Till We Have Faces: A Study in The Four Loves

Each relationship in Till We Have Faces is unique. Unfortunately, in English, one can only categorize the emotion in each of the relationships as “love.” We attempt to use the word “like” to fill the gap, but there are times when “like” does not fit. In Lewis’s book The Four Loves, he analyzes the word “love” because it simply is way too complicated of a word to have only one meaning. It would only be appropriate to define the relationships in Till We Have Faces through the work of Lewis’s later book, The Four Loves. In all relationships in the story, Orual never demonstrates a clear definition of any of the four loves.

Lewis is a well-known Christian writer so he uses the Bible to back up most of his points. One of his most frequent references is St. John. St John said in 1 John 4:19, “We love because He first loved us.” God’s love can be thought of as a prerequisite for any earthly love. God demonstrates perfect love and we are supposed to model His love in every one of our relationships in life. Lewis starts his book, The Four Loves with breaking down love into two forms: Need-love and Gift-love. (Lewis, 1-9)

Need-love is the idea that we are born helpless, and we need people physically, emotionally, and intellectually. We need this love as we need food. If someone were to naturally have no desire for food, we would consider this a medical problem because food is necessary for survival. The same should go for someone who thinks he or she does not want this Need-love. Gift-love, on the other hand, is love that is given with nothing in return. A father may work his whole life on
something for his son, but will not live to see the products of his work. God’s divine love fits into this category of Gift love. (Lewis 1-9)

Secondly, love is broken down into four more categories, Affection, Friendship, Eros, and Charity. Each of the four loves demonstrates either Need-love or Gift love. The first love, Affection, comes from the Greek word *storge* (Lewis, 31). The Greek lexicon defines this love as “affection, especially of parents to offspring” (Lewis, 31). The next love, Friendship, comes from the Greek *philia*, which is the nonsexual love of friends (Lewis, 57-58). The third love is Eros, the sexual love. Lewis stresses that this is not only desire for physical affection, but also more importantly, the desire for physical affection from one individual (Lewis 91-91). The final love, Charity, comes from the Greek *agape*. This love is known as the sacrificial love; charity is a love that occurs when one truly puts another’s needs above his or her own (Lewis, 116-118).

Lewis wrote *The Four Loves* after *Till We Have Faces*, so *The Four Loves* can be considered commentary on the novel *Till We Have Faces* (Rowe, 136). Because Lewis’s work is so dense and elaborate, sometimes it helps to understand his theories to have a book, especially one that is written by him that has so many examples of the four forms of love (Aiura and Vigers, 150).

Affection can be either a Need-love or a Gift-love. When a mother holds her son, she is showing a Need-love. When a father works of the farm to pay for his son’s college education, he is showing Gift-love. Affection from a family member, or someone who is like family, is the least discriminating of loves. Age, sex, beauty, ugliness, stupidity, and class don’t matter to someone who loves with *storge* or
The Fox and Psyche love Orual, the “curd-face” (Faces, 18) with affection. Orual is known to be ugly, but that does not make a difference to The Fox and Psyche. The Fox teaches Orual all about the Greek Culture, but seems to ignore the better looks of Redival, Orual’s sister. The Fox and Orual just have that special bond that is more than outward appearances. Psyche spends most of her time with Orual throughout the story. She could spend it with someone else more beautiful, but she chooses to be with Orual. With affection, a simple touch can make everything better. Psyche has that power on Orual. When Orual travels to the land of the gods to see Psyche, she is sad that Psyche is happy there. But “with one light kiss, she put all those days, all of my life that I cared for, behind us...” (Faces, 105).

Unfortunately, Orual fails to reciprocate this love for Psyche. Although Orual wants to care for Psyche, and wishes she were Psyche’s mother, her lover, her everything, she demonstrates other kinds of love. Her “ostensible caring love” becomes more selfish (Olli-Pekka, 25). Orual wants to be the only person to give Affection to Psyche. This selfishness is not a quality of Affection. Bardia and his wife Ansit better demonstrate this storge Affection. Until we meet Ansit, the readers think what Orual thinks: Bardia and Ansit’s wedding is a loveless, miserable marriage. But when we meet Ansit, we realize their love was just in the boundaries of their home. Lewis explains that his is normal for Affection and “Affection would not be affection if it was loudly and frequently expressed”(Lewis, 34). Readers see Affection in one other character in Till We Have Faces. Throughout the story, readers see Redival and Orual’s constant bickering. We don’t find out till later, the Redival only ever wanted Orual’s attention. A characteristic of Affection is jealousy
when the one whom a certain person has affection for’s life is all of a sudden
“flooded with a new interest” (Lewis, 46). Orual’s obsession with Psyche ultimately
ruined Orual’s relationship with Redival.

The next love demonstrated in Till We Have Faces is Friendship or the Greek
philia. Lewis describes this as the least natural of all the loves. People can live
without philia; it does not breed or produce anything. Friendship delivers us from
the “snail shell of self-interest” (Wood, 115). Because we do not get anything
biologically out of it, we are solely being friends with another because we want to
be. In each friendship, each friend someone acquires, there is something that only
that friend can bring out. (Lewis, 61) Orual has two friends that bring out different
things in her; Bardia and The Fox are constantly giving her completely different
advice. Bardia encourages her to take the traditional Glome religion approach to
things, whereas The Fox challenges her belief in Ungit. At some points in the story,
she does not want to go to Bardia or The Fox because they will sway her opinion.
When Orual returns to the castle the second time, she tries to hide from The Fox. She
believes “he would rebuke [her] for putting that kind of force upon Psyche” (Faces,
177). Orual believed what she did was necessary, but she did not want the fox to
change her mind.

Another aspect of friendship is the absence of sexual desire. Lewis argues
friendship between two sexes is almost impossible, unless one repulses the other.
(Lewis, 67). Following that example, Bardia is Orual’s friend. Orual overhears
Bardia say “…it’s a pity about her face…If a man was blind…she’d make him a good
wife” (Faces, 92). And toward the end of the story when Orual visits Ansit after
Bardia’s death, Ansit accuses Orual of being jealous of Ansit and Bardia’s love. To show Ansit that they were not in love, Orual simply unveils to show her ugliness. Then, Ansit automatically knows that Bardia could not have loved Orual. Orual physically repulsed Bardia. Because of this, Bardia is able to have *philia* for Orual.

Lewis’s third love, Eros, is a Need-love (Malanga, 70). For our purposes in this essay, the Eros love will be in quotation marks. “Eros” allows us to see satisfactions in the benefits of sexual desire, but also the benefits of the object from who gives the eros (Olli-Pekka, 23). Someone is considered “in love” with the love of “Eros” if he or she enjoys sitting around and thinking about the person that gives him or her that sexual satisfaction (Malanga, 71). Eros is the Greek god version of Cupid in the myth, and his mother is Aphrodite. Eros the god has sexual desire, but only for one person, as explained in *Till We Have Faces* (Rowe, 142). According to Lewis, the Christian God demonstrates “Eros.” God commands his followers to put no other gods before Him (Wood, 115). The character that demonstrates this “Eros” love the best in *Till We Have Faces* is Psyche’s lover Eros. Eros gives Psyche a chance to be a god and live a happy life, but he only requests one thing in return: do not ever look at him. When Orual convinces Psyche to look at her lover, Psyche breaks that one rule. Psyche is shunned from the palace and her life with Eros. Because of this jealousy “Eros” is considered to be the “most dangerous of loves” (Wood, 115). The jealousy of Eros made the mountains shake, and transformed Psyche’s life go from a happy and content experience to a life full of weeping and regret.

The final love that Lewis defines is Charity. Charity is the Greek *agape*. Charity is the self-sacrificing, selfless love. The difference in Eros and Charity is
Charity is not to one person; it is extended to all. (Malanga, 143) Agape is demonstrated in throughout Christian Bible. St Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 13, verses 4-8 states the definition of *agape* love:

> Love is patient; love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

Unlike the Greek gods like Eros who ask for favors in return for favors, Christians are called to help people without expecting anything in return (Wood, 116). Philippians 2:3 clearly states, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.” The only character in Till We Have Faces who demonstrates Charity is Psyche. When havoc and disease spread throughout the kingdom, Psyche is accused of being the Accursed. She puts aside her selfish desire to live, and agrees to be sacrificed to save the kingdom. Also, when Psyche is taken by Eros, Psyche is willing to put aside her own selfish desires to never look at her husband. She is perfectly content until she falls into Orual’s temptation to turn the light on to see him at night. Even then, she is only looking at her husband so Orual does not injure herself anymore than the stab in the arm. She is sacrificing her love for Eros so Orual can be happy. (Faces, 164-167) Agape is one of the most difficult loves to achieve, but Psyche appears to achieve it nicely.

Orual never portrayed any of these examples of the four loves. People showed her love, but she never could fully return that love. In the end, when faced
before the gods, Orual realizes her Need-love for all those around her, and the
damages that her lack there of that Need-love caused damages that are irreversible
to her life.


