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INKLINGS FOREVER, Volume VIII

A Collection of Essays Presented at the Joint Meeting of

The Eighth

FRANCES WHITE EW BANK COLLOQUIUM ON C.S. LEWIS & FRIENDS

and

THE C.S. LEWIS AND THE INKLINGS SOCIETY CONFERENCE

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Through the Lens of *The Four Loves*: The Idea of Love in *Till We Have Faces*

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Till We Have Faces was published in 1956, four years before the 1960 publication of *The Four Loves*. But this novel contains many of the same ideas about love and their perversions found in *The Four Loves*. Clearly, several of the characters in the novel personify the various types of love and their perversions presented in *The Four Loves*, and Lewis must have had these representations in mind when he finally collected all his ideas about love together in a systematic way in *The Four Loves*. An examination of *Till We Have Faces* through the lens of *The Four Loves* is a way to better understand one of the themes of the novel while giving us more examples to help clarify Lewis's concepts in *The Four Loves*.

In the novel, *Till We Have Faces*, published in 1956, C.S. Lewis presents the story of three sisters—Redival, Orual, and Psyche—princesses in the pre-Christian kingdom of Glome. Chad Walsh feels that the central theme in *Till We Have Faces* is Queen Orual's attempt "to make the gods speak up and vindicate themselves" (*Literary Legacy* 161). He also says that the "central psychological theme" is "the quest for self-knowledge" (163). Another critic, Evan Gibson, says the theme is Lewis's attempt to show that "God is ever seeking in all nations those who will turn to Him" (222). While these themes are definitely in the novel, I believe the central theme has to do with love—reactions to love, examples of love, and

perversions of love. While the emphasis of the novel is on Orual because she tells the story, much can be gleaned from examining all of the main characters to see how they reflect and personify *The Four Loves*.

Redival, the second oldest daughter of Trom, King of Glome, is beautiful, but "sensuous, superficial, hedonistic" (Van Der Weele 189). From the time she was a young girl, she did not want to be with her two sisters, but constantly looked for male companionship. To her maids, all she talked about was love and men. By her teen years, she would sneak off with any young man who came into the castle. When her father finally caught her with Tarin, a common soldier in the kingdom, he had Tarin castrated and ordered her sisters and tutor to watch her constantly (*Till We* 25). Redival is an embodiment of Venus or sex without love. Redival also serves as an example of the person who perverts Eros (romantic love) into a religion of sorts. She worships "being in love," and attaining it becomes her all-consuming passion.

Because Redival is so full of lust and selfishness and desire for pleasure, she has no room in her life for affection for her sisters or others around her in the castle. There is also no room for the gods—she does not rebel against them; she just ignores them (Kilby, "*Till We: An Interpretation*" 180). She does use organized religion once when she

jealously runs to the Priest of Ungit to tell him that the people of Glome are beginning to worship Psyche instead of Ungit. She feigns an interest in seeing that the gods continue to be worshipped, but it is merely a façade to cover her jealousy of Psyche.

However, later in the story, when Orual meets Tarin, now a chief eunuch in another kingdom, Orual and the reader learn more about what caused Redival's "Venus" and perverted Eros. Tarin tells Orual that Redival's constant attempts to get to know men reflected the fact that she was lonely. Tarin says, "She was lonely... Oh yes, yes, very lonely... She used to say, 'First of all Orual loved me much; then the Fox came and he loved me little, then the baby [Psyche] came and she loved me not at all'" (255) So part of Redival's problem could be blamed on Orual's lack of response to her need for love.

Lewis says in *The Four Loves*, "As soon as we are fully conscious, we discover loneliness. We need others physically, emotionally, intellectually" (10). Redival readily illustrates this Need-love. When Orual leaves her companionship for the Fox, their new tutor, Redival really feels left out since she was "born without intellectual capacities" (Gibson 240), and does not participate in their mental pursuits. When Psyche is born, Redival feels totally robbed of Orual's love. She expresses that need for love in her teenage years by attaching herself to every young man who comes into the palace. Thus her Venus develops from her unfulfilled Need-love.

Redival's Need-love is finally fulfilled when she is married and has children. Now she has several people who love her and need her. She dotes on them (and they on her) and talks of nothing but her children when Orual visits her in her new home (238).

Orual, oldest daughter of King Trom, is the most complex character in the novel because the most is revealed

about her through her narration of the story. She is so physically ugly that she wears a veil over her face once she becomes queen of Glome. The reader cannot help but feel sympathy for Orual—she is ugly, motherless, and mistreated by her father (Hannay, "Orual" 5). But from the time that her youngest sister Psyche is born, Orual loses herself in her loving and caring for Psyche. Orual gives the impression that she really loves Psyche, with Gift-love, when she says that Psyche is "the beginning of all my joys" (*Till We* 20). She feels almost like a mother to Psyche when her real mother dies in childbirth. Orual loves Psyche so much that she takes her away from the nurses and domestics as soon as possible (Howard 169). "I soon had the child out of their hands," she says—and into her own (*Till We* 21).

Just before Psyche was born, King Trom acquired a Greek slave, nicknamed "the Fox," to be a tutor for his children. Once Psyche begins to grow up, she and Orual and the Fox spend all of their time together. (Redival will not join them.) All of Orual's memories of this time are pleasant ones of idyllic, happy days spent in learning Greek ideas and frolicking together out-of-doors. Orual's love for Psyche grows and appears to be full of Affection and even Gift-love.

However, when Psyche is chosen by the priest to become the offering to the gods so that the plague, famine, and drought will disappear, the reader becomes aware of a subtle change in the relationship between Psyche and Orual. When Orual goes to Psyche's chamber to try to comfort her the night she is to be offered, Psyche does not express any fear of death. Instead she speaks of her sacrifice euphemistically (as the natives of Glome did) as a marriage to the goddess Ungit's son, a god called the Shadowbrute. Instead of comforting Psyche, Orual says, "Oh cruel, cruel! Is it nothing to you that you leave me here alone? Psyche, did you ever love me at

all?" (*Till We* 73). Orual even admits that when Psyche speaks bravely of the coming sacrifice on the Grey Mountain, Orual feels, amid all of her love, a bitterness, a grudging against whatever gives Psyche courage and comfort (75).

When Orual sees that Psyche loves the gods more than her and is anxious to go to them, Orual responds, "I only see that you never loved me. It may well be you are going to the gods. You are becoming cruel like them" (76), trying to make Psyche feel guilty. In the scene in the chamber, the reader gets the first glimpse of Orual's distorted Affection for Psyche—a selfish Need-love.

After the offering, sure that Psyche is dead, Orual proposes to the Fox and later to Bardia, the chief of the palace soldiers, that she should go to the Grey Mountain and give whatever is left of Psyche's body a decent burial. All agree that this would be a good way for Orual to show her love for Psyche in the last way she can. She seems to be demonstrating Gift-love at this point in the novel.

However, when Orual discovers Psyche still alive, healthy, and very happy in the lush green valley on Grey Mountain, her love seems to change shape again. As Psyche tells Orual about her glorious life there with the god in his palace—the wonderful feasts and the invisible maids who wait upon her—Orual cannot see the palace upon whose porch Psyche says they are sitting and this disbelieves everything she says. Psyche will not go back to Glome with Orual; "How can I go back?" Psyche says. "This is my home. I am a wife" (125). Orual's response is first, to herself, "the Gods... they had stolen her" (120-21), and then aloud to Psyche, "Is it nothing to you at all that you are leaving me... turning your back on all our love?" (*Till We* 125). Orual's love for Psyche becomes jealousy and possessiveness at this point—instead of happiness for Psyche's new happiness.

From this scene up to the very last scene in the novel, Orual demonstrates an enveloping, selfish love for Psyche. But Orual herself views it only as Gift-love. Her motives toward Psyche seem good on the surface (Van Der Weele 189). She vows that no Shadowbrute or wild mountain man is going to destroy Psyche, her beloved sister; she wants to save her from any harm. When Orual stabs herself and threatens to kill herself to make Psyche light a lamp in order to see her husband (who comes only after dark), she uses the words and gestures of love and says that she is trying to save Psyche (Howard 184). But Psyche sees through her kind of love and replies:

"You are indeed teaching me about kinds of love I did not know. It is like looking into a deep pit. I am not sure whether I like your kind better than hatred. Oh, Orual—to take my love for you, because you know it goes down to my very roots and cannot be diminished by any other newer love, and then to make of it a tool, a weapon, a thing of policy and mastery, an instrument of torture—I begin to think I never knew you."
(*Till We* 165)

The Fox had seen through Orual's plan too, and told her before she left on her mission, "There's one part love in your heart, and five parts anger, and seven parts pride" (148).

On this theme, in *The Four Loves*, Lewis writes:

"Every human love, at its height, has a tendency to claim for itself a divine authority. Its voice tends to sound as if it were the will of God himself. It tells us not to count the cost, it demands of us a total commitment, it attempts to override all other claims and insinuates that any action which is sincerely done 'for love's sake,' is

thereby lawful and even meritorious.” (18)

Orual turns her human love (Friendship and Affection) for Psyche into this kind of authoritarian demand. This possessive love is an example of presumption (Starr 14), of perverted Affection, and perverted Need-love. That Mrs. Fidget, the woman used in *The Four Loves* as an example of perverted Affection because she “loved for her family” and would not loosen control over them, Orual “needs to be needed” and will not let Psyche away from her protection (Kilby, *The Christian World* 58). In a letter to Clyde Kilby, C.S. Lewis writes that

Orual is (not a symbol) but an instance, a “case” of human affection in its natural condition, true, tender, suffering, but in the long run tyrannically possessive and ready to turn to hatred when the beloved ceases to be its possession. What such love particularly cannot stand is to see the beloved passing into a sphere where it cannot follow. (W.H. Lewis, *Letters* 42)

That night, at the moment when Psyche lights the lamp to see her husband, from across the river Orual sees the god’s palace, “witnesses its sudden destruction, sees the god himself,” and hears him talk to her (Urang 43). So she does have direct exposure to the gods and knows they exist. But her will is set against believing in the gods, for if she believes, it would be acknowledging her loss of Psyche to a god as a good thing. Since her love for Psyche is a “devouring passion,” she cannot bear to think of giving her up, even to a god (Urang 44).

In the vision at the end of the novel, Orual is asked to read her “complaint against the gods” aloud. In it, she accuses the gods of stealing Psyche’s love from her. As the gods allow her speak only the truth, she says,

We’d rather you drank their blood than stole their hearts. We’d rather they were ours and dead than yours and made immortal... The girl was mine... I was my own and Psyche was mine and no one else had any right to her... What should I care for some horrible, new happiness which I hadn’t given her and which separated her from me? ... She was mine. Mine! (*Till We* 290-92)

Orual clearly personifies perverted Affection, enveloping, possessive Need-love. This identification is most easily seen in her relationship with Psyche, but it can also be seen in her relationship with the Fox.

As with Psyche, Orual spent much time with the Fox and often called him “Grandfather” in her affection for him (17, 23). She loved him and tried to protect him from the harshness of her father, the king (17). Throughout most of the novel, there is a camaraderie, an openness, a sharing of thoughts between them that is a model of perfect Friendship (philia) and Affection (storge) according to Lewis’s descriptions in *The Four Loves*. However, at one point, Orual’s possessiveness toward him takes over and demonstrates itself clearly.

When Orual becomes queen of Glome, one of her first acts is to free the Fox from slavery, never thinking that he might want to leave her and return to Greece. When she discovers his desire, she thinks, “It embittered me that the Fox should ever desire to leave me... How could he leave us, after so much love?” (209). She makes him feel guilty for even thinking of leaving. In *The Four Loves*, in discussing the kind of pity Orual evoked from the Fox, Lewis mentions those people whose

Continual demand on their part (as of right) to be loved—their manifest sense of injury, their reproaches, whether loud and clamorous or merely implicit in

every look and gesture of resentful self-pity—produce in us a sense of guilt (they are intended to do so)... (65)

Consequently, the Fox stays in Glome out of love for Orual and out of a concern for her in her new duties as queen. Thus, in this instance, Orual demonstrates her possessive Need-love again, but the Fox demonstrates true Gift-love, an unselfish concern for those he loves.

Orual even shows a perverted, possessive love in her relationship with Bardia. He had taught her how to use a sword and how to ride a horse, and had become her friend when the king was still alive. After King Trom's death, Bardia also becomes her trusted counselor, alongside the Fox. Through all of this, Orual comes to feel Eros (romantic love) for Bardia, though she never tells him so—he is already married. But she dreams of him as her husband and loves to talk with him long hours at a time (224).

It is not until Bardia dies and Orual visits his wife Ansit that she discovers the true nature of her feelings for him. Ansit blames Orual for Bardia's death, saying she "drank up his blood year by year and ate out his life" by keeping him at the palace and by her side in battles many more hours and days than should have been necessary. She adds, "Oh, Queen Orual, I begin to think you know nothing of love... Yours is Queen's love, not commoners'. Perhaps you who spring from the gods love like the gods. Like the Shadowbrute. They say the loving and the devouring are all one, don't they?" (*Till We* 264-65).

After Ansit speaks, Orual reflects on the truth of her words. She had indeed "heaped up needless work to keep him [Bardia] late at the palace, plied him with questions for the mere pleasure of hearing his voice." She had even wished Ansit dead. She finally admits to herself,

"A love like that can grow to be nine-tenths hatred and still call itself love" (266). Orual had perverted Eros into possessiveness and selfishness.

Clyde Kilby believes that Orual's ambivalent, possessive love for Psyche, the Fox, and Bardia were part of her lifetime of antagonism against the gods (*The Christian World* 52). Chad Walsh agrees and writes, "...as Psyche slips away from her control, she rages against the gods, from whom she might have learned wisdom and true love if she had listened to them (163). "Not until she gets squared away with them [the gods] does she divest herself of her wish to control and possess; ... not until she encounters the gods honestly does she achieve her own maturity" (Van Der Weele 191). Lewis believes that "love of the gods [leads] to love of fellow human beings" (Van Der Weele 191), and so in the last scene of the novel, when the gods force Orual to see the truth about her life and relationships, she finally truly loves Psyche, the Fox, and even the gods, with a non-possessive attitude.

Though he says he does not believe in the gods, the Fox is a good model of Affection (storge), Friendship (philia), and Gift-love (agape). The Fox truly enjoys his tutoring experiences with Psyche and Orual because he cares for both of them. Affection develops among them through their long hours of being together and learning together. Especially since the sisters' real father, King Trom, is distant and cruel, the Fox becomes a father to them and they call him "Grandfather" (*Till We* 17, 23).

While the Fox is supposed to be a tutor to Redival as well, and he does show Affection for her, it does not develop into Friendship (philia) as it did with Orual and Psyche. In *The Four Loves*, Lewis points out that Friendship develops out of companionship when two or three "discover that they have in common some insight or even taste which the others do not share..." (96). In this case, Orual and

Psyche and the Fox seem to share a love of learning and a love for poetry that Redival does not share. She cannot understand why they enjoy sitting on the lawn every day merely talking. She never feels a part of their camaraderie, and the Fox's true friendship never includes her as it does the other two sisters.

In addition to Affection and Friendship, the Fox also exhibits Gift-love (agape) several times throughout the narrative. When he recognizes that Orual will probably never marry or receive romantic love, he tenderly sings to her a song of consolation. Orual recalls that he sang that song "very tenderly and as if he pities me..." (9). And when Orual is desperately ill, he maintains a "long vigil by her bedside" (Gibson 223). Orual constantly tries to save the Fox from King Trom's furies, but at one point, the Fox says to Orual that he is ready "to risk the flogging and impaling—for your love and hers [Psyche's]" (149).

While Orual had used Psyche's love for her to her own advantage (fearing she would lose Psyche to the gods) and forced Psyche to light the lamp to see her husband, the Fox likewise cries and begs Orual not to fight Prince Argan of Phars, out of love for her and his fear of losing her. But the Fox at least recognizes what he has done and soon after says to Orual, "But I was wrong to weep and beg and try to force you by your love. Love is not a thing to be used" (204). With that statement, the Fox demonstrates his true Gift-love.

The Fox's greatest demonstration of his love for Orual is his decision to stay with her even after she has freed him. He truly wants to go back to Greece, but he remains with Orual out of concern and love for her (210).

The Fox's Gift-love toward Psyche is evident as well. He is like a true father to her and loves her deeply when she is growing up. How much he loves her becomes clear after Psyche has been sacrificed to the gods, for "he tries to

speak to Orual of Psyche's death and then breaks down and leaves weeping" (Gibson 233).

Although Orual feels Affection for the Fox and romantic (albeit possessive) love for Bardia, Bardia feels only Friendship and loyalty for Orual. Friendship, in *The Four Loves*, is built upon common interests. Orual's natural ability with a sword as Bardia's student is the beginning of their common interest. When she takes over her government and "concerns herself with military, diplomatic, and domestic affairs of state, the base of their friendship broadens considerably" (Gibson 238). They spend much time together as Orual keeps him with her, plying him with questions; so their Friendship grows.

As Lewis points out in *The Four Loves*, when friendship exists between man and woman, it sometimes changes into romantic love. For Orual, it very shortly does. "But on Bardia's side there is the barrier of his love for his wife, as well as the ugliness of the Queen" (Gibson 238). No hint is given in *Till We Have Faces* that Bardia feels a romantic interest in Orual. When the two of them first find Psyche on the mountain, and they are forced to remain there overnight, Bardia suggests that, since it is cold, they sleep "back to back, the way men do in the wars" (*Till We* 131). Bardia and Orual practice together with their swords, ride together, and even fight battles together. It is evident that Bardia thinks of her as a true friend as he would a fellow soldier, though he is also "unfailingly courteous" and obedient to Orual as his sovereign (Howard, *The Achievement* 178-79). When Bardia is ill and close to death, the priest Arnom tells Orual that Bardia is "your loyalest and most loving subject" (*Till We* 258). While Bardia loves the Queen in true Friendship, he also loves his wife Ansit with true Eros. Bardia and his wife are not pictured together very often in the novel, but evidence of Bardia's love and faithfulness are present.

At one point, when Queen Orual wants Bardia to stay longer at the palace, Bardia begs to leave so that he can be with his wife when their child is born (222). He mentions Ansit frequently in conversation, and others in the palace speak to Orual of Bardia and Ansit's good marriage. Even the Fox says to Orual about Bardia and his wife, "He's as amorous as Alcibiades. Why, the fellow married her undowered..." (*Till We* 146), an unheard-of thing in Glome. Bardia is an example of "Utter selflessness" and "love and faithfulness to his wife..." (Howard, *The Achievement* 179). Bardia is a true personification of Eros in its best form and of Friendship in its best form.

Ansit herself personifies Gift-love since she never chides Bardia for being away from her so much. When Orual goes to speak with Ansit after Bardia's death, Ansit tells her that she, the Queen, caused his early death by overworking him. When Orual tells Ansit she should have said so earlier so that Orual could have retired him early with great honors, Ansit replies, "Tell you? And so take away from him his work which was his life? ... Keep him to myself at that cost? Make him mine so that he was no longer his?" (*Till We* 264). In the same manner, Ansit also speaks to Orual of her son Ilerdia who is growing up and is expressing his independence from his mother more and more. Ansit says of his growing independence, "Do you think I'd lift up my little finger if lifting it would stop it?" (264). She exemplifies "a love which does not cling to its object, but rejoices in the joys of the other even though it means a separation" (Gibson 247); this is something that Orual could never do.

In contrast to Orual is Psyche. Everyone around her comments on how beautiful Psyche is. From her childhood on, the people of Glome almost worship her for her beauty and kind spirit. Her love for Orual, for the Fox, and even for Redival and the people of Glome does not

change throughout the novel—it is always an example of true Charity or Gift-love.

When Psyche was a child, she was loving and obedient to everyone in the castle. She especially loved to spend time with the Fox and Orual.

Later, when the Fox falls sick with the plague that is spreading through Glome, Psyche is the one who unselfishly nurses him back to health. The story of his recovery spreads throughout the kingdom, and everyone tells the "story of how the beautiful princess could cure the fever by her touch" (*Till We* 30). Soon half the city is gathered at the gate of the castle calling for Psyche to come out and heal them. Though others urge her not to go out to the sick rabble, Psyche says, "Let me go out...They are our people" (31). Thinking she might really be able to help, she walks around touching those in the crowds for hours, never complaining—even when she, too, comes down with the fever. She demonstrates true love (Gift-love) toward the people of Glome throughout the time of the plague.

At first, the number of people with the plague grows smaller. But when more and more people become ill, their worship of Psyche stops, and they begin to say that her "touchings didn't heal the fever but gave it" (37). Even then, Psyche tries to help the people, but when she walks into town they call her "the Accursed" (*Till We* 39).

After Psyche has been chosen to be the offering to the Shadowbrute, and Orual sneaks into the chamber where the soldiers were holding her, Psyche is more concerned with Orual and the beating their father has just given her than with herself. She unselfishly weeps for love and pity of Orual, but sheds no tears for herself and her fate (*Till We* 68).

Psyche tells Orual not to hate Redival for spitefully telling the priest of Ungit that Psyche was usurping the worship intended for Ungit. Orual hates Redival for that, but Psyche says to forgive her and pity her for "she also does

what she doesn't know" (69)—truly a demonstration of forgiveness and Gift-love as Lewis describes it in *The Four Loves*. Psyche also speaks of dying willingly for the people of Glome.

Psyche's love for Orual may be seen again when Orual finds her in the green valley on the Grey Mountain. She confesses that she has been perfectly happy with her new husband and home, except for her longing to see Orual again (102). She tells Orual, "I'll not rest till you're as happy as I" (105). When Orual cannot see Psyche's new palace, she promises to implore the god to allow Orual and to see and enjoy everything she is enjoying. But Orual rejects everything Psyche says, for she does not believe in the gods as Psyche does.

Everything about Psyche shows her unselfish love for Orual, for the Fox, for the people of her kingdom, and for the gods, whom she has loved and sought since childhood. Lewis purposefully gives the reader a picture of agape love, Gift-love, in a mere mortal, Psyche, in order to set forth an example of an attainable kind of love for which all humans should strive. That perfect Gift-love that he describes so well in *The Four Loves*, he personifies in Psyche and he contrasts in Orual, hoping that the reader will want to practice Psyche's kind of love and to avoid Orual's kind of love. Love is the theme of the novel.

"To awaken a desire for love and goodness—this was Lewis' purpose in almost everything he wrote..." (Carnell, *Bright Shadow*, 161).

A Description of C.S. Lewis's *Four Loves*

Four main kinds of love –

I. AFFECTION (Storge)

Usually between relatives

Perversions:

- controlling affection
- craving for affection,
- making others feel guilty for not showing affection

II. FRIENDSHIP (Philia)

Unites those with common interests in small groups of 2s or 3s or more

Perversions

- pride, exclusiveness, cliques

III. ROMANTIC LOVE (Eros)

Purely romantic love

Gives to the loved one unselfishly

Committed to the loved one

Perversions

- worshipping of pursuing 'being in love' rather than loving a person
- Venus – sexual attraction without real love, pleasure for its own sake

IV. CHARITY (agape)

Gift-love – doing what's truly best for others

Giving of oneself without thought of getting anything in return

Need-love – everyone needs others & God

Perversions

- selfishness, possessiveness, controlling others.

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