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Gwenyth Hood

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## Husbands and Gods as Shadowbrutes: Beauty and the Beast from Apuleius to C.S. Lewis

### Abstract

Discusses the Beauty and the Beast theme from Apuleius's tale of Amor and Psyche through versions from Africa, India, North America, and Europe. Analyzes Lewis's handling of the theme in *Till We Have Faces*.

### Additional Keywords

Apuleius, Lucius. "Cupid and Psyche."; "Beauty and the Beast"—Cross-cultural variants; Lewis, C.S.—Characters—Orual; Lewis, C.S.—Characters—Psyche; Lewis, C.S. *Till We Have Faces*

# Husbands and Gods as Shadowbrutes:

*Beauty and the Beast from Apuleius to C. S. Lewis*

Gwyneth Hood

In the center of his long narrative, *The Metamorphoses*, (translated by Robert Graves under the title *The Golden Ass*) and composing a large part of the story, Apuleius inserts the tale of "Cupid and Psyche." Like most of the tales interwoven into the narrative, it had been popular before his time (Neumann 153), and many parallel tales exist in the folklore of widely separated cultures. The most famous modern version is the French tale, "Beauty and the Beast" which inspires popular artists to this day. The myth also underlies the genre of the gothic romance, for example, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*. No lines of interpretation are usually adopted for these tales: they explore the relationship between husband and wife, and they explore the relationship between the human and the divine. Mythopoeic writers doubtless wished to make these motifs work together, since husbands are more glorious when they carry that aura of the divine, and the humanity is more inspired when drawn to the divine by erotic desire. However, in the evolution of the tale in Western Culture, it has veered away from the divine and more toward the human, as a study of "Beauty and the Beast" will attest. Portraying gods as dangerous beasts was troublesome for the Christian culture, while a beastly husband was more acceptable. Then, in the fifties, C. S. Lewis re-treated the "Cupid and Psyche" myth itself, adopting Apuleius as his main source (Lewis, *Till We Have Faces* 311-13) and rejoining it to human-divine interpretation. Could Lewis, indeed, make a success of this motif, which had embarrassed even the pagan Apuleius?

## Part I: Apuleius and Parallels

In Apuleius' work, the tale "Cupid and Psyche" is recounted in the hearing of Lucius, the man turned ass, by an old bandit's moll, for the benefit of the captive girl, Charite. The plot is roughly as follows. Psyche, the youngest daughter of an unnamed king and queen, is so beautiful that people praise her above the goddess Venus, thus arousing that goddess' envy. Venus accordingly commands her son, called both Cupido (Desire) and Amor (Love) to afflict her with a passion for the most miserable of men. After seeing the maiden, however, Amor chooses otherwise.

Meanwhile, none seek Psyche in marriage, for without Venus' blessing her beauty does not arouse sensuality. Therefore, her parents inquire at Apollo's oracle what should be done about her. The oracle commands that Psyche be exposed upon a mountainside where a "beastly and snaky evil" ("ferum viperuemeque malum") which, "flying on wings through the heavens . . . terrifies even

Jupiter" ("pinnis volitans super aethera . . . quod ipse premit Jovis" IV, 33) will take her as wife. Though distressed, the parents obey (Graves 100).<sup>1</sup> The girl herself tries to comfort them and goes bravely. After abandonment, the terrified Psyche is caught up by the West Wind and wafted to a valley where she finds a preternaturally splendid palace. There she is hailed as mistress ("domina"), waited upon by unseen servants and pampered with every imaginable luxury. When she goes to bed at night, a husband comes for conjugal visits, but he always leaves before sunrise, so that she never sees him (Graves 104).

This way of life continues for some weeks, and Psyche is content with it until her husband tells her that her sisters are coming to the spot where she was abandoned to mourn her. Then suddenly she is very unhappy until he reluctantly agrees to let them visit. They do, and are both smitten with envy; furthermore, they figure out (because she tells them inconsistent lies) that she has not seen her husband. They come back pretending they have discovered that he is a "huge snake slithering with many great coils" ("immanem colubrum multinodis voluminibus serpentem"; V, 17; Graves 114) who intends to devour her when her pregnancy is far advanced. They urge her to bring a lamp and a blade into her bedchamber, to see the monster and then kill him.

Psyche resolves to do so, but when she lights the lamp, she sees lying in her bed, asleep, not a viper but the beautiful god Amor. Mortified, Psyche drops her blade and kisses him, accidentally spilling a drop of oil on his shoulder. He wakes, reproaches her bitterly and flies off (V, 17-24; Graves 112-118).

After a vain attempts at suicide and flight, and after luring her sisters to their deaths by pretending that Amor will now marry them, Psyche is forced to submit to the furious Venus, who advertises for her capture as a runaway slave. Venus scourges and tortures Psyche and then poses her impossible tasks which are intended to be fatal. The first three – sorting out a huge heap of mixed seeds, obtaining the fleece of ferocious golden sheep, and collecting a bowl of the water of the river Styx – Psyche manages to accomplish with the help of various creatures who befriend her or give her advice. With the fourth and final task, however, she again violates a taboo. She has been sent into the underworld to bring back a cask of beauty from Proserpina, the Queen of the Dead; but after doing this successfully, she decides to take some of the beauty for herself to keep the love of Amor. So she opens the cask and falls into deathlike sleep. All seems lost.

But now Amor, having recovered from his burn, comes to her rescue, puts the mysterious sleep back into the casket and sends her on to his mother. Then he goes to Jupiter to overrule Venus, make Psyche a goddess and recognize her marriage to Amor. Jovially, Jupiter agrees, and the two live happily ever after. They have a daughter named "Pleasure" ("Voluptas") (VI, 20-26; Graves 140-143).

The allegorical possibilities of this story were recognized as soon as Apuleius wrote it. After all, the heroine's name is Psyche, meaning "soul" in Greek, and she becomes a goddess through the mediation of erotic love, that desire to possess and increase the good and beautiful by which Plato said the soul could be united with divine (Frost 80-87).

On the other hand, the allegorical weight of the name "Psyche" was less heavy for Apuleius than for us. In Greek it also means, "butterfly" (Purser 76) or "moth" (Neumann 168). It is linguistic fossil of the ancient belief in the soul as a winged birdlike or mothlike creature which flies out of one's mouth on one's death. As a woman's name, it had both beauty and mystery, and allegorically would have been no more heavy-handed than such modern names as Rose, Lily, Dawn, Jewel, Pearl, Ruby, Hope and so forth.

In any case, there are other reasons for taking the story as an image of human love. Cupido, or Amor, was the god of love, especially human sexual love. Many aspects of the story Apuleius tells work better if we see contemporary Roman society through his gods instead of expecting them to represent the true divine – Apuleius's or ours.

Probably Apuleius did believe in a true divine and cared how humanity interacted with it. Graves, for example, claims that the *Metamorphoses* "is as moral a work as the *Confessions* [of Augustine]" (xx). At the conclusion of the work, Lucius, the transformed ass, solemnly converts to the religion of Isis, who is described in a passage of great poetic beauty as the sole manifestation of all gods and goddesses ("deorum deorumque facies uniformis" XI, 4; Graves 264). This section is thought to be autobiographical. But Purser argues that the conversion did not last, and that the concluding reconciliation with Isis was tacked on as a sop to Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius, who were struggling to some semblance of sobriety to their culture (xx). Apuleius was, as Purser puts it, "a fashionable sophist," skilled at adorning both his arguments and his tales with lively detail, but not so much at penetrating their depths. At any rate, even by Graves' interesting analysis, Apuleius' moral values are quite different from Augustine's; they were elitist and would not have impelled him to make his story clear for an unlearned audience such as ourselves. (With all our modern sophistication we do not know half the things he would have expected of an educated person in his own time.)

Perhaps that is why his "Cupid and Psyche" does not support a consistent philosophical or theological inter-

pretation, though it contains some sophisticated mythological and philosophical jokes.

The classical pantheon of Roman divinities which Apuleius presents us resemble human society more than they do Apuleius' concept of the true divine. Although Isis in her appearance in Book XI claims that Venus ("Paphian Venerem" XI, 5; Graves 265) is one of her manifestations, his portrayal of Venus bears no resemblance whatever to his portrayal of Isis. Nor does it make much sense even in the old mythology. Why should not the God of Love fall in love, and who is Venus, of all goddesses, to resent it? Apuleius only confuses the issue by having her fellow goddesses raise these very questions (V, 19; Graves, 125). But if we regard Venus as a Roman aristocrat, her behavior immediately becomes plausible. She speaks and acts like a wealthy matron, not quite recovered from the trauma of a recent divorce. She will not let her son grow up, partly because motherhood is her only stable relationship and partly because to acknowledge his maturity is to acknowledge her own middle age. She implies bitterly that she is too young to be a grandmother, (VI, 9; Graves 132) a surprising concern for an immortal and eternally youthful goddess. She is not even above alluring him sexually in order to hold him. After demanding that he punish Psyche for stealing her worship, she kisses her son "with parted lips, long and urgently" ("osculis hiantibus . . . diu ac pressule" IV, 30; Graves 98) and as Neumann notes, there is a hint of incest in this (91). Venus also threatens in her anger to adopt a slave as her son and give him Amor's powers (V, 29; Graves 124), something which could be done to a Roman youth but not to a god whose powers come of his own essence.

When Apuleius brings in traditional mythology, he often does so satirically or mechanically. In the midst of a rather human scene where Venus offers a reward for the capture of her runaway slave, Psyche, we are drawn back to mythology by the fact that instead of money she offers kisses, for of course the kisses of Venus are her prime currency. She describes in detail just what kind of kisses they will be (VI, 8; Graves, 131), which hardly adds sobriety to the story. Then there is the scene where, after seeing the face of Amor, Psyche bends over to examine his arrows and pricks her finger on one of them. This opens the way for some word-play about falling in love with love, but otherwise detracts from a powerful scene; after the magnificent description of the god's beauty, it seems anticlimactic that one should need a magic arrow to fall in love with him (V, 23; Graves 118).

The characterization of Amor is a distinct problem for Apuleius as well as us. Apuleius certainly adapted his sources considerably, and although the genius of his retelling is largely what gives his version its enduring influence, it also blurs the logic of the plot nearly to the point of incoherence in places. For example, Friedlander suggests that in the original tale, Amor's counterpart, trapped in the form of a dragon, met the king on a hunting trip and

threatened to kill him unless he would give him his daughter (103). This would match some of the tale's many parallels, particularly "Beauty and the Beast," and still be compatible with the Graeco-Roman gods' penchant for changing form. Certainly some kind of force is necessary to explain how Psyche was torn from her loving parents and married to a husband she did not know and did not trust. But in Apuleius's version the dragon-form appears only in Apollo's frightening oracle and the sisters' lies. This does not quite rid us of the beast-form, because Apollo is a truthful god. Yet it does excise a potentially dramatic scene while introducing a distraction: how does Apollo know Amor's intentions, and how did Amor persuade him to cooperate? What did Apuleius gain by this device to compensate for these disadvantages?

Perhaps the device reveals how much Apuleius wanted to escape the blatant barbarism of the threat. Perhaps he was equally eager to rid himself of the literal beast form. Sophist or not, he knew Platonism, and Plato held that for gods to take the forms of beings less than themselves was a kind of lying, something incompatible with the divine nature. Not that Apuleius follows Plato in trying to censor this element from his mythology altogether. He has Jupiter review all the forms Love has impelled him to assume, but with the clear implication that it was all beneath his dignity and rather disgraceful (Graves 141). But perhaps he preferred to do without a literal transformation if he could gain his effects by other means. Through Apollo's oracle he could and did.

By putting Amor's beast-form in an oracle, Apuleius indicates that it represents a true side of his nature, both mythologically and philosophically. Mythologically, Apollo is still smarting from some old love-wounds Amor had inflicted on him – perhaps for Daphne – and so his description of Psyche's future husband is tinged with rancor. Philosophically the oracle is true because Amor is a dangerous passion which can, if not properly curbed, threaten law and order among the gods as well as among men and bring the universe again to chaos. Perhaps the old opinion attributed to Empedocles (which Dante mentions in *Inferno*, XII 41-3) that love reduces the world to chaos (Sinclair, 162 n3), was on his mind.

But oracles need not tell the whole truth, and there is another side to Amor. When Psyche through her disobedience finally sees her husband, she realizes that he is "of all savage things the mildest and sweetest beast" ("omnium ferarum mitissimam dulcissimamque bestiam" V, 22; Graves 116). Not that this gives us a rounded view of love in its beneficent and maleficent aspects; instead of synthesizing the conflicting data, Apuleius glories in our confusion. So the beast-form is actually Amor's true form; however, Amor has other aspects which the oracle does not explain. It simply emerges that those who rail against Love are not to be trusted. Jupiter himself, when he seems to chide Amor for impelling him to break the Julian laws against adultery and to change into all those undignified

forms which so offended the Platonists, is actually begging for more, and none too subtly at that. He ends by implying that he will be Amor's rival for Psyche's love, unless Amor finds another beautiful girl soon (VI, 21; Graves 141). Why those who consistently do the will of Amor in private feel they must rail at him publicly is a secret that neither the gods nor the Roman aristocrats will tell.

So in fruitful confusion we see Amor's beast-form can be justified mythologically and philosophically through his nature as a love-god, while his motive for using it is best understood in human terms: an impetuous youth is struggling to gain independence of his mother who does not wish him to grow up. Marrying a girl of a lower class is an excellent way to do this, particularly if she is so beautiful that she makes his mother angry. That he can only woo his bride with threatening oracles comes about because, in a culture where his family ought to be arranging a match for him, he is striking out entirely on his own, and he has not developed the *finesse* for these delicate negotiations.

Less easy to explain are his motives for remaining unseen, for leaving Psyche alone all day, for fleeing from her when she shines light on him, and for returning to her in the end. Obviously many theories based on philosophy and theology are possible, (some will fit with many aspects of the story but none that I have discovered will fit entirely with the whole story as Apuleius tells it) but there is no room to review them all here. Those which relate to human interactions are best illuminated by comparison with the parallels. Sometimes distant parallels can be as illuminating as close ones.

For example, there is an Eskimo tale which curiously reverses "Cupid and Psyche." It involves a beast-marriage. The daughter of a family wanders off and disappears. Months later she returns to visit her mother, secretly carrying a reptilian baby which her horrified mother sees her nurse at her breast. The daughter warns her mother that her husband is "not of the human kind" and tells her that she must not try to discover where her daughter lives. The mother does, however, and the girl's two brothers ambush and kill the reptilian husband. They bring the girl home. She remains with them for a while, but presently wanders off again. This time she never returns (Rink 186-88).

This tale reminds us that beast-marriages are imaginable where the beast does not have a human form, and where they occur, it is as likely that the human spouse will become brutalized as that the beastly one will be humanized. For every beast-husband who would be transformed into a man by a beautiful woman, there is another beast who would devour her or turn her into a beast instead, and for every woman who would help a transformed beast to humanity, there may be another who would like him better as a beast. Here we may consider Apuleius's source for *The Golden Ass*, whose ending Apuleius mercifully did not incorporate into his narrative.

A rich lady falls in love with the man turned ass and seduces him. When he has been restored to his human form, he visits her again, thinking she would like him even better now, but she rejects him because his sexual prowess in that form was not as great (xviii). In the "Psyche" tale and other parallels, the beast-form stirs the reader's sympathy because it is balanced by the human form in bed; but the Eskimo daughter knowingly entered a marriage with a beast and willingly nursed the child from the union. Her willingness to sink below humanity, or her lack of full awareness that she has done so, arouses not sympathy but horror from the reader. Could not the horror of Psyche's sister be similar? Psyche, in Apuleius' words hated the beast and loved the husband in the same body ("in eodem corpore odit bestia, diligit maritum" V, 21; Graves 117). But her sisters did not know that. Is Apuleius fudging on his material somewhat?

A Zulu tale illuminates the story from another angle. A maiden has been betrothed to a prince from afar, but when she comes to his settlement, she finds him absent. He has been missing from childhood. However, she is very patient. She leaves gifts of meat and drink in the tent, and her shy lover comes to consume them. Eventually he approaches the girl. The first night he touches her; the second he permits her to touch him. His skin is slippery because his mother had sewed him into a boa constrictor's skin as a child to protect him from his bestial cousins. However, at this point, the prince puts off his snakeskin and become the king of his tribe (Friedlander 131). This story suggests why a prince with a human heart might be wise to wear the form of a dangerous beast while he lives in an untrustworthy society. Although this Zulu prince could depend on a human family to provide a suitable human bride, we can see that if the mother herself (or her surrogate) is implicated in the cruelty of the culture, the youth is justified in trying to make a better life for himself by finding a bride from a different social order who does not share these tendencies.

Suggestively close to "Cupid and Psyche" story, yet still far away, is the tale of "Golden Wand," which Friedlander tells (112). Here a merchant's daughter is sent a letter, a ring, and a basin by an Indian prince. After she performs a magical incantation which summons the prince, he flies into her window in the form of a little bird, bathes in the basin, transforms to a man and is amorously welcomed by the protagonist. The girl's sisters, observing this, are jealous. They attack the prince with knives and he flees, seriously wounded. His mistress leaves her home in pursuit and with difficulty learns the means by which he can be healed. She heals him; they are united and live happily ever afterwards.

Here once more we are dealing with a transformed human-animal rather than a mere beast. Once more there are jealous sisters who act from spite rather than protectiveness. Again, and more significant, a female protagonist matures and rises from the rank of paramour to official

wife through the performance of difficult tasks designed to reunite her with her lover. But there are important divergences. Golden Wand is a more mature character than Psyche from the start and knows more clearly what she wants. While Psyche was wholly ignorant of love and is given away in marriage without her explicit consent by the command of a threatening oracle, Golden Wand is ready for romance and accepts the prince's gifts with some understanding of what they mean. She leaves her home of her own free will in order to help her lover, while Psyche was expelled from her parents' home by Amor's will and from Amor's palace by the death of the relationship and the anger of Venus.

Also the animal form here, the delicate little bird which a maiden might keep as a pet, is unlike Amor's dragon-form, and suggests not rebellion against a coercive environment, but rather, trustfulness and willingness to lay aside rank and power in a love relationship. The prince here shows no desire to keep his lover "in the dark," but transforms before her eyes. There is no prohibition for her to violate. The opposition to the relationship is external, in the sisters only.

Beside the Golden Wand story, accenting some of its elements and undercutting others, we may lay the story of "Yonec" as told by Marie de France. Here the heroine is not a noble maiden but a young wife closely imprisoned by a jealous and apparently sterile old husband. Like Golden Wand, she expresses interest in a romance before the action begins, in her case by praying to God to send her a lover (line 104). Her lover comes to her in the form of a hawk (lines 110-11), which combines for her the tameness of Golden Wand's bird with the power and lordliness (and willingness to dispense with convention) of Amor's dragon-form. The jealous husband proves more deadly than the jealous sisters, and the hawk is fatally wounded by the snare he sets (lines 314). The hawk-prince flees, dying, and like Golden Wand, the wife escapes the imprisoning protection of her home to pursue him. She finds but cannot save him. Before dying, however, he gives her a ring which prevents her husband from remembering the events, and a sword which she is to pass on to their son (Yonec) when he is knighted. So it happens, and when Yonec is knighted, his mother gives him the sword, tells him of his true parentage, and falls dead. Yonec avenges both his parents by killing the ill natured cuckold; he then inherits his own father's lands (lines 525-550). As this story shows, the woman gains power and maturity when love impels her to disregard the fear of death. This gain is to be valued in itself even if it does not result in a reunion with the lover. Also, incidentally, that this maturity is worth gaining even if it costs life and even if it takes a generation for real love to defeat conventionally sanctioned counterfeits. The possibility for the beast-lover to be injured in these situations is real.

With "Tulisa," an Indian tale from the collection of the Somadeva Bhatta (Purser xlvii) we come to a much closer

parallel. Tulisa, the daughter of a poor woodcutter, hears a voice from a fountain ask her for marriage three times. She refers the problem to her father, who gives consent when the fountain promises him vast wealth. After a mysterious ceremony, she is carried off in a magic palanquin to a marvelous palace where she is pampered with every imaginable luxury. Unlike Psyche, she sees her husband every night (and he wears the human form) but she is not told his name. She is forbidden to leave the palace or to admit visitors. Impelled by loneliness, she disobeys, and an old woman who come to her door.

Actually this is not an old woman but a demon or fairy-like being named Sarkasukis. Three times, disguised as different old women, Sarkasukis comes and discusses Tulisa's life with her, and each time she suggests some matter of ceremony in which Tulisa's husband has fallen short of a lover's etiquette. Each time, Tulisa anxiously queries her husband, and he endeavors to satisfy her. The third time the old woman asks if the husband has told Tulisa his real name. If he has not, he clearly does not love her.

When her husband next returns, Tulisa repeatedly demands to know his name; he pleads with her to desist, telling her that the knowledge would only bring her trouble. But she will not yield. Finally he tells her his name (Basnak Dau), turns into a water snake and vanishes into a river. The palace vanishes and Tulisa finds herself back at home with her parents, freshly impoverished.

Later, however, Tulisa learns from squirrels what had happened: that Basnak Dau had removed his mother from power when he became King of his (demon or fairy) people and she, by tricking Tulisa into asking his name, has deposed him. In order to win Basnak Dau's power back, Tulisa must swim a river filled with snakes, find the egg of a Huma bird, and carry it between her breasts until it hatches. When it hatches, "it will pick out the eyes of the green snake which is coiled round the Queen's neck, and then Basnak Dau will recover his kingdom" (Purser L). While waiting for the egg to hatch, Tulisa must offer herself as a servant to the Queen and "perform all her commands under the penalty of being eaten by snakes" (L). After Tulisa has, in the manner of Psyche, completed two impossible tasks with the aid of sympathetic animal helpers, the Queen sends her servant-demon, Sarkasukis, to kill her. Tulisa burns herbs to keep her away. At last the Huma bird hatches and does its work. The Queen and Sarkasukis "fall dead" and Tulisa and her husband live happily ever after.

Another close parallel, with some different details, is Norwegian fairy tale, "East of the Sun, West of the Moon." The bride is again from a poor family, whose father has trouble feeding his many pretty children. One stormy winter Thursday, a white bear a knocks on their door and asks him for his youngest daughter, promising to make him rich in return. The father consults his daughter, who

promptly declines. So, to gain time, the father tells the white bear to come back next Thursday for an answer. In the interim he convinces his daughter to change her mind, and she does her best to make herself neat and pretty. When the bear returns she is ready to go with him.

The white bear carries the lassie on his back to a mountain, which opens and proves to contain apartments much like Amor's palace. The lassie is waited upon by unseen servants and pampered with every imaginable luxury. The white bear is transformed into a man at night and sleeps with her, but he always leaves before morning, so that she does not see him in this form. During the day, the lassie is bored and lonely, and when her husband inquires why she is pining, she asks to visit her family. The white bear carries her to her family's new farmhouse for a visit of several days but warns her to avoid a private conversation with her mother. The lassie obeys for several days but eventually her mother becomes too insistent. When the lassie tells her mother about the bedroom practices, the latter, alarmed, suspects that the bridegroom is a troll. She advises her daughter to adopt tactics like Psyche's, with a tallow candle instead of a lamp. The lassie does, and like Psyche she is taken by the beauty of her husband, bends over to kiss him, and accidentally spills three drops of tallow on him. The prince wakes and tells her that if she had only refrained from looking at him for a year, the enchantment would have been broken and he could have been a man by day as well as night. Now he must return to his troll stepmother at the castle "East of the Sun, West of the Moon," and marry her daughter, who has a nose three ells long. He flees and their home disappears.

The lassie's search is longer and more elaborate than Psyche's or Tulisa's and takes the place of some other trials. Once she arrives at the tower "East of the Sun, West of the Moon," the "lassie" bribes the troll princess with gifts friendly people have given her on her travels in order to sit with the prince at night. The sly troll princess, however, gives him a sleeping drug, and the lassie has exhausted her last treasure by the time he catches on and secretly throws away the drug. He recognizes his bride and the two plot together to overcome the trolls.

Unlike Psyche, the lassie is allowed to undo directly the damage she inflicted with her tallow candle, since the prince produces the shirt on which the tallow fell and declares he will marry only the woman who can wash it off. The disappointed trolls die of rage (Dasent 22-35).

In these tales we can see a similar plot logic, accented rather than blurred by different details. The bride is always of much lower status than her husband, and always very young, with no firm opinions of her own about love. She is brought into the marriage by the authority of her father. He either sees no need to ask her consent (with Psyche and Tulisa) or at most concedes her a veto power (the Norse tale) which she can exercise only if she is truly determined.

The husband seems to have acquired his beast-form from conflict with his native social environment, particularly his private life, dominated by a mother or step-mother who wishes to keep him from full adulthood. Venus seeks to tie her son to childhood and the strong maternal bond she had when he was an infant, strengthening it by fair means or foul. Basnak Dau's mother also wishes to control the kingdom in place of her son and thus presumably wants to keep him a child, or perhaps to destroy him altogether (since she is killed in the end, the hostility between the two must have been deep). The bear-prince's step-mother, lacking the true maternal bond, hopes to control the prince by binding him to her daughter while he is still in her power and thus gaining lifelong control over him, while at the same time providing for a not-very-attractive daughter.

The husband's beast-form, thus, represents lack of harmony with his society and its conventions, brought about by his necessary resistance to his mother or stepmother's unfair tactics. This forces him to manifest on the surface a beastliness sufficient to fend off the true spiritual beastliness of his environment. This makes him an outlaw in his own sphere because only his beast-form is recognized; the mother or stepmother's coercion is either not perceived or else it is countenanced by the rest of his society. Hence all attempts to establish himself in power within his own family and class are thwarted. However, due to his native powers, heightened by his aggressive and dangerous beast-form, he can escape this environment and try to create one more to his liking, even a family of his own through his marriage with a lovely maiden of lower status. His power, whether expressed through threats or offers of wealth to families whose alternative may well be starvation, is certainly what induces the fathers to hand over their daughters.

On the other hand, the pampered human life his bride leads during the day, with all luxuries and no demands, expresses his own confused conception of the society he would like to create, and he enjoys the carefree existence vicariously through his bride though he cannot live it himself. It is too naive and simple a conception but it does express a generous and giving nature much at odds with his superficial beast-form.<sup>2</sup> There are other difficulties with the arrangement. The bride may reciprocate the love he gives her in the dark, but she cannot love him deeply without knowing him better. Nor can she be a full partner in establishing his new society. She has no understanding of, let alone the strength to face, the dangers which have led to his beast-form. He cannot be sure she would help him if she knew, since without testing her, he cannot know her loyalty. The only test he imposes is the test of restraint, in not seeking to know him. This is a restraint he needs. Not having achieved full adult humanity in his own circle, he may wish to achieve it now, but it is not easy for him to give up the outward beast-form, the only thing which has preserved him from slavery. He does not know how to gain similar advantages from the more sensitive and vul-

nerable human form. If he is to manage it, he must be able to trust his bride to cherish it rather than to exploit it. His bride's willing restraint during his hours of vulnerability (in the dark) might give him this assurance if it endured.

But the bride has troubles of her own. She has lost her virginity without gaining real intimacy with her husband, and given up her family without gaining entrance to a new one. Despite the luxury of the desert in which she lives, she is lonely, and because his bond with her is human and must remain human if he is to regain humanity, her husband has no defense against her unhappiness. Basnak Dau eventually tells Tulisa his name as she demands, thus proving his love, and losing his kingship to his mother again. Amor and the White Bear change their strategies to allow contact with the bride's family, even though they foresee that the families will plot against them. When they wake at night to find their brides standing over them with light, they recognize the failure of their attempts to establish independence, and they return to their mother and stepmother in defeat.

To win her husband back, the bride must risk death, follow him at great difficulty to his own home, infiltrate it from a position of weakness, either as a servant or a through bribery with decreasing resources, learn its nature and overcome the corrupt mother figure, not by violence, but by a combination of cunning, patience, and most of all endurance until her husband returns to her. Then both husband and wife are strong and united and able to rule in a society which is human at its depths as well as in appearance.

Thus interpreted, this works well as a story of adolescent struggles for independence with some class conflict thrown in. As a record of human and divine interaction it does not work unless brutality is accepted as potentially in the divine nature. For, although the bride clearly grows in strength and character through her response to her husband, her husband is also helped by her deeds. Now this is acceptable in many mythologies, but not where the gods are inflexibly virtuous, and thus even Apuleius who gives us our completest and most elaborate version of the tale, found it embarrassing. Obviously the Christian culture which dominated Europe for the next 1300 years or so would find this aspect of the story even more troubling, which results in its being almost filtered out.<sup>3</sup> This can be seen in the tale's most popular modern incarnation, Madame LePrince de Beaumont's "Beauty and the Beast."

At first glance "Beauty and the Beast," seems so different from the other parallels that one is tempted to disregard it; however, closer examination shows that most changes in structure can be traced to one important change in attitude: an increased sense of the rights and responsibilities of women in marriage. (Some of these concerns, indeed, emerge when the Norse tale is compared with the other two.) With this heightened social consciousness, no credible father would give his daughter to a beast without



her consent, and no maiden capable of being a role model would consent. So the Beast-prince cannot count on marrying a helpless but naive and good natured maiden and demonstrating the human side of his nature in bed; he is driven to finding a maiden with sufficient insight to see his humanity through his beastliness. Because the bride must consent freely and lovingly to the marriage, this consent takes the place of the hard tasks by which her predecessors expressed their love for the human manifestation of their beast-husbands.

But because the bride's choice depends on her own wisdom, she must develop her character *before* her encounter with the Beast instead of *in the course of it* as Psyche did. Since she does so, she seems to gain less for the relationship than her predecessors did.

Beaumont's, Beauty follows the type in being the youngest and most beautiful daughter of an already handsome family. Her social status is more complex, however, because instead of merely being poor she is the daughter of a merchant, once rich, who has fallen into poverty. This change in status demands adaptation, and Beauty develops her character by adapting successfully. Her sisters only bewail their fallen condition and complain about hardships, but Beauty takes on responsibilities, learns to "work like a servant" and after hard work makes life gracious by reading, playing the harpsichord, and singing while she spins (117). Yet she alone might have escaped this environment and stayed in the class of her birth. Her arrogant elder sisters are shunned by their former admirers after their father loses his wealth, but "several worthy men" would have willingly married Beauty without a dowry, because her beauty was matched by a good attitude (116). She chose decline their offers out of a desire to remain longer with her father in his distress, and despite all this, is careful, too, not to be self-righteous. When her father goes to the city in the hopes of recovering some of his wealth, the elder sisters make requests for many expensive presents. Noticing she has asked for nothing, her father asks Beauty what she would like. In Beaumont's version she asks for a rose just so as not to seem to reproach her selfish sisters by asking for nothing (Johnson 118).

This Beauty is not merely a naive young girl; she is one who has consciously chosen to be loving, virtuous and courageous despite obstacles. Even though she rises in social position through her marriage with the enchanted Prince, we still feel that he is a lucky man; Beauty is the sort of girl who would bless any environment. She would have done well in any case.

Partly as a consequence of this we have moved farther away from a story of the interaction of the human and divine. In the Amor and Psyche, Amor did bring Psyche to divinity, and there is no question that her character grew through interaction with him. But Beauty already had a lovely character at the start of the story. It is the Beast who represents despised and miserable humanity, and Beauty

represents divine love to him. However, in her powers, she is weak and human, vulnerable to fortune, and receptive to the Beast's pampering. The tale is a beautiful love story, but unsuitable as a vehicle for the interactions with humanity of an omniscient and omnipotent god. Can Lewis really turn this trend around?

## Part II: Lewis

Lewis solved part of the problem inherent in the myth by getting away from our modern conceptions of the divine and transporting us back to times when gods, like humans, were seen as bewildering blends of kindly and malignant traits. Though this is not the official line of Christian theology, it still matches the real attitudes of many people in Lewis's time, including the young C. S. Lewis himself, who used the Norse God Loki to declare that the creation of the world was an unpardonable cruelty. Later Lewis wrote, "Love Himself can work in those who know nothing of Him." (178). In this tale he shows that by a mystical union with the true God of Love, Psyche is driven to great tasks which change, not the gods themselves, but the concepts of them in her own mind and more especially in that of her sister Orual and the people of Glome.

Although in the conception of the gods which he presents, Lewis reaches farther back toward the roots of the tale than Apuleius did, his characterization of Psyche, (or Istra-Psyche as she is best called to avoid confusion) is at the end of the modern progression. Unlike Apuleius' immature Psyche, who is given away at her father's will, who undertakes her awesome tasks at first simply because they are forced on her rather than from a positive desire to rejoin Amor, and who contemplates suicide four times to get out of them, Lewis's Istra-Psyche is a mature and resilient character from the start, more like Beaumont's Beauty. But Istra-Psyche is like her counterpart in being blessed (or cursed) with preternatural beauty. Lewis treats the beauty differently, however. Apuleius said Psyche's beauty was like that of a wonderful statue (IV, 32; Graves 98). Istra-Psyche's beauty is like a vision of unfallen nature. As Orual, her eldest sister and the narrator explains,

It was beauty that did not astonish you until afterwards when you had gone out of sight of her and reflected on it. While she was with you, you were not astonished. It seemed the most natural thing in the world. As the Fox delighted to say, she was 'according to nature'; what every woman, or even every thing, ought to have been and meant to be, but had missed by some trip of chance. Indeed, when you looked at her you believed, for a moment, that they had not missed it. She made beauty all round her. (22)

In short, Lewis's language suggests that Istra-Psyche's whole person calls into the beholders' minds a vision of a better world than they know. Yet the difference between this world and the usual one is so subtle that they do not notice the improvement until they turn away and find it gone. In Lewis's version, this preternatural beauty comes

with an even higher price than in Apuleius's. The price is divine envy and human hatred, but it first takes shape as human exploitation. The people of Glome know that such a rarity as Istra-Psyche does not come by accident. There must be an explanation and a use for her. They begin to worship her as a manifestation of the dreaded Goddess Ungit and demand help from her, first small favors, such as kissing a baby so that she will be beautiful (27-28). Eventually they attribute healing powers to Psyche during a plague and a mob bangs on the palace door demanding her ministrations.

Neither Psyche nor her sister Orual wish to claim divine powers. Orual asks their beloved Greek slave and teacher, the Fox, whether there is sense in the demand. He replies, "It is possible. . . It might be in accordance with nature that some hands can heal. Who knows?" This is warrant enough for Psyche, who says, "Let me go out . . . They are our people" (31). So out she goes and touches the sick until they are satisfied and she is exhausted. Then she contracts an illness, which, as Orual sees it, burns her childhood away (33).

It is never clearly settled whether Psyche had healing powers or not. No indisputable evidence of Lewis' view emerges, but from what he does say, it seems possible that she did. The Fox, whom Psyche had tended, said it could be. Psyche, in explaining afterwards why she sneaked out of the palace to help people, said, "For they all said my hands cured it, and who knows? It might be. I felt as if they did" (39) Does she mean that she felt "power go out" of her as Jesus sometimes did (Luke 7:45)? Orual herself seems to accept the healing as real when she cries, "You healed them, and blessed them, and took their filthy disease upon yourself" (39).

That Psyche's touch might have had some healing influence fits well with Lewis' account of her beauty. Merely seen, it could draw people's minds out of fallen nature and closer to the unfallen nature. Logically, her touch could have an analogous physical power and could draw their bodies closer to their true (healthy) nature and away from their diseases. Even without Psyche's special nature, healing by suggestion are well known (William James 96n-97) and often associated with royalty or persons of high prestige. It could well be that Istra-Psyche had some power to heal and knew it.

But clearly that power was not strong enough to counteract all the hostile forces which were then united against her. Soon the people accuse Istra-Psyche of deliberately usurping Ungit's worship and of bringing the plague on them instead of healing it. They call her the Accursed (39). Obviously, her prelapsarian beauty is not enough to overcome traditional ideas. Their goddess Ungit represents a bewildering combination of beauty and ugliness, power and cruelty which no wise human would willingly contend with. When half crazy with fear, they insist on seeing Psyche as her manifestation and demanding

her help. But when their demands are satisfied, they are left with their guilt – their guilt for forcing the hand of the goddess, their guilt for demanding another goddess than the one they knew governed their lives – and their certainty that cruel vengeance would be exacted. They are happy to put all the blame on Psyche. More subtly shown, perhaps, is that they really hate Istra-Psyche as much as they love her. Her beauty simply cannot be endured for long. Like Christ's goodness, it evokes a joyous energy which shakes a society's foundations, since most human societies are based on compromises with despair and corruption. The beholders come away either energized to fight for a better world or bitterly angry at the one who has aroused and dashed such intoxicating false hopes. As Orual explains later, "the Divine Nature wounds and perhaps destroys us merely by being what it is" (284). Until they have destroyed Psyche and "married" her to their original conception of the gods, the people of Glome cannot be comfortable again. As a result of all this the Priest of Ungit comes to the palace at the height of their troubles, demanding that Psyche be given up in the rite of the "great sacrifice" which he describes mystically as a marriage, a devouring, and death (50). So it is done. But somehow Psyche survives this marriage and this devouring and Orual, come to do a sister's duty and bury her remains with honor, finds her alive and healthy in a valley beyond the ridge where she was offered in sacrifice.

Psyche's temptress is her elder sister Orual. Lewis shows that Orual feels both the protectiveness and the jealousy which are attributed to the bride's family in the parallels. In retrospect it is obvious that jealousy predominated and this jealousy is the beastliness Orual (and Glome) attributes to the gods. But this is far from clear to Orual at the start. She is ignorant partly because she is a willful and passionate person who does not wish to know her own motives, but also partly because she is entering a spiritual territory unknown to her culture and has no exact role models. No one else but Psyche lives in even approximately the same mental environment as Orual, and when the god comes between them, Orual must find her way alone. She has to put together the Fox's Greek wisdom, which she loves, and the religion of Glome, which she hates but in which she is forced to perceive some truth. She makes mistakes, and has no one with whom she can really talk out her problems, except the imaginary Greek reader she invents for herself when she writes her complaint against the gods.

The Fox, who teaches her of Greek wisdom, believes either that the gods do not exist or that they are better than human beings. When Orual chides him for arousing divine envy by praising the young Istra-Psyche over Aphrodite, he scoffs, "The divine nature is not like that. It has no envy," (24). He believes there is a god in each human being, but he defines that god as the disciplined and rational mind of the individual (303). He trains his pupils to be thoughtful, constructive and patient in their dealings with others (68).

But the world view of Glome remains dominated by gods such as Ungit. This religion depends largely on terror as a motivator, and forbids close inquiry into divine matters. As Bardia says, "I think the less Bardia meddles with the gods, the less they'll meddle with Bardia" (135). One of the most honorable people of Glome, he would never dare bring his own moral principles to bear on the gods. Logically this attitude would lead to nationwide moral paralysis.

Though these two world-view are clearly antagonistic, for a long time the princesses are allowed to accept the Fox's ideas. But finally there comes that crucial moment when the Priest of Ungit arrives at the palace demanding Istra-Psyche's sacrifice. Then the Fox's limitations show clearly. His challenge of the High Priest's demand is somewhat obtuse in its over-rationality.

A shadow is to be an animal which is also a goddess which is also a god, and loving is to be eating – a child of six would talk more sense. And a moment ago the victim of this abominable sacrifice was to be the Accursed, the wickedest person in the whole land, offered as a punishment. And now it is to be the best person in the whole land – the perfect victim – married to the god as a reward. Ask him what he means. It can't be both. (50)

The Priest of Ungit replies with true *mythopoeia*:

We are hearing much Greek wisdom this morning, King. . . . It is very subtle. But it brings no rain and grows no corn; sacrifice does both. . . . I, King, have dealt with the gods for three generations of men, and I know that they dazzle our eyes and flow in and out of one another like eddies on a river, and nothing that is said clearly can be said truly about them. Holy places are dark places. . . . Why should the Accursed not be both the best and the worst? (50)

The best-loved is the most hated because it is around our best-loved that our desires center and they disappoint us more than anyone else can by refusing to be everything we want them to be. No reason can refute this mad logic of the human heart. So Psyche is sacrificed. Orual is devastated, but in what should be a touching interview with her sister before her death, she shows how much of her grief is selfish. She is devastated most of all that Psyche is not as upset as she and has ventured to face her catastrophe with more optimism or more philosophical resignation than she herself can.

Psyche has also received a visit from the Priest of Ungit, and like her sister is impressed that the Fox "hasn't the whole truth" where the gods are concerned (70). On the other hand, like her sister, she has adopted many of the Fox's ideas about fair conduct, and with them in mind she cannot accept Glome's cruel and capricious gods. But instead of attacking the gods with Greek philosophy as a weapon, she makes a simple and profound synthesis of the two views: "[M]ightn't it be [that the gods] do these things and the things are not what they seem to be?" (71). Thus

she comforts herself with the thought that she may actually be marrying a (benevolent) god (71). It takes Orual the rest of her life (learning partly through her sister's sufferings) to make the same synthesis.

Possessiveness blocks her more than any mere intellectual or intuitive failure; she is so obsessed with what the gods take from her that she will not heed what they may give her. Added to this is a powerful desire to dominate. More noble than her counterpart in Apuleius's version, she would not begrudge her sister a handsome and doting husband and every kind of luxury, but when Psyche's world extends farther than she can comprehend, instead of letting her go, or even being content to follow her (as Psyche wishes), she tries to pull her by force back into her own, no matter how it hurts her. Her device of the lamp is an attempt to bring Psyche back to heel.

She had a much more noble-sounding rationalization, of course. She states that Psyche was living with something vile which she ought to leave, either a human outlaw, or the Brute spoken of by the priest. But what had aroused Orual's resentment in the first place was that Psyche was living in a beautiful palace which Orual could not see. She envies the spiritual development in Psyche's life.

For of course Orual's failure to see the palace corresponds to her lesser spiritual insight. Yet many things indicate that their minds are not that far apart, and what truly holds Orual back is her will not to perceive. After that first harrowing interview, she is given a glimpse of the Psyche's palace. Later she wonders why she was given that glimpse, and just that glimpse, and just when she had it. She refuses to see the logic of it, but we can. We can notice that she had just drunk the water native to that valley and thus become momentarily closer to the divine and that for a moment she had temporarily relaxed her mental struggle against the gods and was receptive. The same is true of her fervent demand for a "sign" the next night. Since nothing happens instantly, she assumes her prayer has not been answered. It never occurs to her to attribute the clearer thought which comes to her when she wakes in the night as an answer (150-1) because it is not the answer she wants. As she snarls in her final "Complaint," translated by her vision into its true meaning,

[O]h, you'll say (you've been whispering it to me these forty years) that I'd signs enough her palace was real could have known the truth if I'd wanted. But how could I want to know it? Tell me that. (291)

Lewis shows Orual's ingenuity at self-deceit in many instances, but its masterpiece is her plot to "free" Psyche from her husband. To do so she splices together interpretations from the two incompatible philosophies she holds and devises a plan which makes sense in neither.

In Bardia's interpretation, Psyche has been taken by the Brute, just as the Priest had said. She may very well be

living in a palace which is real but invisible. "I don't well know what's *really*, when it comes to the houses of gods" (136) he says. The Fox, on the other hand, believes that Psyche has gone mad from all her sufferings and is hallucinating about the palace. Her lover must be real, though, because someone has obviously been feeding her. Since the only men who could go to that valley would be outlaws, it follows that he is an outlaw (142-43). Trying to reconcile these stories without opting firmly for one or the other, Orual tells herself that both the Fox and Bardia agree that the lover must be "evil or shameful" (151). This is a lie. It was only to her own jealous heart that both tales said that. Bardia could never have said the Brute was evil; he would, in terror, withdraw his own moral concepts from anything which belonged to the gods. The Fox, on the other hand, did not believe that there were any gods who would concern themselves with the flux and change of human affairs; hence Psyche's lover had to be human. However, he took pains to debunk Orual's feelings of shame about this. As he points out, wisely, at her furious reaction, "There is one part love in your heart, and five parts anger, and seven parts pride" (148). A good man might possibly have fallen afoul of the law, he notes, but the real point was to rescue Psyche (149).

In either view, Orual's strategy of lighting the lamp is absurd. If Psyche's mate is the Brute, there is no fighting him. If her lover were an outlaw, she might be lured from him, with careful thought and planning, but a simple confrontation with a lamp makes no sense. As the Fox points out, "[W]hat would he do then but snatch her up and drag her away to some other lair? Unless he stabbed her to the heart for fear she'd betray him to his pursuers" (179). Orual then admits "[N]ow I wondered why indeed I had not thought of any of these things and whether I had never at all believed her lover was a mountaineer man" (179). Psyche's temptress is indeed a confused woman.

Unlike the Roman Psyche, Istra-Psyche is not directly persuaded to doubt her husband's good intentions toward her. As she expresses it, she chooses to obey Orual not because she suspects her husband is evil but because "I think better of him than I do of you. . . He will know how I was tortured into my disobedience. He will forgive me" (166). But in a fashion she accepts Orual's view when she assumes that only her disobedience can prevent her sister's suicide. Her husband is elsewhere quite efficient at blocking suicides (279). So in reacting reflexively to the old bond with Orual, Istra-Psyche shows immaturity, but immaturity at a higher level than the older Psyche's.

The shining of the light in her chamber carries a different allegorical weight than in Apuleius. In the cases of the earlier beast-husbands, it seems that the maiden was forbidden to see the human form because her husband was unsure of it and frightened of its vulnerability. In Lewis's story, it is not the god himself, but Psyche, who is returned to the power of others by Psyche's deed. As the god says, Now Psyche goes out in exile. Now she must hunger and

thirst and tread hard tracks. Those against whom I cannot fight must do their will upon her. (174)

God, or Love Himself, as Lewis would put it, remains invisible to her because in truth she cannot really "see" him. In the divine humility which is to result in the Incarnation, he has deigned to embody a concept gropingly formed in her mind, for if he did not, he could not communicate with her at all. But the concept is insufficient, and she must grow in understanding through their mystical relationship. To manifest himself in visible form for her would be to crystallize her concept at that insufficient level and thus estrange her from true understanding. While she is content not to see him, her understanding continues to grow. When she violates the command, he appears in a form just verging on comprehensibility, remote and rejecting. She can no longer draw perceptions directly from him and is thrown back on her own resources, into intellectual and emotional confusions like Orual's. The original bond is not recovered without difficulty.

Istra-Psyche is delivered into the power of the Goddess Ungit, because Ungit stands for the human selfishness and jealousy which motivates Orual, to which Orual has subjected herself by her own will, and to which Istra-Psyche has also submitted in lighting the lamp at Orual's demand.

In fact, Psyche recovers her relationship with her lover by joining Orual in her own spiritual struggle. This is the doom of the god, and we see that it is fitting. Orual insists on disrupting Psyche's life, which is happy in itself, by making her life depend on the disruption. Psyche accepts her demand in shining the light. The god confirms the bargain in his doom to Orual: "You, woman, shall know yourself and your work. You also shall be Psyche" (174). The four tasks which Apuleius attributes to Psyche, Lewis has Orual and Istra-Psyche perform together by some spiritual link while physically separated, but as the Fox explains, Orual bore most of the pain and Psyche accomplished the tasks (301). The process of separating the hopeless tangle of seeds is the process of Orual sorting out her hopeless tangle of motives; Istra-Psyche is seen in the final vision watching with concentration and knitted brow while her helper-ants accomplish on time the task which she (at Ungit's requirement) has set them (299) while Orual in her own visions had seen herself become an ant and painfully carry the grains one by one (256-7), an amusing comment on the nature of rational thinking. It is then revealed to Orual that she is herself Ungit, that is, the demonic force which she has attributed to the goddess Ungit is really hers (276). To rid herself of this ugliness, she must "die" in a spiritual sense, before she dies (279).

In the final task, Psyche now is seen walking into the underworld despite the attempts of various wraiths in the forms of humans who have tried to block her progress, the most pitiable and dangerous being Orual herself (301-4). Psyche walks past without speaking, thus completing the process of separation and maturity she shrank from in

their first confrontation. She then returns with the casket of beauty. In Lewis the failure of Apuleius' Psyche in taking the beauty for herself becomes the success of Istra-Psyche in giving the cask to Orual-Ungit so that she can become the beautiful Orual-Psyche and reconciled to the gods (306). In retrospect we perceive that Orual-Psyche has had a role all along, as a dedicated and mostly benevolent Queen, in her public life, revealing to the people of Glome what Istra-Psyche had revealed to her: a nobler concept to the divine nature.

Clearly Apuleius' tale and Lewis's are different in style and aim. One motif they share with each other and with the many parallels is that the erotic bond, whether between husband and wife or between the divine and an individual human soul, is unsatisfied unless it is fruitful and demands a larger family or community as an field for its energies. Apuleius' "Amor and Psyche" are accepted by the divine community and their family is enlarged with a child. Istra-Psyche's family is enlarged first with Orual-Psyche, the redeemed sister, and by extension with all the people of Glome who through her enlightened rule will more easily be "united with the Divine Nature" while the gods "become wholly beautiful" (304).

### Endnotes

1 For the convenience of those who prefer to follow translations, I am giving references to Apuleius both by book and chapter in Latin and by page number from the Graves translation. However, Graves's translation (though lively and as good an interpretation of the story as any I know) is, word for word, too free for most of my purposes. Hence, all translations of the Latin are mine unless otherwise indicated, and I am responsible for any inaccuracies. (I try to convey the sense, but not necessarily the exact grammar of the lines I quote.)

2 Erich Neumann and Bruno Bettelheim both see this series of stories as allegories of the sexual adaptation of a woman to marriage. There is much insight in both their treatments, but some difficulties too. Neumann sees Psyche's story as an account of "individuation" (85) in a Jungian sense. To summarize briefly, he says that Psyche grows, and impels Amor to grow, from an archaic sexual bond represented by Aphrodite, which is "dark anonymous love that consisted only of drunken lust and fertility, the transpersonal love that had hitherto governed all life" (93) to an individual relationship with her husband. Psyche's sisters represent the man-hating "Amazonian" consciousness, or matriachate (72, 82n), which makes Psyche realize the outrageousness of her domination. This results in a (potentially) violent plot against Amor. However, Psyche then falls in love with Amor as an individual; he, on the other hand, cannot at first endure Psyche's assertive manifestation and flees. Only after Psyche shows that she will undertake daring and arduous tasks on his behalf, and then sacrifice everything she has gained through her exertions, by opening the casket of deathly beauty (135-6) can he wholeheartedly return her love. Neumann's book contains many insights useful even to those who do not accept his theory. However, his theory that "anonymous love" was the rule in society before Psyche's exploits either is not well explained or else does not fit Apuleius' treatment (or any other discussed here) very well. Amor (and his parallels) deliberately separate their brides from the rest of the world and control the environment in which they live in all its aspects, not merely the sexual one. These intentions are not directed toward any other sexual object at that time. There is an individual sexual jealousy here, even without the intimacy the bride desires, and this jealousy implies the desire and need for intimacy. The Beast's power to wrest the bride from her parents and command servants who meet her physical needs without being satisfying companions implies a society with a hierarchical structure in which individuals are not interchangeable.

Indeed, I know of no ancient literature which clearly displays a human society in which anonymous love was the rule; it is difficult to imagine what one would be like, given the human species as we know it today, though Medieval and modern authors have tried. The earliest literature we know already shows some very individual husband and wife relationships (say, Odysseus and Penelope, Abraham and Sarah). Though social structures and moral values have changed a lot over time, human desires seem much the same. Neumann is trying to delve deeper into an racial history than our literature extends, and if our literature does not extend that far, one wonders if human consciousness does.

Bettelheim's treatment, in *The Uses of Enchantment* also assumes the stories involve individuation. He, however, places more emphasis on the process by which the marital partners come to accept sex, which they at first, due to repression, perceive as beastly. The beast-form thus represents the bride's sexual repression, and this is the true reason why, according to Bettelheim, "It is a sorcerer" who imposes the beast-form, "and she is not punished for her evil doings" (283). Bettelheim doubtless had many tales before him in which this was true, but it happens then in two out of the three parallels selected here – "Tulisa" and "East of the Sun, West of the Moon," the mother and stepmother are not only punished but killed. Furthermore the absence of this element from tales more familiar to Bettelheim could be explained by another kind of repression, by moralizers who disapproved of violence. Of such moralizers and their literary activities there is an extensive literary record.

3 I am to some extent slighting the offshoots of this branch of story which deal with human-divine interaction; for example, the story of "Patient Griselda" told by both Boccaccio (tenth story, tenth day) and Chaucer (Clerk's Tale) is clearly related although specifically supernatural elements have been removed. Chaucer has his Clerk deny that the tale is meant to urge wives to be so patient with their husbands ("For it were inportable, though they wolde" line 1144). He declares, rather that it should inspire all people to be patient with what God sends ("... wel moore us oghte / receyven in gree that God us sent" line 1150-1). He feels moved to add that God does not needlessly test anyone the way Griselda's husband did ("But he ne templeth no man that he boghte" / As seith Seint Jame, if ye his pistel rede" lines 1153-4). Of course Chaucer and the Host both append lines which suggest it would be nice if wives are that patient. Likewise the story of Loherangrin or Lohengrin the Swan-knight is related, and the knight's need to keep his name secret has a quasi-religious significance since Loherangrin is the Grail-Prince (Wolfram von Eschenbach 409: 418-420). These stories differ vastly from one another and from the prototype; quite apart from the lack of the supernatural, Griselda, though greatly provoked, commits no fault, and Loherangrin never returns to his wife.

4 Not all; Madame Leprince de Beaumont (Johnson vi) omits to explain why the Beast-form was imposed, and clearly exonerates the mother. In place of this mother-son competition, she puts an allegorical intention: Beauty is to learn to perceive the Beast's "goodness" despite his physical ugliness and lack of wit. Though these are valuable lessons, they are strangely applied to a creature who first makes himself known by threatening to kill a man for picking a single rose from his flourishing garden.

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or corruption of perfection in order to create the various evil characters in the work. His approach then is one of a committed Christian and a medievalist.

Above and beyond this obvious conclusion is something much more profound with respect to Tolkien's writing. It is almost a commonplace to emphasize the great care he has with respect to his use of language. Something that has not been immediately evident to Tolkien's critics up to this time is that he is just as careful with his theological and philosophical concepts as he is in the creation of language. This study of evil in *The Lord of the Rings* shows that once we get beyond the "good story" aspect of his writing, we find an extremely complex and carefully worked out philosophical system. Similar studies could be made with respect to his notions of God, of justice, of truth, and of being itself to name only a few possibilities. In each of these cases we would have to take into account both Tolkien's Christian background and his medieval scholarship.

Philosophers have tended to ignore Tolkien as serious philosophical literature because of its imaginative quality. It has taken a long time for linguistic scholars to take him seriously. Some of the theological ideas are easier to draw to the surface than are the philosophical ones. There is, however, a fruitful area of study available to philosophers who are interested in the interplay of philosophy and literature.

#### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Richard P. Bullock, "The Importance of Free Will in *The Lord of the Rings*," *Mythlore*, Vol. XI, no. 3 (Winter, Spring 1985), 29.
- <sup>2</sup> W.H. Auden, "Good and Evil in *The Lord of the Rings*," *Tolkien Journal*, Vol III, no. 1 (1967), 5.
- <sup>3</sup> Jared Lobdell, *England and Always: Tolkien's World of the Rings* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1981), 62.
- <sup>4</sup> Cf. Lobdell, *England and Always*. All of Chapter III, "The Timeless Moment in *The Lord of the Rings*: Christian Doctrine in a Pre-Christian Age," (pp. 49-70) analyzes these Christian influence on Tolkien. Lobdell shows that Tolkien is first and foremost writing literature. This means that from a theological viewpoint there are some systematically loose ends. For example, the place of Aragorn as Christ figure. Lobdell denies this attribution to Aragorn showing that no one character is a genuine Christ figure.
- <sup>5</sup> See Rose M. Zimbardo, "The Medieval Renaissance Vision of 'The Lord of the Rings,'" in Tolkien: *New Critical Perspectives*, eds: Neil D. Isaacs and Rose A. Zimbardo (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky), pp. 63-71 and Jane Chance Nietzsche, Tolkien's Art: A 'Mythology for England' (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979).
- <sup>6</sup> Christopher Tolkien in his foreword to *The Silmarillion* points out that his father was immensely interested in philosophical and theological issues (Cf. J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Silmarillion*, ed. Christopher Tolkien (New York: Ballantine Books, 1979), xi-xiv). I believe that he is correct in this claim and that especially Tolkien's interest in philosophical issues has been neglected up to the present. Further references to this work will appear in the text as S.-.
- <sup>7</sup> M. Hodgatt in "Kicking the Hobbit," *New York Review of Books* Vol. VIII, no. 8 (May 4, 1967) claims that "Somewhere in the background of the war between Gondor and Mordor is the war in heaven described in *Revelations*." (p. 11) I would agree with the assessment and want to say that it is probably stronger than Hodgatt acknowledges. This is especially true if we take Sauron and Gandalf as semi-angelic beings. Sauron fills the role of the dragon, and Gandalf fills the role of Michael. Hodgatt does not approve of this approach and his general evaluation of Tolkien's work states that, "This extreme polarization of good and evil which is so striking in the works of all three [Charles Williams, C.S. Lewis, and J.R.R. Tolkien] is not only reminiscent

- of rigid medieval Christianity but is also, surely, rather infantile" (p. 11). It will be obvious from what follows in this paper that this author does not at all agree with Hodgatt's opinion.
- <sup>8</sup> Cf. Augustine, *The Problem of Free Choice*, trans. Dom M. Pontifex (Westminster, Md: The Newman Press, 1955), Books II and III. Cf. also Augustine, *The Retractions*, trans. St. Mary Inez Bogan, R.S.M. (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1968), Book I, ch. 9.
  - <sup>9</sup> Paul A. Kocher, *Master of Middle Earth: The Fiction of J.R.R. Tolkien* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, Co., 1972), pp. 77-79.
  - <sup>10</sup> J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, 3 Volumes [I. The Fellowship of the Ring; II. The Two Towers; III. The Return of the King] (New York: Ballantine Books, 1965), I, 351. All future references to this work will appear in the text of the paper by simply noting the volume and page number of this edition.
  - <sup>11</sup> J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, Revised edition (New York: Ballantine Books, 1982), 37.
  - <sup>12</sup> Cf. Robert Foster, *The Complete Guide to Middle-Earth* (New York: Ballantine Books, "Sauron". Foster gives a complete history of Sauron in this entry together with page references to the various sections of the epic where he is mentioned.
  - <sup>13</sup> Kocher, *Master of Middle-earth*, pp. 77-79.
  - <sup>14</sup> The genealogy of corruption for Trolls is not as easy to trace as that of the nazgul and the orcs. In the references cited the initial description of Treebeard is that "It [his face] belonged to a large Man-like almost Troll-like figure, at least fourteen feet high, very sturdy, with a tall head and hardly any neck" (83). Treebeard gives his assessment of Trolls by claiming that even though they look like ents they are, "... only counterfeits, made by the Enemy in the Great Darkness, in mockery of Ents, or Orcs were of Elves" (113). Based on this slight evidence the genealogy of both races seems to be similar. Some elves were captured and corrupted giving rise to the orcs; and some ents were captured and corrupted giving rise to trolls.
  - <sup>15</sup> J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Silmarillion* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1979), 3ff.
  - <sup>16</sup> Foster, *Complete Guide*, "Melkor".
  - <sup>17</sup> Auden, "Good and Evil in LOTR", 7.
  - <sup>18</sup> Foster, *Complete Guide*, "Shelob".

Please complete and return as soon as possible the Mythopoeic Society's Members & Mythlore Questionnaires that are included as an insert in this issue. (See page 3 Editorial)

- Bibliography for Husbands and Gods**, continued from p. 43
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