

The Tale of Cupid and Psyches¹ and Till We Have Faces: The Attainment of Self-Worth Via Femininity and Masculinity.

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¹ The use of the spelling of “Psyches” rather than “Psyche” conforms to the translation of Adlington.

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‘Behold the last day, the [extreme] case, and the enemies of thy blood, hath armed themselves against us, pitched their camp[s], set their host in array, and are marching towards us, for now thy two sisters have drawn their swords and are ready to slay thee.’
(Adlington, 20)

Abstract

The Apuleian myth of Cupid and Psyche has long been a source of inspiration in art and literature. This motivation might be derived either from its spiritual and philosophical wisdom or from the love of mythology; being the virtuoso work of Lewis, *Till We Have Faces*, a composition that introduces all these elements. As a result of their remarkable complexity, both narratives also offer an insight into the human psyche, where symbology varies along with the reader's interpretation. Consequently, it is the vast interpretative possibilities they offer that incite me to carry out an analysis focused on the concepts of masculinity and femininity. More specifically, I aim at examining the source from which feminine and masculine characters attain a sense of self-worth as well as validity in the traditional culture in which they live; being both societies based on male prerogatives. For this purpose, I will concentrate on two major elements, firstly, on the cultural construction of masculine values based on domination, masculine privileges as well as the devaluing of feminine attributes; and the representation of women via properties deemed weak and disposable.

From the obtained conclusion, I might suggest that, on the one hand, epic masculinities resort to the domination and degradation of femininity as well as of inferior masculinities in order to legitimise their appropriateness. Secondly, the worth of femininity stems from fulfilling their role as wives as well as child-bearers assuming a pliant attitude. Thirdly, the rejection of masculine or feminine values engenders a wound which incapacitates masculine characters emotionally and prevents femininity from active development. Therefore, I conclude that authentic worth stems from embracing both feminine values along with masculine strength; being this achieved through bridging power and love so as to attain self-acceptance.

Keywords: *Cupid and Psyche*, *Till We Have Faces*, femininity, masculinity, domination, degradation, self-worth.

1. The Myth of Cupid and Psyche

1.1. The Genesis of the Myth

The *Metamorphoses* or *The Golden Ass*, written in the second century (Gollnick, 5; Gruenler, 4), is the most notorious work of Apuleius, being this his sole fictional work remaining to date (Kirichenko, 90). Apuleius was best known for *The Golden Ass* apart from being widely admired as a Platonic philosopher and an accomplished rhetorician; competences that could be observed in *The Golden Ass* (Gaisser, 1). The *Metamorphoses* serves as the first record of the tale of *Cupid and Psyche* (Hooker, 24), however, the figures of Cupid and Psyche date back to earlier periods. For instance, in accordance with Hooker, the image of Cupid had already been approached by several authors, such as the poet Hesiod as well as the Alexandrian tradition (28). The main narrative is classified into eleven volumes from which the narration of *Cupid and Psyche* is the most extensive one as well as the focus of numerous investigations (Tatum, 508).

This paper aims at analysing both *The Tale of Cupid and Psyche* and *Till We Have Faces* from the perspective of gender constructions, however, I will first introduce a literary review so as to understand the various elements orbiting the story.

1.1.1. Literary Approaches

Since its rediscovery in the Renaissance, the tale has been approached from various perspectives (Purser, lxvi). As a consequence, there is no unanimous agreement in reference to the genre of the story, although most academics prefer to classify it as a “märchen” or folk tale (Hooker, 26). Scholarly debate pivots around the narrative being considered a fairytale, a myth, a legend or an allegory (Gollnick, 11). The impossibility of classifying the story as belonging to any specific genre could be attributable to the existence of diverse elements within the tale (Hooker, 26).

Some scholars, such as Hooker, identify the presence of a Platonic doctrine within the tale; being the pursuit of immortality, through love, an element present in Apuleius as well as in Platonic philosophy (25). To illustrate, Plato considered that loving wisdom serves as a bridge between mortals and gods (202e8) for the latter favour those who love knowledge (212a8-10). Likewise, Apuleius, states Barra, aimed at resolving the breach separating men from the gods (qtd. in Schlam, 479); a quest which would be voiced throughout the *Metamorphoses* (479). Nonetheless, connoisseurs, including Haight and H. J. Rose, reject the story as a transmission of Platonic doctrines. On the contrary, they advocate for classifying it as a fairy tale. Haight reasons stem from the presence of marvellous elements including ‘talking birds, beasts, reed, tower’ (168). Furthermore, he attributes the symbolic names of Cupid and Psyche to ‘[a] faint echo of Platonism’ (168). In a like manner, Rose claims that Apuleius might have created the tale in an attempt to write an allegory, as implied via the meaningful names of Psyche and Cupid. However, she argues, his attempts resulted in the creation of the ‘loveliest of fairy-tales’ (287).

Alternatively, further propositions, such as that of Harrison, consider the purpose of both the story of Cupid and Psyche as well as *The Metamorphoses* itself to be mere entertainment or pleasure (183). His argumentation is grounded on the symbolism connoted by the name of Voluptas or Joy (183). Similarly, Tatum agrees that the Apuleian tale may function as amusement; yet, this characteristic is subordinated to its dominant allegorical purpose (509). Conforming to Tatum, the Apuleian tale surpasses the “bella fabula” to become an allegory of the quest which Lucius must accomplish (509). On this basis, the story of Cupid and Psyche could serve the purpose of foretelling the development of the central narration.

In the fifth century B.C., Fulgentius proposed an interpretation, centred on Christian dogmas, which became standardised for centuries and whose importance has persisted to date. According to this approach, the quest, accomplished by Psyche, symbolises the pilgrimage which the soul must endure as punishment for succumbing to erring desires; being Cupid an allegory of earthly pleasures and Venus a symbol of the retribution (Gollnick, 15).

Thereafter, these allegorised interpretations of the tale would switch focus onto a more abstract dimension, that is, psychology. Unlike the religious approaches, psychological studies address the story concentrating on the details rather than on general reflections. Pertinent for this paper are the analyses of the psychologists Labouvie-vief as well as of Johnson, whose dissections provide similar viewpoints regarding *The Tale of Cupid and Psyche*. They suggest that the figures of Psyche as well as of Venus are construed as two separate stages of the feminine consciousness. According to Labouvie-vief, Psyche represents a modern stage of feminine awareness symbolising the suppression of the more primitive stage, personified by Venus (29). Labouvie-vief continues to explain that this feminine consciousness is defined as passive, material and organic; being also repressed and subdued by its dynamic and immaterial counterpart (Labouvie-vief, 117). This second aspect of the self is considered to be masculine and, therefore, represented via Cupid. Similarly, Johnson elucidates that women possess a recessive masculine attribute identified as *animus*, whereas for men this recessive property is named *anima* (*She: Understanding Feminine Psychology*, xii). In conformity with this, Cupid would symbolise the *animus* present in Psyche, her masculine strength, which comes to the aid after she failed to accomplish the last task (72).

Despite the diversity of interpretations from which the tale has been analysed, they all are similar in that they are valid. The Apuleian myth is markedly fruitful in meaning independently of its function as an allegory, a fairy tale or psychological understanding. Therefore, the genre, as well as the interpretation extracted from *The Tale of Cupid and Psyche*, is subjected to the reader (Kirichenko, 90-91).

1.1.2. *Till We Have Faces*

In 1956, the Irish writer C. S. Lewis, adapted the myth into his novel *Till We Have Faces*. The retelling merges mythology with the spiritual quest carried out by Orual, Psyche's eldest sister. The story recounts the spiritual conversion of Orual paralleling

the endeavours of Lewis himself after the death of his mother. The tranquillity experienced at the beginning by Orual, Psyche alongside the Fox resembles that of Lewis together with his family as he narrated in *Surprised by Joy*. This short-lived joy came to an abrupt halt for both Lewis as well as for Orual; in the case of Orual, she was deprived of her half-sister, Psyche, as for Lewis, he was bereaved from his beloved mother.

His bereavement evolved into a quest to restore the joy he experienced in his childhood, and which, he discovered, was vested in God. The image of the king seems to be as well based on his father whom he described as a man of uncontrolled emotions who ‘spoke wildly and acted unjustly’ (*Surprised by Joy*, 19). Further parallels between Orual and Lewis could be traced on the grounds that they both were instructed by a figure who would exert a great impact in their views of religion; Orual was the pupil of the Fox whereas Lewis was instructed by Kirkpatrick under whose guidance Lewis affirmed to have found ‘fresh ammunition for the defence of a position already chosen’ referring to his atheism (*Surprised by Joy*, 139-140). From Kirkpatrick he learned to reject beliefs for which a rational explanation could not be provided (Hess, 34); a thought to be shared with the rationalistic and sceptical Orual. Similarly, his conversion into Christianity unfold on rationalism (Marsden, 13), being the influence of J. R. R. Tolkien decisive in his perspective regarding Christianity; from him Lewis learned that Christianity was also a myth that had in fact occurred (Gray, 148). Lewis accepted myths as a via to transmit the true myth of Christianity (Gray, 149; Gruenler, 2), and consequently, his life was shaped by his love of mythology which guided him to Christianity and, eventually, to joy (Hess, 12).

Till We Have Faces could be comparable to *The Tale of Cupid and Psyche* not solely in that both narratives introduce a spiritual quest, but in that they possess such complexity of elements admitting multiple interpretations. Consequently, in this paper I aim at analysing the way in which masculinity and femininity obtain self-value and joy in the selected narratives. In order to accomplish so, I will firstly centre on the construction of masculine values based on domination, masculine privileges as well as the devaluing of the feminine. Secondly, I will elaborate on the rejection of feminine

and masculine attributes and the subsequent emotional reverberations that ensue in both women as well as in men. Next, I will proceed to classify characters as feminine, masculine or female masculine based on the interpersonal circumplex, proposed by Richard A. Lippa, which exposes the existence of a prevailing inequality between female and male genders. Following, I will connect the resulting values of the study to the ideas of ascension and descension which are based on feminine passivity and masculine supremacy. Finally, I will resort to psychological sources so as to be able to comprehend the motivations of the characters as well as their emotional responses. To conclude, I argue that as a means to heal the wound sourced from rejecting feminine values as well as masculine attributes, both the reconciliation of the masculine along with feminine strength should be pursued.

2. Masculinity

Masculinity has long been associated with the biological condition of being male, yet it cannot be reduced to be a trait present exclusively in men, an approach that could be observed in *Till We Have Faces* as well as in *The Tale of Cupid and Psyche*. Societies have developed conceptions on masculinity and femininity based upon a series of attributes which women and men are expected to fulfil in order to construct their identities as women or men (Hoffman, Borders, and Hattie, 476). *Ergo*, promoting dichotomous differences between male and female genders. These dissimilarities are presented as contrastive in the interpersonal circumplex carried out by Lippa allowing the assessment of interpersonal behaviour of both male and female individuals. According to this model, men displayed traits such as assured-dominant, arrogant-calculating and cold-hearted, whilst women exhibited attributes including warm-agreeable, unassuming-ingenious along with unassured-submissive (170). In terms of masculinity, the above-listed traits convey authority whereas femininity represents the devalued attributes of their culture, an idea which can be further explored in the selected narratives.

To begin with, both stories unfold in a period prior to Christianity, these are societies based upon traditional and restrictive values in both social as well as religious conventions. Masculinity, in this social context, could be translated into ‘legitimacy’, dominion, male prerogatives along with the outcomes this conveys e.g., women-trading (Halberstam, 2). In order to prove their virility, masculine individuals are encouraged to exert their power through violence alongside domination. In *Till We Have Faces*, masculinity is presented through characters such as Trom, the king of Glome, who satisfies all the above-mentioned features. King Trom is dominant and he feeds on the fear as well as the weakness of his subjects for the purpose of upholding his authority. According to his demeanour, I might argue that King Trom could be classified as the supreme masculine character in the story. In contrast, in the Apuleian tale, it is Venus the figure who wields masculine strength on the grounds that she also fulfils the three masculine features; being domination, pride and ruthlessness, all attributes displayed by the goddess. In the first place, she is markedly confident of herself, for she is the goddess of life, beauty as well as of femininity. However, at the time in which Venus becomes aware that her femininity has been compromised, due to the emergence of a younger goddess-like female as Psyche, she has recourse to her dominant and patronising nature. I may argue so considering that she aspires to possess absolute control over her son, Cupid, Psyche as well as over other deities including Juno and Ceres. She lays claim to Psyche via sacrifice in order to restore her divine supremacy, therefore, whenever her pride is jeopardised, she demonstrates arrogance as well as cruelty to Psyche. The moment in which Venus assaults Psyche by ‘leap[ing] upon [her face], and (tearing her apparel) [taking] her by the haire, and dash[ing] her head upon the ground’ (Adlington, 42), she parallels King Trom who enraged ‘would slap the Fox about the face and pull [Orual] by the ears or the hair’ (Lewis, 41). Both characters, King Trom along with Venus are prone to respond outrageously to fear; Venus’ aggressiveness serves the purpose of upholding her supremacy. In like manner, King Trom beats his daughter in front of the Priest as means to prove his manliness because, as he states, he cannot allow women to second guess his commands (Lewis, 55).

In addition, King Trom torments himself on account of his inability to engender a male heir which is considered to be a manifestation of weakness, a sin to the goddess

Ungit. In primitive peoples, explains Johnson, the prosperity of a kingdom rests on the ‘virility or power’ of their sovereign (*He: Understanding Masculine Psychology*, 8), as remarked one of his subjects “[b]arren king makes barren land” (Lewis, 36). Therefore, the king being barren connotes a loss of masculinity for, as believed, if he could not fulfil his role as man, he would neither satisfy his role as a king. Consequently, for the purpose of contenting his people as well as the gods, King Trom resolves to offer Psyche as a sacrifice to the god of the mountain, being this decision evidence of the lack of esteem held for the feminine. King Trom ensures his masculine creation, his reign, to the detriment of compassion. The act of sacrifice, thus, is symbolic to the abdication of feminine values, e.g., love, for power. Further deprecation of femininity manifests itself through the offering of women in marriage degrading women to be but possessions of masculine dominion (*Femininity Lost and Regained*, 47). This idea serves to establish a connection between Psyche and her deceased mother. The latter, being offered to King Trom, shivered with powerlessness while staring at the royal bed (Lewis, 12), paralleling the experience Psyche endured when offered to the god of the mountain, being she ‘left alone, weeping and trembling’ (Adlington, 10). Both sacrifices are performed for the sake of the prosperity of the kingdom.

In other respects, both the figure of Trom as well as that of Venus represent dominant masculinities, which Judith Halberstam terms as ‘epic masculinity’; a type of masculinity that degrades and resorts to alternative masculinities in order to enthrone themselves as ‘the real thing’ (Halberstam, 1). In the like manner in which Venus exercises her power over Cupid and Psyche, so does King Trom over his daughters and subjects; they take advantage of inferior individuals so as to preserve their dominance. In spite of this, these epic masculinities depend on alternative masculinities as exemplified through the dependence of King Trom on the counsel of Orual and the Fox so as to carry out political affairs; their absence would have entailed the collapse of the kingdom under enemy threats. Similarly, Venus relies upon the veneration of mortals in order to attain a sense of superiority as the goddess of femininity and beauty.

Additionally, Lewis offers an interesting perspective in relation to Venus to whom he names Ungit. For the people of Glome, this goddess does not only signify beauty and life but death as well. Orual refers to her as ‘a black stone without head or hands or face’ (Lewis, 4) who feasts upon mortals; she devours the life of her servants, her altars smell of animal as well as of human blood. Later on, this image of an all-consuming ruler would be assimilated by Orual herself when she assumes control of the throne.

2. 1. Female Masculinity

As explained above, heroic masculinities rely on the subordination of alternative masculinities, e.g., female masculinity. Halberstam explains that alternative masculinities incorporate queers along with heterosexual males (2) who not being considered to meet masculine standards, are excluded. On the other hand, female masculinity is a more specific term employed to refer to tomboys, females who are deemed as expropriators of roles entrusted to males; women who are displayed as dominant as well as self-contained individuals (Menicucci, 19).

In *Till We Have Faces*, female masculinity functions differently for women as well as for men. On the one hand, male characters, such as Bardia along with the Fox, do not conform to the heroic stereotype of manliness. In regards to Bardia, because he is intimidated by spirits as well as by his wife, a demeanour which most men viewed as a flaw in his masculinity, attributable to a “girl” (Lewis, 53) as much as to a slave (Lewis, 146). The genuine devotion and commitment which Bardia displays towards others are considered to be attributes expected from women, not from men. Similarly, the Priest called into question the masculinity of the Fox due to his condition as a Greek slave, “[t]hat Greek there is your slave because in some battle he threw down his arms and let them bind his hands and lead him away and sell him, rather than take a spear-thrust in his heart” (Lewis, 50). The words uttered by the Priest emphasise the esteem with which masculine values are held, surpassing any attachment to life.

In Apuleius, this assumption is reiterated the moment in which Psyche's sisters find fault with their husbands for lacking courage, health as well as independence (Adlington, 17-18). Consequently, their consorts are deprived of their masculinity alongside their appropriateness as men. Similarly, King Trom would practice eunuchism on a young soldier, who dared to woo his daughter Redival, as a dishonourable punishment. In both narrations masculinity is constantly being connected to virility, courage along with a castrating dominion over others; this correlation occurs automatically and emphasises the veneration and approval of masculinity 'and the more [the] better' (Blechner, 600).

In contrast to Bardia and the Fox, Orual is not deemed weak but strong when she is crowned queen of Glome. It is necessary to differentiate the figure of the Queen Orual from that of Orual whereas they are presented as separate identities. Whilst Orual is handicapped, due to her unattractiveness as well as her lack of assertiveness, Queen Orual, on the contrary, is self-assured, courageous as well as defiant; being these attributes that secured the support as well as the admiration of her people. Queen Orual attained, via tyrannical power, that which Orual could not achieve through feminine values, that is, the approval alongside the obeisance from her subjects and her father. Accordingly, King Trom 'would speak to [her], not [...] with love, but friendly as one man might to another' (Lewis, 30). These mores evince how manifestations of feminine behaviour in men, along with male gender deviations, appear to be considerably less tolerated than tomboyism (Halberstam, 5). This response is triggered by the assumption that masculine females ambition the independence and power bestowed to male figures (Halberstam, 6).

Queen Orual could be defined as a tomboy on the basis that she adopts a behaviour conventionally wielded by men, she does so due to her lack of feminine qualities, for instance, daintiness. In the same manner in which masculinity equals male prerogative, domination and conquering, femininity is associated with sensitivity, naiveté, passivity alongside beauty. Orual, being hard-featured, could not be offered in marriage which, at first, involved an incapacity to fulfil her role as a woman. Nonetheless, afterwards, this lack of femininity and womanhood would entail an advantage for men would regard

her as an equal. Queen Orual quickly cultivated the conception that love alongside beauty equals weakness and, in view of this, she deemed more rewarding to ‘fight [...], and labour [...], to drive all the woman out of [her]’ (Lewis, 184). In deciding so, Queen Orual rejects feminine virtues for the sake of power-wielding, as Queen Orual remarked, “Orual dies if she ceases to love Psyche. [...] Let Orual die. She would never have made a queen” (Lewis, 211).

2.2. Devaluing Feminine Values

In the last sections, I discussed that feminine traits are not socially accepted in male figures for it could be read as a sign of debility. Womanhood is recognised as a punishment from the gods, to lay in a man’s bed, to bear his children, to be “his leisure, his solace” (Lewis, 233). Accordingly, any feature attributable to women is repudiated not only by epic masculinities but also by feminine masculinities; being love, beauty, along with innocence bearers of negative connotations.

2.2.1. Love

Firstly, love and power seem to be in a counteractive relationship considering that compassion or love are not qualities that beseem a ruler. King Trom lacks compassion, therefore, preventing himself from displaying affection or concern towards anyone, aside from himself; his decisions are aimed at securing his place in the throne of Glome. To conduct himself in benevolent demeanours, in the light of Psyche’s sacrifice or Orual’s beseeching, would imply a lack of authority. These high expectations on masculinity instigate the king to validate his manliness by assailing his daughter, an act of which he appears to be remorseful. However, holding the power bids notions of ruthlessness which heroic masculinities rank as a priority.

In opposition to King Trom, Bardia along with the Fox are less reluctant to express concern for their beloved ones, yet they are neglected because of this. Love affects including the wisest men, the Fox, for instance, was impotent to reason clearly when Psyche's life was in peril. Similarly, Orual courted death saving Bardia in battle. Correspondingly, in the Apuleian myth, the gods were overpowered when facing Cupid's energy; likewise, Cupid himself was impelled by his own impulses daring to defy the commandment of Venus. Hooker elucidates that the act of 'falling in love' alludes to the action of descending rather than of ascending (29). The Apuleian Cupid is dreaded by deities for this 'falling' entails being vulnerable to commit acts of passion; being these challenging to repress as implied by Venus' struggles to restrain his son, a 'beast' (Adlington, 34). In order to suppress human passions, one must resort to reason, counselled the Fox, rather than "bring[ing] a mercenary army to our aid" (Lewis, 178), being this a masculine maxim. However, the rejection of emotional attachment would eventually beget an emotional void, incapacitating Queen Orual to develop a sense of relatedness which 'grew slowly smaller and less alive' (Lewis, 226).

A second approach associates love with the act of devouring. Paying attention to the Apuleian depiction of Cupid as a ferocious 'Serpent dire' (8), it evokes images of a human-flesh-consuming being. Lewis addressed this idea straightforwardly via his depiction of Queen Orual as well as of Ungit. "[A] queen's love" (Lewis, 264) serves to describe and parallel Queen Orual to Ungit, as well as to Venus, for they associate the experience of loving to worship alongside slavery. With respect to Queen Orual, she yearns the love of Psyche, of Bardia as well as of the Fox; only their absolute servility would content her emotional void. Her affection for Psyche evinced narcissistic love owing to her possessive attitude towards her sister. Orual demands from Psyche her utter obeisance; the belief that Psyche is hers to possess as well as to supervise is recurrent in the narration. Orual asserts that "[she] must be all the father and mother and kin [Psyche has]. And all the King too" (Lewis, 158). Through this statement, it could be assumed that the parental figures are related to that of a proprietor, to love entails subordination. Orual desperately needs Psyche, Bardia and the Fox in order to be soothed, resembling Venus' imperatives to mortals as means to obtain self-assurance. Similar to Ungit, Queen Orual is the 'shadowbrute' "[gorged]

with [women's and] men's lives'" (Lewis, 265) for she would overwork Bardia to death, prevent the Fox from returning to Greece, and force Psyche into disobedience. Love, therefore, serves as a device to exert control over others, to manipulate and torment.

2.2.2. Pulchritude

In regards to beauty, it operates in two different ways. Firstly, as means to "lure and entice" (Lewis, 290) the beholder who assumes a passive and submissive attitude. Accordingly, comeliness serves the possessor of beauty with a view to regulate as well as to control, such as the Apuleian Venus whose beauty summons mortals to worship her. On the contrary, in Lewis beauty lessens awe-inspiring impressions regarding Queen Orual as well as Ungit. In view of her lack of pulchritude, Queen Orual resorts to her intimidating veil so as to remain faceless to the public eye, seeing that she masks both her insecurities as well as her ugliness. She asserts that remaining faceless served as an advantage in order to compel power-wielding figures, and she narrates, 'I have seen ambassadors who were brave men in battle turn white like scared children in my Pillar Room when I turned and looked at them' (Lewis, 229). Being a ruler Queen Orual conceived weakness to be a by-product of beauty considering her attempt to build a new Ungit similar to Greek sculptures; endowed with a face, white and aesthetically beautiful in order to lessen the darkness engulfing Ungit. Comeliness, in this case, is used to diminish Ungit's power by making her beautiful, the more attractive, the more feminine, therefore, less intimidating.

2.2.3. Innocence

Uniformly with beauty and relatedness, innocence carries a negative connotation, that is, vulnerability. In Apuleius, the fall of Psyche betides due to her simplicity, her inability to lie is ascribed to her being overly naïve, hence, she falls prey to the fabrications of her sisters (Tatum, 511). In Lewis, simplicity is connected to mortality, the sense of embarrassment Psyche experienced, when faced to the holiness of the West-wind, sourced from her mortal condition (Lewis, 111). Therefore, to be ignorant projects a sense of inferiority as well as the need to be safeguarded.

In both narrations, there is a correlation between the loss of innocence and sacrificial offerings. Johnson compares this missing innocence to the loss of virginity (*She: Understanding feminine Psychology*, 16), yet this could also signify the sacrifice of a virginal consciousness. Marriage, Johnson explains, entails the death of the bride, of her past self, in order to evolve into maturity (16). A similar process can be observed in Orual who, as a mean to prove herself righteous to occupy the throne, decides to fight King Argan in a duel; succeeding his death Queen Orual claims to have experienced a transformation ‘as if something had been taken away from [her]’, comparing this loss to a woman losing her virginity (Lewis, 220). This fight could be interpreted as a ritual of passage for Orual, a celebration of her new nature, as a queen, as well as of her gained masculinity.

Halberstam elucidates that rites of passage, represented by adolescence, suggest an act of ascension translated into masculine privileges, for men, whereas for women it signifies descension, immuration as well as oppression (6). This clarification is exemplified via the image of Cupid who is related to ‘heroic conquering’ and power-gaining whilst Psyche is connected to passivity along with submission (Labouvie-vief, 31). This idea transpires in *Till We Have Faces*, considering that epic masculinities secured their supremacy from exploiting alternative masculinities; thus, it is an ascendancy based upon degrading or sacrificing feminine values, e.g., the feeling function. However, this practice, propelled via masculine achievements, will engender a wound to the individual as much as to the culture in which they live.

3. Femininity, a Wound Exposed

In the section concerning masculinity, I have elaborated on the devaluing of femininity via masculine refusal to identify with feminine attributes, being these labelled as undermining. Masculinity development evokes notions of empowerment secured in consequence of suppressing the feminine (Labouvie-vief, 158). These heroic masculinities do so for the purpose of ‘validat[ing] their “appropriateness” as men and women’ in the culture to which they belong (Labouvie-vief, 29).

Consequently, the rejection of relatedness breeds emotional emasculation, a wound which masculine characters attempt to relieve via artificial attainments. As a case in point, Cupid attempted to create an eternal paradise with Psyche, however, this could only be possible if she yielded her creativity, her freedom as well as her curiosity. The collapse of the paradise, imputed mainly to the deceitful sisters, stemmed as well from the unhappy state which Psyche endured for she believed herself to be engaged ‘within the walls of a prison’ (Adlington, 14). Cupid evidences masculine reasoning by providing an artificial solution to an emotional wound. Despite the grandeur of the paradise in which Psyche, at first, delighted, it proved to be but a replacement of joy which ‘carries no human value’ (*The Fisher King and the Handless Maiden*, 86).

The nullification of the feminine enforces restraining masculine precepts, a concept which King Trom exemplified by means of mistreating his underlings; love is rendered in the interest of empire-building. A similar interaction ensues between Orual and Queen Orual for Orual resolves it is necessary to yield her ability for empathy in order to satisfy Queen Orual’s ambition for power. This restless quest for dominion eclipses human emotion (*Femininity Lost and Regained*, 36-37), begetting contempt as well as resentment which both King Trom and Queen Orual endured.

This hunger for joy is foretold in the pronouncement of the god in both stories, in spite of being directed to different individuals, to Orual and to Psyche respectively. In Lewis, the god sentenced Orual to “‘hunger and thirst and tread hard roads’” (Lewis, 173); similar to the fate reserved for Psyche who ‘shalt be sufficiently punished by

[Cupid's] absence' (Adlington, 29). Both prophecies could be referential to the yearning for affection as well as for felicity ensued from transgressing love. Suppressing the feeling function, results in 'rage, resentment, gnawing fantasy, or sullen bitterness' (Lewis, 282). This reaction, in accordance to Johnson, stems from failing to identify with positive feminine values (*Owning Your Own Shadow*, 26) and, consequently, individuals would project their hostility on someone else (31). In the case of Queen Orual, she aimed her ill-temper at her sister Redival, at the gods as well as at Psyche. This statement is equally valid for Venus for she, witnessing her dethroning as the goddess of femininity, would aim her wrath at Psyche.

The suffering sprung from an emotional wound could only be assuaged through activities which provide a contact with the unconscious (*The Fisher King and the Handless Maiden*, 22). In the same manner in which King Trom resorted to hunting, Queen Orual would immerse herself into sword-training or equestrianism so as to 'cure [...] ill thoughts' (Lewis, 91). Unlike King Trom and Queen Orual, Bardia fearlessly voices the overwhelming nature of meeting masculine standards, "I wonder do the gods know what it feels like to be a man?" (66), he utters, echoing his impotence to rebel against supreme authorities.

The Apuleian myth contributes to understand the conflict between feminine and masculine strength. Apuleius presents an unresolved Psyche when she determines to uncover the identity of her husband; armed with a lamp and a razor she assumes masculine vigour (qtd. in Hooker, 32). The fact that Psyche employed the lamp rather than the razor communicates that violence is not required to obtain masculine strength. Therefore, female capacity lies in resorting to masculine vehemence only if necessary (*She: Understanding Feminine Psychology*, 60).

In spite of degrading 'the divine feminine' (*Femininity Lost and Regained*, 51) via masculine domination, this appears to be necessary condition for feminine evolution to unfold; in order to develop 'a new vision' (44) or conscience, the earlier one oughts to be sacrificed. Accordingly, the gods alongside Venus were instrumental in the

development of Orual as well as of Psyche, and in their subsequent ascension to a divine state.

3.1. Redemptive Ascension

A further parallel, traceable in both narrations, is the idea of penance. In *Till We Have Faces*, Lewis introduces suffering as a way of the gods to act; he believed that pain was necessary so as to attain redemption (Marsden, 17). As a case in point, Queen Orual, having suffered the injury of the rams, realised that she survived the stampede and was able to ‘live and knew [herself], and presently could stand on [her] feet’ (Lewis, 284). Paralleling Queen Orual, the Apuleian Psyche had to undergo ‘the purification of suffering’ in order to experience divine transformation (Hooker, 29).

As aforementioned, Venus behoves Psyche to evolve from her mortal simplicity to a fully-formed state as a deity. Psyche could only gain comfort from resorting to the goddess, therefore, Venus represents the source of the wound, ‘the slayer’, as well as the impelling force of healing (*She: Understanding Feminine Psychology*, 52). This idea is addressed straightforwardly in Lewis, being Ungit the “‘mother of all living things’” (270), ‘all-devouring womblike, yet barren, thing’ (276); she represents both life and death, the death of materiality alongside the attainment of a superior state of existence.

In *The Tale of Cupid and Psyche*, it is feminine strength that conquers; Psyche obtains her power not from violently advancing against the volatile rams, a symbol of masculine strength (*She: Understanding Feminine Psychology*, 59), but from patiently awaiting their retrieval. In contrast, Queen Orual’s approach generated self-destruction considering that the rams trampled her down. Whereas masculinity strives for defeating the opposite, in this case any sense of emotion, femininity attempts to reconcile and bridge the chasm dividing them; ‘[h]e fights; she reconciles’ (*The Fisher King and the Handless Maiden*, 80). Psyche endeavoured to appease the rejection of Orual regarding

the gods, she desired to bring together the divine element and materiality. Unlike Orual, Psyche understood the importance of joining the opposites. Therefore, the gods and Orual could be an allusion to the conflicting relationship between divinity and mortality; the degraded femininity and the idolised masculinity.

Gruenler observes that Queen Orual is helpless to comprehend the purpose or actions of the gods due to her veil, revealing her state of not being completely ‘formed as a person’ (21). This remark brings into focus the missing part of the self which supreme masculinities lack, that is, their *anima*, their femininity. Both masculine and feminine attributes are in constant opposition considering that masculine characters have feminine values discounted. Similarly, feminine characters disapprove masculine demeanour, being this propelled by ambition alongside violence. The latter idea is voiced through Psyche who reminds Orual that men are “cruel [...] cowards and liars, the envious and the drunken” yet pitiable for they cannot discern virtue from vice (Lewis, 68). Nonetheless, both opposing genders ignored that those qualities they deeply despised and omitted were complementary so as to attain joy for love and strength counterbalance each other.

3.2. Bridging the Opposites

The culture in which Queen Orual grew attempts to explain and systematise life based on dichotomies, e.g., good and evil, man and woman, love and power; being the last opposing pair the most challenging to balance for the lack of love grows violence and the lack of power nurtures debility (*Owning Your Own Shadow*, 89). “[w]e're all limbs and parts of one Whole” (Lewis, 300-301), uttered the Fox voicing the solution so as to diminish this counteraction of opposites; rather than charging against the ‘evil one’ both their femininity and masculinity ought to be reconciled. Nonetheless, for this union to materialise, acceptance is key.

To illustrate, Platonic thinking proposes that love is ‘giving birth and procreation in the beautiful’ (Plato, 206e7) implying that the love for knowledge breeds wisdom. Whilst ‘[t]he ugly clashes with all that is divine [,] beauty is in harmony with it’ (Plato, 206d2), as a case in point, Lewis depicts Psyche as a wise woman; she is beautiful in soul, appearance and, most importantly, in her desire of knowledge. This idea, in Apuleius, is illustrated via the forbidden opening of Proserpina’s box, communicating Psyche’s desire to discover ‘the identity of a [god]’ (Tatum, 510). Psyche voices her yearning to finally reveal the being awaiting her in the mountain; she longs for joy in divine state (Lewis, 74). In contrast, Orual’s ugliness could bespeak her rejection of the gods. Consequently, she was unable to ‘give birth’ emotionally; similar to King Trom, Orual was barren. Being this relieved through the acceptance of Divine Nature, only then, she could also become Psyche (Lewis, 308), eternally beautiful.

Whilst the rejection of any part of the self prods enmity, it is the bridging of opposites which possess redemptive power (*He: Understanding Masculine Psychology*, 69). Paralleling Plato, Johnson explains that the ascension onto a holy state can be obtained via the acceptance of our individual ‘shadow’ (*Owning Your Own Shadow*, 17) which could be symbolised in the acceptance of feminine values; the other segment of the masculine self. In the like manner in which Venus accepted Psyche, Orual would be able to receive the gods, thus, achieving joy as well as beauty. Correspondingly, the Apuleian Psyche required her masculine strength in order to grow stronger as an individual; being the eagle, the ants, the reed and Cupid himself symbols of her *animus*.

This concept of reconciling the opposites is present in both religious tenets as well as in Platonic doctrines which influenced Lewis and Apuleius respectively. Both ideologies predicate that immortality can be gained through love. Being religion the connection with ‘the Absolute’ (qtd. in Ivanova, 57), the ‘art’ of joining and bridging opposites in order to heal their emotional wound; there lies the healing faculty of religion, states Johnson (*Owning Your Own Shadow*, 84). Similarly, Platonic thinking is based on the premise that ‘love is the unconscious pursuit of immortality’ (Hooker, 29). Being this bespoken through the divine union of Cupid and Psyche and remarked via

the birth of Voluptas or Pleasure, referencing ‘the soul’s discovery of spiritual joy’ (Tatum, 514).

Johnson illustrates that ‘to create is to destroy’ (*Owning Your Own Shadow*, 14-15), however, as both narrations evince, destruction also sets into motion a corresponding creation; heroic masculinities, rejoiced in their attainments at the cost of devaluing femininity, prompted feminine evolution.

4. Conclusion

The present work has focused on how feminine and masculine characters obtain a sense of self-value in both *Till We Have Faces* as well as in *The Tale of Cupid and Psyche*. I have argued that masculine as well as feminine characters obtain self-assurance along with cultural validity from separate sources, and this operates differently for women as well as for men.

In order to do so, I resorted to a literary review so as to obtain a perspective of the literary background influencing the authors’ respective narratives. Understanding the convictions of both writers proved to be instrumental so as to comprehend the main concepts that lay within the retelling and the myth, that is, redemption and the union of opposites, the soul and the mind. From these fundamental ideas, I decided to address the symbology in terms of femininity and masculinity in both works.

To begin with, the interpersonal circumplex, presented in the study of Lippa, allowed me to understand as well as to dissect the relationship between feminine and masculine attributes in terms of authority and subordination, being this dynamic exhibited in the selected narratives. My reasoning stemmed from a comparative analysis of the characters, namely, their behaviour, their convictions, as well as their emotional state and the way this depends on their powerful or powerless status.

From the obtained analysis, I might argue the following, firstly, heroic masculinities aim at validating their worth by dominating and conquering alternative masculinities as well as a despised femininity. These heroic masculinities resort to violence as well as to material achievements so as to reflect their masculine grandeur and conceal their weaknesses. Furthermore, authoritative characters are similar in that they are tyrannical demanding absolute submission from their subordinates. With ascendancy as a property attributed to masculinity, I may deduce that for inferior characters to attain power, they resort to masculine standards along with the negative values it entails; being this an unconscious process.

Secondly, masculine characters are also comparable in that they are emotionally deficient; the suppression of compassionate emotions, for the sake of power, manifested itself in the characters via resentment as well as hostility. Masculine power, therefore, urges concepts of dominion as well as control over others for self-satisfaction and greedy achievements, with female characters as victims of a scapegoat system. Consequently, femininity seems to be sacrificed in order to assuage masculine ambitions, being these based on reasoning away love as well as compassion.

Regarding female characters, their similitude lies in their required passivity, to be used as objects to conceive male heirs, whose beauty is to be admired but they are to be nullified as agents. Therefore, feminine worth is expected to be achieved through passivity, women are demanded to remain submissive (Labouvie-vief, 158). In both narrations, the figure of Psyche is that of misdemeanour for she refused to obey Orual, in Lewis, and contravened the commandment of Cupid, in Apuleius. Females who refuse to render obeisance, either to a male figure or superior, are resented in a culture in which being a woman limits their functions to wives, not rulers. In view of this, women worth rests on their role as child-bearers, the peace among reigns is secured through women-trading, therefore, degrading feminine worth to mere masculine property.

Finally, based on the deprecatory attitude of masculine characters towards feminine virtues, including love, innocence and beauty, I inferred that the quest, in both

narratives, could signify the state of joy resulting from embracing those rejected qualities. As a case in point, masculine domination could be associated with the act of devouring, being this symbolised through the image of the serpent-like beast, in the Apuleian tale, as well as the shadowbrute, in Lewis. Despite the fact that masculine attributes granted powerful figures the favour of their underlings, they sacrificed their feminine nature, their *anima*, resulting in emotional emasculation. Consequently, masculine source of self-worth is shallow in feminine values resulting in a quest for soothing their thirst for joy; being this unattainable through ceaseless conquering.

Whilst masculinity as well as male prerogatives are expressed in terms of ascension, of gaining and conquering, femininity is based on endurance, *ergo*, breeding lack of action as well as the inability of venturing beyond impositions. Nevertheless, to relinquish masculine strength entails assuming a yielding attitude. In view of this, the source of joy and contentment is not to be obtained either from masculine vehemence or feminine passivity; rather, on both. This is what the Fox understood as ““being parts of one whole”” (Lewis, 300-301), to become aware that opposites work together in order to attain a superior perspective. In lieu of immersing themselves in battling the masculine or feminine adversary, the characters ignored that each set of attributes fulfil a specific purpose (*The Fisher King and the Handless Maiden*, 21). It is the ability to take action ‘when required and to endure when [...] appropriate’, explains Johnson (*Femininity Lost and Regained*, 70).

To that which I refer as bridging the opposites, Labouvie-vief defines as levelling femininity and masculinity; she claims that in order to balance both values it is necessary to lessen the power and worship granted to masculinity and to render higher esteem to a degraded femininity (250). The difference in terminology does not alter the core message, that is, equilibrium or harmony, which in Apuleius and Lewis is represented via the attainment of a divine state through the embracing of those rejected attributes. In *Till We Have Faces*, it is via the acceptance of the gods, the divine feminine, that Orual achieves the joy she long yearned. However, she also resorted to masculine determination so as to defy the castrating exercise of male authority. Therefore, masculine strength provided Queen Orual with the necessary ““wings”” (qtd.

in Labouvie-vief, 157) for her to explore womanhood beyond the restricted limits which femininity entailed in her culture.

Finally, I shall reiterate that both *Till We Have Faces* and *The Tale of Cupid and Psyche* are greatly accomplished works capable of eliciting multiple interpretations. Consequently, the provided analysis, centred on femininity and masculinity, is the result of personal interpretations. As aforementioned, *Till We Have Faces* is a work whose core message is that of Christian conversion, whereas the Apuleian myth may source from Platonic philosophy. There exists no evidence indicating that the present reflection was purposefully introduced either by Lewis or Apuleius.

In spite of this, the quest, being religious or philosophical, transmits a wisdom which demonstrates that authentic worth sources from love as well as from tolerance rather than from pretentious exhibitions of power or self-serving deeds; being the latter narcissistically gratifying, yet an imitation of happiness (*Femininity Lost and Regained*, 96). For evolution to take place, states Johnson, we should relinquish the heroic figure based on 'the conquering (masculine) hero' by assimilating the obliging hero, caring and sheltering (95-96). Whilst human logic prompts a systematisation of the world based on polarities, on labelling and judging beliefs, genders, races, based on the values of right and evil, Lewis' and Apuleius' stories illustrate that good does not always conquer evil but that opposites can fuse into one.

To conclude my paper, I would like to mention that the motivation which encouraged this work is the existing pursuit of happiness in modern societies which are not so different from that of Queen Orual and Psyche. There still exist standards of beauty, of moral, of social status, of race, which are deemed to be sources of happiness as well as of self-esteem. It is this, therefore, a frustrating quest for those who are unsatisfied with what they already possess and with who they already are.

Appendices

The following are brief summaries of the discussed narrations introduced for the purpose of illustration.

Appendix A

The Tale of Cupid and Psyche

In a certain kingdom reigned a king and a queen with their three daughters of whom Psyche surpassed in beauty the goddess Venus herself. Rapidly, people from distant parts of the world came to gaze upon ‘the new Venus’, and to worship her. But Venus, seeing her altars abandoned and forsaken, bid her son Cupid to punish such profanity by claiming Psyche in sacrifice. However, Cupid, in love with Psyche’s beauty, pierced himself with his own arrows and married Psyche.

The couple lived in secrecy for a period of time until Psyche, down-hearted for her sisters’ grieving, begged Cupid to welcome them into their palace. Despite Cupid’s warnings, Psyche decided to take her sisters’ ill-advice and, thus, beholding her husband’s visage, she was cast away from their paradise. Meanwhile, Cupid, wounded, fled away. As punishment, Venus commanded Psyche to carry out four tasks of which she failed at the last one; having opened the box of Proserpina, she fell fast asleep.

Sensing danger, Cupid flew towards her beloved wife and saved her. Finally, with the aid of Zeus, Cupid and Psyche were united in marriage and Voluptas was born.

Appendix B

Till We Have Faces

In Glome, Orual is the eldest of the three daughters of King Trom. After failed attempts to engender a male heir the king is desperate for the future of his reign. The decadence of the kingdom has been blamed on the king's barrenness, being the latter sinful to Ungit.

Orual's childhood was marked by her ugliness; considering herself inferior and despised, she discovered joy in her love for the Fox and Psyche.

As time passed, Psyche's beauty grew to such an extent that she became an object of worship. However, this blasphemy awoke the anger of Ungit who sent draughts, famine, beasts and disease to condemn the kingdom. The solution was spoken, Psyche ought to be sacrificed to assuage the wrath of the gods.

The loss of Psyche implied for Orual the loss of her utmost joy, leading her to hide herself behind a veil and to embrace rational atheism. After the death of the king, Orual assumed control of the throne. By duelling a neighbouring king she proved to be fitting for the role.

In her power, Glome flourished, yet Queen Orual's heart grew bitterer, living a joyless existence. She could only be able to gain joy and immortality through the realisation of the selfish nature of her love as well as the acceptance of the gods.

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