewis says, "Did I tell you there was a queer little volume in Latin by Cornelius Agrippa the great magician (mentioned in Cosmo's episode)?" (320). That he mentions this specific detail indicates that the story not only stood out to him, but he was deeply familiar with even small details in it (320). In July, Lewis refers to a Gautier story that he compared to that of Cosmo: "It was this third one that I compared, not to Phantastes as a whole, but to the Cosmo story—which,

you know, has rather a different flavour from the main book" (323). In this last mention of the story, although only a brief mention (330), Lewis asserts the Cosmo story stands out to him as different from the entire book of *Phantastes*.

Since Lewis suggests that he had considered the Cosmo story as singular to *Phantastes*, a significant episode in *Phantastes*, and that he enjoyed and contemplated it, one might wonder what about the story elicited this response from Lewis. How would Lewis, deeply influenced by Neo-Platonism, have read the story of Cosmo? For one thing, the name "Cosmo" is one that Lewis would have recognized.

There is no doubt that Lewis was deeply familiar with Neo-Platonism. Explaining some aspects of Platonic and Neo-Platonic thought during the Middle Ages in his influential work of intellectual history, *The Discarded Image*, Lewis demonstrates his deep concerns with Christianity and Neo-Platonism. Lewis believed that the Neo-Platonic philosophers and the Christians during third to sixth centuries had common interests. In *The Discarded Image*, he states how this connection influenced the works that writers produced in that era: "where so much ground was—or at least seemed to be—common, a writer could sincerely produce much that was acceptable to many Christian and many Pagan readers alike, provided his work was not explicitly theological" (47). In this quotation, he asserts that the common ground between the two schools of thought enabled writers to compose works "acceptable" to both groups. This illustrates a principle that could be applied to Lewis's fiction. Lewis himself, as well as MacDonald, produced works such as he mentions in this passage—works that share common ground of Neo-Platonic thought and Christian theology—read by Christians and non-Christians alike.

More important than the connection between Neo-Platonism and Christianity that Lewis discusses is his emphasis on the former's influence on the latter. In *The Discarded Image*, he says, "the present study, however, is interested not in the short-lived impact of the new religion on the old but with the enduring effect of the old upon the new" (48). What is remarkable about his clarification is his focus and emphasis on the influence of Neo-Platonism on Christianity rather than the influence of Christianity on Neo-Platonism. He asserts the powerful influence of Neo-Platonism during the Middle Ages and its remaining influence still present in modern society: "The last, and neo-Platonic, wave of Paganism which had gathered up into itself much from the preceding waves, Aristotelian, Platonic, Stoic, and what not, came far inland and made brackish lakes which have, perhaps, never been drained" (48).

By highlighting the Neo-Platonic "wave" which he says has possibly "never been drained," Lewis suggests his conception that this Neo-Platonic thought strongly impacted the "world view" during the European Middle Ages and Renaissance (48). Because of the fusion of Neo-Platonism and Christianity that resulted from this "world view," the Christian morality of love and the Neo-Platonic epistemology are inseparable, or so Lewis argues, and so I argue, at least insofar as it helps us to understand his own fiction.

In the "world view" expressed in both *The Discarded Image* and Lewis's later works of fiction, the Christian theology of love is fused with the Neo-Platonic epistemology of knowing, seeing, and reflecting. This fusion is especially clear in the Scriptural imagery of light and love powerfully expressed by Paul, for example, in 1 Corinthians 13: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" ("Bible Gateway"). As we shall see, this Christian / Neo-Platonic emphasis on knowing,

loving, and seeing resonates throughout Lewis's works of fiction, especially *Till We Have Faces*, and it is powerfully evident in MacDonald's fantasy *Phantastes*.

For example, when conveying the development of the main character Orual in *Till We Have Faces* (*TWHF*), Lewis describes Orual's experience of self-realization—knowing herself—as the result of glimpsing her reflection in a mirror. She looks into the mirror and perceives herself as Ungit, the goddess: "That ruinous face was mine. That all-devouring, wormlike, yet barren, thing . . . gorged with men's stolen lives" (276). She realizes that she has loved others selfishly—devouringly—not self-sacrificially. Because she looks into the mirror and sees herself as Ungit, she knows herself and knows that she lacks self-sacrificial love. In *TWHF*, the mirror is the symbol by which Lewis illustrates Orual's self-realization or "true" knowledge of her own character. Closer analysis of this scene and its central role in Orual's spiritual development is included later in this thesis.

George MacDonald communicates seeing, knowing, and loving in *Phantastes* in the Cosmo story, in which Cosmo Von Wehrstahl beholds a woman, only in a mirror, the result of a spell put upon her. Because he desires to look at her face to face, he summons the lady to him by magic. The lady asks him to free her by breaking the mirror. Because the mirror is the only way that Cosmo sees the beautiful woman and he is afraid of not seeing her again, he does not immediately break the mirror—an act that evinces his selfish love; "not yet pure in love, he hesitated" (99). Cosmo desires to see the image of the woman in the mirror more than he desires the real woman's freedom from the spell. When the lady exclaims that he must not love her, he realizes his error in not destroying the mirror, knows he must destroy it, and attempts to break the mirror.

Lewis clearly connects the ideas of seeing, knowing, and loving in his preface to *George MacDonald: An Anthology*: "His best characters are those which reveal how much real charity and spiritual wisdom can coexist with the profession of a theology that seems to encourage neither . . . MacDonald illustrates, not the doubtful maxim that to know all is to forgive all, but the unshakeable truth that to forgive is to know. He who loves, sees" (*George MacDonald* xxiii-xxiv). In this quotation, Lewis refers to the "common ground" that fuses charity and wisdom to theology, just as those writers in the past wrote of common ground shared by Neo-Platonists and Christians. Linking charity, (love), and wisdom, (knowledge or good judgment), to theology, Lewis asserts that forgiving love sees and knows the self and others. To Lewis, in order to love, one must not only know, but also see.

Since the goal of this thesis is to explore and explain how and to what extent the Neo-Platonic influences underlie Lewis's and MacDonald's works of fantasy and how they help to explain the similar imagery and symbols in these two author's works, I examine examples from Lewis's and MacDonald's fiction that demonstrate their shared Neo-Platonism, especially examples that illustrate their fusion of the Christian theology of love and the Neo-Platonic ideas of knowing, loving, and seeing. I illustrate the significance of these examples through deep discussion of Lewis's own comments about MacDonald and researchers' comments about both the Neo-Platonic imagery in Lewis's fiction and the similar imagery in both Lewis and MacDonald. I show through these examples that the Neo-Platonic influence underlying both Lewis's and MacDonald's fiction is essential to understanding the similar elements in their fiction—the motif of faces and the mirror and reflection imagery.

cannot know everything about the true image, because he glimpses only a reflection of that image. Seeing face-to-face enables a true knowledge, because by seeing the true object face-to-face, one can know that object as it really is. Nevertheless, MacDonald does not stop and explain the allusion or the story he is about to tell because he has already given this allusion that contains some of the major motifs of the story, and will illustrate these concepts through the story, without having to explain them. After this allusion to first Corinthians, Anodos continues with the story.

Cosmo von Wehrstahl, whose first name, according to Lewis, means "everybody . . . *tout le monde*," (*Studies in Words* 252) and last name translates to "military steel," is an idealist, seeing "everything as through a rose-coloured glass . . ." (86). Cosmo looks at everything as if it were in a story. One day, he walks into an antique store, and is captivated by a particular mirror. Although he does not have enough money to buy it, he returns to the store and the owner makes a deal with Cosmo, offering him the mirror for one-fourth of the cost, and Cosmo purchases the mirror. When he brings the mirror home, he contemplates mirrors and remarks:

> What a strange thing a mirror is! and what a wondrous affinity exists between it and a man's imagination! For this room of mine, as I behold it in the glass, is the same, and yet not the same. It is not the mere representation of the room I live in, but it looks just as if I were reading about it in a story I like. All its commonness has disappeared. The mirror has lifted it out of the region of fact into the realm of art . . . reveals Nature in some degree as she really is, and as she represents herself to the eye of the child . . . I should like to live in *that* room if I could only get into it. (89-90)

Cosmo's emphasis on the ability of the mirror's ability to carry him into a transcendent realm is similar to the idea in Neo-Platonism that through seeing reflections, one glimpses and acquires an imperfect knowledge of deity (Goldin 8). This mirror shows images that are partially true, but seeing these reflections of deity is not the same as seeing deity itself. In Neo-Platonism, Intelligence enables the Soul to recognize itself as part of the One. MacDonald's use of the mirror is significant to the theme of recognition, because it is through Cosmo's later inability to destroy it that he realizes his own possessiveness.

To Cosmo, possessing the woman in the mirror was more important than freeing her. MacDonald, when describing Cosmo's hesitation, says that Cosmo's love was "not yet pure . . ." (99). Cosmo's selfishness is evident because he does not immediately choose to free the lady as she asked.

Tormented because he realizes his mistake of hesitating, Cosmo exclaims that he "will not wait to be willing" (100), grabs his sword, and attempts to destroy the mirror, but his stroke fails and he is knocked senseless. After recovering, he overhears a conversation about a Princess von Hohenweiss,[3] who has been sick for over a year. He learns that the Princess "gave offence . . . to an old woman who had held an office of trust in the family, and . . . disappeared . . . But the strangest part of the story is its association with the loss of an antique mirror, which stood in her dressing-room, and of which she constantly made use" (101-02). After hearing this conversation, Cosmo also learns of the new possessor of the mirror. MacDonald breaks off the story of Cosmo, and describes the scene of the Princess regaining consciousness and running to find Cosmo. When she finds Cosmo, he is dying, and he asks, "Have I atoned at all? Do I love you a little—truly?" (104). Princess von Hohenweiss affirms that now she knows he has loved her truly.

Three issues here will be useful when discussing Neo-Platonism in MacDonald and Lewis's reading of it: Cosmo's name, because the etymon *kosmos* is defined by Lewis and is related to the notion of the Macrocosm significant to Neo-Platonism; Cosmo's desire to be united to the lady, just as the Neo-Platonic universe desires to be united with the One; and Cosmo's recognition of his own inner possessive nature.

Mirror Imagery in *Till We Have Faces*

In *TWHF*, Lewis adapts the Cupid-Psyche myth (described below) and in his adaptation he includes three instances of mirror imagery and one particular use of reflection imagery. Orual offers herself as a sacrifice to the Brute in order to spare Psyche's life. Before she offers herself, her father has beaten her for trying to convince him to not sacrifice Psyche. Her Father, King Trom, leads her to the mirror in which, as Orual describes, "you can see your perfect image" (61). Her sacrificial act of offering herself in Psyche's place contrasts her father's focus on her physical appearance. Orual's offering of herself demonstrates the only time that Orual acts self-sacrificially, and not possessively, of Psyche; however, the King ignores the self-sacrificial offering and determines to show Orual how her ugliness makes it impossible for her to be a sacrifice to the god. Nevertheless, he leads her to the mirror to show her that she is not beautiful enough to be a sacrifice to the god; he says, "Ungit asked for the best in the land as her son's bride . . . And you'd give her *that*" (62). Her father uses the mirror not only to show Orual her own ugliness, but also to impose upon Orual a distorted sense of concern with her outward appearance.

Next, Orual describes a vision in which her father visits her and leads her to the Pillar Room (274). Orual describes her fear of the mirror in the Pillar Room, and shortly after, she explains that she dreads her father's discovery that she gave the mirror—"his favorite

treasure"— to her sister Redival. In this vision, she describes digging a hole in the pillar room, traveling underground, digging another hole, and jumping down again at her father's orders (274). Her father asks her, "Who is Ungit?" and leads her to ". . . that mirror on the wall, where it had always been" (276). Orual becomes terrified when she sees it, and she feels "sucked along" towards it (276). She stands in front of the mirror with her father, and sees her face as the face of Ungit. The King asks again, "Who is Ungit?" and Orual responds, "I am Ungit" (276).

Lewis uses the motif of descent in *TWHF* to show a movement towards inner awareness to suggest that Orual's ugliness is an interior, rather than exterior, ugliness. In *George MacDonald: An Anthology*, in the entry Lewis calls "The Body," one quote by MacDonald seems to describe what inner descent accomplishes: ". . . we are both trained outward from ourselves, and driven inward into our deepest selves to find God" (24). While Trom used the mirror in the pillar room to encourage Orual to an inordinate concern with her outward appearance in Orual, Orual's digging a hole in the same room suggests her traveling deep inside her inner being and finding ugliness there because of her selfishness. After she digs under the room, she realizes that she is like Ungit because she has loved others selfishly.

Ungit, the goddess of Glome in *TWHF*, is a distorted version of the classical goddesses of love, "Aphrodite" or "Venus." Ungit, in this work, symbolizes a love that "devours." Lewis's personal letters indicate that he thought of Orual as a case of human love "gone wrong." Lewis wrote about selfish love and self-sacrificing love in *The Four Loves* (*TFL*), a book of non-fiction published four years after *TWHF*. In *TFL*, Lewis makes a distinction between selfish (sexual) love, which he calls "Venus," and more unselfish (sexual) love that desires the good of the beloved, which he calls "Eros" (91-92).[4] Orual demonstrates Venus-like, devouring love through

ler words and actions, eventually recognizes its presence in herself, and through a journey completed by both herself and Psyche, achieves the self-sacrificing love, "charity."

The third mention of the mirror in the novel is during a vision in which Orual's advisor, the Fox, speaks with her. Orual describes her fear again of being led to the mirror, but is relieved that she is led to part of a wall instead of a mirror. On the wall, she sees moving images of the tasks that Psyche undertook in her stead. The Fox describes the last task of Psyche—retrieving beauty in the deadlands. The moving images on the wall that show Psyche's sacrifice for Orual are similar to Plato's allegory of the cave, where people see reflections of reality on a wall.[5]

The final instance of reflection imagery in *TWHF* is after Psyche brings Orual the gift of beauty. Before this instance, Orual says, "I could mend my soul no more than my face" (282). Through Orual's self-recognition of her devouring qualities, she now sees that she could neither change her physical features, nor transform her inner qualities, but she resolves not to be devouring, and knows that only the gods can help her to be free from her possessiveness. Orual's change on the inside is shown by her statement, "I loved her as I would once have thought it impossible to love, would have died any death for her" (307). She feels self-sacrificial love for Psyche. Then, she looks down at their reflections and sees herself as Psyche. The reflection shows that physically and inwardly, Orual has changed from squeezing life out of others by asking them to serve her, to loving others enough to give up her own life to serve them. In both MacDonald's Cosmo Story and *Till We Have Faces*, the mirror imagery is linked to moments in the plot in which the protagonists have crucial moments of self-realization in which the recognition of their own self-love is ironically what frees them from that self-love into a greater charity.

Neo-Platonism, *Till We Have Faces*, and *Phantastes*

The similarities between the Cosmo story and *TWHF* can be explained through Neo-Platonic thought, a philosophy both familiar and intriguing to C. S. Lewis. In particular, a sense of Neo-Platonism, its history, and especially Lewis's understanding of it, helps us to view Orual's journey from selfish to unselfish love in *TWHF* as a particularized occurrence of the general Cosmo story, showing that Lewis may have (unconsciously or consciously) created Orual as a particular instance of the Cosmo everyman from *Phantastes*.

Neo-Platonic, Pauline, And Augustinian Concerns of Love, Knowledge, and Perception

Neo-Platonism, meaning "new" Platonism, is a term that originated in Germany during the eighteenth-century and referred to the philosophy of those who interpreted Platonic philosophy during the third through sixth centuries (Moore 2; Wallis viii, 2). Neo-Platonism emerged after the period of Middle Platonism, a span of two hundred years in which a revival of Plato occurred (Steel 2). Later revivals of interest occurred in the twelfth century in France at the Chartrian School and in the fifteenth-through-sixteenth-century Renaissance. Because of its comprehensiveness as a philosophy and the diversity within the three particular schools, the scope of Neo-Platonic philosophy is too broad to be covered entirely here. Nevertheless, several ideas central to Neo-Platonism relate to the themes present in Lewis's *TWHF* and MacDonald's *Phantastes* and therefore will be useful. As well, a more general understanding is necessary to see the central ideas in context.

Neo-Platonism started with Plotinus, who taught in Rome and wrote the *Enneads* (Turner 2). According to R. Baine Harris, "The chief document of Neo-Platonism is the *Enneads* of Plotinus, a series of fifty-four essays arranged into six divisions of nine each, each division being called an "Ennead" (2). Organized by topic by Plotinus's student Porphyry, the *Enneads* offer a

complete description of Plotinus's philosophy, including several ideas that relate deeply to *TWHF* and *Phantastes*, particularly his ideas regarding what Carlos Steel calls the "salvation of the soul," or the soul's return to the Ultimate (or God) (3).

In the first section of the *Enneads*, "the Three Hypostases," Plotinus asserts the notion of the three Hypostases, what some regard as one of the ideas most distinctive and fundamental to Neo-Platonism (Steel 1). These Hypostases (or fundamental essences)—the Soul (*Psyche*), the Mind or Intellect (*Nous*), and the Good (also the Ultimate or the One)—are immaterial, and make up a hierarchy with the soul at the lowest point and the One, or Good, at the highest. While Plato and Aristotle both had theories about the ultimate, Plotinus's notion of the Ultimate is according to R. Baine Harris "greater than the Ultimates of either Plato or Aristotle" (4). The Ultimate is not only at the top of the hierarchy, but also considered by Plotinus to be both "non-being"—to exist, it must be immaterial—and paradoxically "everything," because all things come from it (Harris 4). Emphasizing the mysterious connection between the Ultimate and all that extends from it, Plotinus's idea of "emanation" refers to "the procession of all things from the One . . ." (Wallis 5). The Ultimate knows that it is good, and its knowing and contemplating itself—through Intelligence—results in the Ultimate creating all other things, including souls. The souls are good because they came from the Good; their source is the Good, and while they are not the Good, they have the quality of goodness in them. The Soul, or Psyche, not only proceeds from the Ultimate, but also retains some vestige of its original participation in the One. The Soul has understanding, a crucial capacity that needs to be manifested or fulfilled before the Soul's ascent to Intelligence:

> The understanding is considered by Plotinus as the proper and normal level of the Soul, intermediate between Intelligence and the sensible world. The

> understanding is what we are, whereas Intelligence on the one hand, and the body on the other, are only possessions of ours (Brehier 81).

The understanding serves to "comprehend," and it is this comprehension that enables the Soul to ascend "toward Intelligence from which it receives illumination" (Brehier 81). The Soul ascends ultimately towards the One, but achieves this through the Soul's knowledge or self-recognition that occurs as a result of Intelligence. This self-knowledge is described in detail: "All knowledge rests upon a more or less complete assimilation between the knower and the known . . . 'It is because vision is light and one with light that it sees light'" (Book 3, line 8 from Plotinus's *Enneads*). "Intelligence denotes properly a state in which this assimilation is complete, in which object is not different from subject" (Brehier 96). This self-knowing or self-realization that occurs is described as ideal knowledge: "It is the knowledge of self to which all other knowledge tends, as toward an ideal" (Brehier 96).

Neo-Platonism emphasizes very strongly that the soul can return to the One—a return to its origin. Nevertheless, in order for the soul to return, it must first recognize that it is a soul: "We find them [The Three Hypostases] in ourselves, at least if we first discover that we are a *self*"" (Steel 2). This realization of its essence, that it is a self (that it came from and participated in the One), can be thought of as a reverse process of emanation. In emanation, the One contemplates itself, and this contemplation results in the generation or creation of souls, which proceed from the One. In salvation, the soul recognizes that it is a self, and in recognizing itself—discovering or remembering its true essence—it returns to the one.

The soul's recognition of its true self and its process of returning to the One underpin Plotinus's idea of salvation; this return to the One consists of catharsis or purification, a dialectical movement towards awareness of true self, and eventually "enlightenment" through

''direct communion with that part of the One that is already within it" (Harris 6). Here is where light imagery and sight imagery are so important in explaining knowing and being. Brehier demonstrates how significant light is to the process of knowing and being known in the quotation in the previous paragraph. According to Antonia Tripolitis in *The Doctrine of the Soul in the Thought of Plotinus and Origin*, the object is not only simply "not different" from the subject; she describes how the subject is the object: "In attaining union with the One, the individual reaches a state in which he is no longer himself; Seer and Seen are one" (84). The use of words related to both light and sight imagery implies that a necessary component in the process of the soul's self-recognition is light. This self-recognition is simultaneously ontological and epistemological. Through emanation—being, and knowing that it is "being,"—the One creates everything. Through salvation—knowing it is from and part of the One—the soul returns to the one. These processes are paradoxically similar because, in both, the One and the soul participate in knowing that the One created the soul. Through this participation, the soul is part of the One, once again, as in emanation. Through recognition that it is itself an emanation of the One and therefore its image, the soul achieves salvation through internal means because it is a part of the One. Through knowing that the One is in it, and returning (being) in the One, the soul achieves salvation.

This return to the One is also described as a journey: "The way of salvation is a journey from the soul to mind to the One during which the soul progressively sees itself as an element of the Ultimate" (Harris 6). Plotinus's notion of "knowing" differs from Plato's notion in that he conceives of the relationship between the soul and the One precisely as the same reciprocity as that of an object being known and the knower of that object (Harris 7). This description of the

relationship between the Ultimate and the soul achieves one of the fundamental purposes of philosophy:

> This unification with the One is not an alien supplement, not a denial of philosophy, but a realization and radicalization of what always was the intention of philosophy: to reach the first principle; to overcome the distinction of knower and object known (Steel 2).

In Neo-Platonism, the distinction between the knower and the object is overcome through the realization by the object known (the Soul) that the One is in itself even while it is participating in the One. The Soul's knowing itself as the One demonstrates that the Soul is like the One because the One is in it. Edward Moore asserts that for Plotinus, "'Likeness to God as far as possible,' is really likeness to oneself—*authentic existence*" (5).

Mirror Imagery in Neo-Platonism

In his chapter "The Optics of Light," Richard T. Cottrell states the significance of the mirror image in Neo-Platonism: "A central image in the Platonic-Christian tradition, it [the mirror] is charged with a rich cargo of meanings" (95). According to Cottrell, mirrors in literature from the time of Augustine through the Middle Ages may imply God and scripture; moreover, mirrors may imply reality or truth—namely, "what is"—and a model or ideal for reality—"what should be."

Cottrell observes that while Plato mentions works of art in the *Republic* as "nothing more than imperfect reflections of ultimate reality," in the *Timaeus*, he "noted that the lower orders of being reflect "'as in a mirror' (71B) the higher reality that extends downward from God" (95). The first Neo-Platonic philosopher, Plotinus, speaks of this Platonic reflection in the *Enneads*,

''to convey the notion that the universals are not perceived directly but only in a reflector, be it language, reason, or matter" (95).

Cottrell adds, "allusions to specula [Latin for "mirrors"] are also common in the Bible," and mentions 1 Corinthians 13:12, where Paul says "'now we are seeing a dim reflection in a mirror'" (95). By mentioning that Augustine "recast speech into a Pauline mirror capable of reflecting God," Cottrell demonstrates that Augustine uses speech to reflect God. Cottrell also remarks that Augustine says in *Confessions* "that God . . . has given us the mirror of Holy Scripture, in which we can read His will" (96).

Cottrell adds a statement crucial to comprehending the importance of mirror imagery in the work of Augustine and other works in the medieval era: "As well as reflecting God, however, a mirror may also reflect man's own image back to him and thus disclose his sinfulness . . . . As Sister Rita-Mary Bradley observed in her seminal article on the use of the words *speculum* in medieval literature, the mirror image, at least from Augustine on, has had two basic connotations: a mirror may reflect a faithful image of what is, or it may serve as a paragon of what should be" (96).

In the *Mirror of Narcissus and the Courtly Love Lyric*, Frederick T. Goldin supports Cottrell's statement, asserting that the mirror's significance in the Middle Ages and in its Neo-Platonic revivals was the result of the "medieval world view" which "was essentially Platonic,"; Goldin also asserts the subsequent Neo-Platonic use of the mirror. Goldin identifies three ways the mirror is used in the literature in the Middle Ages,[6] including two uses that are particularly relevant to the Cosmo story and *TWHF*—that of the "mirror of matter," or the passive mirror, and the "ambivalent mirror" (4-8). Plotinus viewed the mirror as a passive object: "The copies and shadows of real things which pass in it [the mirror] and out of it, come into it as into a

formless shadow. They are seen in it because it has no form of its own" (6). Explaining Plotinus's statement, Goldin remarks, "In its [the mirror's] passivity . . . it can produce nothing but an illusion. The mirror of matter represents the delusiveness of experience in the sensible world, a world of shifting images, a world whose substratum has the 'actuality of an illusion'" (6). Goldin presents Narcissus, the man who falls in love with his own reflected image, as an "exemplum" of the passive mirror which shows illusions. The Neo-Platonists Macrobius and St. Augustine added to the idea of the mirror as showing illusions; speaking of Macrobius's thoughts on the mirror, Goldin says, "The image in the mirror is a 'seductive similitude,' seeming to be real but really false, for it cannot be grasped, it makes no sound, it does not live" (7). While the mirror as a passive object shows illusions of reality, the "ambivalent mirror" points the viewer to imperfect reflections of truth seen in the mirror.

The ambivalent mirror can be thought of as playing a crucial role in Neo-Platonic salvation. This mirror ". . . unites its own material nature with a spiritual reality" (8). Following an ascent towards the "the invisible things of God, the incorporeal essences . . . we may come to know them directly and intuitively in *contemplation*. But the slow and faltering way to that knowledge is *speculation*, the inferior knowledge we work to attain through the *speculum* of the visible things of this world" (8). While seeing a reflection of the things in the world is a significant component to contemplating, and knowing the divine, Goldin shows that seeing a reflection and the knowledge that follows precedes an even deeper, "face-to-face" knowing of the divine:

> St. Paul's theme is the imperfect nature of man's knowledge in this life: we may see the glory of God only in a mirror, never directly . . . But beyond that mirror obscured by mortality, beyond the firmament that separates us from another

> heaven— . . . there is another kind of contemplation, pure, without obscurity because its object is no mere image perceived in a mirror but the very 'face' of God (9-11).

This face-to-face seeing is described as it relates to the fundamental Neo-Platonic concept of the Soul's return to the One:

> In this world of images the soul alone is capable of becoming conscious of itself as an image whose ultimate reality is the One, the Divine. It alone can understand that its identity consists in resemblance, and its salvation in the enhancement of that resemblance. It knows itself as an image endowed with the ability to rise out of the mirror and become one with its Creator (15).

Goldin emphasizes the Neo-Platonic concept that the soul's knowing itself must precede its return to unity with the One; the soul must see, or recognize itself, and understand it is a reflection of the One to return to the One.

The Platonic Revival in the School of Chartres

Fused with their interests in salvation and their intrigue with mirrors, thinkers in the twelfth century developed "an alternative, structured vision accessible through intuition of a reality underlying the *visibilia* of nature" (15). In his *Allegory of Love*, Lewis describes in great detail the school of Chartres, its authors, and the works that they produced, illustrating his knowledge of the school and its philosophy. Lewis emphasizes the Platonism inherent in the school, saying: "The school of Chartres is Platonic, as Platonism was understood in those days, [hence Neo-Platonic] when Chalcidius' translation of the *Timaeus*, and the pseudo-Dionysius, were the important texts" (*Allegory* 88).

Winthrop Wetherbee in his *Platonism and Poetry in the Twelfth Century* makes clear a notion that parallels the relation between the individual soul and the One in the new Platonism of the time, the microcosm and the macrocosm: "The relations between the human psyche [microcosm] and its macrocosmic environment were a theme for mystical vision and spiritual exercise as well as scientific investigation . . ." (15). At Chartres, the relationship between the microcosm and macrocosm is a major topic. Wetherbee indicates that the school was fundamentally founded on Plato's cosmology in the *Timaeus*: "Chartrian thought begins and ends in the study of the *auctores*" (28) and "the greatest of the *auctores* was Plato, whose *Timaeus* was revered as the 'flower of all philosophy.' It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the Timaean cosmos as a model for Chartrian thought" (29).

Lewis himself emphasizes the significance of the *Timaeus*. Speaking of Chalcidius, the translator of the *Timaeus*, Lewis says: "By translating so much of the *Timaeus* and thus transmitting it to centuries in which little else of Plato was known, Chalcidius determined what the name of Plato should chiefly stand for throughout the Middle Ages" (*Discarded Image* 52). He argues that because of Chalcidius's translation, "For the Middle Ages, Plato . . . was . . . the great monotheistic cosmogonist, the philosopher of creation . . . To that extent, Chalcidius unconsciously supplied a corrective for the *contempus mundi* inherent in neo-Platonism and early Christianity alike" (52). To Lewis, Chalcidius's translation and commentary on the *Timaeus* was crucial to understanding how people in the Middle Ages perceived Plato.

The Neo-Platonists in the twelfth century were not only influenced by the *Timaeus*, but were also influenced by the poetry of the Neo-Platonic writers Boethius and Macrobius. Wetherbee identifies Book 3, Poem 9 from Boethius's *De consolatione philosophiae* as "the high point of the *De consolatione* for the Chartrians . . ." (*Platonism* 76). In this poem, Boethius uses

light and seeing imagery to ask the deity for knowledge and to express his desire for his soul to be one with the deity. Wetherbee includes a translation of this poem:

> You fashion all things according to the eternal exemplar. You who are most beautiful produce the beautiful world from your divine mind and, forming it in your image, you order the perfect parts in a perfect whole . . . . Grant, O Father, that my mind may rise to they sacred throne. Let it see the fountain of good; let it find light, so that the clear light of my soul my fix itself in thee . . . . For thou art the serenity, the tranquil peace of virtuous men. The sight of thee is beginning and end; one guide, leader, path, and goal (76-77).

The Neo-Platonic ideas in the poem include the belief that everything comes from the Good, that the creation in the world reflects the Good, and that the creation in the world is a part of the whole world. Boethius asks for his mind to "rise," or to ascend, towards the Good, to "see" the good, and considers the "sight" of the Good as eternal. Moreover, Boethius asks to find "light," in order for his soul to return to the One. Boethius seems to be asking the Good to help him return back to the Good, a process which can only occur through his mind's rising, seeing, and finding the light of intelligence so that his soul may once again be part of the Good.

Since the poem contains Neo-Platonic elements, it is not surprising that Wetherbee calls the poem "a brilliant summary of the cosmology of the *Timaeus*, but read in the context of the dialogue, it is also the fulfillment of the longing for an integrating vision expressed in the earlier *metra* . . . and implies the possibility of further enlightenment" (76).

Bernardus Sylvestris

The powerful influence of Boethian though in the Middle Ages reinforced Platonic and Plotinian concerns with the role of light, sight, and reflection in Medieval notions of salvation

and return.[7] Less well known to many of us perhaps is the influence of Bernardus Silvestris, although his influence and fundamental Neo-Platonism was certainly well-known to Lewis, who described him as the "leader" of the school of Chartres (*Allegory* 87). Wetherbee acknowledges Bernardus as "a poet" and "a philosopher", and goes on to identify *De Mundi Universitate* as his most important work (*Platonism* 108-09). Like Boethius, Bernardus's work is deeply influenced by the *Timaeus*, as Wetherbee makes clear.

For his own part Lewis discusses Bernardus and *De Mundi* in his *Allegory of Love*, introducing and describing Bernardus Silvestris and the school of Chartres. Lewis comments, in detail, on Bernardus's *De Mundi*, a combination of both poetry and prose in the two books, the Macrocosm and the Microcosm. Similar to Plato's *Timaeus*, Bernardus's work has as its subject the "creation of the world and of man . . . told from the point of view of the created" (*Allegory of Love* 90). The first book tells how the creator Noys makes the Macrocosm, the soul, and the second book tells the story of the Microcosm. Lewis specifically describes the scene in which Nous creates the "little world of man" (90). This little world, the microcosm, is a particular of the general world, macrocosm. Just as a soul or psyche is like the One because the One made it, man is like the world, yet is more than a copy of the world. Lewis asserts: "Man is to have something more than that mediated impress of the divine idea which rests upon creation as a whole: in him something of immediate divinity is to dwell" (94). In other words, in Bernardus's work, man is not just a copy or a replica of the divine; divinity inheres in man. Lewis not only emphasizes this idea of the microcosm and the macrocosm, but he also demonstrates his deep familiarity with Bernardus's *De Mundi* as a whole by summarizing it in *The Allegory of Love* and remarking on it in *The Discarded Image.*

Lewis asserts that Bernardus's *De Mundi* was heavily influenced by the *Timaeus* (*Discarded Image* 49). He displays his interest in Bernardus even further by using a very unusual word from *De Mundi*, "Oyarses," in his book *Out of the Silent Planet* and referring to Bernardus and the twelfth-century Platonists in the same sentence in which he references this word (153). In this book, Oyarsa is a being who watches over, guards, and rules (to a certain degree) the planet Malacandra [or Mars]. The Oyarsa is not Maleldil, the creator or the ruler of the entire universe in the *Space Trilogy*; Maleldil placed the Oyarsa on the planet to protect it, and is ". . . something like an archangel." Walter Hooper in *C. S. Lewis: A Companion and Guide* tells us that Lewis's colleague, C. C. J. Webb wrote to him informing him that the word *oyarses* "was a corruption of . . . *ousiarches* ('ruling essence') from Pseudo-Apulius's *Asclepius* . . . this was a very important discovery" (207-08).

Commenting on *oyarses* in Bernardus's *De Mundi*, Wetherbee explains the notion of *oyarses* even further: "One purpose of this image of the genius figure was probably to illustrate, or at least to allude to the 'Chartrian' doctrine of 'secondary forms,' intermediary between the ideas in the divine mind and their substantial embodiments" (*Cosmographia* 140). By using the term *oyarses*, Lewis displayed his interest in Neo-Platonism, its revival in the School of Chartres, and the School's leader, Bernardus Sylvestris. Perhaps more remarkably, the term *oyarses* can be connected to the Neo-Platonic concept of salvation.

In the *Cosmographia of Bernardus Sylvestris*, Wetherbee describes how Urania is linked to the notion of consciousness, before going on to connect both with the *oyarses*: "The nature and limitations of human consciousness are further illustrated in Urania and Physis, Nature's collaborators in the creation of man" (42). Specifically Urania is "the muse of cosmic knowledge, who bestows upon Psyche the gift of self-knowledge . . . . Through her man's soul

will be aligned with the principles of celestial order and harmony . . ." (42). This alignment shows the similarity of the soul to "the divine ration of creation" (42). Bernardus displays this similarity, or "affinity," through mirror imagery—"The implications of this affinity are conveyed by the image of the Mirror of Providence which Noys presents to Urania" (42). In *De Mundi,* Urania gives self-knowledge to the Soul, and Noys gives a mirror in order for Urania to give "guidance in the task of 'the composition of a soul [for man] . . .'" (42). After explaining these details about Urania and the Soul, Wetherbee states a relationship between consciousness and *oyarses*: ". . . with this conception of human consciousness in mind . . . we must consider the roles of the various 'genius' figures," and Wetherbee continues to explain that the *oyarses* ". . . all exist on the periphery of consciousness" (44).

The *oyarses* seem to be figures who are between the Soul and the One, a kind of mediator between the particularized and unified duality of being: "Natural existence is from one point of view a means whereby man can achieve self-recognition and fulfillment; from another it is an imprisonment, a confinement within an order which is finally an obstacle to the vision necessary for self-realization" (45). These two statements about being are similar to two meanings of the mirror that Goldin describes; while a mirror can show the true image of the object reflected in it, it can also show false images or illusions of that object (4).

Till We Have Faces

Lewis wrote *Till We Have Faces* as a retelling of the myth of Cupid and Psyche, a story in *Metamorphoses* or *The Golden Ass*, written by Apuleius in the third century (Schakel 2), a writer who Lewis says was responsible for a kind of "diffused Platonism" (*The Discarded Image* 43). Lewis summarizes the myth in a note at the end of *TWHF*. According to Lewis, the myth tells the story of Psyche, a princess, who was worshipped "as a goddess" (311) for her beauty.

Venus, the goddess of love, was being "neglected" (311) and envied the worship that Psyche was receiving.

She sends her son Cupid to punish Psyche, but Cupid, "on seeing Psyche, fell in love with her himself" (311). He arranges for the West Wind to bring Psyche to his palace. Cupid "visited her by night . . . but he forbade her to see his face" (311). Psyche requests that her sisters visit the palace, but after enjoying the splendorous palace, "they were devoured with envy, for their husbands were not gods and their houses not so fine as hers . . ." (312). They convince her that Cupid is a "monstrous serpent" and that she should take a lamp into the bedroom in which Cupid visits her by night, and upon seeing the monster that he is, she should kill him. Psyche follows their advice, sees and loves Cupid, but by spilling a drop of oil from the lamp on him, wakes him from sleep. Cupid arranges for the two sisters to die. Psyche attempts to commit suicide, and is saved by Pan. Eventually, she becomes Venus's "slave" and must perform "impossible tasks" for Venus (312). The last task is to retrieve "the beauty of Persephone, the Queen of the Dead," and bring it to Venus. Psyche is ordered not to open the box, but "curiosity overcame her and she looked into it" (313). As a result of opening the box, Psyche "immediately lost consciousness" (313). Cupid "interceded" on behalf of Psyche, and Psyche becomes both Cupid's bride and a goddess.

Lewis's most noticeable change to the story is to make Psyche's ugly half sister, Orual, the protagonist (and narrator) instead of Psyche herself. Although this change to the story seems most noteworthy, Lewis indicates in the concluding note to the novel that his "central alteration" in *TWHF* is "making Psyche's palace invisible to normal, mortal eyes . . . This change . . . brings with it a more ambivalent motive and a different character for my heroine and finally modifies the whole quality of the tale" (313). Both of Lewis's significant changes to the plot—that of the

creation of Orual, and the palace unable to be seen only by mortal eyes—can help us to recognize a central concern of Lewis's novel: the Neo-Platonic return to the One, or Neo-Platonic salvation.

In the novel, Psyche is a character as Orual's half-sister, and she has a symbolic or allegorical dimension. She and Orual are half-sisters, but more than sisters; Psyche is a projection for the metaphysical potential in Orual. This dual dimension of Psyche in the novel is clearly seen in chapters nine through fifteen, in which three discussions in particular demonstrate Psyche to be readable as the metaphysical potential for Orual's return to the One.

Psyche's Sacrifice: Psyche's Journey to the Mountain and Neo-Platonic Salvation

King Trom, Orual's father, has decided to offer Psyche as a sacrifice to the god of the mountain in order to end the drought in Glome.[8] Before Psyche is offered to the god, Orual and Psyche converse and argue about her imminent sacrifice. Their conversation is especially powerful because of the contrast between Psyche's and Orual's reaction to Psyche as a sacrifice. Whereas Psyche has peace about being sacrificed, Orual is angry after Psyche defends the gods, saying: "mightn't it be— They do these things and the things are not what they seem to be?" (71). Because Orual believes that the god is a monster and Psyche will be devoured and die, she wants Psyche to have a rational and realistic understanding of her death; Orual thinks, "Had I not come to her to give comfort, if I could? Surely not to take it away. Perhaps it was a sort of pride in me, a little like her own, not to blind our eyes, not to hide terrible things . . ." (72). Psyche speaks courageously of death[9]:

> We have made little use of the Fox's teaching if we're to be scared by death. And you know, Sister, he has sometimes let out that there were other Greek masters than those he follows himself; masters who have taught that death opens a door

> out of a little, dark room (that's all the life we have known before it) into a great real place where the true sun shines and we shall meet— (72-73).

Interrupting Psyche, Orual demonstrates her selfishness: "Oh cruel, cruel! . . . Psyche; did you ever love me at all?" (73). Psyche states her love for Orual, and foreshadows Orual's future actions: ". . . Sister, you will follow me soon" (73). During the conversation, Psyche speaks of the Grey Mountain as if going to it would be a return journey[10]:

> . . . because it was so beautiful, it set me longing, always longing . . . . Everything seemed to be saying, Psyche come! But I couldn't (not yet) come and I didn't know where I was to come to . . . I felt like a bird in a cage when the other birds of its kind are flying home (74).

She continues to speak of the Grey Mountain as a return, saying "For indeed it now feels not like going, but like going back . . ." (76).

While Psyche repeats the notion that death, or going to the mountain, is like a return journey, Orual repeats, "I only see that you have never loved me" (76). While Psyche emphasizes that death is like returning, Orual sees it selfishly, thinking of it only as a separation. The poignancy of the scene lies in Psyche's description of her sacrifice as a return to home, a version of the yearning that is central to the soul's return to deity in Neo-Platonism. Psyche's concern and emphasis on her own return in this chapter starkly contrasts Orual's certainty of Psyche's death. While Orual's fear is mundane and centered on Psyche's physical death, Psyche yearns only to be with the god and demonstrates her intense longing. This notion of the Soul's strong desire to be united with the god is crucial to Neo-Platonism. The Soul, as a creation of the One, desires to participate in the One and to return to it. Psyche, as the metaphysical potential for Orual, displays this longing for being with the god, which she describes as going home.

Epistemology and Ontology in Orual and Psyche's Conversations

Psyche is led to the top of the mountain, where she is chained to a tree and left to be "devoured" or taken by the god. When Orual journeys to the mountain to retrieve Psyche's body for burial, she finds the chains empty. She and her faithful servant and guard Bardia discover a jewel belonging to Psyche. They pass the tree, see a valley, and walk to the bottom of the valley which contains a river. Surprised and astonished, Orual sees Psyche across the river.

Psyche, joyful at seeing her half-sister, exclaims "Oh Maia [her pet name for Orual], I have longed for this. It was my only longing. I *knew* you would come . . ." [emphasis added] (102). Psyche's instruction and guidance enable Orual to cross the river –she calls out directions, and offers her hand to support Orual. Orual says, ". . . but for Psyche's hand, I think it [the current] would have knocked me down and rolled me under" (103). Psyche's guidance foreshadows Psyche's later completion of tasks that enable Orual to complete her own journey of self-realization. This particular scene illustrates the close, complex relationship between Orual and Psyche; Psyche has longed for Orual to join her at the palace, and Orual needs Psyche to cross the stream—they are sisters in the novel, but are also examples of the inseparability of mind and soul, epistemology and ontology.

The concepts of knowing and being are evident especially in two conversations between Orual and Psyche. After crossing the stream, Orual questions Psyche. Orual and Psyche discuss the palace, and while Orual asks questions pertaining to seeing the palace, Psyche focuses on the ontological presence of the palace. When Orual demands to see the palace, Psyche exclaims that they are standing in front of it. This conflict between what Psyche sees and what Orual does not see is demonstrated by how Orual's description of the scene: "If anyone could have seen us . . . I believe he would have thought we were two enemies met for a battle to the death" (117). Orual

asks herself, "How did I know whether she really saw invisible things or spoke in madness?" (118).

Psyche realizes that because Orual does not see the palace, she does not think it exists. Psyche asserts that the god has already told her that Orual would doubt the existence of the palace by saying, ". . . 'so this is what he meant. You can't see it. You can't feel it. For you, it is not there at all. Oh Maia . . . I am very sorry'" (119-20). Psyche shows that Orual's physical inability to see the palace causes her to question its existence and yearn for Psyche's return across the river. Orual's possessiveness immediately manifests itself: she says, "Gods, and again gods, always gods . . . they had stolen her. 'It's not right . . . Oh, Psyche, come back!'" (121). Psyche comforts Orual by emphasizing how the god will give intelligence, understanding, knowledge, and sight to Orual. Psyche says, "And perhaps, Maia, you too will learn how to see. I will beg and implore him to make you able" (122). Presumably, when Orual sees properly (an epistemological issue) she will realize that she should (ontologically) be on Psyche's side of the river, and, as we shall see by the end of the novel, realize that she is Psyche.

Orual begs Psyche to leave with her, but Psyche insists that she will not leave the palace, her home. Psyche tells Orual to leave, but to return soon. Orual asks, "Are you sending me away forever, Psyche?"(128). Psyche responds: ". . . come again as soon as you can. I'll work for you here. There must be some way. And then—oh Maia—then we shall meet here again with no cloud between us . . ." (128). Psyche speaks of her own future toil on behalf of Orual, efforts to help Orual make the return journey to love, beauty, Psyche, and the god. Psyche completes a journey in order for Orual to gain self-realization.

Before Orual leaves, she drinks from the stream, and as she looks up, she glimpses the palace briefly, describing: ". . . As she [Psyche] had said, it was like no house ever seen in our

land or age" (132). Orual continues: "I must lie on the steps at the great gate of that house and make my petition. I must ask forgiveness of Psyche as well as of the god" (133). Just as quickly as she glimpsed it, the entire palace disappears. Orual wonders if the palace was real: ". . . it might have been a true seeing; the cloud over my mortal eyes may have been lifted for a moment. It might not . . ." (133). Even though she is momentarily assured of Psyche's happiness, Orual yet determines to force Psyche to reveal who the god is. Speaking of the love that motivates her to this action, Orual says: "I perceived now that there is a love deeper than theirs who seek only the happiness of their beloved . . . whatever the price, by her death or mine or a thousand deaths . . . Psyche should not make sport for a demon" (138).

After Orual returns to the palace, she discusses with the Fox the invisible palace that she glimpsed for a moment, a conversation where knowledge and seeing are significant motifs. She asks him, "You don't think—not possibly—not as a mere hundredth chance—there might be things that are real though we can't see them?" (141). He responds: "Certainly . . . Justice, Equality, the Soul or musical notes" (142). A figure of Greek rationality, the Fox quickly reduces Orual's questions of spiritual ontology to a philosophy of distraction. Orual asks, "'Oh Grandfather, I don't mean things like that. If there are souls, could there not be soul-houses?'" (142). The Fox responds: "'Child,' he said, 'you make me believe that, after all these years, you have never even begun to understand what the word soul means'" (142). In her response to the Fox, Orual questions if things unseen exist: "'I know well enough what you mean by it, Grand-father. But do you, even you know all? Are there no things—I mean *things*—but what we see?'" (142). The Fox informs Orual that men such as "vagabonds" (143) reside on the mountain, and that Psyche is unaware who her husband really is: "Psyche doesn't know" (143). Misguided in her love and misled by her rational mentor, Orual thinks that Psyche will perish on

the mountain; she determines to go back to the mountain and convince Psyche of who it is who "... comes to ... [Psyche] in the holy darkness" (123). When Orual says she would take such extreme measures as killing Psyche to prevent her from staying on the mountain, the Fox replies:

> You are transported beyond all reason and nature. Do you know what it is? There's one part love in your heart, and five parts anger, and seven parts pride. The gods know I love Psyche, too. And you know it; you know I love her as well as you do ... Yet even this ... it is not to be named beside such detested impieties as you speak of (148).

Orual speaks to the gods: "I stretched myself downward and called upon them with my whole heart ... I promised anything they might ask of me, if only they would send me a sign. They gave me none" (150). She remarks of the duality she feels: "I was the child of Glome and the pupil of the Fox; I saw that for years my life had been lived in two halves, never fitted together" (151). She speaks of Psyche as her own possession: "... some evil or shameful thing had taken Psyche for its own" (151). She determines: "'It shall not have her'" (152). Even though she admits to herself Psyche's own happiness, she concludes that despite her limited knowledge, she knows more than Psyche: "If the present case were beyond my understanding, how much more must it be beyond hers? Children must obey" (152). At this point, Orual has rejected her glimpse of the divine palace and determined to deny Psyche (her Soul) access to the divine.

When she returns to Psyche, she speaks first of Psyche as her own possession: "I have tried to be and still I must be—all the father and other and kin you have ... if anyone is to care for you or counsel you or shield you, ... it can be only I" (158). Psyche's response demonstrates her self-sacrificial love, while showing that Orual lacks understanding: "You do not think I have left off loving you because I not have a husband to love as well? If you would understand it, that

makes me love you—why, it makes me love everyone and everything—more" (158-159). Psyche speaks of her husband as the god of the mountain. Orual asks: "What sort of god would he be who dares not show his face?" (159). Clearly Orual's notion of the existence of the god depends upon her desire to know or experience it visually, while Psyche's experience of the god is related to her willingness to accept its existence and its love of her. Orual's desire to have all of Psyche's love (Orual's possessiveness) blocks her from recognizing Psyche's joy and leads her to deny the very existence of the god.

During Psyche and Orual's discussion of the existence and nature of the god, Orual emphasizes comprehending the god epistemologically—knowing about him, but Psyche focuses on experiencing him ontologically—being with him. This begins with Orual's asking, ". . . 'Who are the two wisest men we know?'" (160). Psyche answers that the Fox and Bardia are the two wisest men she knows. Orual tells Psyche that they all agree that Psyche's husband is a "felon" (161). Psyche defends him, saying "How should they know? I am his wife. I know" (161). Orual thinks the god's reason for forbidding Psyche to see him directly is that he is an outlaw or monster, and Psyche says: "he has good grounds for what he does . . . How should I know of them? I am only his simple Psyche" (163). Trapped by her possessiveness and her empirical assumptions, Orual threatens to kill Psyche and then herself if Psyche does not take the lamp in the bedroom to see who the god is. Psyche's response emphasizes a paradoxical combination of deep love and mutual misunderstanding between the two sisters. In a very significant way, they are both One and separate—one in their love, but separate in their inability to understand in the same way:

> Oh Orual—To take my love for you, because you know it goes down to my very roots and cannot be diminished by any other newer love, and then to make of it a

> tool, a weapon, a thing of policy and mastery, an instrument of torture—I begin to think I never knew you (165).

Psyche only consents to what Orual asks because Orual threatens to kill herself. Even though Orual knows the god might ". . . destroy both her and me," she insists that Psyche knows directly who the god is: "But she would know. She would at worst, die undeceived, disenchanted, reconciled to me" (172). Here Orual's insistence that Psyche sees things in her way forces upon Psyche the task of "proving" the existence of the god in Orual's terms. Orual seeks to impose her own empirical standard of knowing the god on Psyche's more direct apprehension of him.

Orual crosses the stream and watches from a distance as Psyche shines the light on the god. Orual describes seeing the god in language rich in seeing and light imagery: ". . . Though this light that is coming from the god and that is the god stood motionless, my glimpse of the face was as swift as a true flash of lighting . . . Not my eyes only, but my heart and blood and very brain were too weak for that . . ." (173).[11] She sees that the face of the god is beautiful:

> I think anger . . . would have been more supportable than the passionless and measureless rejection with which it look upon me . . . his eyes seemed to send me from him to an endless distance. He rejected, denied, answered, and (worst of all) he knew, all that I had thought, done or been (173).

When Orual is seen, understood, and known by the god, he speaks to her of the consequences to Psyche and herself of her actions: "'Now Psyche goes out in exile. Now she must hunger and thirst and tread hard roads. Those against whom I cannot fight must do their will upon her. You, woman, shall know yourself and your work. You also shall be Psyche" (173-74). Even though Orual has felt herself to be known by the god, she still does not know herself or him. Here, the god tells her that she will not only know herself, but she will be Psyche—she will see him, know

him, and perhaps even love him way Psyche knows him.[12] After this encounter with the god, Orual says, "I looked on the things about me with a new eye" (175).

In this section, Lewis combines concerns with knowing and seeing as well as developing the motif of Orual's possessiveness. Because Orual cannot see the palace, she does not believe it exists. Even after seeing the palace's beauty, Orual questions the reality of the palace. Psyche insists that she knows her own husband is a god although she has never seen his face while Orual thinks he is not a god precisely because he will not show his face. By insisting that she knows the god, Psyche argues that he is a god because she knows him even though she has not seen him, whereas Orual relies on her own epistemology as the basis for not believing Psyche's husband is a god. Orual and the Fox discuss the possibility of real, but invisible things. Orual's possessiveness of Psyche is a recurring motif, and is connected to her epistemological limitations:

> The thing came in darkness and forbade itself to be seen. What lover would shun his bride's eyes unless he had some terrible reason for it? Even I had thought the opposite only for an instant, while I looked at that likeness of a house across the river . . . 'It shall not have her' (152).

Here, Orual questions the god's reasons for hiding his face while admitting that she doubted her own assumptions of the god's reasons when she glimpsed the ornate palace, and ends by asserting her determined possessiveness of Psyche.[13]

Orual's Veiling, Contemplation, and Accusation of Jealousy

When Orual returns to Glome, she speaks of her determination to "go always veiled" (180), hiding her true self behind the veil of being queen. The veil becomes the central image of the novel. By covering her face, she cannot know or see her true self. She fails to know the god

face-to-face because she masks her own face, hiding herself from him. Commenting on this crucial image of the novel, Peter J. Schakel explains: "What started out as a covering for physical ugliness and a disguise now becomes, symbolically, a way to cover her inner ugliness and to alter her self-identity, to hide and thus almost to bury her old and despised self" (56).[14] Orual destroys anything of Psyche's related to the god of the mountain, and she organizes Psyche's room hoping that she will return. Orual's possessiveness is clearly evident and here takes on a new dimension of willful insistence that Psyche's return must be in her own close-minded terms. She seeks not so much a return of Psyche as a replacement of Psyche: "I wished all to be so ordered that if she could come back she would find all as it had been when she was still happy, and still mine. Then I locked the door and put a seal on it. And, as well as I could, I locked a door in my mind" (183). She does not speak of Psyche with the Fox or the servants and trains herself to become a strong fighter, and "by learning, fighting, and laboring, to drive all the woman out of me" (184). Both her father, King Trom, and the Priest of Ungit, are near death. Orual speaks of the changing times: "There'll be a new world in Glome and if I get off with my life, I shall be driven out. I too shall be a Psyche" (186).

Significantly, Orual has the opportunity to be like Psyche by sacrificing herself as Psyche sacrificed herself, although Orual's sacrifice does not involve submission to the god but battle versus a man. Trunia, a prince of Phars, a neighboring land, is being pursued by his brother Argan. Orual, Bardia, and Trunia determine to challenge Argan to a fight in which Trunia will be killed if the fighter for Glome wins. She desires to fight Argan, and compares herself to Psyche:

> I could hear them saying, 'And yet how bravely her sister went to the offering!' . . . And so she would be far above me in everything: in courage as well as in beauty

> and in those eyes which the gods favoured with sight of things invisible . . . 'She shall not,' I said with my whole soul (200).

She uses this fighting and veiling of herself to distract her from her separation from Psyche and in order to reject the divine: "I'd queen it as long as the gods let me . . . It was an art that left you no time to mope. If Orual could vanish altogether into the Queen, the gods would almost be cheated" (201). Despite distracting herself, she is reminded of her possessive love of Psyche through the Fox. Even though the Fox at first begs her not to fight, he says that this action was wrong: "'But I was wrong to weep and beg and try to force you by your love. Love is not a thing to be so used'" (204). Orual frees the Fox from his status as slave, but because of her possessive love for him, knows she does not want him to leave Glome: "He had been the central pillar of my whole life . . ." (209). Just as she spoke of her world as in pieces when she cannot see Psyche's palace (121), she speaks of her world as in pieces again when faced with the Fox's leaving her and with her father's imminent death: "It was as if my father's sickness had drawn away some prop and the whole world—All the world I knew—had fallen to pieces. I was journeying into a strange new land" (210). King Trom dies, Orual becomes Queen, and kills Argan. Orual again mentions her changing world: "A new world, very bright seemed to be opening all round me." (222).

Though she has attempted to forget about Psyche, arguably seeming to suppress her soul, she contemplates how others perceive her and who she is and what she wants. She sits in the garden, and asks herself: "What are you to Bardia? . . . What are you to the Fox?" (209). Shortly after she kills Argan, she understands who she is to Bardia, who says, ". . . Queen, the day's work is over . . ." (222) and asks to return home. Orual thinks: "I suppose he never dreamed what he had done to me with those words . . . Yes, that was it—the day's work. I was his work . . ."

(223). She admits her desire to herself, but does not yet realize her possessiveness and its fundamental unreality. She fantasizes about a world in which she has all she desires: "The picture, the impossible fool's dream, was that all should have been different from the very beginning and he would have been my husband and Psyche our daughter" (224).

Shielded by political responsibilities, her own possessiveness, and the repression of Psyche, Orual speaks of burying her true self deep inside as well: ". . . the Queen of Glome had more and more part in me and Orual had less and less. I locked Orual up or laid her asleep as best I could somewhere deep down inside me . . ." (226). Nevertheless, Orual cannot escape her true self nor the haunting memory of Psyche's pain. Ever since Psyche wept when she was exiled, Orual has been haunted by a weeping sound:

> I gave up trying to find a room where I should not hear that noise which was sometimes chains swinging in the wind and sometimes lost and beggared Psyche weeping at my door. Instead, I built stone walls round the well and put a thatched roof over it and added a door . . . For a while after that an ugly fancy used to come to me in my dreams, or between sleeping and waking, that I had walled up, gagged with stone, not a well but Psyche (or Orual) herself (235).

Here, Orual compares this locking away of the well, just as she has locked Psyche's room, to the locking away of her true self. She decides to travel westward, and after glimpsing a hot spring, she hears temple bells and enters the white-pillared temple, where she sees an image of a goddess whose face is covered— an image of herself.

The Priest of the temple relates a version the story of Psyche to her, one that confronts Orual with a new perspective—that she was somehow responsible for the loss of Psyche. Orual asks the Priest, "They [the sisters] saw the palace?" and he responds affirmatively: "They

weren't blind" (243).[15] Orual thinks, "How could any mortal have known of that palace at all?" (243). The priest says it was because of her sisters' jealousy that they told Psyche to shine the lamp on the god. Orual refuses to believe that she was jealous of Psyche and, from this moment, determines to write a complaint against the gods: "I could never be at peace again till I had written my charge against the gods . . . But my eyes and ears were shut up" (247). When Orual concludes her first book by speaking of the possibility of an answer from the god, she emphasizes knowing:

> 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).

At this point, Orual is imposing her own epistemology on the gods. Just as Orual has forced Psyche to reveal the face of the god because she does not understand the god's reasons for hiding his face, she speaks of forcing the world to see the gods although she does not understand why they hide their faces. Orual shields herself from the reality that the gods do not show their face to the world, when with deep irony it is she who has worn a veil over her face since she has lost Psyche.

Orual's Complaint and Answer

Orual begins the second book by speaking of a new self-knowledge: "Since I cannot mend the book, I must add to it. To leave it as it was would be to die perjured; I know so much more than I did about the woman who wrote it . . . I did not, even when I had finished the book, see clearly many things that I see now" (253). She relates key discoveries about her own nature that led her to her self-realization, and her ultimate progress to the god.

One event important to her realization is Bardia's death. Bardia becomes ill and soon dies. When Orual visits Bardia's wife, Ansit, to comfort her, Ansit reveals that Bardia's death was a result of Orual's working him to death. Orual asks Ansit why Bardia would not have informed her of his failing strength and need for rest. Ansit replies: "'You know him little, Queen, if you think he'd ever have spoken that word . . . I know, that your queenship drank up his blood year by year and ate out his life'" (261; 264). Orual asks again why Ansit did not tell Orual or ask Orual for Bardia to retire from his duty. Ansit replies:

> 'Make him so mine that he was no longer his? . . . Oh Queen Orual, I begin to think you know nothing of love . . . Yours is Queen's love, not commoners'. Perhaps you who spring from the gods love like the gods . . . They say the loving and the devouring are all the same . . .' (264-5).

Ansit speaks of Orual as a devouring figure like Ungit, the goddess of selfish love: "You're full fed. Gorged with other men's lives, women's too: Bardia's, mine, the Fox's, your sister's . . ." (265).

Orual's confrontation with her devouring love leads eventually to her deeper knowledge of herself. Directly after this revelation of her selfish love for Bardia, Orual describes "The rite of the Year's birth" (268), a tradition in the temple of Ungit, in which " . . . the Priest is shut up in the house of Ungit from sunset, and on the following noon fights his way out and is said to be born" (268). Orual describes the temple as ". . . an imprisoning, smothering sort of place . . ." (269). She thinks about the temple, and realizes:

> . . . the seed of men that might have gone to make hardy boys and fruitful girls was drained into that house, and nothing given back; . . . the silver that men had

> earned hard and needed was also drained in there, and nothing given back . . . the girls themselves were devoured and were given nothing back. (270)

As she contemplates this place of devourment, Orual gazes at the stone that is Ungit: "Then I looked at Ungit herself . . . In the little clots and chains of it I made out a face . . . A face such as you might see in a loaf, swollen brooding, infinitely female" (270). She asks the Priest Arnom, "who is Ungit?" (270), a question emphasizing her growing need to know herself and the nature of her love. Arnom replies that "she signifies the earth" (270). After being in the temple for this event, Orual returns home. Just as the Neo-Platonic Soul contemplates before it understands that it came from the One, Orual ". . . sank into deep thought" (273). Orual must contemplate before she can recognize herself as a Soul and return to the god. Contemplation is an idea fundamental to the concept of Neo-Platonic salvation. The One creates everything by contemplation of itself—the Soul is created through the One's contemplation. After emanation, in which the individual Souls proceed from the One, the Soul must contemplate in order to recognize itself as part of the one; only this recognition can enable its return to the One. As Frederick Goldin indicates, contemplation is one step to knowing the One directly, whereas speculation is a step to knowing the One indirectly. When speaking of speculation, Goldin explains: "But the slow and faltering way to that knowledge is *speculation*, the inferior knowledge we work to attain through the *speculum* of the visible things of this world" (8). Reversing Goldin's sequence, Lewis's most powerful use of the mirror, or *speculum*, occurs after Orual contemplates.

Orual has a vision of her father, who tells her to come to the Pillar Room. In a scene that represents a search into one's inner self, Orual descends the stairs, enters the room, and says she fears he was "looking for that mirror of his" (275). The King tells her to dig, and to throw herself down the hole. She finds that they are in a smaller Pillar Room, ". . . all made (floor, walls, and

pillars) of raw earth" (274). This descent under the room signifies Orual's inner descent. The room made of earth may demonstrate Orual's similar qualities to Ungit, because earth is a quality previously expressed by Arnom as associated with Ungit. She mentions fear of the mirror again; this may show her fear of seeing herself for who she really is. The King tells her to dig in this second room, and to throw herself down again (275). His repetition of "Throw yourself down" can be seen as his telling her to throw herself down not only physically, but also to throw down all that she is—possessiveness and selfish love. There, she finds herself in another Pillar Room. King Trom asks Orual, "Who is Ungit?" He leads her to the mirror, where she sees herself: "But my face was the face of Ungit as I had seen it that day in her house" (276). The King asks her again, "Who is Ungit?" (276). After seeing herself in the mirror as Ungit, Orual responds, "I am Ungit" (276), realizing that she is the false god. Orual finds herself in her own room again, and says:

> Without question it was true. It was I who was Ungit. That ruinous face was mine. I was that Batta-thing, 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).

Seeing herself in the mirror enabled her to admit who she really was—a devouring, self-centered person. Here, it is through seeing her reflection in the mirror that Orual becomes conscious of who she is and her qualities of possessiveness and self-centeredness. This knowing of herself is achieved through seeing a reflection of herself, and is clearly similar to the ambivalent mirror that Goldin describes. Just as the Neo-Platonic soul must know itself before it returns to the One, Orual comes to know herself, and this knowing precedes her return to Psyche and the god.[16]

As soon as Orual recognizes herself as Ungit, she states: "I will not be Ungit" (276), and realizes that hiding her face is like hiding her soul:

> My veil was no longer a means to be unknown. It revealed me . . . I went out bareface . . . For I thought I would look as like Ungit to them as I had seen myself to be in that mirror beneath the earth. As like Ungit? I *was* Ungit; I in her and she in me. (278)

In this quotation, Orual shows that her epistemological recognition of her similarity to Ungit leads to her understanding of her ontological identity with Ungit.

She contemplates again her identity with Ungit, and realizes: "I could mend my soul no more than my face. Unless the gods helped" (282). Then, she has another dream in which she sees rams with gold fleece, and thinks she will be beautiful if she steals the gold fleece. Unable to succeed, Orual is surprised to see a "mortal" (284) successfully retrieving the gold fleece of the rams caught on thorns as they run away. This mortal ". . . won without effort what utmost effort would not win for me" (284). During this time, Orual finds that her only comfort is her love for Psyche:

> However I might have devoured Bardia, I had at least loved Psyche truly . . . I took this book . . . to comfort myself, and gorge myself with comfort, by reading over how I had cared for Psyche and taught her and tried to save her and wounded myself for her sake. (285)

Directly after thinking this, Orual sees another vision. In this, her final vision, light, seeing, and reflection imagery are significant elements to her self-realization and return to Psyche and the god. She sees that she is Ungit's slave, and must carry a bowl to retrieve the water of death for Ungit. She realizes that she is carrying not a bowl, but her book which contains her complaint

against the gods. A bird she describes as a "divine creature" (287) tells her that the gods will hear her complaint. Orual finds herself being "hurried in out of the burning sunlight into the dark inwards of the mountain, and then further and further in . . ." (288). Eventually, she describes standing ". . . in a cave so great that I could see neither the sides nor the root of it . . . But soon my eyes grew able to see things in that half light" (288). She sees her father and the Fox, and finally knows that the judge is present. The judge asks her to read her complaint against the gods, but when she looks at it, she thinks it is the wrong book. Lewis demonstrates that Orual did not fully understand herself or what she was writing until that moment by describing how Orual perceives the book:

> I looked at the roll in my hand and saw at once that it was not the book I had written. It couldn't be; it was far too small. And too old—a little shabby, crumpled thing, nothing like my great book that I had worked on all day, day after day, while Bardia was dying. (289)

She looks at it and unrolls it, and sees: "it was all a vile scribble—each stroke mean and yet savage, like the snarl in my father's voice, like the ruinous faces one could make out in the Ungit Stone" (290). When Orual finally reads her complaint, she repeats the word "know":

> I know what you'll say. You will say the real gods are not at all like Ungit, and that I saw shown a real god and the house of a real god and ought to know it. Hypocrites! I do know it. (290)

Realizing her own Ungit-like possessiveness, she verges here on recognizing the real nature of the god within her, but again her possessiveness intrudes and clouds her ability to see the true nature of the god and the final futility of seeking to avoid the gods:

> There's no room for you [the gods] and us in the same world. You're a tree in whose shadow we can't thrive. We want to be our own. I was my own and Psyche was mine and no one else had any right to her . . . She was mine. *Mine.* (292)

She stops speaking, and realizes: ". . . this, at last, was my real voice" (292). When she thinks about reading her complaint to the gods, she mentions how the Fox has taught her that "'to say the very thing you really mean, the whole of it . . . that's the whole art and joy of words'" (294). She emphasizes how this action was not joyful, but painful and difficult. She describes realizing and knowing her true self:

> 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 . . . been saying over and over, you'll not talk about the 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? (294).

The Fox appears to her, and takes the blame for her possessiveness: "I taught her, . . . 'Ungit's a false image.' . . . I never said, Too true an image of the demon within" (295). The gods are truly within in this formulation and only when this is realized can the individual know herself. Then, the Fox speaks of knowledge and the way to the "true gods":

> The way to the true gods is more like the house of Ungit . . . oh, it's unlike too, more unlike than we yet dream, but that's the easy knowledge, the first lesson; only a fool would stay there, posturing and repeating it. (295)

Intelligence enabling the Soul to recognize itself as a Soul and as a product of the One, the Soul returns and is unified with the One. The Fox describes his and Orual's attempt to prevent Psyche's unification with the god because of their possessive love. After speaking of Psyche specifically, the Fox tells of the general action of people that attempt to prevent a soul itself from this unification with the divine. Almost immediately after the Fox speaks these lines, Psyche returns, carrying the beauty she has retrieved from the deadlands. After hearing of this "salvation" or unification that the Fox describes, and seeing and knowing Psyche's toil on her behalf, Orual describes her reaction to seeing Psyche again:

> Next moment I was flat on my face; for Psyche had come . . . 'Oh Psyche, oh goddess,' I said. 'Never again will I call you mine; but all there is of me shall be ours . . . I never wished you well, never had one selfless thought of you. I was a craver.' (305)

Before Psyche gives Orual the beauty from the deadlands, she asserts that Orual now knows and understands Psyche's actions: 'You know I went a long journey to fetch the beauty that will make Ungit beautiful.' ... . 'Did I not tell you . . . that a day was coming when you and I would meet in my house and no cloud between us?' (306). This process parallels Neo-Platonism through Psyche's emphasis on Orual's knowledge of Psyche's journey. As previously discussed, Brehier indicates that the Soul must comprehend before it can ascend towards Intelligence, and through Intelligence, ultimately recognize itself as a Soul (81). In order for Orual herself to return to the god, Psyche must make the journey to bring the beauty back to Orual, but Psyche's journey would have been futile if Orual had not first recognized her own inability to "mend her own soul" (282). Psyche asserts what Orual has already understood as a result of recognizing the reality of her Ungit-like devouring nature and the necessity of Psyche's sacrificial journey, told

The Fox shows that once this easy, first lesson is known, one would not keep babbling the same thing over and over again. If he would have told Orual the possibility of Ungit's devouring nature being inside people, Orual would not have been as possessive as she was.

Seeing, Knowing, and Loving Selflessly: Neo-Platonic Salvation as the Result of Intelligence

The Fox leads Orual to a wall of moving images in which Orual sees the different tasks Psyche completed on her behalf.[17] Psyche almost drowns herself, as Orual nearly comes close to doing; Psyche sorts seeds, just as Orual describes sorting her words; Psyche collects the gold wool from the rams; Psyche carries the bowl and retrieves the water of death. Before the Fox describes the last task that Psyche undertakes, he says, "'This is the last of the tasks that Ungit has set her'" (301). Orual asks him, "Then there is a real Ungit?'" (301). The Fox responds:

> All, even Psyche, are born into the house of Ungit. And all must get free from her. Or say that Ungit in each must bear Ungit's son and die in childbed—or change. And now Psyche must go down into the deadlands to get beauty in a casket from the Queen of the Deadlands, from death herself; and bring it back to give it to Ungit so that Ungit will become beautiful (301).

The Fox describes how Psyche must not look at anyone along the way; Psyche even sees Orual, but does not look at her. Orual finally realizes that her love was not the self-sacrificing love that Psyche displayed: "And we said we loved her'" (304). The Fox responds, ". . . mortals . . . will become more and more jealous. And mother and wife and child and friend will all be in league to keep a soul from being united with the Divine nature" (304). The Fox speaks of the Soul's unification with the Divine Nature in a way that is similar to the Soul's desire and return to the One in Neo-Platonic salvation. Because the One created the Soul through emanation, and the Soul is like the One, the Soul retains some of its traces of its participation with the One. Through

to her by the Fox. Orual's recognition of both her possessiveness and Psyche's journey for her enables her own unification with the god.

Once Psyche has given Orual this beauty, Orual is taken to be judged by the god. Lewis describes the light and the brightness as the god approaches. Orual sees understands that she is like Psyche, and she describes the self-sacrificing love she feels for Psyche:

> The air was growing brighter and brighter about us; as if something had set it on fire . . . I was being unmade . . . I was no one. But that's little to say; rather, Psyche herself was, in a manner, no one. I loved her as I would once have thought it impossible to love, would have died any death for her. (307)

Directly after describing this unselfish love, Orual looks down and sees the reflections of herself and Psyche:

> Two figures, reflections, their feet to Psyche's feet and mine, stood head downward in the water. But whose were they? Two Psyches . . . both Psyches, both beautiful (if that mattered now) beyond all imagining, yet not exactly the same. 'You also are Psyche,' came a great voice. (307-308)

This powerful scene suggests that with the help of the god brought by Psyche, the soul, Orual has realized that she is a Psyche—she knows that she is a Soul, and has achieved unification with the One. Here, Orual knows herself and her sister-soul, Psyche, and understands that Psyche's journey has enabled her to realize the metaphysical potential in her own soul. Orual sees their reflections that confirm what the god says: once she has experienced self-realization through seeing herself reflected as Ungit, and been given the gift of beauty by Psyche, she is Psyche, a Soul. Her selfless love of Psyche comes directly after her learning Psyche's sacrifice for her; she

returns to participate with the One and hears him proclaim that because she knows and sees she is Psyche, she is a Psyche—a Soul.

Cosmo and Orual: The Recognition and Return of the Universe and the Individual Soul

The name of the protagonist from George MacDonald's Magic Mirror story is named "Cosmo." The Neo-Platonic Soul can be connected to the word *kosmos*—the etymon of Cosmo. According to Lewis in *Studies in Words*, the word *kosmos* can be used to indicate "the inhabitants of the world . . . 'everybody,' *tout le monde* . . . " (252). In addition to applying the word to everyone, Lewis comments also that the word *mundus*, "which translates *kosmos*," can "mean, quite unambiguously, the universe . . . the region of regions. But we should get nearer to the ancient point of view if we said rather 'the pattern of patterns' or 'the arrangement of arrangements'" (228). In this context, *kosmos* means the ideal or absolute universe. These two meanings of *kosmos*, that of both "everybody" and the absolute universe, reflect a fundamental paradox in Neo-Platonic thought: the connection and separateness of the microcosm and the macrocosm. Commenting on the Neo-Platonic progress of the soul, Edward Moore describes the soul's individual journey as a parallel to the journey of the entire universe:

> . . . everything he [Plotinus] says concerning the nature of the Cosmos (spiritual and physical) can equally be held of the Soul . . . it would be correct to say that the entire Cosmos is an analogue of the experience of the Soul, which results in the attainment of full self-consciousness (6).

In this way, MacDonald's Cosmo can be read to be both the individual who achieves self-realization, and a stage in the universal return to the One—a destruction of illusion (the mirror) that enables direct, face-to-face encounter between the world (Cosmo) and the object of its love (The One). It is no accident that the mirror plays a crucial role in this story. In Neo-Platonism,

according to Moore, the experience of the Cosmos parallels and is analogous to the entire experience of the Soul. If we consider Cosmo from the Magic Mirror story as a universal everyman figure, and Orual as a particularized Soul, we can explore how and to what extent their experiences are parallel or analogous to each other, especially evident in the scenes of Orual's vision of descent and Cosmo's magical summoning of the woman and his seeing her face-to-face after he has broken the mirror.

In *Till We Have Faces*, the mirror is crucial to Orual's self-recognition of her own devouring nature, like the goddess of Glome, Ungit. The mirror motif is most powerful in the scene of Orual's descent. In *TWHF*, Orual must first recognize that she is a Psyche—a soul—before she can return to the god. This scene of descent is crucial to her self-realization, which must precede her own realization that Psyche journeys on her behalf so that Orual can return to the god and see that she is a particular Soul.

The mirror plays a similarly central role in the story of Cosmo in *Phantastes*. Cosmo desires the mirror to possess it and to understand the detailed frame of the engraving. He purchases the mirror at a reduced cost from the owner. Shortly after he takes it home, Cosmo sees the reflection of a woman in the mirror. This reflection is of a real woman, who is not physically present in the room; Cosmo will later learn that this is the result of a spell. Cosmo believes that he loves the woman, and tells himself he "shall die for love of the maiden" (94). He contemplates love, and thinks that often people only love each other as reflections, and they are unable to "truly know" each other (95). Cosmo thinks:

> Nay, how many who love never come nearer than to behold each other as in a mirror, seem to know and yet never know the inward life, never enter the other

> soul, and part at last, with but the vaguest notion of the universe on the borders of which they have been hovering for years? (95).

Cosmo here makes the distinction between seeing a reflection of another, and knowing the person; he uses the image of the mirror to demonstrate that love without knowledge of the soul, the object of the love, is merely a reflection and a false image. Cosmo compares this love without knowledge to the image of hovering over a universe: being close to the universe, but not in it or part of it. His emphasis on the subject's complete knowledge of the object of love is like the emphasis on Intelligence in Neo-Platonism; the Soul, created by the One and part of it once, longs to return to, be re-united with, and to participate again with the One. Before Intelligence enables the Soul's recognition of its previous participation with the One, the Neo-Platonic Soul hovers, or is on the "borders" of unification with the One.

Speaking of the woman, Cosmo says, "She lives in another world, all day, and all night, after she leaves me" (96) and "She—she alone and altogether—was his universe, his well of life, his incarnate good" (96). Cosmo speaks of the woman as his only desire, and his longing only for her is similar to the Neo-Platonic Soul's longing for the One, or the Good, another name for the One. Here, Cosmo concludes these thoughts by contemplating being recognized by the woman, "if I could but speak to her, and knew that she heard me, I should be satisfied" (95). His possessiveness clearly parallels Orual's possessiveness of Psyche and manifests itself most clearly when he considers the possibility of another man possessing the woman. Orual desires to be Psyche's only family, and wants especially that no man be in Psyche's life—she speaks of Psyche's husband as an enemy in a war: "He? . . . now she was saying *he* every moment, no other name but *he* . . . this also is like what I've known in wars: when that which was only they or the enemy all at once becomes the man, two feet away, who means to kill you" (122). Both

Cosmo's possessiveness and his longing to "see the lady face to face," eventually results in his turning to magic in an attempt to see and speak with the lady (96).

Just as Orual rationalizes her own action of threatening to kill Psyche and herself by telling herself that love seeks other things besides the happiness of the beloved (138), Cosmo justifies his actions and the possible detrimental consequences of this summoning by using his love for the lady as the rationality for his use of magic. He succeeds in his seeing her long enough for them to have a short conversation.

The woman asks for his help—she asks him to destroy the mirror, because only through its destruction can she be set free from the spell that suspends her consciousness. Because Cosmo is afraid that destroying the mirror will result in never seeing the woman's reflection again—that he will lose this possession, his "treasure" (95)—Cosmo hesitates to destroy the mirror, illustrating that his desire to possess the lady in the mirror is greater than his desire for her physical freedom and well-being. Her reflection means more to him than her freedom from the spell and resulting consciousness. When describing Cosmo's hesitation to destroy the mirror, MacDonald not only uses a pun on Cosmo's name, but also shows how his hesitation is directly related to his selfish love for the woman: "The whole world would be but a prison, if he annihilated the one window that looked into the paradise of love. Not yet pure in love, he hesitated" (97-8). In other words, Cosmo himself—the world—would be a prison (and a prisoner) if he destroyed the mirror; his imperfect love results in his hesitation. The lady immediately cries that Cosmo does not love her. Although Cosmo recognizes his own inner lack of willingness to destroy the mirror, he attempts to destroy it regardless of his lack of willingness, saying, "I will not wait to be willing" (100). Here, Cosmo chooses to take the right

action towards freeing the woman even though he desires the woman's reflection in the mirror, "the window . . . into the paradise of love" (97).

Cosmo's speaks with determination when he chooses to free the woman, contrary to his desire to keeping the mirror for himself. Just as Cosmo declares, "I will not wait to be willing," in her confrontation with selfish love, Orual asserts her own will that, despite her possessive and devouring nature, she chooses not to be Ungit: "I will not be Ungit" (276). Both Cosmo and Orual see an image in the mirror, and declare their determination to act in a way that contrasts their desires. Recognition is crucial to this step of declaration: in order to declare what their action and response should be, they must recognize the reality of their prior possessive motives and actions. Cosmo and Orual's actions after their declarations parallel each other, with each of them attempting to destroy a false image: Cosmo grabs his sword and attempts to destroy the mirror, and Orual "takes down" her "old sword" (276), and nearly commits suicide. Cosmo's attempt to break the mirror, thereby destroying the false image of the woman, parallels Orual's attempt to destroy herself, the image of the false god, Ungit. Neither of their attempts are successful—Cosmo is struck by lightning, and Orual attributes her failure to her own weakness (277).

Since, according to Moore, the Soul's journey is a parallel journey to that of the Cosmos or the World's journey, one can consider Orual as a particularized Cosmo. Cosmo's yearning to see the woman face-to-face is similar to Orual's own longing for her sister-soul, Psyche, and Psyche's desire for the god. Despite Cosmo's desire to see the lady face-to-face in order to truly be with her, and Orual's desire for Psyche to see the hidden face of the god and to show the world the hidden faces of the gods, both protagonists act upon this desire before understanding that they are motivated by possessive, self-centered love. Both Cosmo and Orual demonstrate

recognition of the possessiveness in themselves—Cosmo, when he hesitates to destroy the mirror, and Orual, when she confesses verbally, "I am Ungit" (276)—a recognition that leads to their return to the One. After Cosmo's recognition of his imperfect love, and "selfish indecision," (100), he desires to find the mirror again not out of possessive desire for the woman's reflection, but in order to set her free: "Whether he should see the lady again, was now a thought altogether secondary, and postponed to the achievement of her freedom" (101). Similarly, Orual's recognition of her own possessiveness results in her eventual return to Psyche and the god. Following Orual's recognition of herself as Ungit, she makes her complaint to gods and sees that the extent of her possessiveness reaches even to Psyche; she thought of Psyche—her own soul—as belonging to her. This complaint precedes her vision of the Fox, who describes Psyche's journey so that Orual would receive beauty. This recognition of Psyche's—the Soul's—sacrifice, enables Orual to say, "Never again will I call you mine . . ." (305).

One significant difference between Cosmo's realization and Orual's realization is that Cosmo recognizes his own possessiveness, and becomes self-sacrificing after or through this recognition. In contrast, Orual must recognize herself as Ungit in order to understand that she cannot destroy her possessiveness on her own—that Psyche's journey on her behalf was the only way for her possessiveness to be destroyed.

Although we are not told how Cosmo destroys the mirror, the lady awakes from unconsciousness and runs to meet Cosmo; as a result of destroying the mirror, Cosmo is dying, but he and the lady see each other face-to-face. He asks her if he loved her truly, and she affirms his love for her: ". . . I know now that you love me, my Cosmo" (104). Once he recognizes his selfishness, and desires the freedom of the lady, he is able to destroy the mirror with the false image and thereby be united with the lady; now, he is her Cosmo—her world—he has returned

to the One. This is similar to the Neo-Platonic Soul's recognition of itself which enables its return to the One. Orual, as a particularized Cosmo, recognizes herself, but must also recognize Psyche's journey on her behalf. Once she knows and understands why Psyche had to undertake this journey, she accepts Psyche's gift of beauty and loves Psyche unselfishly: "I loved her as I would once have thought it impossible to love, would have died any death for her" (307). After demonstrating Orual's inner change, Lewis expresses Orual's realization of her Soul through reflection imagery: "Two figures, reflections, stood head downward in the water . . . Two Psyches . . . both Psyches, both beautiful (if that mattered now) beyond all imagining, yet not exactly the same" (308). Even though he expresses this change through reflection imagery, Lewis has made clear that the god was with Orual and that, she is now Psyche—a soul.

Cosmo and Orual similarly recognize their possessiveness, assert their will in contradiction to their desires, and become self-sacrificing before the false images of the lady's reflection and the false goddess Ungit in Orual can be destroyed. This recognition enables the realization of return, or unification, with deity. That recognition leads to their return demonstrates the shared Neo-Platonic elements in these stories by George MacDonald and C. S. Lewis. In MacDonald, Cosmos or the world must abandon its desire to be with love; in Lewis, the soul must know itself to truly be.

Notes

[1] In *Patches of Godlight: The Pattern of Thought of C. S. Lewis*, Robert Houston Smith describes George MacDonald's influence on C. S. Lewis. Smith remarks on MacDonald's perception of life:

> [MacDonald] . . . stimulated the imagination of the young Lewis. MacDonald was not a Platonist as such, though he was a thoroughgoing super-naturalist who perceived life to consist of a religio-philosophical quest not unlike the Platonic ascent to the Good. What particularly fascinated Lewis was the way in which MacDonald communicated an essentially Christian message through the medium of magic, imaginary worlds, and symbolism (45).

Although Smith emphasizes MacDonald's influence on Lewis, and Lewis's interest in Platonism and Neo-Platonism, Smith comments:

> [Lewis's] . . . affection for Platonism continued throughout his life, although from the mid-1950's onward it seems to have waned slightly as he became less confident of mankind's ability to comprehend reality. This loss of confidence may be detected in *Till We Have Faces* . . . (11).

Smith emphasizes this notion again when he mentions that Orual in *Till We Have Faces* "has grasped only a few insights into the nature of reality" (163).

[2] See Peter J. Schakel's *Reason and Imagination in C. S. Lewis: A Study of Till We Have Faces*, pp. 159-160; Doris T. Myers's *Bareface: A Guide to C. S. Lewis's Last Novel*, p. 198; William

Luther White's *The Image of Man in C. S. Lewis*, p. 111; Walter Hooper's *C. S. Lewis: A Companion and Guide*, p. 568; and Douglas Gresham's *Jack's Life: The Life Story of C. S. Lewis*, p. 33.

[3] Meaning "Highly white one" ("Hohenweiss"). Additionally, "hohen" translates to "high," and "weiss" translates to "knows" ("Hohen"; "Weiss").

[4] Lewis devotes one of the four chapters to "Eros," in which he includes the distinction between desiring a beloved for oneself, and desiring the beloved for only the pleasure that they can bring to that person. Lewis devotes the last chapter of *TFL* to his discussion of "Charity," or self-sacrificing love which has no sexual or romantic affiliations. Curiously, in the source of *TWHF*, Apuleius's story of Cupid and Psyche, Eros is Cupid, the god of love and son to Venus.

[5] See Plato, *The Republic*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1975.

[6] Goldin remarks: "As the mirror is made of matter, it has the capacity of matter to receive the image of ideal forms. From this root idea three distinct developments are possible" (4). Goldin describes the three developments, emphasizing in each one a different use of the mirror. He describes the "ideality of the image," in which the image shows how one "ought to be"; the "mirror's essential passivity," in which in the mirror shows "images that seduce us with a false vision of beauty"; and the "matter and form together . . . [which] shows us an image of eternal Beauty in the beauty of a momentary body. But that image is fleeting, it has no substance; and we must learn how to leave the mirror behind and to love a being that is invisible and immutable" (4-5).

[7] For an explanation of Boethius's influence on the school of Chartres and Bernardus Silvestris's *De Mundi*, see Howard Patch, *The Tradition of Boethius: A Study of His Importance in Medieval Culture*, pp. 88-89.

[8] Mark Allen points out to me that Trom's sending of Psyche is an inversion of Venus's sending of Cupid in the original myth and is also an aspect of the soul's progress towards salvation; *psyche* is Greek for soul.

[9] Doris T. Myers discusses this quote in light of Plato's concept of reality, and as demonstrating Lewis's interest in Platonism (211). Peter J. Schakel also discusses this quotation as Platonic, while strongly emphasizing Psyche's desire to be with the god: "Plato regarded love, *eros*, as a desire, a longing. It is not just a longing for wholeness in union with the other sex . . . but wholeness in the union with the Good forever" (32).

[10] Schakel describes Psyche's desire to return as Platonic: ". . . [Psyche's desire demonstrates] Platonic love-longing for a return to the world of Ideas . . ." (33).

[11] In *Patches of Godlight: The Pattern of Thought of C. S. Lewis*, Robert Houston Smith discusses the importance of the image of light in C. S. Lewis's works and the significance of light in Platonism (65-9). Smith explains: "Certainly among the great images of reality in Lewis's thought is that of light. Many thinkers in the Platonic and Christian traditions down through the centuries had used light to represent God as the ultimate source of all that is good in the universe . . . The most important single image of light is, of course, that of the sun. In the *Republic* Plato used the sun as an analogy of the Good" (65-6).

[12] In "Seeing and Knowing," his discussion of chapters twelve through fifteen of *TWHF*, Schakel remarks on the motif of knowledge throughout these chapters, and asserts that knowledge is crucial to the novel: "[Orual's] gaining of such self-knowledge, of what it means that Orual also shall be Psyche, is the central theme in the rest of the book" (52).

[13] Orual's possessiveness can also be seen in Orual's first conversation with Psyche after she helps Orual to cross the river: Orual calls Psyche her "own child" (121) and accuses Psyche of leaving her and turning away from Orual's love (125). In contrast to Orual's possessiveness, Psyche asserts that she belongs to the god, her husband: "I'm not my own" (128).

[14] Schakel indicates that critics have proposed several different meanings for the veil: ". . . that it [the veil] stands for the queenship, for the flesh, for the barriers between herself and the gods" (56). He continues by commenting on the veil's "symbolic meaning . . ." in the novel (56-57). He connects the veil and imagination itself: ". . . the veil . . . functions . . . as a symbol for symbolism. Like a veil, a symbol conceals in order to reveal: it conceals its meanings behind a literal image in order that they may be conveyed powerfully as they are grasped by the imagination" (57).

[15] In the priest's version of the story, *TWHF*, and the original myth, a third sister exists. In *TWHF*, Redival is the second half-sister to Psyche. In his version, the priest asserts both Redival and Orual as to blame for separating Psyche from the god. In the plot of *TWHF*, however, Redival is not significantly involved in separating Psyche and the god.

[16] Bernardus Sylvestris has Urania give Psyche the gift of self-knowledge; Urania receives a mirror of Providence which will show the similarity of the soul to creation. See 24-25 above.

[17] See note 4.

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