

TILL WE HAVE FACES. By C. S. Lewis. (Geoffrey Bles; 15s.)

This novel is a reconstruction of the old story of Cupid and Psyche which has been fashioning itself in Professor Lewis's mind since he was an undergraduate. Psyche's great beauty incurs the jealousy of Venus who sends her son Cupid to punish Psyche. Cupid falls in love with Psyche and has her carried off to his palace but tells her she must never see his face. Her sisters who are jealous of her urge her to look on his face; this she does and Cupid vanishes and leaves her. It is not until she has accomplished a number of apparently impossible tasks that Cupid returns, marries her and makes a goddess of her. Professor Lewis emphasizes that Apuleius, who was presumably not the author but the transmitter of the original story, is for his novel a source and not either an influence or a model. He is presumably drawing out of the original myth implications for our own age and for humanity in general.

This modern version is told from the point of view and in the words of Orual, Psyche's ugly sister. Her motive for her actions is never pure jealousy: she deeply loved her beautiful young sister and when Psyche's 'vocation' develops she finds it very difficult to accept the separation and she is more mystified than jealous. She cannot see that she is possessive also. The situation is doubly poignant because she takes it for granted that, ugly duckling as she is, no one can love her and she can offer her love to no one else but Psyche. Thus the story is not so much the divinization of Psyche as the humanizing of Orual. It would not be easy to over-emphasize the importance of this part of Orual's make-up. Presumably it lies behind the remark of hers from which the book takes its name: 'How can the gods meet us face to face till we have faces?' We shall have faces, one presumes, when we accept love as the gods send it. It is Orual's tragedy that she believed love should have come to her as it came to Psyche, direct from the gods, whereas the gods intended her to find love through human beings. There is a double lesson here: the havoc that a vocation can work in human life—that is Psyche's lot; and the difficulty we have in detecting a vocation in a human situation which the gods make—that is Orual's lot.

This story is written with all Professor Lewis's old skill and feeling. One is reminded of *The Great Divorce*: there the blessed walked in their bare feet over the grass and heard music in the great waterfall, but the others found the grass cutting their feet and were terrified of the thunder of the waterfall. So here only Psyche can see Cupid's palace. When Orual visits her she sees nothing. One of the sisters is alive with love and the other is not, so one has a face and the other has not; but notice it is a face to see with, not a face to be seen. Because she is faceless (i.e. loveless) Orual is blind, blind to the nature of her love for Psyche

and blind to the fact that she could and in the bottom of her heart does love Bardia. When we accept love we are able to see the truth. 'Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God' is the Christian version of the same fact.

Despite its barbaric setting, this story is more convincing and real to us than that of Apuleius himself. That, no doubt, is because Professor Lewis incorporates, for the most part implicitly, many Christian and European assumptions of the last two thousand years. Fox, for instance, the Greek slave tutor, is an important figure. He stands for all that we now mean by Greek intellect and civilization; he is the only man Orual dare admit she loves or thinks she loves. Surely she is using intellect as an escape from love, a familiar and barren substitute. It is only when she accepts the fact that she truly loved Bardia, although he is now dead, that Orual truly has a face. She sees the possessiveness and jealousy that lurked in her love of Psyche; all this and much more she sees in her complaint to the gods at the end, and when all this truth is revealed to her in her own speech then she is ready to be transformed into yet another Psyche. Presumably one may see here also the destroying of the sinful self and think of St Paul and Jung and so on and go on endlessly. But the further one takes these interpretations the greater the danger of ruining the story. Best to read it and enjoy it, and if you insist on being done good to let the story do its own work.

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ARISTOTLE'S POETICS. A Course of eight lectures by Humphry House.

Revised by Colin Hardie. (Rupert Hart-Davis; 9s. 6d.)

These lectures were originally the fruit of collaboration between Mr House and Mr Hardie, the one from the standpoint of a lecturer in the faculty of English, the other from that of a Classical scholar. House was of course a Classical scholar before he became an English don, and the great value of this book is that it combines the best of both the disciplines. It is difficult to speak adequately in a short space of this invaluable short work: it will be necessary to isolate a few points. One is first impressed by the soundness of method; House is utterly faithful to the text without ever becoming dull and prosy, though, as Colin Hardie notices in the preface, his enthusiasm for Aristotle was apt to blind him to Plato's virtues. He was saved from dullness by being very much alive to the relative quality of critical terms. In his introduction he points to the value and purpose of studying the *Poetics* and outlines Aristotle's life, setting him in the history and thought of his age. The rest of the book is taken up with an exposition of and commentary on the text which is kept alive by the direct personal manner of writing—and after all these were lecture notes. All the familiar topics are