

OUR MYTHICAL CHILDHOOD

# OUR MYTHICAL HOPE

The Ancient Myths  
as Medicine for the Hardships  
of Life in Children's  
and Young Adults' Culture

Edited by  
Katarzyna Marciniak



# OUR MYTHICAL HOPE

“OUR MYTHICAL CHILDHOOD” Series

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00-838 Warszawa, Prosta 69

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# CONTENTS

Katarzyna Marciniak, *What Is Mythical Hope in Children's and Young Adults' Culture? – or: Sharing the Light* **11**

Notes on Contributors **47**

List of Figures **59**

## Part I: Playing with the Past

Véronique Dasen, *Playing with Life Uncertainties in Antiquity* **71**

Rachel Bryant Davies, "This Is the Modern Horse of Troy": *The Trojan Horse as Nineteenth-Century Children's Entertainment and Educational Analogy* **89**

## Part II: The Roots of Hope

Katarzyna Jerzak, *Myth and Suffering in Modern Culture: The Discursive Role of Myth from Oscar Wilde to Woodkid* **131**

Marguerite Johnson, "For the Children": *Children's Columns in Australian Newspapers during the Great War – Mythic Hope, or Mythic Indoctrination?* **145**

Jan Kieniewicz, *Bandar-Log in Action: The Polish Children's Experience of Disaster in Literature and Mythology* **159**

Simon J.G. Burton and Marilyn E. Burton, *Mythical Delight and Hope in C.S. Lewis's Till We Have Faces and Chronicles of Narnia* **179**

## Part III: Holding Out for a Hero... and a Heroine

N.J. Lowe, *How to Become a Hero* **193**

Robert A. Sucharski, *Joe Alex (Maciej Słomczyński) and His Czarne okręty [Black Ships]: A History of a Trojan Boy in Times of the Minoan Thalassocracy* **211**

Michael Stierstorfer, *From an Adolescent Freak to a Hope-Spreading Messianic Demigod: The Curious Transformations of Modern Teenagers in Contemporary Mythopoetic Fantasy Literature* (Percy Jackson, Pirates of the Caribbean, The Syrena Legacy) **219**

Markus Janka, *Heraclēs/Hercules as the Hero of a Hopeful Culture in Ancient Poetry and Contemporary Literature and Media for Children and Young Adults* **231**

Susan Deacy, *Hercules: Bearer of Hope for Autistic Children?* **251**

Edoardo Pecchini, *Promoting Mental Health through the Classics: Hercules as Trainer in Today's Labours of Children and Young People* **275**

Krishni Burns, *La Fontaine's Reeds: Adapting Greek Mythical Heroines to Model Resilience* **327**



**Part IV: Hope after Tragedy**

- Sheila Murnaghan and Deborah H. Roberts, *New Hope for Old Stories: Yiyun Li's Gilgamesh and Ali Smith's Antigone* **345**
- Edith Hall, *Our Greek Tragic Hope: Young Adults Overcoming Family Trauma in New Novels by Natalie Haynes and Colm Tóibín* **371**
- Hanna Paulouskaya, *Turning to Myth: The Soviet School Film Growing Up* **387**
- Divine Che Neba and Daniel A. Nkemleke, *Ayi Kwei Armah's Two Thousand Seasons and Osiris Rising as Pan-African Epics* **413**

**Part V: Brand New Hope**

- Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer, *The Utopia of an Ideal Community: Reconsidering the Myth of Atlantis in James Gurney's Dinotopia: The World Beneath* **433**
- Elizabeth Hale, *Mystery, Childhood, and Meaning in Ursula Dubosarsky's The Golden Day* **451**
- Babette Puetz, *When Is a Robot a Human? Hope, Myth, and Humanity in Bernard Beckett's Genesis* **471**
- Helen Lovatt, *Hungry and Hopeful: Greek Myths and Children of the Future in Mike Carey's Melanie Stories* **491**
- Lisa Maurice, *Percy Jackson and Israeli Fan Fiction: A Case Study* **511**
- Katerina Volioti, *Images of Hope: The Gods in Greek Books for Young Children* **531**
- Ayelet Peer, *Growing Up Manga Style: Mythological Reception in Yoshikazu Yasuhiko's Arion Manga* **555**
- Anna Mik, Et in (Disney) Arcadia ego: *In Search of Hope in the 1940 Fantasia* **577**
- Elżbieta Olechowska, *Between Hope and Destiny in the Young Adult Television Series Once Upon a Time, Season 5, Episodes 12–21 (2016)* **593**

**Part VI: Behold Hope All Ye Who Enter Here...**

- Jerzy Axer, *Kotick the Saviour: From Inferno to Paradise with Animals* **613**
- Krzysztof Rybak, *All Is (Not) Lost: Myth in the Shadow of the Holocaust in Bezsenność Jutki [Jutka's Insomnia] by Dorota Combrzyńska-Nogala* **629**
- Owen Hodgkinson, *Orphic Resonances of Love and Loss in David Almond's A Song for Ella Grey* **645**
- Katarzyna Marciniak, *"I Found Hope Again That Night...": The Orphean Quest of Beauty and the Beast* **669**
- Bibliography **721**
- Index of Names **807**
- Index of the Main Concepts and Mythological Figures **819**

PART II

# The Roots of Hope



## MYTHICAL DELIGHT AND HOPE IN C.S. LEWIS'S TILL WE HAVE FACES AND CHRONICLES OF NARNIA

When I became a man I put away childish things,  
including the fear of childishness and the desire to be very grown up.

C.S. Lewis, "On Three Ways of Writing for Children", 1966<sup>1</sup>

All myth, according to C.S. Lewis, conveys truth. For all myth is a reflection, however clear or distorted, of the True Myth – the story of God's relationship to his creation. This concept was foundational for Lewis, both in his Christian faith and in his writings.<sup>2</sup> Myths of all kinds, primarily but far from exclusively classical, pervade his novels, particularly his *Chronicles of Narnia* (1950–1956)<sup>3</sup> and his final novel, *Till We Have Faces* (1956). So in what way do these works of fiction convey to us the True Myth? Well, the answer, of course, is, in many ways. This paper will focus on one aspect – namely, Lewis's use of myth to explore the different ways in which his characters perceive (or, perhaps, choose not to perceive) the same reality.

Unlike the *Chronicles of Narnia*, which has become a best-loved children's classic, *Till We Have Faces* is not a book written for young readers. Indeed, not

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<sup>1</sup> In C.S. Lewis, *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories*, ed. Walter Hooper, London: G. Bles, 1966, 101.

<sup>2</sup> Lewis in a letter to a friend (Arthur Greeves, 1 October 1931) famously wrote: "Now the story of Christ is simply a true myth: a myth working on us in the same way as the others, but with this tremendous difference that it really happened: and one must be content to accept it in the same way, remembering that it is God's myth where the others are men's myths: i.e., the pagan stories are God expressing Himself through the minds of poets, using such images as He found there, while Christianity is God expressing Himself through what we call 'real things'"; see *The Collected Letters of C.S. Lewis*, vol. 1: *Family Letters 1905–1931*, ed. Walter Hooper, San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 2004, 976–977. For further discussion, see, e.g., James W. Menzies, *True Myth: C.S. Lewis and Joseph Campbell on the Veracity of Christianity*, Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> On this topic, see particularly Michael Ward, *Planet Narnia: The Seven Heavens in the Imagination of C.S. Lewis*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

only does it allude to a number of adult themes<sup>4</sup> but it is also highly complex in its style. In Lewis's own view it was "far and away the best" book he had written,<sup>5</sup> and it has been hailed by critics ever since as the most sophisticated and powerful of all his literary offerings, almost postmodern in its conception.<sup>6</sup> It is in some ways the book of Lewis's which is best placed to speak to our age, with its frightening tendency towards cynicism and despair.

Most importantly, however, *Till We Have Faces* is a novel of hope, and it thus speaks to many of the same themes as the Narnian septet.<sup>7</sup> Cleverly inverting the coming-of-age novel, it is also a story of innocence lost and subsequently, beyond all hope, recovered. Birthed out of his own childhood struggles, *Till We Have Faces* in many ways mirrors Lewis's own hesitant journey from scepticism towards faith. As Martha Sammons suggests, the seeds of the principal characters may easily be found in Lewis's troubled early life.<sup>8</sup> As an adult, Lewis became convinced that he, like many others, had become trapped in a prison of false maturity. Reading and writing stories, and re-engaging with myth – above all the True Myth at the heart of the Christian faith – represented for him the way of return, a pathway he hoped to open up for his own and future generations. Animating all his mature fiction is thus Jesus' charge that "unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3). Ultimately then, regaining the faith of childhood – which is also true maturity – is the theme which binds *Till We Have Faces* and Narnia together.

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<sup>4</sup> That is to say, the novel touches on themes such as adultery, rape, and suicide.

<sup>5</sup> Letter to Anne Scott, 26 August 1960; see *The Collected Letters of C.S. Lewis*, vol. 3: *Narnia, Cambridge and Joy 1950–1963*, ed. Walter Hooper, San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 2009, 1181.

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., Kyoko Yuasa, *C.S. Lewis and Christian Postmodernism: Word, Image, and Beyond*, Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2017. Colin Duriez, in *The A–Z of C.S. Lewis: An Encyclopaedia of His Life, Thought, and Writings*, Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2013, 179–180, calls Lewis "a premodernist who has a postmodern appeal".

<sup>7</sup> We would strongly contest Kath Filmer's suggestion that the ending of *Till We Have Faces* remains ambiguous; our own reading of the novel is far more hopeful. See Kath Filmer, *Scepticism and Hope in Twentieth Century Fantasy Literature*, Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1992, 33–34.

<sup>8</sup> Martha C. Sammons, "A Far-Off Country": *A Guide to C.S. Lewis's Fantasy Fiction*, Lanham, MD, New York, NY, and Oxford: University Press of America, 2000, 191.

## ***Till We Have Faces***

*Till We Have Faces* is a retelling of the myth of Cupid and Psyche, originally found in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*.<sup>9</sup> In Lewis's version, the narrator is Orual, oldest of the three daughters of King Trom of Glome. Her youngest sister, Psyche, or Istra in their native tongue, is "prettier than Andromeda, prettier than Helen, prettier than Aphrodite herself",<sup>10</sup> as well as being of a sweet and loving disposition, as if "Virtue herself had put on human form" (21). First venerated by the people and mistaken in her astonishing beauty for the goddess Ungit herself – that is, the equivalent of Venus/Aphrodite – she comes to be blamed for everything wrong in the land, called the Accursed for making the land impure by "aping the gods and stealing the worship due to the gods" (35). To lift Ungit's curse, the Priest requires Psyche to be sacrificed to the Shadow Brute – the son of Ungit and god of the Mountain – as a Great Offering. But of course, as we know, the god loves Psyche and takes her for his own bride.

The two sisters are contrasted from the very first – as much as Psyche is beautiful, so we read that Orual is ugly, a trait emphasized throughout the book. But their characters are contrasted too. When the people begin to treat Psyche badly, she readily forgives them<sup>11</sup> and seeks the fault in herself, while Orual threatens violence against the perpetrators.<sup>12</sup> And when Psyche is to be sacrificed to the god of the Mountain, Orual is distraught and Psyche accepting. What is at the root of this contrast? It is their differing perspectives on the same event. For Orual, what is to happen to Psyche is a "cowardly murder" – she is to be made "food for a monster" (53). For Psyche, to be given to the god of the Mountain is the fulfilment of a lifelong desire. In her own words, "I have always [...] had a kind of longing for death [...]. It was when I was happiest that I longed the most" – for whenever she saw beauty,

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<sup>9</sup> Lucius Apuleius, *The Golden Ass: Being the Metamorphoses of Lucius Apuleius*, ed. Stephen Gaselee, trans. William Adlington, London and New York, NY: William Heinemann and Macmillan, 1915, iv–vi. Lewis was fascinated by this myth all his life, and in fact had been considering for more than thirty years how he might retell it, making several attempts in various poetic genres before finally recounting it in prose in its current form. See Karen Rowe, "Till We Have Faces: A Study of the Soul and the Self", in Bruce L. Edwards, ed., *C.S. Lewis: Life, Works, and Legacy*, vol. 2: *Fantast, Mythmaker, and Poet*, Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007, 136. Lewis's extant early attempts may be found in Don W. King, *C.S. Lewis, Poet: The Legacy of His Poetic Impulse*, Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2001, 269–271.

<sup>10</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold*, London: Fount, 1998 (ed. pr. 1956), 18. All the subsequent quotations are from this edition; page numbers are given in brackets.

<sup>11</sup> Indeed, in one episode she even describes a young boy who spits at her as "a lovely boy" (ibidem, 30).

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem, 29–30.

because it was so beautiful, it set me longing, always longing. Somewhere else there must be more of it. Everything seemed to be saying, "Psyche, come!" [...] The sweetest thing in all my life has been the longing – to reach the Mountain, to find the place where all the beauty came from [...]. All my life the god of the Mountain has been wooing me [...]. I am going to my lover. (55–56)

Indeed, her only true fear in being sacrificed is that there *is* no god of the Mountain and that she will die slowly of starvation instead.<sup>13</sup>

It may seem to us that Orual is the more grown up of the two girls – for indeed she is the older sister and has cared for Psyche since she was a baby, being the closest thing to a mother that she had. Her view of the situation may seem worldly-wise and in touch with harsh reality, whereas Psyche's is naive. But this is not how Lewis encourages us to read the characters. For it is Psyche who "acts with a grave quietness, almost as if she were older than I [Orual]" (30); it is Psyche who, in the moment of crisis, pets and comforts her older sister "as if it were [she] who were the child and the victim" (50).<sup>14</sup> Thus naivety is not immaturity, and cynicism is not mature wisdom.

Yet Orual persists in treating Psyche as immature<sup>15</sup> – she addresses her as "child" (51)<sup>16</sup> and wants to force her eyes open – "not to blind our eyes, not to hide terrible things" (53). When later in the story Psyche admits that in her anxiety at the moment of the sacrifice she found that she could no longer believe in the god of the Mountain, Orual rejoices at her wavering, since she sees in Psyche's faith something "unnatural and estranging" (81).

The opening sketch of the characters is only amplified as we move further into the story. For when we find Psyche at home in the invisible palace of the god, her husband – Orual having till that moment believed her dead at the hands of the Shadow Brute – we see contrasted Psyche's pure joy as she recounts the wonders she has experienced with Orual's scepticism, on the one hand, and antagonism on the other. For it is, as Lewis says himself, his most original contribution to the myth that he makes the palace invisible: "[...] if – he says – 'making' is not the wrong word for something which forced itself upon me, almost at my

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<sup>13</sup> Ibidem, 52.

<sup>14</sup> See also ibidem, 123.

<sup>15</sup> Indeed, this is a natural consequence of her obsessive and disordered need-love for Psyche; her efforts to hold on to her mothering role towards Psyche stem from a desire that Psyche would remain dependent on her. See Rowe, "*Till We Have Faces*", 144.

<sup>16</sup> See also Lewis, *Till We Have Faces*, 78, 88.

first reading of the story, as the way the thing must have been".<sup>17</sup> The invisibility of the palace, by contrast to the Apuleian original, accounts for Orual's sceptical reaction to Psyche's narrative. Where Psyche sees a palace unlike any other, Orual sees only an empty valley. Where Psyche perceives herself dressed in the finest clothes, Orual sees her in rags. Psyche offers her sister the best wine, and honey cakes fit for the gods, and Orual eats wild berries and drinks water from the stream. Thus the same reality is perceived by the two sisters in very different ways, and of course we as readers know that Psyche's view is the correct one. Yet how can we blame Orual for her scepticism, when she cannot see the palace? Indeed, this is her chief complaint against the gods throughout the book – that they did not make it clearer to her.<sup>18</sup>

Lewis does not excuse her<sup>19</sup> – and indeed, ultimately she does not excuse herself. For it is her will to disbelieve, her choices not to try to see, that put her in the wrong.<sup>20</sup> Many times in her conversation with Psyche, Orual tells us that she "came almost to full belief" (89) – we see her wavering back and forth between faith, grounded in Psyche's confidence, and rejection, based on her own fear. Indeed, she is offered opportunities<sup>21</sup> – Psyche, realizing she cannot see the palace, begs her to touch it. Whether she would have been able to feel it, we do not know, but she refuses to try, accusing Psyche of wilful self-deception. Later Psyche promises her that "all will come right. We'll make – he [the god] will make you able to see", but Orual again rejects the chance to genuinely seek, crying: "I don't want it [...]. I don't want it. I hate it. Hate it, hate it, hate it. Do you understand?" Perhaps the saddest line in the novel is this: "I saw in a flash that I must choose one opinion or the other; and in the same flash knew which I had chosen" (94).

The decision, once made, she stubbornly holds in the face of evidence, for not long after, she does see the palace – and even the god himself. But for her this is only confirmation that the gods have done her wrong:

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<sup>17</sup> Lewis, "Note", in *ibidem*, ix.

<sup>18</sup> See, e.g., Lewis, *Till We Have Faces*, 93: "I was at that very moment when, if the gods meant us well, they would speak".

<sup>19</sup> As a young man, before he came to faith, Lewis actually intended to write the story differently, in a way vindicating Orual's unbelief; see John Anthony Dunne, "'Nothing Beautiful Hides Its Face': The Hiddenness of Esther in C.S. Lewis' *Till We Have Faces*", *Sehnsucht: The C.S. Lewis Journal* 9 (2015), 81. It is his own spiritual journey, which parallels Orual's in so many ways, that led him to write as he did.

<sup>20</sup> See Rowe, "*Till We Have Faces*", 144.

<sup>21</sup> Clyde Kilby offers a thorough examination of all the witnesses Orual had, and wilfully ignored, to the truth about the god; see Clyde S. Kilby, "*Till We Have Faces: An Interpretation*", in Peter J. Schakel, ed., *The Longing for a Form: Essays on the Fiction of C.S. Lewis*, Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2007, 171–181.

And now, you who read, give judgement. That moment when I either saw or thought I saw the House – does it tell against the gods or against me? Would they (if they answered) make it a part of their defence? – say it was a sign, a hint, beckoning me to answer the riddle one way rather than the other? I'll not grant them that. (99)

And on seeing the god:

He made it to be as if, from the beginning, I had known that Psyche's lover was a god, and as if all my doubtings, fears, guessings, debating, questionings [...] had been trumped-up foolery, dust blown in my own eyes by myself. You, who read my book, judge. Was it so? (130)

Even old age does not bring to Orual the true maturity possessed by Psyche from the beginning. Near the end of her life, Orual has the chance to make her complaint before the gods, and here we truly learn how wilful her own self-deception has been:

Oh, 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? (220, emphasis added)

But finally, in the very act of making her complaint, Orual's complaint is answered – and her eyes are truly opened to reality – to the reality of the beauty of the gods, and to the nature of her own motivations.<sup>22</sup> And in that moment, when the god arrives, Orual becomes a second Psyche – “beautiful beyond all imagining” like her sister the goddess, “yet not exactly the same” (233).

## ***The Last Battle***

Significantly, *Till We Have Faces* was published in the same year as *The Last Battle* (1956), the conclusion to the *Chronicles of Narnia*. Indeed, while it seems to have gone largely unnoticed, many of the themes of *Till We Have Faces* resonate with this final Narnian book. As Michael Ward has convincingly demonstrated, *The Last Battle*, like each of the other *Chronicles*, draws its inspiration

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<sup>22</sup> For more on the process of Orual's transformation, see Rowe, “*Till We Have Faces*”.



from one of the planetary gods of classical mythology – in this case Saturn.<sup>23</sup> The book tells the story of “the last days of Narnia”, and the god Saturn himself plays a crucial, if incognito, role in the story. As Father Time he is the one who brings an end to Narnia at Aslan’s command, sweeping the stars from the sky and engulfing the land with waves.<sup>24</sup> Even more significant is the fact that Aslan himself takes on a distinctly Saturnine aspect for much of the book – complementing his Jovial, Venusian, Martian, Mercurial, Solar, and Lunar aspects in the other volumes. For we see him permitting terrible war and disaster in his beloved Narnia, enacting its total dissolution, and carrying out the final judgement of all Narnians.

As elsewhere in the *Chronicles*, however, Lewis’s deployment of classical myth proves both subtle and multi-layered. On the one hand, as Ward has powerfully argued, *The Last Battle* is a profound retelling of the ancient myth of Saturn’s deposal by Jupiter, and it is the Jovial and not the Saturnine Aslan who finally reigns over the new Narnia.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand – and Ward perhaps does not make quite enough of this reversal – it is this very displacement of Saturn by Jupiter that actually inaugurates the new, and everlasting, “age of Saturn”, to recall the pregnant words of Virgil’s Fourth Eclogue (v. 41: “Saturnia regna”), a text beloved by Lewis for its Christological resonance.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, in this fascinating double movement, we in fact see the two sides of Saturn’s Justice – and indeed of Jupiter’s Reign – the judgement on the Narnian wicked and the vindication of the Narnian faithful.

If the interplay of Saturn and Jupiter is crucial to *The Last Battle*, is indeed its very theme, then it must be realized that the larger success of this motif is itself dependent on a subtle interweaving of the myth of Cupid and Psyche. Indeed, we might even say that it is the undying love of Cupid-Aslan which brings Psyche-Narnia through her (apparent) abandonment and Saturnine despair into his own eternal, Jovial, embrace. Certainly, the same themes of innocence,

<sup>23</sup> Ward, *Planet Narnia*, esp. ch. 9. See also Simon J.G. Burton, “A Narnian ‘Allegory of Love’: The Pegasus in C.S. Lewis’ *Chronicles of Narnia*”, in Katarzyna Marciniak, ed., *Chasing Mythical Beasts: The Reception of Ancient Monsters in Children’s and Young Adults’ Culture*, “Studien zur europäischen Kinder- und Jugendliteratur / Studies in European Children’s and Young Adult Literature” 8, Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2020, 357–373.

<sup>24</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Last Battle*, London: Diamond Books, 1997 (ed. pr. 1956), 140–149. All the subsequent quotations are from this edition; page numbers are given in brackets.

<sup>25</sup> Ward, *Planet Narnia*, 207–213.

<sup>26</sup> Virg., *Ecl.* 4.6; cf., e.g., C.S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, London: Geoffrey Bles, 1958, 101: “The great procession of the ages begins anew. Now the Virgin returns, the reign of Saturn returns, and the new child is sent down from the heavens”. Ward, *Planet Narnia*, 191, notes that “the adult Lewis made the Fourth Eclogue a regular part of his Christmas reading”.

maturity, and cynicism that we find in *Till We Have Faces* are fully evident in this book. In particular, the story of Susan's tragic journey from childlike wonder to adult cynicism – something we learn to our shock towards the end of the book<sup>27</sup> – inverts disturbingly the conversion narrative of Orual without closing the door on the possibility of Susan's final redemption. By contrast, we see in the other children, most notably Lucy, an abiding Psyche-like faith in Aslan, and hence a breakthrough to true maturity.

To see this properly we need to briefly revisit some of the earlier *Chronicles*. When Lucy first enters Narnia in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950), the other children think she is playing a game, or worse, lying.<sup>28</sup> It takes the elderly Professor Digory, who himself went to Narnia as a child, to open their eyes to the possibility that Lucy is telling the truth. Interestingly, it is said about Susan, who is clearly the most mature of the four and a kind of mother-figure, that "she had never dreamed that a grown-up would talk like the Professor".<sup>29</sup> Later, she and the other children, including eventually Edmund, come to share in Lucy's simple wonder. Indeed, following Aslan's Resurrection, the two girls, Lucy and Susan, share a memorable romp with him, with Susan casting aside, at least for a moment, her mask of grown-up dignity.<sup>30</sup>

In the following book, *Prince Caspian* (1951), all four children return to Narnia. While overjoyed to be back, there are signs that Susan and Peter are becoming too old to stay. In this book Susan never quite becomes again the Queen she once was, and she is depicted as cautious, unimaginative, and fearful.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, when Lucy excitedly reports that she has seen Aslan, Susan pours cold water on the idea, saying, "Where did you think you saw him?", only to earn Lucy's angry rebuke, "Don't talk like a grown-up [...]. I didn't think I saw him. I saw him" (111). Here, as in *Till We Have Faces*, the perspective of an older sister is not always to be listened to. Indeed, anticipating her later defection, Susan sides with the cynical dwarf Trumpkin, who does not believe in Aslan

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<sup>27</sup> Lewis, *The Last Battle*, 127–128.

<sup>28</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, London: Diamond Books, 1997 (ed. pr. 1950), 27–29.

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem, 47. Sam McBride, in "Coming of Age in Narnia", in Shanna Caughey, ed., *Revisiting Narnia: Fantasy, Myth and Religion in C.S. Lewis' Chronicles*, Dallas, TX: BenBella Books, 2005, 71, is right to note that Digory's maturity is not quite like Lucy's initial innocence of childhood – rather, he has learned that "true maturity involves unlearning some of the things learned while growing toward maturity". Susan, meanwhile, seems stuck at a stage of "partial maturity", having left behind childlike trust and having not yet learned to regain it.

<sup>30</sup> Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, 148–149.

<sup>31</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Prince Caspian*, London: Diamond Books, 1997 (ed. pr. 1951), 93, 107–108. All the subsequent quotations are from this edition.

at all, against the belief of Lucy and Edmund and the wavering faith of Peter.<sup>32</sup> While Lucy is later rebuked by Aslan for not leaving the others to come and find him, her own Psyche-like nature is affirmed by her simple, childlike delight in his presence. When she first hears Aslan's voice, she thinks it is that of her father or her trusted brother Peter; realizing that it is Aslan, she trembles with delight, not fear, and rushes to embrace him and bury her face in his mane.<sup>33</sup> However, Lucy's attempt to communicate her delight to the others is met by a sharp rebuff when Susan replies, "in her most annoying grown-up voice", "you've been dreaming, Lucy. Go to sleep again" (126). In fact, Susan is the most resistant to Lucy's pleas to follow Aslan, and, apart from Trumpkin the unbeliever, she is the last to see him. Yet Susan's fault, by her own confession, is not merely disbelief but in fact much worse. It is rather, like in Orual's case, suppressing and extinguishing the true belief that she knew she had "deep down inside. Or [...] could have [had] if I'd let myself" (132).

At the end of *Prince Caspian* we are told that Peter and Susan are not allowed to return to Narnia. It is Aslan's intention, as we learn in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1952), that all the children should learn to know him in their own land.<sup>34</sup> From here, however, the paths of Peter and Susan diverge radically. Peter, although still a boy, steps into his role as High King and shows a maturity beyond his years. As the leader of the Friends of Narnia he always retains his childlike faith in Aslan – and his love of childish jinks.<sup>35</sup> By the end of the series he, like the other children, as well as Digory and Polly, have become ageless, ever young and yet simultaneously wise with the wisdom of eternity.<sup>36</sup> The contrast with Susan could not be greater. When King Tirian asks the High King Peter why she is not with them, his reply is chilling: "My sister Susan [...] is no longer a friend of Narnia".<sup>37</sup> The subsequent exchange is worth quoting in full:

"Yes," said Eustace, "and whenever you've tried to get her to come and talk about Narnia or do anything about Narnia, she says, *What wonderful memories you have! Fancy your still thinking about all those funny games we used to play when we were children.*"

<sup>32</sup> Ibidem, 112.

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem, 120–124.

<sup>34</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, London: Diamond Books, 1997 (ed. pr. 1952), 188.

<sup>35</sup> Lewis, *The Last Battle*, 45–46, 50–52, 126–127.

<sup>36</sup> Ibidem, 126–127, 131.

<sup>37</sup> Ibidem, 127–128.

"Oh Susan!" said Jill. "She's interested in nothing nowadays except nylons and lipstick and invitations. She always was a jolly sight too keen on being grown-up."<sup>38</sup>

"Grown-up indeed," said the Lady Polly. "I wish she *would* grow up".<sup>39</sup>

There is a supreme irony here in that Eustace, who himself once believed that Narnia was just a silly game,<sup>40</sup> has outgrown Susan. There is an even greater irony, however, in the fact that Susan herself was once a beautiful and noble Queen in Narnia and has now forfeited her true identity for the sake of a false maturity.<sup>41</sup>

Susan's journey from childlike faith to cynicism is only in the background in *The Last Battle*. Featuring much more prominently is the story of the Dwarfs, and it is here that we find the most explicit connection to *Till We Have Faces*. For the exploited and oppressed Dwarfs living in "the last days of Narnia", Aslan has become a fable.<sup>42</sup> While King Tirian, the unicorn Jewel, Eustace and Jill, and all the true Narnians keep faith in Aslan, even when it seems that he has deserted, or worse, turned against them, the Dwarfs believe the lies. Renouncing their allegiance to Aslan and Tirian, they turn treacherously against their fellow Narnians, ruthlessly murdering the Talking Horses.<sup>43</sup> At the end of the book their selfish attitude – "the Dwarfs are for the Dwarfs" – has become their prison.<sup>44</sup> Surrounded by the beauty and wonder of the new Narnia, the Dwarfs are unable – indeed, like Susan in *Prince Caspian*, they refuse – to see it. Instead, they continue to believe they are in a "pitch-black, poky, smelly little hole of a stable".<sup>45</sup> When Lucy, who despite their treachery still loves them, asks them if they cannot see the trees and the flowers or even her, their beautiful Queen, one of their number responds angrily: "How in the name of all Humbug can I see what ain't there" (137). When Aslan arrives and places before them

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<sup>38</sup> Lewis has often been accused here of criticizing Susan for reaching a natural stage of growing up. However, as Rowan Williams rightly notes in *The Lion's World: A Journey into the Heart of Narnia*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, 41, Susan's "failure is not growing up. It is the denial of what she has known, rooted in her 'keenness' not to grow up, but to *be* grown-up, a very different matter" (emphasis in the original).

<sup>39</sup> Lewis, *The Last Battle*, 128 (emphasis added).

<sup>40</sup> Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, 10.

<sup>41</sup> For more on this, see McBride, "Coming of Age in Narnia", 68–71.

<sup>42</sup> Lewis, *The Last Battle*, 70–72.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, 114–115.

<sup>44</sup> See Chris Brawley, *Nature and the Numinous in Mythopoeic Fantasy Literature*, "Critical Explorations in Science Fiction and Fantasy" 46, Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2014, 85–87.

<sup>45</sup> Lewis, *The Last Battle*, 136.

a sumptuous banquet, they still think they are only eating cabbage leaves and drinking dirty water (139). Here we are back in Cupid's invisible palace with the Dwarfs vividly representing Orual's disbelief. In their refusal to yield to Aslan, their refusal "to be taken in", the Dwarfs have cut themselves off forever.<sup>46</sup>

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But Susan and the Dwarfs are not given the final word. This belongs to characters such as Emeth, whose desire and longing to behold the face of his God was, like Psyche's, so great that he resolved to look upon it "though he should slay me".<sup>47</sup> It belongs to the faithful frolicking dogs, whose joy in coming to the new Narnia is utterly infectious.<sup>48</sup> It belongs to King Tirian and his loyal friend Jewel the unicorn, who even in the darkest hour retained their faith in Aslan. It belongs to the seven Friends of Narnia, who are also the seven Kings and Queens of Narnia. It belongs to all the faithful followers of Aslan from every age who remained true to him no matter what. Above all, it belongs to Aslan himself, whose own sacrifice on the stone table marks the true reversal from Saturnine despair to Jovial hope, a reversal in which even death itself is turned backwards.<sup>49</sup>

At the end of *The Last Battle* we see that Jupiter has come into his Kingdom and Cupid has claimed his Psyche.<sup>50</sup> It is this hope, this *reality*, that Lewis seeks to invite all his readers, young and old, to embrace – a hope that calls out to them even in the depths of despair, a hope that survives even the unmaking of the world. As Lewis the narrator says, having given up trying to describe the wonder of the new Narnia,<sup>51</sup> which is so much deeper than we can ever fathom: "[I]f ever you get there you will know what I mean".<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Brawley, *Nature and the Numinous*, 86: "The sacramental vision is only offered to those who are willing to experience a higher reality, one which transcends any concern with the finite self".

<sup>47</sup> Lewis, *The Last Battle*, 153. Emeth, as a Calormine, is a worshipper of the false god Tash – yet comes to realize that all his life Aslan has been the one he has truly been seeking and serving (153).

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, 163.

<sup>49</sup> Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, 148.

<sup>50</sup> While not explicit, it is clear that Aslan can be seen in a role parallel to Cupid's, and the faithful Narnians to Psyche's. Certainly the endings of both novels were intended to represent the union of Christ with the soul or with the Church; see, e.g., Joe R. Christopher, "Archetypal Patterns in *Till We Have Faces*", in Peter J. Schakel, ed., *The Longing for a Form: Essays on the Fiction of C.S. Lewis*, Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2007, 193–212.

<sup>51</sup> Indeed, strikingly similar imagery is used to describe the valley of the god in *Till We Have Faces* (see Rowe, "*Till We Have Faces*", 138), further tying together the two stories.

<sup>52</sup> Lewis, *The Last Battle*, 160.

The book is to be recommended for academics as well as graduate and post-graduate students working on the reception of Classical Antiquity and its transformations around the world.

David Movrin, University of Ljubljana  
From the editorial review

*Our Mythical Hope* is the latest collection of articles by scholars participating in an ongoing collaboration to ensure that the beauty and profundity of Classical myth remain known, and (hopefully) remain part of our modern culture. The size of this compendium, the sweep of subjects considered, the involvement of leading experts from around the world, all testify to how important and extensive this initiative has become over the last decade. The project's continued commitment to engage all ages, especially the young, and to extend its outreach beyond the Academy merely, makes it a leading model for how research retains its relevance.

Mark O'Connor, Boston College  
From the editorial review



Classical Antiquity is a particularly important field in terms of "Hope studies" [...]. For centuries, the ancient tradition, and classical mythology in particular, has been a common reference point for whole hosts of creators of culture, across many parts of the world, and with the new media and globalization only increasing its impact. Thus, in our research at this stage, we have decided to study how the authors of literary and audiovisual texts for youth make use of the ancient myths to support their young protagonists (and readers or viewers) in crucial moments of their existence, on their road into adulthood, and in those dark hours when it seems that life is about to shatter and fade away. However, if Hope is summoned in time, the crisis can be overcome and the protagonist grows stronger, with a powerful uplifting message for the public. [...] Owing to this, we get a chance to remain true to our ideas, to keep faith in our dreams, and, when the decisive moment comes, to choose not hatred but love, not darkness but light.

Katarzyna Marciniak, University of Warsaw  
From the introductory chapter

