EDUCATING THE MORAL IMAGINATION:

THE FANTASY LITERATURE OF

GEORGE MACDONALD, C.S. LEWIS, AND MADELEINE L'ENGLE

by

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Master of Arts, The University of British Columbia 1983
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THESIS
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In the Faculty
of
Education

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

December 2003

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DEGREE   Doctor of Philosophy

TITLE   Educating the Moral Imagination: The Fantasy Literature of George MacDonald, C.S. Lewis, and Madeleine L'Engle

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Educating the Moral Imagination: The Fantasy Literature of George MacDonald, C.S. Lewis, and Madeleine L'Engle

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the education of the moral imagination through the fantasy literature of George MacDonald and two authors he directly influenced, C.S. Lewis, and Madeleine L'Engle. Though moral education is the oldest curriculum, and considered by many, from Plato to the present, to be the ultimate aim in education, much of academic literary discourse and contemporary classroom practice ignores moral education. We excel in reading literature through various theoretical lenses, and teach for intellectual and stylistic excellence but, ironically, ignore too often literature's most serious purpose: to teach virtue. To the extent that this is so, we are failing to equip children and young adults with what they need most: literary nourishment that facilitates the development of spiritual well-being. This inquiry is addressed to such a gap in the curriculum: the need to educate the imagination with healing stories of courage and hope, and the need to do so with an imaginative pedagogy that encourages moral fortitude.

Unlike rationalistic discourse, which alienates learners, I argue that MacDonald, Lewis, and L'Engle nurture the ethical human being with an education into the "feeling intellect." I describe how they achieve this in a subversion of the cultural privileging of the traditionally viewed "masculine" values of reason, autonomy, and egotistical power and, concomitantly, by a celebration of the traditionally viewed "feminine" values of imagination, interdependence, and humility.

In the six chapters that make up the body of this work, I explore how MacDonald, Lewis, and L'Engle nurture the moral imagination: one, their ethical pattern of humility as

grounded in the moral imagination of the Christian Gospel, particularly as articulated by

John Milton, and that of William Wordsworth; two, the childlike heroic in George

MacDonald; three, the "feminine" heroic in C.S. Lewis; four, the mythic understanding of

heroism in Madeleine L'Engle; five, theoretical curriculum implications for the

imaginative education of these three authors; and six, practical pedagogical interpretations

of teaching this heroic fantasy literature in the classroom. Together, these chapters are

intended to help teachers explore educating the moral imagination through fantasy

literature.

For my beloved family:

my husband, Emanuel,

and our children,

Natalie, Jessica, and David.

In thanks

for your love,

patience,

and joy.

By love subsists

All lasting grandeur, by pervading love;

That gone, we are as dust.

William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (bk. XIV, lines 168-70)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

HHB	*The Horse and his Boy*
LB	*The Last Battle*
LWW	*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*
MN	*The Magician's Nephew*
PC	*The Princess and Curdie*
PCaspian	*Prince Caspian*
PG	*The Princess and the Goblin*
PL	*Paradise Lost*
PR	*Paradise Regained*
SC	*The Silver Chair*
STP	*A Swiftly Tilting Planet*
VDT	*The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*
Wind	*A Wind in the Door*
Wrinkle	*A Wrinkle in Time*

INTRODUCTION

Imagination is the creative capacity for thinking of things "as possibly being so" (Egan, 1992, p. 43; White, 1990, p. 184),[1] or of being otherwise—better, more wondrous, more humane—and alternatively, worse, more horrible, more depraved. And imagination of the better kind, informed by a moral vision, is, to borrow George MacDonald's (1893) metaphor, the "scaffolding" upon which excellent reason depends (*Orts*, p. 13)[2] or, to borrow Wordsworth's (1850) words, "Imagination . . . is Reason in her most exalted mood" (*The Prelude*, bk. XIV, lines 189-192). Conversely, few desirable educational results come from the narrow sort of rationalism that disallows imaginative leaps. Such reflections may seem obvious to the literature teacher who is the designated cultural worker in wonderfully imaginative written products. But the enthusiasm attending such reflections is sorely lacking in too many literature students. Nor can the lack of student enthusiasm be attributed only to personal, societal, or stage-related reasons. On a regular basis, teachers need to rethink, redesign, and assess more effective modes of engaging students in the study of literature. Our teaching must be imaginative, many of us feel with some vagueness, but how can it be done?

In the workaday reality of teaching, rather like parenting, the demands of the job increases the urgency for imagination at about the same rate that it seemingly decreases our capacity for delivering it. It is all too easy to occasionally slip into "survival mode" and feel that theoretical work is rather outside our immediate needs. In response, this thesis is addressed to teachers of literature who wonder about how to foster stronger

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imaginative and, therefore, critical thinking in their students. In particular, it is intended for those who wonder if a literary curriculum can and, at least in part, should train the ethical human being—a curriculum that offers a better, more wondrous, more humane vision of Good. Also, another question posed is, "What imaginative pedagogical strategies, theoretical and practical, might achieve moral education?" The specific intent of this inquiry is to help teachers explore the distinct agency of fantasy literature for educating the moral imagination.

For this purpose I will examine how the fantasy literature of three classic authors, George MacDonald (1824-1905) and two authors he directly influenced, C.S. Lewis (1898-1963), and Madeleine L'Engle (1918-), potentially shape the moral imagination of the learner. I have selected these authors not in any exclusive sense, but as mentors or key examples of storytellers who speak to this curriculum with remarkable fluency. To do this I will discuss how their work forms a clear ethical pattern, show how it is grounded in the moral imagination of the Christian Gospel, particularly as articulated by John Milton (1608-1674), and that of the Romantic poet, William Wordsworth (1770-1850), and consider theoretical and practical curriculum implications to achieve this sort of imaginative education in the classroom. While I would not want to suggest that literature is a vehicle for educational concepts and ends in any reductive sense, its experience offers, as William Walsh (1959) and Kieran Egan (1997) argue, rich opportunity for informing curriculum theory and practice. In this inquiry I will explore the possibility that greater familiarity with these authors, and implementation of the theoretical and practical curriculum implications that their work suggests, could help considerably towards

increasing and deepening our success with the imaginative teaching of literature, and of moral education through literature especially.

As a student and now also a teacher of English, I have always been drawn to literature that nourishes the imagination with a vision of goodness—a central moral imagination that inspires courage and hope. But instead much of what I have read, taught, and teach still, explores the darker side of human experience without this central inspiration. Certainly the common complaint students raise against much modernist and postmodernist literature, and sometimes older tragedies, is "Why do we have to read so many depressing poems and novels?" Also, I remain haunted by the stories of people who injure themselves and/or others, sometimes fatally, and therefore share concern over the question of moral education or the lack thereof phrased as: "Why do intelligent, educated people commit acts of violence?" Far less dramatic but more pervasive is the everyday ethical malaise by which students (and sometimes we educators, though perhaps more in capitulation than out of theoretical persuasion) take a utilitarian approach to learning that crowds out or renders unintelligible the love of truth. As G.K. Chesterton (1910) observes, school children are only taught to care about facts they can use for their own advantage and are "never taught to desire the truth" (p. 233). Perhaps Chesterton's assertion is an exaggeration; let us hope so. But to the extent to which utilitarianism and a curriculum and practice without moral imagination hinders ethical education, this utilitarian bias in education needs our attention.

With every incident of school bullying, brutality, and senseless violence, but also with the many more ordinary examples of indifference to ethical formation, I repeat these questions: "Can a better literary diet help students?" "Might an imaginative engagement

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with stories of moral courage and redemptive hope assist them?" And "How can literature teachers nurture the moral imagination through our choice of literature as well as our pedagogical strategies?" In response to these kinds of questions, I have addressed my inquiry to the question of a gap in the curriculum: "Is there a need to educate the imagination with healing stories of hope?" And "How might we address this need with a pedagogy that encourages moral fortitude?"

Now I defend the value of teaching gloomier literature, partly because these are cultural artifacts (voices that need to be honoured), partly because they can enrich our moral vision by means of inversion (cautionary tales written large?). Works like J.D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*, George Orwell's *Nineteen-Eighty-Four*, and Henrik Ibsen's *The Wild Duck*, for example, all deserve attention, and all, at least through the stark example of the failure of moral imagination in some characters, educate for virtue. At the same time I worry about the cumulative effect of a largely pessimistic literary diet where little hope is embodied on the minds of the young (or on the old, for that matter). Is too much of what we teach of this darker nature? To what extent do we teach tales of brokenness, cynicism, and sometimes despair? To what extent do we balance these with stories of encouragement and hope? Are we equipping children and young adults with what they arguably need most: literary nourishment that facilitates the development of spiritual wholeness and well-being?

It is tempting to say, rather simply, that happy endings are preferable to the sad ones. But certainly tragedy, as well as comedy, has the power to educate for virtue, sometimes more so by its sobering nature, and particularly tragedy, like Shakespeare's for example, which is informed by a worldview of a meaningful cosmos. The questions

surrounding happy/sad literature as moral nourishment have more to do with whether or not these stories provide experiences that allow students to explore hope. Perhaps it is helpful to consider St. Paul's association of consolation with disciplined focus on moral excellence: "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things *are* honest . . . just . . . pure . . . lovely . . . of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:8, King James Version). Alongside the sobering tragedies then, especially those that do not embody some form of hope, do students also engage in literature that embodies creative courage? We should, however, be careful not to confuse "happy endings" with the foolish immoral ones that elevate personal vanity and material success (Le Guin, 1974; Lewis, 1952a) and fail to wrestle with the deepest human questions and longings—the quest for identity, the problem of evil, and the courageous affirmation of faith, hope, and love. Instead, literature that teaches moral character illustrates the strong, endurable "happy ending" of the human spirit that overcomes adversity with good, creating, in the words of Milton (1667), "a paradise within . . . happier far" (*Paradise Lost*, bk. XII, line 587). Or, said another way, literature that educates for spiritual health offers what J.R.R. Tolkien (1947) identifies as defining the best fairy stories: "Fantasy, Recovery, Escape, and Consolation" (p. 46). So as teachers of literature who ever seek to educate our students for stronger intellectual acumen and literary excellence, we might consider the argument that our foremost educational mandate is nonetheless to teach for moral maturity. As in the words of Walsh (1959), "Upon the teacher at all times rests the obligation of speaking for intellectual sanity and spiritual health" (p. 22).

Moral education is the oldest curriculum. It is fundamental to Plato's vision of the

Good in *The Republic*. In John Locke's (1693) words, "The great business of all is *virtue*

and *wisdom*" (p. 152), and only a fool would prefer scholastic prowess at the expense of

these (p. 113). In Alfred North Whitehead's (1929a) view, "the essence of education is

that it be religious," one "which inculcates duty and reverence" (p. 25-6). C.S. Lewis

(1947a) argues that the primary job of the educator is to educate the moral person (p. 24).

Northrop Frye (1963) defines "the educated imagination . . . that affects the whole

person" as training that is not just intellectual in the narrow sense, but as involving

"social and moral development" (p. 66). Of "moral sensibility" William Walsh (1959)

says, "No conception of the growth of intelligence which omits it can be adequate, no

discussion of the mind which neglects it can be sufficient" (p. 49). Dwayne E. Huebner

(1985) speaks of education as "the lure of the transcendent" which enables learners to

resist idolatrous empirical and scientific thinking (p. 360). And Nel Noddings (2002)

regards the primary educational task as educating "the moral sentiments," with "the main

aim . . . to produce competent, caring, loving, and lovable people" (pp. 8, 99).

But as Plato (trans. 1941) says, educating for how we should live "is no light

matter" (*The Republic*, I. 353, p. 37). And moral education is all the more challenging in

an intellectual climate nervous about describing how we should live given our post-

modern stance of ambivalence towards the nature of truth. I will return to these concerns

again in Chapter 5. For now I would like to point out, as Vigen Guroian (1998) argues,

that much of contemporary academic literary discussion (and so perhaps also classroom

teaching) ignores moral education. While we excel in reading literature through lenses as

varied as psychoanalysis, sociopolitical critique, feminism, and deconstructionism,

ironically, contemporary literary discourse is oddly silent on literature's most serious purpose: to teach virtue. However, voices in the fields of psychology (Bettelheim, 1975), ethical philosophy (MacIntyre, 1984), theology (Guroian, 1998), and education (Egan, 1992; Noddings, 2002; Walsh, 1959; Whitehead, 1929a), join with several voices in the field of literature (Booth, 1988; Frye, 1963; Gardner, 1978; Lewis, 1947a; Lochhead, 1977) in looking to literature as the most effective means to moral development. With some urgency they insist on this as the most important, though often omitted, educative experience. The educational question then is not "*should* literature teachers offer ethical education?" but "*how* can literature teachers do so well, with intentionality and desirable effect?"

Another problem with thinking about literature as a moral curriculum, and perhaps especially literature designated for children, is that it raises the spectre of the flatly moralizing or sermonic approach. We can trace the history of children's literature as a movement from "instruction to delight" in which the early religious and cautionary didactic tales gave way to outright entertaining literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Demers & Moyles, 1982; Russell, 1997). Perhaps as a partial result of this shift, we tend to regard the instruction/delight characteristics as a dichotomy for the very good reason that this has been the practice. Like teaching, too much of such literature has been authority-laden "talk" delivered top-down, given from the rationalistic, objective stance of the independent text/ teacher to the ignorant listener/student receiving needed instruction. Stories like the hell-fire tales of James Janeway (1636-1674) and Maria Edgeworth's (1767-1849) rational didacticism in "The Purple Jar" (1801) (even though Edgeworth makes emotional engagement possible in her character development) invite

this sort of pedagogical experience—effective, possibly, as fear and shrewdness are teachers, but felt somehow to be a "cheat" because the love of a good story, and with that the inner experience of morality, is not the priority. As Marion Lochhead (1977) notes, this kind of moralizing has been "over-emphasized" and "thrust upon the young," and it is with considerable relief and pleasure that we look to imaginative writers like George MacDonald whose nineteenth-century mythic tales initiated what she calls the "renaissance of wonder" with his joyous sense of "goodness" or "true holiness" (p. 2). Unlike the rationalistic approach of earlier children's literature that potentially alienates the learner, the later imaginative approach of writers like MacDonald, and Lewis and L'Engle after him, invites readers "inside" the story. As I have discussed elsewhere (in press), it is this "inside" experience of literature, interactive or dialogical by nature (cf. Bakhtin, 1981; Freire, 1970), which is freeing. So, nourished by the mythic exploration of imaginative storytellers, and informed by the theoretical understanding of engaging pedagogy, literature teachers can become rather well equipped to overcome the spectre of moralizing in our education of the moral imagination.

The term "moral imagination" is a relatively recent term that Peter J. Schakel (2002, p. 163) notes as originating with Edmund Burke. And though moral education is the oldest curriculum, this specialized term, "moral imagination," encapsulates the theoretical position that any effective, life-shaping ethical education must engage the imagination. It's one thing for the teacher to rationally impart a vision of the Good, whether through argumentative discourse like Plato, or through moralizing didactic as in the cautionary tale tradition in children's literature. But it's quite another thing to have readers fall in love with the Good and want it. While we have our ways to coerce learning

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through homework and tests, this dubious distinction has limited value unless we also nurture lifelong, passionate learners. In John Gardner's (1978) words, "morality by compulsion is a fool's morality and . . . the highest purpose of art is to make people good by choice" (p. 106). The important educational question then is "how to teach so that students may fall in love with the Good and want it?" As Huebner (1985) notes, "love" is one of those "verboten" words in rationalistic educational discourse (p. 363), and this is indeed symptomatic of the erroneous dichotomization of reason/imagination in much of, though not all, Western thinking. This troublesome issue has often been addressed in education, and while much work has been done towards repairing such faulty thinking (Doll, 2000; Egan, 1986, 1992, 1997; Frye, 1963; Greene, 1995; Huebner, 1959, 1985, 1993; Lewis, 1947a, to name a few), much more remains to be done.

The controversy between reason and imagination is an old one, and the heat it generates is enough to make one want to echo the child who asks, "Dear God, who draws the lines around the countries?" Plato's ambivalent attitude toward the arts and perceived rejection of metaphorical thinking fixes the Western dichotomization of reason/ imagination where the latter is, historically, a suspect way of thinking. St. Paul's famous reference to 'putting away childish things' in adulthood (I Cor. 13: 11) gives weight to the attitude that rational adult "wisdom" is superior to "irrational childish foolishness." The King James translation that "the *imagination* [italics added] of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Genesis 8:21, King James Version), elsewhere translated as "intent" or "inclination" (New American Standard), suggests the notion that reason is the seat of moral virtue and fuels the consequent rejection of some or all fantasy literature on religious grounds. (Ironically, and sadly, C.S. Lewis's and Madeleine L'Engle's books

are spurned by some Christian readers for these sorts of reasons. The presence of unicorns and witches apparently appear to them as more dangerous than the mind-numbing consumerism at the mall, and the "fantastic" stories of the Bible are not recognized as sharing the same appeal to wonder. But this issue deserves a book or two.) An 18th century rhyme (Anon, 1734) encapsulates this rejection of fantasy literature: "Enchantment proceeds from nothing but the/ Chit-Chat of an old Nurse, or the Maggots in a/ Madman's Brain" (cited in Summerfield, 1985, p. ix). With the advance of a scientific view of the world, the conflict between a rational, empirical way of knowing and an imaginative, poetic way of knowing was heightened.

Ever since Herbert Spencer (1859) asked, "What knowledge is of most worth?" , and gave his unequivocal answer, "Science" (p. 42), many educators have felt further justified in perpetuating the false dichotomy between reason and imagination.[3] Teaching was and still is too often regarded in a linear, rationalistic fashion where the assumption is that the "objective" rational voice is the infallible measure over less reliable "subjective" imaginative voices. Scientific disciplines, it was believed, would usher in the new millennium; the humanities were too inefficient to do much of anything. Part of this problem has to do with an inadequate view of both science and art—ignoring that science requires imaginative leaps and art requires technical skill and rational thought. But while Spencer and the disembodied rationalist educators that preceded and followed him believed that "for the purposes of discipline—intellectual, moral, religious—the most efficient study is, once more—Science" (p. 43), many thinkers have insisted that the imagination is central to intellectual, moral, and spiritual development. And indeed, many argue that reason/imagination should not be regarded as oppositional but as integrative.

Mary Aswell Doll (2000), for one, refers to Carl Jung in her argument against Western disbelief "that overvalues rationalism and knowledge at the expense of intuition and wisdom . . . . [the] Western prejudice . . . to ignore the promptings of the unconscious" (p. 150), and calls for aesthetic experience that enables learners to move beyond homogeneous, "rational" learning, and become "commuters" between the known and the unknown (p. viii). But certainly there is enough within the Western heritage to challenge split consciousness and arrive at wholeness. Wordsworth (1850), as noted earlier, celebrates an imagination that informs rational thinking: "Imagination is . . . Reason in her most exalted mood" (*The Prelude*, bk. XIV, lines 189-192). John Milton (1667) before him describes angelic reason as being most often intuitive, "differing [from discursive] but in degree, of kind the same" (*Paradise Lost*, bk. V, line 490). To point further back, the metaphorical heritage of biblical literature which has directly informed the work of MacDonald, Lewis, and L'Engle, especially Jesus's own preference for storytelling over sermons, establishes this rich tradition and inspires storytelling on religious grounds. And more attention could be given to how Plato names intuitive intelligence (*noesis*) as the highest form of cognition, superior to discursive reason (*dianoia*): it is with the intuition that the philosopher-king apprehends a vision of the Good (pp. 221-6). So imagination is not necessarily this "crazy" faculty that runs counter to reason and is disruptive to education. As Egan (1997) insists, "imagination is not in any sense in conflict with developing rationality and its view of reality, seen in the light of common day" (p. 101). And in the words of J. Philip Newell (2000), there can be a "harmony of lights" in the soul with a "fruitful intermingling" of "intuitive knowing and enlightened reasoning" (pp. 46-7).

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Moreover, several curriculum thinkers emphasize the connection between imagination and moral learning. Dwayne E. Huebner (1959) calls for a return to imaginative wonder in education because only this will release us from the darker quest for knowledge whose aim is "manipulation and control" (p. 8). C.S. Lewis (1947a) argues that the task of the literature teacher is to teach imaginative fiction in order to train the child into having correct moral emotions so that when he grows rational he will be prepared to recognize and live out ethical principles (p. 26). Ursula K. Le Guin (1974) has a moral understanding of fantasy literature when she criticizes the fear that highly technological and materialistic people have of such literature and urges educators "to encourage that faculty of imagination in our children, to encourage it to grow freely, to flourish like the green bay tree" (p. 34) because a healthy imagination challenges the falsehood and trivia that a deformed imagination (materialistic, narrowly technological, pornographic) embraces (pp. 32, 34). Kieran Egan (1992), in harmony with Alan R. White (1990) as mentioned above, argues that "imagination is the capacity to think of things as possibly being so" and that, in conjunction with our growing capacity for "invention, novelty, and generativity" (p. 43), imaginative capacity can lead to "moral autonomy" from the crowd (p. 165). Only with such moral autonomy can the private imagination have profoundly social implications. In this sense, Northrop Frye (1963) speaks of a well-trained imagination as giving us the moral freedom to re-envision and so impact our society. Unlike the pleasure-seeking materialist whose imagination has "been starved and fed on shadows" and "can never be anything more than a parasite on . . . society" (p. 65), the imaginative truth-seeking thinker has the resilience to do better than adjust to his society (p. 66). And Maxine Greene (1995) in particular speaks out against a

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self-centered private imagination, underscoring the need for a "social imagination: the capacity to invent visions of what should be and what might be in our deficient society, on the streets where we live, in our schools" (p. 5). This imaginative capacity "that permits us to give credence to alternative realities" (p.3) is what enables us "to create or even participate in what might be called community" (p. 37). Similarly, only after having accepted an imaginary "unreality" "can we turn back to the variegated social realities we share and, perhaps, find them enhanced, expanded, corrigible" (pp. 186-7). A "greening" imagination then is what can prevent idolatry of "the principalities and powers" that might otherwise hinder the journey of the self or soul (cf. Huebner, 1985, p. 367; 1993, p. 405). So, without these so-called "maggots" of the imagination we are beholden to the Goliaths of homogeneity. Free, moral thinkers mature only in a society that fosters imaginative thinking.

In view of the strong tendency to privilege rationalistic discourse over the imaginative and the affective in Western or, more accurately perhaps, technological education,[4] it cannot be over-emphasized that virtue must be taught through literature that engages the emotions through an imaginative adventure. Why literature? Because we are story-telling creatures, and stories are the best way to satisfy existential thinking because they help us to both think and feel about our deepest questions. Along these lines, Kieran Egan (1988) refers to Levi-Strauss (1962) in describing stories as *"bonnes à penser"* "(good things to think with)" (p. 93), and says that this is due to their "power . . . to fix affective responses to the messages" (p. 104). "Our emotions, to put it very crudely," Egan comments, "are better things to remember with than are our intellects" (p. 104). Only when a vision of the Good is imaginatively experienced then, the emotions fully

engaged, may the learner begin to desire virtue to a lasting rational effect. To borrow

from Lewis's (1946) own description of the effect that reading George MacDonald had

on him, such stories have the power to "baptize the imagination" (p.34). As I will discuss

in more detail in Chapter 1, Wordsworth (1850) describes such moral development in

terms of the "feeling intellect" (*The Prelude*, bk. XIV, line 226).

To achieve this, the teacher must be clear on his role as the nurturer of moral

emotions. As Lewis (1947a) argues, the literary educator's task is to 'irrigate emotional

deserts' by "inculcat[ing] just sentiments" (p. 24).[5] Linking his reasoning to Plato and

Aristotle, Lewis says, "The little human animal will not at first have the right responses.

It must be trained to feel pleasure, liking, disgust, and hatred at those things which really

are pleasant, likeable, disgusting, and hateful" (pp. 26-7). To ignore this is to educate

people who suffer from "atrophy of the chest" (p. 35), and it is, as he observes, an

"outrage" (p. 34) to consider anyone to be intellectual who is not also trained in moral

feeling. Similarly, Huebner (1961) worries about an "objective, stereotyped,

unenthusiastic" curriculum that easily "filter[s] out the child's curiosity toward and love

for the world, and hence filter[s] out the responsibility for it" (p. 11). And he advocates

an education of "wonder" (1959, p. 8) as central to moral development, saying, "The

closing of the asking mouth and the shutting of the wondering eye lead eventually to the

hardening of the responsible heart" (1961, p. 12). As a result, Huebner takes Nietzsche's

question, "what have you really loved 'till now?" and frames it as a form of educational

criticism by which teachers could ask themselves, "What have your children really loved

'till now, as a result of their experience in your classroom? What will they really love

when they leave your classroom in June?" (pp. 12-13). These questions are as vital as they are disturbing.

Our primary task then as literature teachers is, I will argue, to nurture moral emotions, and so educate the virtuous human being. In my exploration of how MacDonald, Lewis, and L'Engle achieve this I have found a common theme, the *Magnificat*, which I address more fully in Chapter 1. Succinctly, this fundamental concept is the enigma of how the humble are exalted or the "underdog" is the one who wins. As a result of this ethical pattern of humility rooted in Christian thinking these authors subvert traditional cultural discourse which privileges the so-called "masculine" values of reason, autonomy, and egotistical power, and celebrate, rather, the so-called "feminine" values of imagination, interdependence, and humility. In their moral vision, these authors therefore also offer an education that serves to disentangle repressive from liberatory discourse by repairing misreadings and reinventing a humane curriculum of widening reason and wonder.

The following chapters explore how these three related classic authors in fantasy literature, George MacDonald, C.S. Lewis, and Madeleine L'Engle, nurture the moral imagination. Chapter 1 considers how their ethical pattern is grounded in the moral imagination of John Milton and William Wordsworth. Chapter 2 considers how the Victorian 'granddaddy' of imaginative children's literature, George MacDonald, celebrates "childlike" heroism in his mythic fairy tales. Chapter 3 considers how the Oxford and Cambridge don, C.S. Lewis, develops a surprisingly "feminine" heroic in the *Chronicles of Narnia*. Chapter 4 considers how the American author, wife, mother, and grandmother, Madeleine L'Engle, offers a mythic understanding of heroism in the

"Wind" trilogy. Chapter 5 considers theoretical curriculum implications for the combined imaginative education of these three authors. And Chapter 6 considers some practical pedagogical interpretations of teaching this heroic fantasy literature in the classroom. Together, these chapters are intended to help teachers explore educating the moral imagination through fantasy literature.

CHAPTER ONE
THE PEDAGOGY OF HUMILITY IN MILTON AND
WORDSWORTH

To begin to consider how the fantasy literature of George MacDonald, C.S.

Lewis, and Madeleine L'Engle, nurtures the moral imagination of the learner, and what

theoretical and practical differences that can make to teachers, I would like to consider in

this chapter how their thinking is grounded in the moral imagination of two key literary

figures, John Milton (1608-1674), as he articulates the Christian Gospel,[1] and William

Wordsworth (1770-1850), the Romantic poet. Together these older authors help us to

recognize the ethical pattern of humility that is often misread and, importantly, is

prominent in this fantasy literature. Said another way, MacDonald, Lewis, and L'Engle,

informed by these representative "elders," form a community of imaginative thinkers

who educate the ethical human being into an ethos that disrupts and repairs traditional

cultural values. In a rationalistic educational environment that esteems narrowly

conceived intellectual achievement and an overall commitment to individualism, their

imaginative education for the purpose of spiritual well-being has profound implications.

Their pedagogy is counter-cultural and potentially transformative. And in the words of

Meguido Zola (2003), we might think of all of these authors as belonging to a literary

"communion of saints"[2] because they share a common vision of achieving what is too

often overlooked and yet most needed: moral education through imaginative pedagogy.

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First, Milton's imaginative epic vision explores the Christian worldview shared by MacDonald, Lewis, and L'Engle: the Gospel which recognizes human sinfulness, or 'missing the mark,' and emphasizes the power of redemption. There are distinct parallels between the dramatic conflict in their fantasy novels and Milton's dramatization of the conflicting heroic models of the Western classical epic and the Christian ethos of humility. Specifically, as I have argued elsewhere (1983; 2002a), in *Paradise Lost* (1667) and *Paradise Regained* (1671), Milton dramatizes how the "masculine" quest for military and intellectual power of the classical Western tradition is undone by the "feminine" quest for love and humility in the Christian paradigm. This revolutionary Christian ethos of humility, which Ralph Waldo Emerson (1838) calls "the genius of . . . . Christian ethics" (p. 366) —"the better fortitude/ Of Patience and Heroic Martyrdom/ [hitherto] Unsung" (Milton, 1667, PL, bk. IX, lines 31-3)—is, as Alasdair MacIntyre (1984) observes, one that neither Homer's warrior nor Aristotle's gentleman understands or aspires to (p. 182);[3] and it constitutes, as Milton shows, the ultimate subversion of oppression. So the cultural privileging of "masculine" values of reason, autonomy, and egotistical power, is subverted by a celebration of "feminine" values of imagination, interdependence, and humility. This liberatory epic vision suggests several further educational questions.

To what extent are we teachers, together with our students, "classical heroes" who seek self-gratification? To what extent is there a misplaced focus on self at the expense of otherness? To what extent do we teach, implicitly or explicitly, the classical idea that individual power and prestige is superior to community? To what extent do we honour a narrow rationalistic view of intellectual achievement and dishonour the deeper journey of

spirituality? To what extent does a repressive hierarchical pedagogy hinder student development? Conversely, to what extent do we seek servant-leadership? Find meaning through attentiveness to others? Emphasize community? Honour a curriculum of widening imagination? Honour and foster the personal quest for spirituality? Hold classroom authority fluidly, like servant-leaders, empowering students in development?

It seems to me that many of us wake up most days showing strong tendencies to classical heroism. Whatever our objectives might lack in clarity we make up for in the zeal to achieve them as we believe we know best, regardless of how this might silence or incapacitate some students. For many of us it is perhaps only through the long day of teaching to a mixed review that we come to relinquish a tight grip on traditional cultural values and seek out a better way. In looking at Milton's dramatization of conflicting ways of being, the classical and the spiritual, and how this informs the moral imagination of MacDonald, Lewis, and L'Engle, we can consider developing a pedagogy that is transformed by humility.

Second, these authors show and acknowledge, in spite of differences, an indebtedness to Wordsworth's Romantic celebration of imagination (L'Engle, 1985; Lewis, 1949b; MacDonald, 1893). In particular, Wordsworth's (1850) emphasis on imagination as a superior way of knowing, "Reason . . . exalted" (*The Prelude*, bk. XIV, line 192), poses a challenge to the academic tradition of disembodied rationalism. In conjunction with this, his sense of the numinous interrupts a materialistic worldview. In Wordsworth's vision there is an all-pervasive mystery to life that inspires wonder and awe, and it is with this attitude of openness to wonder towards both the known and the unknown through which education best occurs. Instead of reducing education to a

utilitarian function of technical performance for the purpose of socialization, an education informed by Wordsworth emphasizes fostering the imaginative thinker who can introduce innovative change. Certainly his emphasis on childhood as a time of rich imaginative knowing is a major shift from the view of the child as a "blank slate" associated with John Locke. Moreover, Wordsworth's (1850) concept of a humane education which fosters moral growth as occurring through the nurture of the "feeling intellect" (*The Prelude*, bk. XIV, line 226) presents a significant challenge to an educational culture marked by rationalism. This Romantic vision suggests several further educational questions.

To what extent do we explore an imaginative curriculum with our students? And to what extent do we lapse into, or even advocate, a utilitarian pedagogy? To what extent do we encourage a sense of mystery and wonder in our line of questioning and assignments? And to what extent do we block out wonder by requiring answers that appear single-layered and incontestable to students, hence "teaching" students how to give certain "correct" answers instead of encouraging the crossing of boundaries into new ways of seeing? Doubtless, we educate for utility and socialization, as we well should to some extent, but do our students also acquire the important sense that creativity can transform both? To what extent do we approach our students as if they were capable of rich imaginative knowing? And to what extent do we "dumb down" our expectations, assuming students can't or wouldn't want to explore further possibilities? To what extent are we motivated to nurture moral development in a conflicted cultural and educational context? And to what extent are we satisfied with an intellect that does not "feel"?

As literature teachers informed by wonderfully imaginative written products, an imaginative pedagogy may seem to us as inherent to the task. But it seems to me that it is all too common to teach highly imaginative literature in unimaginative ways. While we may think we are engaging students' imaginations by virtue of the assigned reading, which is true enough, our classroom activity and following assignments may instead too often imitate the rationalistic worksheet approach that we have been taught. For example, "What struggle did this character have in Chapter 2?" And, "List eight adjectives on page 22." While developing these skills have their place, too much of this sort of activity crowds out the possibility of more challenging and meaningful assignments that would encourage the students to think and feel deeply about their literary experience. For example, "Write from inside that character's experience, in his voice, exploring his thoughts during that moral struggle. Present as a dramatic monologue." And, "Use four of those adjectives in a piece illustrating a) fear, b) surprise, c) frustration, d) hilarity, or e) another emotion/idea of your choice."

Given our daily constraints in teaching many students in a busy schedule of discrete blocks of time, and needing to prove that we have met required learning objectives designed to ensure a "standardized" quality of education, it is tempting to substitute a technical approach for the imaginative. The challenge for the literature teacher is to rethink and redesign a curriculum that deepens and strengthens imaginative thinking within our constraints. In looking at Wordsworth's imaginative education, and how it informs the moral imagination of MacDonald, Lewis, and L'Engle, we can consider developing an alternative pedagogy of wonder that, in fact, can energize us and our students, and so assist us within our constraints. Engaged, imaginative students not

only meet but, by far, excel in any learning outcome. And so like Milton's dramatization of a spiritual way of being, Wordsworth's nurture of imaginative wonder is rooted in a pedagogy of humility that transforms rationalism.

Before we consider Milton's and Wordsworth's pedagogy of humility in more detail, I would like to clarify one distinguishing concept central to their moral imagination—the *Magnificat*—a concept which is key to and pervasive in Christianity,[4] has its roots in Judaism, and without which the pedagogy of Milton and Wordsworth, as well as that of MacDonald, Lewis, and L'Engle, is not to be understood.

The Magnificat: A Heroic Reversal

The youngest son, overlooked by his father, slays the giant with five smooth stones and becomes king. (David). The few warriors who fall down at the bank of the stream to lap up water with their tongues, like dogs, are vastly outnumbered and, miraculously, win. (Gideon's men). The unwed teenager agrees to bear the promised one and becomes the spiritual mother of humanity. (Mary, mother of Jesus). A prophecy announces how "a little child shall lead them" (Isaiah 11:6, King James Version), and the Galilean who "suffers with us" (cf. Whitehead, 1929b, pp. 520-33) redeems the world. (Jesus). All these "likely" stories illustrate the paradoxical biblical pattern of inverse heroism—the *Magnificat*—which is the key to the moral imagination in these authors. The enigma is that the humble are exalted or the "underdog" is the one who wins. The term *Magnificat* originates in the Latin version of Mary's song when she exalts in having been chosen to be the mother of the Messiah (Luke 1:46-55): *Magnificat anima mea Dominum* (my soul doth magnify the Lord). This has a precedent in Hannah's song when she rejoices over having become Samuel's mother (1 Sam. 2: 1-10), and in David when

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he echoes the theme of how the humble are exalted (Psalm 34: 2-3). What is striking here is how these unlikely heroes subvert and overcome the powerful hegemonies that oppose them.

In the field of children's literature the principle of the *Magnificat* has fundamental importance. G.K. Chesterton (1908, pp. 88-9) and Bruno Bettelheim in citation (1975, p. 64) both note how this moral principle operates in the Cinderella story. And as we shall see in the following chapters, George MacDonald, C.S. Lewis, and Madeleine L'Engle, in particular celebrate this paradoxical heroic ethos of the weak child who becomes the grand saviour. For example, the puzzled school principal, Mr. Jenkins, in L'Engle's *A Wind in the Door* (1973)[5] asks, "But a child—One small child—why is he so important?" And he hears the cherubim give this educative answer: "It is the pattern throughout Creation. One child, one man, can swing the balance of the universe" (p. 179). In a world that measures its worth in economic and intellectual achievement, where size and ego rank high and so render the young relatively unimportant or voiceless, it is especially striking how these authors create child-saviours who exhibit the greater spiritual strength of love. In sharp relief to what Maria Tatar (1992) calls the "hardened pedaphobia" (p. 53) that characterizes the many cautionary tales of children's literature in which "curiosity and stubbornness" are treated as punishable disobedience (pp. 25-6, 30), these authors exhibit a moral imagination that celebrates the child as a leader. This heroic reversal culminates in J. R. R. Tolkien's (1947) famous definition of the highest and most authentic purpose of the fairy tale as the ultimate surprise of what he coined as *Eucatastrophe*:

the good catastrophe, the sudden joyous 'turn' . . . . [which] denies ... universal final defeat and in so far is *evangelium*, giving a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief. (p. 68)

But very often in the academic discourse the concept of the *Magnificat* is overlooked. The question, "Can there be heroes in children's literature?", is grounded in the rhetorical question, "Are not children by their very frailty and weakness the opposite of all that we might regard as heroic?" Indeed, Tatar (1992) emphasizes how the Freudian reading of childhood as "narcissism and hostility" makes it difficult for us to see children as victimized or heroic (p. xxiv). Of the three children's authors of this study, in particular, some critics view the heroic concept put to children as incongruous (Crouch, 1972, p. 124; Manlove, 1987, p. 123). Others protest the portrayal of female characters as inferior to the male heroes (Filmer, 1993; Fredrick and McBride, 2001; Lehr, 1995). This confusion surrounding the spiritual heroism of the "unlikely" child-hero reflects today's culture wars over authority—over privileged voices and the quest for moral truth—and to this the combined voices of Milton and Wordsworth have considerable to say. Our understanding of the centrality of the *Magnificat* in the moral imagination can lead to a truly liberatory pedagogy.

Let us now turn to Milton's and Wordsworth's pedagogy of humility in more detail.

The Miltonic Argument: From Heroic Idol to Image and Achievement

How we read John Milton's exploration of heroism in *Paradise Lost* (1667) and *Paradise Regained* (1671), and how we regard his characterization of Eve in particular, is a kind of "litmus test" of our cultural assumptions and, consequently, our notions of

literature and teaching the moral imagination. To what extent might we agree with readings (Blake, 1793; Shelley, 1821) asserting that Milton's Satan is the epic hero? How do we regard Eve? Is Eve a lesser intellectual and moral being next to Adam, more prone to error, an inferior domestic? Or is she a noble human, intellectually bright and uniquely gifted in intuition, of equal worth, capable of superior heroism, a leader in undoing the hegemonies that would bind her and all of humanity? Do we see Eve as the product of centuries of male misogyny or, as Adam hails her, as "Heav'n's last best gift" (*PL*, bk. V, line 19)? Our reading of Milton tells us much about our position in the current culture wars, and how we therefore read literature, regard students, and our own role as educators of the moral imagination.

As I have said earlier, in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* Milton's epic vision subverts Western classical heroism with the spiritual ethos of humility. The traditional cultural values of reason, autonomy, and egotistical power associated with the "masculine" are disrupted and repaired by the neglected or sometimes rejected qualities of imagination, interdependence, and humility associated with the "feminine." Pedagogically, this constitutes a rejection of oppressive learning tools for liberatory ones.

Certainly, the historical appropriation or abuse of Christianity, so-called, to sanction tools of oppression, such as racism and sexism for example, is ever to be distinguished from the liberatory nature of sincere Christianity which writers like Milton, and later MacDonald, Lewis, and L'Engle, explore. Along these lines, Joan Malory Webber (1980) notes the erroneous tendency to regard epic history and myth "as conservative of a cultural past" when in fact the tradition of Western epic is to criticize the culture it arises from, and to this Milton is no exception (pp. 3-8). Similarly, Joseph

Wittreich (1987) views the "patriarchal or misogynistic attitudes . . . of the militantly

masculine world of epic poetry [as] Milton's bogie . . . . the rude contrivance" which

Milton transforms (p. 101). To unpack this argument, I will consider Milton's conflicting

and conjoining heroic voices as I have elsewhere (1983):[6] Satan as the heroic idol,

"strength from Truth divided" (*PL*, bk. VI, line 381); the Son as the heroic image whose

"weakness shall o'ercome Satanic strength" (*PR*, bk, I, line 161); and Adam and Eve as

the heroic achievement whose journey becomes "a paradise within . . . happier far" (*PL*,

bk. XII, line 587). Of course, the opposing Satanic sham and the divine archetype of

genuine heroism define the moral arena in which humanity finds itself.

The Heroic Idol: "strength from Truth divided."

The fallen arch-angel, Satan, may be at first misread as the sole hero in Milton's

epic vision if the only heroism considered by the reader is the classical one of fierce

autonomy fueled by pride, ambition, rage, hatred, deceit, and lust for personal glory. In

this sense William Blake (1793) insisted that Milton was "of the Devil's party without

knowing it" (p. 353), and Percy Bysshe Shelley (1821) regarded "Milton's Devil as a

moral being . . . far superior to his God" (p. 358). In contrast, Samuel Taylor Coleridge

(1818) argued that "Milton has carefully marked in his Satan the intense selfishness, the

alcohol of egotism, which would rather reign in hell than serve in heaven," emphasizing

that this "is the character so often seen *in little* on the political stage" (p. 95). It is worth

considering then, as several critics suggest, that it is in fact Milton's intent for readers to

be impressed by Satan's exemplary classical stature in order to experience both its appeal

and how such an exercise in spiritual death is doomed to failure. As Jon S. Lawry (1968)

argues,

It is a clever mistake to believe that Milton was of the devil's party without knowing it; on the contrary, he wants us to know, fully, that it is we who have been of the devil's party without knowing it. (p. 127)

Joseph Wittreich (1987) describes "Satan's perspective [as] contagious" (p. 19), and

Diane Kelsey McColley (1988) notes the effect of the poem to engage the reader in moral

discovery (p. 101). In spite of the appeal of classical heroism, it becomes clear that comic

deflation is woven into the very grandeur of the fallen angel. For one "proudly eminent"

whose "form had yet not lost/ All her Original brightness" (*PL*, bk. I, lines 590-2), his

continuous demise is evident when the fallen angels, formerly gigantic, assemble for

council at *Pandæmonium*, "thir Straw-built Citadel," like buzzing "Bees," "like that

Pigmean Race . . . . to smallest forms/ Reduc'd thir shapes immense" (bk. I, lines 768,

773, 780, 789-90). And though he boldly proclaims, "To reign is worth ambition though

in Hell:/ Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heav'n" (bk. I, lines 262-3), the emptiness

of this political rhetoric is evident in his private torment: "Me miserable! which way shall

I fly/ Infinite wrath, and infinite despair?/ Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell" (bk.

IV, lines 73-5). Milton's Satan, the emblem of "strength from Truth divided and from

Just" (bk. VI, line 381) has, as C.S. Lewis (1942a) observes, "become more a Lie than a

Liar, a personified self-contradiction" (p. 97).

Interestingly, those who categorically object to Milton's God and universe

because of hierarchy as unacceptable power-mongering do not seem to notice that it is

precisely Satan, not God, who is the power-hungry figure. Out of his characteristic "sense

of injur'd merit" (bk. I, line 98), Satan is the one who wants to be at the helm of a

domineering patriarchal hierarchy (Webber, 1980, pp. 16-7). While God's concept of

hierarchy is remarkably "fluid" (Lewalski, 1974, p. 6), handing over the scepter to the

Son, creating angels and humanity differing only in degree, creating complementary genders, it is Satan who wants to establish himself as the key authority, whether in heaven or hell, and exercise rigid power.

As suggested earlier, the classical position embodied in Milton's Satan raises several vital educational questions about a repressive pedagogy that teaches idolatry of power, individualism, and rationalistic control. The daily challenge, as I have said, is for us to consider in what ways we might silence or disenfranchise students and instead consciously seek ways to resist this rather choleric tendency. For example, on one occasion a teacher elegantly and effectively silenced an adult student who was making enthusiastic religious responses in a public night school class discussion. Because the student's comments were more personal testimonials than neatly rational, "objectively" voiced analyses, the teacher decided they were unacceptable in the context of the literary analysis, more or less said so, and only realized her error when the vocal student never volunteered another word. A subsequent apology did nothing to restore that student's willingness to engage with the class. Classical success = pedagogical failure. The better and moral pedagogy would have involved honouring the student's subjective voice from the start, and if directing her towards "objective" expression doing so in a way that supported and encouraged her engagement the entire time. How easy it is to transgress against our students' developing voices. How easy it is to impose our experience in oppressive ways. In MacDonald's fairy tale, "The Shadows" (1864b), shadows frighten characters into moral feeling; perhaps considering the dark pedagogy of Milton's Satan may assist us in re-examining our own. Educating the moral imagination begins with

relinquishing tight control; only then do we have a chance to make poetry sing (and stronger logic follow) in students' hearts.

The Heroic Image: "His weakness shall o'ercome Satanic strength."

In the Son in *Paradise Lost*, and in his incarnation as Jesus in *Paradise Regained*, the reader encounters the genuine image of heroism: "in his face/ Divine compassion visibly appear'd,/ Love without end, and without measure Grace" (*PL*, bk. III, lines 140-2). With a self-giving heroism so revolutionary it is "Above Heroic" (*Paradise Regained*, bk. I, line 15), the Son illustrates the paradox that what is classically seen as weak actually exemplifies greater spiritual strength: "By Humiliation and strong Sufferance:/ His weakness shall o'ercome Satanic strength" (*PR*, bk. I, lines 160-1). So as "unexampl'd love" (*PL*, bk. III, line 410), in contradistinction to Satan's grasping for hierarchical power, the Son relinquishes his authority in order to offer himself as atonement for fallen humanity. (The fact that he is able to take up his authority again afterwards foreshadows the strong hope that he offers humanity: full restoration, and out of evil even greater good.) With ultimate compassion he fills the silence in heaven with the gift of himself:

> Behold mee then, mee for him, life for life
> I offer, on mee let thine anger fall;
> Account mee man; I for his sake will leave
> Thy bosom, and this glory next to thee
> Freely put off, and for him lastly die
> Well pleas'd, on me let Death wreck all his rage. . . .
>
> (*PL*, bk. III, lines 236-41)

From his example Adam and Eve learn that "to obey [God] is happiness entire" (bk. VI, line 741). When he comes to them in Eden as judge they experience how he

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assumes the form of a servant who mercifully clothes them, allegorical of how the

Messiah clothes humanity's "inward nakedness" (bk. X, lines 211-23). And in the

Nazarene in *Paradise Regained*, the reader experiences discovery of self-knowledge

through the rejection of the idolatry of worldly power and prestige, "*Eden* rais'd in the

waste Wilderness" (bk. I, line 7). Christ's victory over temptation in the "pathless Desert

. . . by human steps untrod" (bk. I, lines 296-8) is a triumph over the "masculine" values

that his tempter hopes to seduce him with, an embrace of this spirituality that is at once

"more humane, more heavenly" (bk. I, line 221). The complaint against testosterone is

that it is insufficiently harnessed for the greater good of humanity; the Messiah, as Milton

illustrates, apparently knows how to and chooses to channel its potency. Rejecting pomp

and circumstance, "our Saviour meek . . . unobserv'd/ Home to his Mother's house

private return'd" (*PR*, bk. IV, lines 636, 638-9). As Webber (1980) argues, Jesus's

renunciation of classical masculine aggression—"that cumbersome/ Luggage of war . . .

argument/ Of human weakness rather than of strength" (*PR*, bk. IV, lines 400-2)—and his

affirmation of his nurturing mother upon his success,

> repairs the damage done to self by Adam and Eve, and acknowledges the
> damage done to the world . . . . combin[ing within himself, as he does,]
> the qualities of Adam and Eve which had been distinguished in their
> creation. (p. 19)

So God-with-us, out of his characteristic love, inspires life. His spiritual heroism

of obedience to God characterized by humility, patience, fortitude, magnanimity,

martyrdom, and ultimately fired by love (Hilder, 2002a), is the true creative heroic image

that will triumph.

And with the Son, Milton suggests raises several vital educational questions along the lines of a liberatory pedagogy that teaches humility, interdependence, willingness to relinquish rationalistic control, and deep respect for our students and who they may become. The daily challenge then is for us to consider in what ways we might affirm students and give them voice. (Not an easy task, perhaps especially for teachers of adolescents.) For example, how many of us can name indebtedness to one or two of our own teachers who showed enthusiastic faith in our developing ability? In the light of "common day" the evidence of our ability at the time was not particularly astonishing; the difference was that that teacher encouraged us to reach higher, and so we did. (So different from the teacher who insists to the parent, "No, that child is just a 'C' student, nothing more," and refuses to consider a contrary possibility.) Or we can foster servant-leadership by demonstrating our own willingness to serve our students diligently and by encouraging them to develop similarly in designated times of assisting each other. Much of this attitude is "caught" rather than taught, for example, in our manner of encouraging discussion and doing something with each offering rather than letting it "drop." An overall "reverence" for our students, frequently referred to as Buber's I-Thou relation, underpins every act of teaching the moral imagination. Students who feel and know they are honoured are not only more likely to succeed intellectually, but are more likely to be receptive of moral nurture. Spiritual heroism=pedagogical success.

The Heroic Achievement: "A paradise within . . . happier far."

As I have said, how we regard teaching the moral imagination overall, and Milton's contribution in particular, has much to do with how we read his depiction of Eve. Not only does Satan single out Eve as the focus of his efforts in *Paradise Lost*, so do

the critics, for how we view her is central to Milton's heroic argument, and whether or not we regard her as inferior to Adam continues to be the debate. So if Adam tends to get short shrift in criticism, it is because we either think we understand him (superior male reason curbing female imagination), or because we think we understand him only in his relation to Eve (incomplete male reason and not all too consistently rational and/or imaginative at that). Either way, whatever we glean from Eve's rebellion and regeneration reflects on Adam, for they should be seen as one, one interactive image of humanity. Said another way, to focus on Eve's heroism is to include Adam's, for he learns from her as she does from him.

On the one side of the debate raging around Eve, Patricia Clifford and Sharon Friesen (2003), rather in the tradition of Blake and Shelley though they are not considering Milton's story in particular, regard Eve's choice to rebel, along with Lilith's and Pandora's, as the praiseworthy act of transgression that enables educational freedom—the heroic act. Focusing on Eve's humility, the postmodernist Christine Froula (1983), for another, insists that Eve's "imagination is so successfully colonized by patriarchal authority that she literally becomes its voice" (p. 329). To argue this position though Froula must maintain a singular and uncritical view of Eve, and the critical reader might well ask, "Of which Eve are you speaking?" So Froula's reading begs the question: who indeed is silencing or disenfranchising Eve (and which Eve)? Carol Gilligan (1982) makes this pertinent observation:

> As we have listened for centuries to the voices of men and the theories of development that their experience informs, so we have come more recently to notice not only the silence of women but the difficulty in hearing what they say when they speak. (p. 173)

I suggest that it is not Milton who silences Eve, but classical heroism in its various

representations that has difficulty hearing her. For example, when Eve declares to

Adam—

> O thou for whom
> And from whom I was form'd flesh of thy flesh,
> And without whom am to no end, my Guide
> And Head . . . . (*PL*, bk. IV, lines 440-3)

—it is worth considering that she is not so much "colonized" as she is freely choosing

mutuality and humility. Significantly, Adam does no less in his appellations to her: "Best

Image of myself and dearer half" (bk. V, line 95); "Mother of all things living, since by

thee/ Man is to live" (bk. XI, lines 160-1). Also, it is telling how Froula appropriates

classical or patriarchal language for her argument when she concludes, "As women begin

to come into a share of the 'patrimony,' we can begin to imagine a redistribution of

'credit' that will undo the invisible power of the literary tradition and make for a richer

world" (p. 344). "Sharing in patrimony," "credit," and "power"—these terms all arise

from the very classical assumptions which Milton challenges. Then, in company with

Froula's reading, Janet E. Halley (1988) emphasizes "that female heterosexuality is not

natural but socially constructed" (p. 234), and insists that opposing Milton critics

(Lewalski, McColley, and Webber, in particular) share with Milton "in the historical

construction of the female subject" (p. 234). Much more moderate, but still troubled by

Eve's apparent "inferiority," critics like Julia M. Walker (1988) and Susanne Woods

(1988) caution readers to consider the tension between Milton's "profound respect for

human liberty" and his "patriarchal assumptions" in which his "women are not as free as

his men" (Woods, pp. 19, 30).

On the other side of the critical spectrum, we might regard Eve as wholly human, wholly fit, and eminently heroic, and our task then as literature teachers of the moral imagination is to liberate Eve from the misogynistic tradition that misreads her. As Diane Kelsey McColley (1983) argues, Milton responds to misogynistic tradition with his reform of the faulty dualistic intellectual heritage which assumes "that nature and spirit, body and soul, passion and reason, and art and truth are inherently antithetical and that woman, the primordial temptress, represents the dark and dangerous (or rebellious and thrilling) side of each antithesis" (p. 3). Milton's enormous task, as McColley argues, is "to create an Eve who is imaginative and rational, sensuous and intelligent, passionate and chaste, and free and responsible" (p.3). Pointedly, McColley (1988) associates misreadings of Eve with Satanic violence:

> Satan throughout is a cautionary kinetic emblem for the act of interpretation. . . . And whenever there is a rape of the text, Eve gets the worst of it. Whenever we appropriate the poem for our own textual politics, we exploit Eve as text object. (p. 101)

Similarly, Joan Malory Webber (1980) points out the irony that postmodern deconstructionists "attack Milton with weapons which he himself gave us the power to create by being among the first to recognize these issues" (p. 4). And Joseph Wittreich (1987) argues that *Paradise Lost* is "a poem that acknowledges and affirms the principles of a feminist hermeneutic: that women are fully human and to be valued as such, and that the experience of women is itself a pathway to understanding—and to liberation" (p. 97). Indeed, Wittreich points out that Milton's early female readership regarded his work as empowering for women's liberation. Likewise, he directs attention to Rosemary Radford Ruther's (1985) feminist reading of the Bible which suggests that "divine revelation does not buttress, but destabilizes, the ideologies that support the social order" (cited in

Wittreich, p. 97). And together with these voices, I argue that Milton, in fact, enables us to offer a feminist criticism of the master narrative of classical heroism. This reading of Eve poses a unique opportunity for literature teachers to undo misogyny with their students. I now turn to how Milton achieves this with Eve (and Adam).

Though Satan in *Paradise Regained* dismisses Eve as Adam's "facile consort" (bk. I, line 51), in the same classical spirit, arguably, as several of her feminist critics, this "Mother of all Mankind" (*PL*, bk. XI, line 159), remarkably, is the first human hero— first in her imitation of the deceiver's classical heroism in grasping knowledge for the sake of power, then in her penitent imitation of Christ-like humility which relinquishes self for others. Paradoxically, Eve, sentenced to sorrow in motherhood and submission to her husband's authority after the fall (bk. X, lines 193-6), becomes a salvific leader to Adam and to humanity. Paradoxically, like Christ, her willingness to suffer is life-giving. So when a suicidal Adam (bk. X, lines 720-844) rejects her misogynistically—"Out of my sight, thou Serpent" (bk. X, line 867)—Eve's loving confession of guilt and desire to suffer in his place "disarm[s]" (line 945) and softens him, bringing about his contrition and saving him from despair. It is noteworthy that Eve's language is a powerful echo of the Son's offer of self-sacrifice: "On me, sole cause to thee of all this woe,/ Mee mee only just object of his ire" (bk. X, lines 935-6). She re-enacts Christ-like "Humiliation [which] exalt[s]" (bk. III, line 313). As McColley (1983) observes,

> subordination is not demeaning, but is a means of promotion by unpredestined merit; and obedience is not a following of a set of instructions but a response to a divine calling, made in one's own distinctive way. The idea that service means loss of power, freedom, dignity, and opportunity is the central distortion of the Satanic mind.
>
> (p. 56)

The understanding then that loving service means genuine freedom and healing power is the central clarity of the Christ-like mind. This is the lesson Adam is beginning to learn from Eve. And part of this lesson requires that we revisit the apparent exclusivity of Adam having been "For contemplation . . . and valor form'd,/ For softness [Eve] and sweet attractive Grace" (bk. IV, lines 297-8). Is this passage outrageously sexist or are we missing some vital lesson? To consider this passage, let's remember that just as Adam's contemplative powers are insufficient company for him prior to Eve's creation, so are his contemplative powers unable to save him once he is fallen. Adam requires Eve's love in both instances, and Eve, notably, shows no deficiency in contemplative capacity, whether in absorbing Raphael's lectures or in conversation with Adam. Also, to be emphasized is that Eve's intuitive knowledge (she receives through dreams while Adam learns only discursively from Michael's lectures, bk. XII, lines 594-614) compares favourably with Raphael's distinction between intuitive angelic reason and discursive human reason where he suggests that intuitive reason may be the reward for obedience (bk. V, lines 485-595). Here too Milton destabilizes the familiar hierarchy of reason as governing intuition or imagination.

Overall then, Milton's psychosexual representation is inclusive, emphasizing the mutuality and interdependence of Adam and Eve, of their faculties and roles. In this dance between the genders, the polarizing question, "Who follows which leader?", loses its relevance. The question which begins as "Who has the most power?" changes to "Who serves?", and is as quickly followed by the observation, "Look at how they share." Certainly the poem closes with a vision of psychosexual harmony as Adam and Eve leave Eden in possession of "a paradise within . . . happier far" (bk. XII, line 587):

> The World was all before them, where to choose
> Thir place of rest, and Providence thir guide:
> They hand in hand with wand'ring steps and slow,
> Through *Eden* took thir solitary way. (bk. XII, lines 646-49)

So Eve, hardly "facile," is an instrumental epic figure whose heroism repairs fractured humanity. Her last words, also the last speaker's words in the epic, an extraordinary "privilege of place" for a woman (Wittreich, p. 107), exalt in the promise of how she occupies a vital role in the salvation of humanity: "though all by mee is lost,/ Such favor I unworthy am voutsaf't,/ By mee the Promis'd Seed shall all restore" (bk. XII, lines 621-3). This makes for interesting parallels with the emphasis on caring as associated with "feminine" moral imagination in current educational discourse (Gilligan, 1982; Kazemek, 1995; Noddings, 1984, 2002). The "feminine" heroism of *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* offers a paradigm shift that is as revolutionary in the 21st century (misunderstood, sometimes overlooked or ignored, but vital) as it first was in the 17th, or, indeed, the 1st. Our interpretive task as literature teachers, it appears, continues to be a wrestling match with the "bogie" of classical heroism. In the moral arena the lessons from Milton's Eve and Adam speak clearly to the educational enterprise: humility is the superior heroic that liberates.

Now, with the knowledge of the pedagogy of humility that Milton offers, let us turn to Wordsworth.

Wordsworth's Education into the "Feeling Intellect"

William Wordsworth's Romantic celebration of childhood constitutes a radical departure from the Western tendency to regard children as inferior adults in the making, and education, therefore, as an evolutionary process where childhood is a time of

ignorance that one must be taught to outgrow. Certainly his influence on children's

literature is recognized (L'Engle, 1985; McGillis, 1991; Pattison, 1978). Inheriting Jean

Jacques Rousseau's insistence in *Emile or On Education* (1762) on a child-centered

education, along with the 18th century moralist's veneration for "the natural man" free

from the imprisonment of culture and society, Wordsworth advances childhood as the

time of superior awareness. It is his focus on the superior nature of the "foolish and

weak" child—and his association of rich imaginative knowing with childhood—that

informs our understanding of the *Magnificat* in literature. And it may be remembered, as

Wordsworth gives voice to in "London, 1802" (1807a), the high esteem with which he

regards Milton's heroic legacy:

> MILTON! thou should'st be living at this hour:
> England hath need of thee. . .
> . . . the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
> Have forfeited their ancient English dower
> Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;
> Oh! raise us up, return to us again;
> And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power. (lines 1-8)

With distinct parallels to Milton's "feminine" heroism, Wordsworth (1850) offers an

education into the "feeling intellect" (*The Prelude*, bk. XIV, line 226).

In "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood"

(1807b), Wordsworth celebrates the young child with his intuitive awareness of "celestial

light" (line 4) as the "best Philosopher" (line 110), "Eye among the blind" (line 111),

"Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!" (line 114). His paradoxical preface—"The Child is Father

of the Man"—encapsulates his revolutionary stance: the child is the sage to the adult who

has forgotten his divine origins (line 66). As Samuel F. Pickering, Jr. (1981) points out,

"Locke's belief that the child was the father of the man had long been current among

educators, particularly among those with Calvinistic leanings" (p. 16). But unlike belief in the familiar idea that habits learned in childhood shape the adult, interpreted by John Locke (1693) as the infant mind being a "blank slate" without innate ideas, receiving impressions for better or worse, Wordsworth reinvents this old image with a radically new emphasis on the superiority of the child. Unlike Plato's sage who evolves to enlightenment, representative of classical Western confidence in discursive reason as the means to truth, Wordsworth's view of wisdom is, arguably, one of *devolution* where from birth on we enter a life that is "but a sleep and a forgetting" (*Intimations*, line 58) of our heavenly origins (line 66). The young child, however, who arrives in this life "trailing clouds of glory" (line 64) is closest to spiritual consciousness, and therefore our recollections of awareness of immortality from our childhood are what will nurture and protect us in adulthood when those visions necessarily "fade into the light of common day" (line 76). In an echo of the Old Testament prophecy, "a little child shall lead them" (Isaiah 11:6, King James Version), Wordsworth condemns the "blind Authority beating with his staff/ The child that might have led him" (*The Prelude*, bk. III, lines 608-9). By contrast, he condemns the "Presumption, folly, madness, in the men/ Who thrust themselves upon the passive world/ As Rulers of the world" (bk. XIII, lines 66-8). So classical active ("masculine") heroism is the world's curse; and a passive ("feminine") world the victim. His constant theme is of the unlikely child as the true spiritual leader: "Our childhood sits,/ Our simple childhood, sits upon a throne/ That hath more power than all the elements" (bk. V, lines 507-9).

Now Wordsworth's sentimental vision of childhood as essentially noble certainly raises some questions. For one, there seems to be a fundamental flaw in the idea of

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necessarily losing one's ability to perceive the intrinsic glory or numinous otherness in the troubled, workaday world. For if our perception must inevitably weaken, relying only upon receding memory, an education into spiritual heroism seems rather limited. On how Wordsworth's contribution may be revisited though I will say more in Chapter 2 as I address George MacDonald's insistence upon the "childlike." For another, Wordsworth's view of childhood's innocence is seriously challenged, not only by Freud, but by the proponents of original sin. For example, Robert Pattison (1978) asserts that Wordsworth is a "heretic" whose sentimental view of children's innocence rejects the Augustinian articulation of the doctrine of original sin. His pure child possesses what the adult can only hope to recollect—not very convincing either to the secular or the religious authorities emphasizing a darker view of the human psyche already at a young age. To this second challenge to Wordsworth's view of childhood's innocence I would suggest that, alternatively seen, Wordsworth is perhaps not so much a "heretic" departing from Christian orthodoxy wholesale as he is a significant revisionist (albeit presumably a pantheistic one) of the child-centered message of the New Testament (as well as the Old Testament).

As I have noted elsewhere (2002c), the recent discourse of feminist theologians uncovers how the radical message of the New Testament challenges and subverts a repressively patriarchal reading. Marcia J. Bunge (2001) notes the "radical" nature of Jesus receiving the children, identifying himself with them, and depicting them as models for adults at a time when children occupied such a low position in society (p. 11). Judith M. Gundry-Volf (2001) explores the "provocative" gospel teaching in which children are regarded "as recipients of divine insight and representatives of Jesus" (p. 59), noting that

Jesus "welcomed little children and did not privilege adults; rather, he privileged children and welcomed adults who became like children" (p. 56). She emphasizes the challenge that Jesus's teaching poses—"the arrival of a social world in part defined by and organized around children"—and that Jesus "cast judgment on the adult world because it is not the child's world" (p. 60). The invitation Jesus offers children, Gundry-Volf concludes, is not an initiation into the adult world but into "what is *properly theirs*—the reign of God" (p. 60). On the question of original sin in particular, as Barbara Pitkin (2001) argues, it is hardly appropriate to implicate young children in a view of sinful human nature "that takes as its normative representative the adult male" (p. 189).

It is this second reading of Wordsworth as a child-centered revisionist informing the Christian paradigm of the *Magnificat* that deserves highlighting: the Romantic poet's vision of the imaginative wonder of childhood makes the radical difference between complicity with classical Western discourse and a revolutionary voice for the historically disenfranchised. With his elevation of the child, regardless of whether we view that child as morally perfect (a blank slate?) or flawed (as well as gifted or graced), Wordsworth challenges the classical emphasis on a narrow rational adult discourse divorced from imagination. To ignore this is to miss much.

Importantly, as we consider Wordsworth's pedagogy of humility it cannot perhaps be over-emphasized that Wordsworth's child-centered vision bequeaths a distinctly "feminine" epistemology reminiscent of Eve's "softness . . . and sweet attractive Grace." The very opposite of associating "feminine" qualities with failure, Wordsworth contemplates his own education as a journey out of "pride of strength" in "conquest" into an inner quietness of the heart where he was "taught to feel" (*The*

Prelude, bk. II, lines 69-77). After his disillusionment over the carnage of the French

revolution as well as the post-revolutionary crowning of the new emperor "like an Opera

phantom" (bk. XI, line 369), he praises his own sister's influence in saving him from a

retreat into the "reasoning faculty enthroned" (bk. XI, line 329) by restoring him to a

sense of his true self as a poet (lines 346-7). He also esteems Nature as a force of

"maternal care . . . teaching comprehension with delight" (bk. III, lines 568-60), leading

him "to those sweet counsels between head and heart" (bk. XI, line 353). And most

poignantly, in clear rejection of the "masculine" classical heroic ethos, he describes the

mature human being in feminine terms:

> and he whose soul hath risen
> Up to the height of feeling intellect
> Shall want no humbler tenderness; his heart
> Be tender as a nursing mother's heart;
> Of female softness shall his life be full,
> Of humble cares and delicate desires,
> Mild interests and gentlest sympathies. (bk. XIV, lines 225-31)

In other words, the truly humane intellect speaks with the heart, and the heart with the

intellect. Reason and imagination, intellect and passion, should not be considered as

dichotomous elements rivaling for power but as complementary strengths. So

Wordsworth refers to "passion [as] . . . highest reason in a soul sublime" (bk. V, lines 40-

1). Similarly, he says

> Imagination . . . in truth,
> Is but another name for absolute power
> And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,
> And Reason in her most exalted mood. (bk. XIV, lines 189-92)

As Kieran Egan (1992) argues, in this declaration of imagination as "Reason . . . exalted"

"Wordsworth knew that reason and imagination were not mutually exclusive faculties, or

even in any way incompatible" (p. 25), and that "his combining profound thought with deep feeling" is "another power of the imagination" (p. 24).

In all this Wordsworth warns against the destructive nature of analytical reason apart from imagination. As he states in "The Tables Turned" (1798), "Our meddling intellect/ Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things: —/ We murder to dissect" (lines 26-8). Similarly, he criticizes a narrow rationalistic understanding of education: "But who shall parcel out/ His intellect by geometric rules,/ Split like a province into round and square?" (*The Prelude*, bk. II, lines 203-5), and dismisses science as "a prop/ To our infirmity . . . . By which we multiply distinctions, then/ Deem that our puny boundaries are things/ That we perceive, and not that we have made" (bk. II, lines 214-1). And his criticism of how we privilege educational authority which has little connection "with real feeling and just sense" (bk. XIII, line 172), misleading and debasing the majority for the advancement of "the wealthy Few" (line 209), remains relevant. Though we have made progress towards imaginative education in response to empiricism, Wordsworth's 19th century educational insights have yet to be widely grasped and implemented in the 21st.

Significantly, Wordsworth's concept of the imagination as the "feeling intellect" is inseparable from his moral vision. To exercise the feeling intellect is to exercise a morally informed imagination— "Reason . . . exalted." So Wordsworth condemns "that voluptuous life/ Unfeeling" (bk. IX, lines 345-6) "where good and evil interchange their names" (line 352)—echoes of Satan's resolve, "Evil be thou my Good" (*Paradise Lost*, bk. IV, line 110). He warns of "power and energy detached/ From moral purpose" (*The Prelude*, bk. XIII, lines 43-4), and teaches rather "to look with feelings of fraternal love/ Upon the unassuming things that hold/ A silent station in this beauteous world" (lines 45-

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7). Typical of the reversal of the *Magnificat*, Wordsworth applauds the higher "Power . . . [that] provokes to no quick turns/ Of self-applauding intellect; but trains/ To meekness, and exalts by humble faith" (bk. XIII, lines 20, 26-8). He insists that this paradoxical reversal is the moral order of the universe: "Nature . . . wants not power/ To consecrate . . . [but] to breathe/ Grandeur upon the very humblest face/ Of human life" (bk. XIII, lines 283-7). And crowning this moral vision is Wordsworth's affirmation of cosmic love: "By love subsists/ All lasting grandeur, by pervading love;/ That gone, we are as dust" (bk. XIV, lines 168-70). The high task of the educator then is to foster "this spiritual Love [which] acts not nor can exist/ Without Imagination" (lines 188-9). To foster this development of the moral imagination he recommends the education of old heroic stories (bk. IX, lines 364-70) and, in particular, emphasizes the power of fairy tale to nourish the child (bk. V, lines 341-6).

So with Wordsworth's understanding of the heroic reversal the educator is called to renovate, nourish, and repair (bk. XII, lines 210-5) the feeling intellect so that his student will develop into "a sensitive being, a *creative* soul" (bk. XII, line 207). To what extent are we willing to think with our feelings, and to feel with our thinking? Consider as valuable the insights of the child or young adult? Take seriously the "murderous" potential of rational analysis? To what extent do we choose to teach out of a sense of moral order?

Conclusion

Clearly, the literary heritage of Milton and Wordsworth form a growing pedagogy of humility that informs our understanding of George MacDonald, C.S. Lewis, and Madeleine L'Engle, as we shall explore in the following chapters, and it is their

imaginative moral education, arguably counter-cultural and potentially transformative,

that offers an alternative literary curriculum and pedagogy.

CHAPTER TWO
FOREVER CHILDLIKE: READING HEROISM IN GEORGE MACDONALD'S *PRINCESS* BOOKS AND OTHER FAIRY TALES

George MacDonald, (1824-1905), the former Scottish clergyman and popular

author, may be thought of as the Victorian 'granddaddy' of imaginative children's

literature, a voice of considerable influence. Together with his closest friend, Charles L.

Dodgson (Lewis Carroll), who wrote *Alice in Wonderland* (1865),[1] and other writers like

Charles Kingsley (*The Water Babies*, 1863), E. Nesbit (*Five Children and It*, 1902), J. M.

Barrie (*Peter Pan*, 1904), and Kenneth Grahame (*The Wind in the Willows*, 1908),

MacDonald was an early formative figure in the 19th century Golden Age of children's

literature where, influenced by the Romantics, the Victorians celebrated childhood and

developed a new interest in imaginative writing for children (Russell, 1997). In addition

to the claim of direct influence by the two twentieth century authors of children's fantasy

literature who are also the subject of this study, C.S. Lewis and Madeleine L'Engle,

several others speak favourably of MacDonald's impact, prominent authors such as G.K.

Chesterton, W.H. Auden, T.S. Eliot, Frederick Buechner, Maurice Sendak, and Jane

Yolen (cited in Guroian, 1998; Hein, 1982, 1993; Raeper, 1990). In particular, his mythic

stories offer an education that, unlike narrowly conceived didactic pedagogy and

literature, nurtures the moral imagination. Several critics speak of his exceptional ability

to convey goodness in an engaging, non-moralizing manner, marking something rather

new after the cautionary didactic tales (Auden, 1967; Avery, 1990; Hein, 1982, 1993;

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Lochhead, 1977). Certainly MacDonald's curriculum of childlike wonder developed in his mythic thinking challenges the Western tendency to marginalize imagination and spirituality within education discourse—and so raises the alternative of rethinking and revitalizing education for its imaginative and spiritual possibilities.

The context for MacDonald's joyous education of the moral imagination in his own spiritual journey is well documented. The author rejected the harsher aspects of his contemporary Calvinism out of his deep conviction of a loving God, and his own developing spirituality is a fusion of orthodox Calvinism with the imaginative vision of both German and English Romantics, as well as of some Christian mystics (Hein, 1982, 1993; McGillis, 1991; Robb, 1987).[2] In this chapter I will consider how in his fantasy stories, *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872), *The Princess and Curdie* (1882),[3] as well as in several shorter fairy tales,[4] "The Castle" (1864a), "The Shadows" (1864b), "Cross Purposes" (1867a), "The Golden Key" (1867b) , "The Carosyn"(1871a), "Little Daylight" (1871b), "The Wise Woman, or The Lost Princess: A Double Story" (1874), and "The Day Boy and the Night Girl" (1879), MacDonald facilitates the potential development of spiritual wholeness and well-being. To do this I will discuss how his vision of imaginative education, informed by the pervasive concept of childlike wonder, offers several further educational implications such as mythic education, metaphorical thinking, and a pedagogy of nurture.

MacDonald's Imaginative Education

In contrast to the Western emphasis on discursive reason as the means to wisdom, attended by wariness of the imagination and feeling, and an overall view of education as a rational and adult achievement, George MacDonald is heir to the Romantic revolution

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introduced by Rousseau, and especially as developed by Wordsworth. In particular,

individualism, the importance of sentiment, and the celebration of the child, first

articulated by Rousseau, and then Wordsworth's additional emphasis on spirituality and

the imagination, underpin MacDonald's vision. Certainly, MacDonald (1893) attests to

his indebtedness to the Romantics in his discussion of Wordsworth and Shelley (*A Dish*

of Orts, pp. 245-81). Of particular interest to the literature teacher is the special emphasis

MacDonald gives to imaginative learning and its relation to reason.

MacDonald views the imagination as the primary means to wisdom. He regards

the imagination as "that faculty in man which is likest to the prime operation of the power

of God" (p. 2). Similarly, he says, "The imagination is the light which redeems from the

darkness for the eyes of the understanding. Novalis says, 'The imagination is the stuff of

the intellect—affords, that is, the material upon which the intellect works'" (p. 14). And

importantly, he regards the imagination to be in harmony with reason: the human being is

one whole and the nature of the imagination is directive. As he says,

> Man is not divided when the manifestations of his life are distinguished.
> The intellect "is all in every part." There were no imagination without
> intellect, however much it may appear that intellect can exist without
> imagination. What we mean to insist upon is, that in finding out the works
> of God, the Intellect must labour, workman-like, under the direction of the
> architect, Imagination. (p.11)[5]

The architectural function of imagination, then, to extend his metaphor, is to employ

rational "contractors" that implement the imaginative design. So the educational goal is

to teach for "architectural" thinking that produces eminently reasonable designs.

MacDonald's holistic concept of the imaginative/rational human being is

dramatized in his somewhat allegorical fairytale, "The Day Boy and the Night Girl"

(1879). Here the witch Watho who "had a wolf in her mind," "car[ing] for nothing in itself—only for knowing it" (p. 241), represents the rationalistic, scientific quest for knowledge as the ultimate good by imprisoning the children Photogen and Nycteris in separate caves of ignorance, raising the boy, Photogen, ignorant of night, and the girl, Nycteris, ignorant of day. When the young people escape these caves and each learn to help the other's weakness, kill the witch and marry, this shows that the two ways of knowing, allegorized in the two genders, are complementary. As Photogen says,

> if ever two people couldn't do the one without the other, those two are
> Nycteris and I. She has got to teach me to be a brave man in the dark, and
> I have got to look after her until she can bear the heat of the sun, and he
> helps her to see, instead of blinding her. (p. 287)

Cynthia Marshall (1988) observes that in this fairy tale MacDonald overcomes the binary polarization of reason and imagination, traditionally viewed as "masculine" and "feminine." In associating Photogen with "an Apollonian preference for light and reason" and Nycteris with "the Romantic valuation of imagination, creation, and female virtue," MacDonald shows the necessary union of the two poles for spiritual wholeness (pp. 65-66). Moreover, their strengths are not limited to their gender. For love of each other, Nycteris comes to love the day best, and Photogen the night (p. 288). So, MacDonald transcends the dehumanizing wolf, "science," that would divorce the two ways of knowing.

It is worth emphasizing that MacDonald asserts the mutuality of scientific and poetic thinking. While C.N. Manlove (1975) considers MacDonald as "a would-be 'exclusive' modern fantasist" who occupies himself "with only the unconscious and imaginative side of the mind" and "tries to shut out the conscious selves of science and

law, intellect and will" (p. 98), the author's own words contradict this conclusion. For instance, he regards the "architect Imagination" as the faculty that inspires scientific hypothesis.

> "But the facts of Nature are to be discovered only by observation and experiment." True. But how does the man of science come to think of his experiments? . . . . We yield you your facts. The laws we claim for the prophetic imagination. "He hath set the world *in* man's heart," not in his understanding. And the heart must open the door to the understanding. It is the far-seeing imagination which beholds what might be a form of things, and says to the intellect: "Try whether that may not be the form of these things" . . . . Nay, the poetic relations themselves in the phenomenon may suggest to the imagination the law that rules its scientific life. (1893, p. 12)

Also, in his vision of their mutuality he considers that it is the immature mind that easily regards science as superior, and warns of the power of this faulty thinking to chase away poetry.

> Poetry is as true as Science, and Science as holy as Poetry; but young Poetry is timid and Science is fearless, and bears with her a colder atmosphere than the other has yet learned to brave. It is not that Madam Science shows any antagonism to Lady Poetry; but the atmosphere and plane on which alone they can meet as friends who understand each other, is the mind and heart of the sage, not of the boy. The youth gazes on the face of Science, cold, clear, beautiful; then, turning, looks for his friend— but alas! Poetry has fled. (p. 51)

So MacDonald's concept of education offers an interdependent view of reason/imagination where imagination proves rational, informing and heightening reason, but does not originate in reason or, rather, not in a narrowly conceived view of reason. He offers a holistic view of the human mind that curriculum theorists, designers, and teachers are still contending with.

Moreover, central to MacDonald's imaginative education is his distinctly moral vision. Reminiscent of the transcendent vision of Plato's "*noesis*," suggestive of intuitive

intelligence (pp. 221-6), Milton's "Reason . . . Intuitive" (*PL*, bk. V, lines 487-88),

Rousseau's "truth of sentiments" (p. 227), Wollstonecraft's "pure heart and exalted

imagination" (p. 325), and Wordsworth's "Imagination [as] Reason . . . exalted" (*The*

Prelude, bk. XIV, lines 189-92), MacDonald (1893) speaks of a moral or "right

imagination" that is in tune with the divine (p. 35). In his words, "To inquire into what

God has made is the main function of the imagination" (p. 2). Similarly, he says, "In very

truth, a wise imagination, which is the presence of the spirit of God, is the best guide that

man or woman can have . . . . We live by faith, and not by sight" (p. 28). To this

MacDonald contrasts an evil or "lawless imagination" (*The Princess and the Goblin*, p.

14) that debases and destroys humanity. Like Wordsworth, MacDonald develops a sense

of the imagination as the "feeling intellect" which fosters moral growth.

In this chapter I will consider how MacDonald educates the moral imagination

through his concept of "childlike" wonder and explore several curriculum implications of

his mythic education, metaphorical thinking, and a pedagogy of nurture.

Childlike Wonder

The centrality of childlike wonder to the educative journey is affirmed by various

educational thinkers. John Dewey (1916) identifies the need for all learners to "become

as little children" (p. 42), maintaining that childlike "plasticity" (p. 50)—the capacity for

wonder, insatiable appetite for questions, and capacity for experience without 'knowing

all the answers'—that distinguishes the lifelong learner. Dwayne E. Huebner (1959)

worries about how children lose their "curiosity and wonder and awe . . . for the sake of

conformity and functional performance in this world of technical proficiency," and

argues for the necessity of childlike wonder, stating that "Knowledge and learning alone

lead to manipulation and control—wonder and knowledge and learning lead to the

possibility of faith and love" (pp. 1, 8). In the words of G. Stanley Hall (1904),

> Gifted people seem to conserve their youth and to be all the more children,
> and perhaps especially all the more intensely adolescents, because of their
> gifts, and it is certainly one of the marks of genius that the plasticity and
> spontaneity of adolescence persists into maturity.
>
> (cited in Egan, 1997, p. 194)

And as Kieran Egan (1997) argues,

> When we suppress Mythic and Romantic characteristics as "childish
> things"—a suppression that seems to have been endemic to traditional
> academic schooling in the West—the too common result, as described by
> Hall, is that "we are prematurely old and senile of heart . . . . What we
> have left is second-hand, bookish, shopworn, and the heart is parched and
> bankrupt". . . . Rhetorically a tad over the top perhaps, but expressing the
> educational disaster of assuming we can somehow make young children
> "rational" before furthering the development of the intellectual
> characteristics out of which and along with which a rich rationality
> properly emerges. (p. 194)

This concept of childlike wonder is central to MacDonald's imaginative

education. In his stories MacDonald suggests an epistemology of wonder that overrides

an inflexible rationalistic perception. And it is the characters who relinquish rationalistic

tendencies and explore imaginative possibilities with a kind of bold unknowing who

make remarkable discoveries. So the reader learns in *The Princess and the Goblin* that "it

doesn't follow that [the princess] *was* lost, because she had lost herself" (p. 17).

Similarly, as Colin discovers in "The Carosyn" (1871a) mystery is revealed only when

the seeker "loses" or no longer relies on his conscious, controlling self. Conversely,

mystery is inaccessible when the seeker prematurely demands rational knowledge.

For MacDonald the ultimate icon of unpretentious humility and openness to

childlike wonder is his vision of the divine. In his words (1867c), "the *childlike* is the

divine" (*Unspoken Sermons, First Series*, p. 3). Unlike the thunderbolt-wielding "monstrosity of a monarch" by which some theologians "misrepresent" the divine as a classical hero, for MacDonald the divine, like the "underdog" of the *Magnificat*, is characterized by the compassion and friendship associated with servants and children (p. 23). He repeatedly illustrates this motif of the oldest and wisest person appearing as a child. For example, in "The Wise Woman, or The Lost Princess: A Double Story" (1874), the child on the winged pony grows larger, attaining "the old age of everlasting youth," until it becomes apparent that "the goddess-child" (p. 95) has been the wise woman all along. Again, in "The Golden Key" (1867b), the oldest man of all, the Old Man of the Fire who is able to help Tangle find her way to eternal life, appears as a little naked child playing with coloured balls. (Overall, MacDonald's fiction explores the heroic reversal of the underdog who succeeds, and I will return to examples of this in Chapter 6.) For MacDonald then, the purpose of any worthy educational journey is to recover and cultivate this attitude of childlike wonder. Certainly his characters grow in moral stature in direct proportion to their capacity for childlike wonder.

Fittingly, the children in his stories become heroic figures that battle against and overcome social and spiritual evil precisely because of their curiosity, willingness to suspend disbelief, and capability to undergo adventures they cannot (yet) rationally understand. So Irene in the *Princess* books first discovers the secret stairs to the grandmother's attic; so Nycteris in "The Day Boy and the Night Girl" (1879) first ventures out of her tomb-cave to experience the night sky. And the very humbling, childlike posture the children must assume to embark on their heroic quests is emblematic of their attitude of "foolish weakness" or humility—a prerequisite to spiritual

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greatness. In the *Princess* books the children need to climb the steep attic stair leading to the grandmother on all fours (*The Princess and Curdie*, p. 25). In "The Day Boy and the Night Girl" Nycteris hurts her foot on the broken pieces of her lamp, falls forward, and so tumbles out of her cavern (pp. 250-1). When the terrified Photogen first discovers night he falls senseless to the ground (pp. 260-1). And out of their ignorance and weakness the children grow heroic. Irene and Curdie become instrumental heroic figures because they are most attuned to the guiding presence of the great-grandmother. Nycteris and Photogen discover each other and assert freedom from the witch.

And fundamental to developing a childlike imagination is the characters' education into intuitive trust. Irene learns intuitive trust or childlike imagination in the safety of the grandmother's mysterious world with the cleansing fire of roses and the seemingly bottomless silver tub with the sky and the moon and the stars shining in it (*PG*, pp. 100-5). Curdie learns this when the choice to step into the presence of the grandmother requires that he step into a space where he "see[s] neither walls nor floor, only darkness and the great sky," but finds enough floor to satisfy his foot (*PC*, p. 63). There he engages in an alternate consciousness where her spinning wheel speaks to him and he to it without his consciousness (p. 64)—a "feminine" way of knowing. And there too Curdie chooses to thrust his hands into the cathartic fire of roses, doing so in "trust and obedience," not daring to stop to think (p. 67). With this choice then Curdie becomes a spiritual hero who is "ready to let [the grandmother's] idea, which sets [him] working, set [his] idea right" (p. 75).

The most poignant metaphor for reliance on intuition comes in *The Princess and the Goblin* when the children Irene and Curdie learn to follow the grandmother's

invisible spider thread. With this thread attached at one end to her ring and at the other to the ball in the grandmother's safekeeping, a thread too fine to see and which may only be felt, Irene is able to find her way into the goblin territory inside the mountain, rescue Curdie, and return to safety. Irene must "follow the thread wherever it leads" and "not doubt the thread" (p. 108). This method of following the thread appears nonsensical to the rational Curdie until with a flash of insight he too learns to follow (pp. 188-9). And a peculiar feature of the thread is that when Irene tries to follow it backwards it vanishes from her touch (pp. 138-9); the clear mandate is the heroic of "obedien[ce] to the guiding thread" (p. 138) in a continuous and courageous forward movement. To remain with the known in an attitude of apparent control, inside one's "comfort zone," is antithetical to growth. The better learner follows ideas into the unknown, always seeking new adventure.

Importantly too, MacDonald echoes Wordsworth's paradox of "the Child as the Father of the man" in the portrayal of his child hero/ines as the moral and imaginative superiors to their elders. So, Irene corrects her nurse's rudeness (*PG*, pp. 28, 170) and Lootie gradually improves under her influence (p. 173). Importantly, Princess Irene, younger than the agnostic Curdie, is the first to discover the grandmother. The very young child Barbara, still 'trailing clouds of glory,' always has the best sense of the grandmother's whereabouts (*PC*, pp. 218-19). Little Barbara too has a healing effect on the king, her presence banishing his evil dreams and winning his heart through play (*PC*, 194-99). The children are in fact educators, the adults being either evil obstacles to overcome or benign but relatively helpless players needing salvation. In the *Princess* books, adults such as Curdie's parents, Peter and Joan Peterson, as well as the old woman

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Derba, assist the children on their quest in offering food and shelter, but they have no part to play in the large battle for the kingdom. In *The Princess and the Goblin*, Irene and Curdie in various ways initiate and sustain the victory against the goblins. In *The Princess and Curdie*, the king and his remaining faithful subjects are also saved by the children. In "The Wise Woman," the child Rosamond, having gained moral vision, becomes the leader to her blinded, proud parents. In "The Day Boy and the Night Girl," the evil adults are outwitted and punished, and the innocent but ineffective parents are blessed by their heroic children.

Now one trouble with the Romantic celebration of the child is the mistaken sentimental association of stronger moral imagination with chronological childhood when, in fact, it is arguable that 'the little human animals' need training in order to develop into ethical human beings (Lewis, 1947a, pp. 26-7). The key distinction, however, between MacDonald and his Romantic predecessors is that for him childhood is not so much to be seen as a stage but as an essential lifelong educative attitude. While Wordsworth suffered disillusionment over the loss of his childlike vision of immortality, MacDonald views childlikeness as an attitude of spiritual openness that is intrinsic to being human. In this sense then he insists on this one prevailing idea: *"The child is not meant to die, but to be forever freshborn"* [italics added] (*PC*, p. 18). In other words, continuing moral evolution requires a perpetual childlikeness.

Nor did MacDonald think that childlike wonder is necessarily a quality that all children possess. His stories all illustrate children who are indifferent and even hostile to imaginative wonder just as they also illustrate adults who are so inclined to wonder. He explains, "For my part, I do not write for children, but for the childlike, whether of five,

or fifty, or seventyfive" (1893, p. 317). Likewise, "Humility is essential greatness, the inside of grandeur" (p. 70), and "obedience alone places a man in the position in which he can see so as to judge that which is above him" (p. 72). As Roderick McGillis (1991) discusses, "For Wordsworth childhood is bound by time; it passes. For MacDonald, the opposite is true; childhood is a state of being which everyone must aspire to" (p. 152). Also, "Childlike innocence is a quality inherent in everyone (like poetry); it may be latent or muted by sin and age, but it cannot be annihilated, and it partakes of God" (p. 153). As MacDonald (1893) asserts, "we dare to claim for the true, childlike, humble imagination such an inward oneness with the laws of the universe that it possesses in itself an insight into the very nature of things" (pp. 12-13).

MacDonald's celebration of childlike wonder is apparent in his view of the four births in the stages of becoming human (1893, pp. 43-76; McGillis, pp. 156-61). After the three stages of physical birth, self-consciousness, and exercising the will, the individual arrives at the crucial fourth stage of choosing to serve God. "Obedience to the will of God keeps the man childlike; belief in Christ renders life holy, harmonious and poetic. This is the result of the fourth birth" (McGillis, p. 161). This childlike wonder and harmony with the divine regardless of age is apparent in adults like Peter and Joan Peterson, who grow in their awareness of the grandmother's influence. Especially poignant is the king's own confession when he begins to be "compelled to believe many things [he] could not and [does] not yet understand" (*PC*, p. 167), recalling his own mother's words that "he will be an old man before he understands" (p. 167). He resolves to suspend disbelief and when he later undergoes the purging healing of the fire of the burning roses he is lifted out of it by the princess as "large and strong as a Titaness" "as if

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he were but a little child" (p. 202). Now childlike, the king has become a mature human. And likewise, the child hero/ines become courageous adults, just rulers of kingdoms, in direct proportion to their ability to retain childlike awareness.

So for MacDonald a continuous and growing capacity for childlike wonder is the distinguishing feature of an imaginative education. And this characteristic of the "forever childlike" suggests several further educational implications: 1) mythic education that cultivates moral growth; 2) metaphorical thinking and its relation to inventiveness; and 3) a pedagogy of nurture informed by the "feminine" heroic.

A Mythic Education Inviting Moral Development

One curriculum implication of childlike wonder is MacDonald's exploration of the mythic imagination. Undoubtedly the central attraction of his fiction to writers like C.S. Lewis and Madeleine L'Engle, as they and many others have said, is precisely this exceptional ability to embody spirituality in mythic stories, and so to inspire the reader's imagination with a literary experience of the numinous or transcendent. A fuller discussion of mythopoeia follows in Chapter 5, but here I would like to refer to Clyde S. Kilby's (1973) comment on the nature of myth: "Myth is like the green-belt of the world without which, as the great British historian George Macaulay Trevelyan says, man is brutish. Myth is a lane down which we walk in order to repossess our soul, our essentiality" (cited in Hein, 1998, p. XIII). The educational principle in mythic imagination is, as depicted in MacDonald's fairy tale "Cross Purposes" (1867), that the borders between "common day" and fairyland are porous: "No mortal, or fairy either, can tell where Fairyland begins and where it ends" (p. 133). (MacDonald would presumably agree with G.K. Chesterton (1905) that Wordsworth's phrase, "the light of common day,"

is, if not exactly "hideous and blasphemous," at least mistaken (p. 164)). Like Plato, Milton, Wordsworth, and countless others, MacDonald is a mystic whose "bifocal" (Prickett, 1992, p. 23) vision of two worlds, the temporal and the eternal, is at the heart of his fiction. For MacDonald, the natural and supernatural are interlinked, and a key purpose of his mythic education is to portray their unity. Just as Curdie and his father Peter Peterson are miners whose "business [is] to bring to light hidden things" (*PC*, p. 12), so MacDonald's task in fiction is to make vivid the spiritual dynamics of the soul's journey—to educate the moral imagination.

Importantly, unlike the rational didacticism of some children's authors, MacDonald is exceptional in engaging the emotions in the idea of Good. As Gillian Avery (1990) observes, he is able to "make holiness vital, natural and desirable, and to show a spiritual progress" (pp. 135-6). As noted earlier, Marion Lochhead (1977) regards him as the initiator of the "renaissance of wonder" with his joyous sense of "goodness" or "true holiness" (p. 2). And as I discuss in detail later in this chapter, his "pedagogy of nurture" associates the numinous with love. Just as Rosamond is enveloped inside the wise woman's magical cloak in "The Wise Woman" (1874), and Irene is cradled in the great-grandmother's bosom in *The Princess and the Goblin*, so the reader is potentially drawn inside the emotional experience of an encounter with goodness. In the midst of various forces of evil, it becomes clear that at the heart of the universe is the greater power of love. Various characters in MacDonald's stories respond to this experience with Wordsworth's sense of the "feeling intellect," and begin a journey of moral development. In considering this mythic education I would like to examine how perception of the

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numinous occurs through the "feeling intellect," and how such imaginative experience invites moral development.

For MacDonald, the "feeling intellect" that characterizes childlike wonder is the means by which perception of the numinous occurs. Unmistakably, the *Princess* books portray this principle. It is with this inner intuitive faculty that the characters perceive the presence of the "numinous other," the great-grandmother. Indeed, ordinary common sense balks at the suggestion of otherness, rejecting it as empty fancy. So, the pragmatic nurse, Lootie, dismisses the great-grandmother story as "nonsense" (*PG*, pp. 25-7). Curdie at first cannot comprehend the idea of the invisible thread, views the grandmother's attic as only "a big, bare, garret-room" (p. 154), and condescendingly tells Irene to "drop it . . . and go down to the nursery, like a good girl" (p. 155). Irene herself struggles with dismissing her experience with the grandmother as a dream (pp. 76, 79, 95). To this, the grandmother explains a key idea: "*Seeing is not believing--it is only seeing*" [italics added] (p. 156). The ability to see the grandmother and her lamp is a gift that the grandmother hopes everyone will one day have (p. 104). It takes imaginative faith to see "the more" that is there. Similarly, when he doubts the existence of the grandmother, Curdie's mother underscores the need for visionary faith, advising him, "there must then be more truth in your dreams than in your waking thoughts" (*PC*, p. 39). She illustrates this with the image of regeneration in the sweet peas that grow from a "dry, withered-looking" seed, something that "seems just as full of reason as it is of wonder" (p. 39). For Macdonald (1893), only "the true, childlike, humble imagination" (p. 13) is in harmony with the cosmos.

Once the characters are within the imaginative experience of the numinous,

MacDonald cultivates the curriculum of moral development. In this, MacDonald's

indebtedness to Plato's *Republic* is evident in both his essentialism and his dramatization

of symbols in the Allegory of the Cave. Like Plato, MacDonald is an essentialist who

believes that the highest human destiny is to apprehend the Good. The task of the "inside

house" (*PG*, p. 195) or the soul is to recognize and be transformed by the divine. As Plato

argues, knowledge of "the essential Form of Goodness" is intrinsic to moral

development. "Without having had a vision of this Form no one can act with wisdom,

either in his own life or in matters of state" (p. 231). And MacDonald creates this vision

of Goodness in the old Princess or the great-great-grandmother who is an image of the

divine. She who appears first as a "pale green light" (*PC*, p. 46) to Curdie and his father

is recognized as "the Mother of Light" (p. 51), the source of physical and spiritual light.

As Curdie discovers inside the very dark cavern of the mine in which the goblins have

held their assemblies,

> all the beauty of the cavern, yes, of all he knew of the whole creation,
> seemed gathered in one centre of harmony and loveliness in the person of
> the ancient lady who stood before him in the very summer of beauty and
> strength. (*PC*, p. 49)

In the words of Rolland Hein (1982),

> In the symbolism of the fantasy, Queen Irene is a surrogate for the highest
> expression of being within man: God. She is Irene's grandmother—many
> times removed—and also named Irene, because the highest human, the
> quintessential Irene, is divine, being made in God's image . . . . Her
> pervading reality subsumes all aspects of the lives of those who love and
> obey her, as she constantly works for their good, their spiritual betterment
> (p. 54)

It is through their response to the grandmother's influence that the children grow moral. As in Plato's vision of education where "the entire soul must be turned away from this changing world, until its eye can bear to contemplate reality and that supreme splendour which we have called the Good," the child's "soul's eye . . . instead of looking in the wrong direction . . . is turned the way it ought to be" (p. 232). In the *Princess* books, both Irene and Curdie separately travel up "the great staircase" (*PC*, p. 23) to the grandmother, thus undergoing a spiritual transformation. In *The Princess and the Goblin*, Irene learns to see the light of the grandmother's moon and follow the invisible thread. In *The Princess and Curdie*, "a light . . . break[s] in upon [Curdie's] mind" (p. 30) as the lady spins moral awareness into him (p. 30). The morally transformed Curdie now has a politeness that his mother recognizes as "com[ing] from the place where all lovely things were born before they began to grow in this world" (p. 36). As in Plato, in MacDonald there is an eternal origin to everything earthly, and every earthly phenomenon has its source in the eternal.

Whereas it is arguable that Plato is an elitist who sees only the rare philosopher kings as arriving at truth, his egalitarianism is apparent in the statement that "the soul of every man does possess the power of learning the truth and the organ to see it with" (p. 232). Certainly, MacDonald emphasizes that each individual is capable of attaining his heavenly destiny, and so the journey of each of his child hero/ines is a Platonic journey of the soul out of the enslaving shadowlands of materialism, or realism of "the cave," into freeing faith in the greater spiritual world of eternity.

In the *Princess* books MacDonald's elaborate use of Plato's cave imagery dramatizes his vision that all human beings are in a state of becoming—either a spiritual

evolution towards Good or spiritual devolution away from Good, a case of "a continuous

dying" or of "a continuous resurrection" (*PC*, p. 17). As the grandmother explains to

Curdie in what Humphrey Carpenter (1985) calls "an ingenious answer of the

imagination to Darwin" (p. 73),

> "Have you ever heard what some philosophers say—that men were all
> animals once?"
> "No, ma'am."
> "It is of no consequence. But there is another thing that is of the greatest
> consequence--this: that all men, if they do not take care, go down the hill
> to the animals' country; that many men are actually, all their lives, going
> to be beasts. People knew it once, but it is long since they forgot it."
>
> <div align="right">(PC, p. 69)</div>

This "beastward" (p. 69) degeneration in which the corrupt soul grows increasingly

hideous is particularly evident in the goblins in *The Princess and the Goblin* whom

MacDonald portrays as "dwarfed and misshapen," creatures who were once like other

people (p. 12) but "were now, not ordinarily ugly, but either absolutely hideous, or

ludicrously grotesque both in face and form" (p. 14). Like the ignorant prisoners in

Plato's cave who, accustomed to the darkness of ignorance, would be dazzled by sudden

sunlight, and are hostile and ready to kill any potential saviour from the upper world (pp.

229-31), the goblins are subterranean creatures wholly committed to their dark empire.

Like Plato's prisoners who mistake the shadows seen by firelight as reality, and so "live

fighting one another about shadows and quarreling for power, as if that were a great

prize" (p. 234), MacDonald's goblins illustrate the ludicrous preference of artificial

vision to true vision. As the goblin Glump declares enroute to the assembly,

> 'Now light your torches, and come along. What a distinction it is to
> provide our own light, instead of being dependent on a thing hung up in
> the air—a most disagreeable contrivance—intended no doubt to blind us
> when we venture out under its baleful influence! Quite glaring and vulgar,

I call it, though no doubt useful to poor creatures who haven't the wit to make light for themselves!' (p. 60)

They too are consumed with visions of power, planning to overtake the upper world by a kidnapping and forced union of Princess Irene with their own Prince Harelip and, when this fails, to destroy the upper world.

Similarly, in *The Princess and Curdie*, the theme of degeneracy is dramatized in the Uglies, former humans whose current grotesque animal bodies show their state of spiritual degeneration. And many miners, knowing little of the upper world (p. 16), are prisoners whose "evil eyes" cannot perceive the grandmother as she is (p. 55), and so mockingly reject the concept of the great-great-grandmother, referring to her in misogynistic terms such as Old Mother Wotherwop or an old hating witch (pp. 41-2). And the adolescent Curdie too is growing "faster in body than in mind--with the usual consequence, that he was getting rather stupid—one of the chief signs of which was that he believed less and less in things he had never seen" (p. 17). Unlike Plato's "man of the upper world where the wind blew" (p. 17), Curdie is developing into the metaphorical miner, the "commonplace man" (p. 17) of the cave.

The reverse process of potential spiritual evolution is illustrated in the regeneration of some goblins after the demise of their world. After the goblins had inadvertently flooded their own country (*PG*, p. 203), some of those who had escaped disaster and remained in the upper world kingdom "grew milder in character, and indeed became very much like the Scotch Brownies. Their skulls became softer as well as their heart, and their feet grew harder, and by degrees they became friendly" (pp. 206-7). Along with the army of Uglies, led by Lina, once a woman who had become "naughty,

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but is now growing good" (p. 141), they help execute moral judgment on the city of

Gwyntystorm (going-to-storm) (Willard, 1992, p. 73). And after Curdie is purged of his

"commonness" by the fire of the roses, he receives the gift of spiritual discernment

whereby his hands can determine the character of a person. Importantly, MacDonald

(1867c) thinks of purgation not as senselessly punitive but as "the consuming fire . . . [of]

Love, the creative energy of God" which allows people to become "fully themselves"

(pp. 46, 44).

MacDonald's shorter fairy tales also offer a mythic education that invites moral

development. "The Shadows" (1864b) explores the drama of moral choices, whether in

converting a villain, helping prevent a villain or hero from making disastrous ethical

choices, or aiding the needy. The tale "Little Daylight" (1871b) dramatizes the principle

that perseverance in good through hardship is rewarded by a reversal in good fortune. In

"The Castle" (1864a), it is noteworthy that when the regenerate characters "gr[ow] in

consequence more and more friendly and loving" (p. 168), understanding the paradox

that subordination yields greater freedom, they become increasingly stronger individuals,

each pursuing his inclinations with greater effect, one in astronomy, another in

exploration, another in music. One outstanding example of MacDonald's moral education

through myth in the shorter stories is in "The Wise Woman" where, in similar though

ultimately divergent journeys, the children, Rosamond and Agnes, explore the dynamics

of spiritual evolution and devolution.[6] Here he emphasizes the undeniable importance as

well as the considerable difficulty of moral growth through the dramatization of tests of

character in the "mood chambers," all within the context of a merciful, yet demanding

divine love.

In view of MacDonald's indebtedness to Plato in his curriculum of moral development it is worthwhile to note one important distinction between the cave imagery of *The Republic* and MacDonald's imagery, as Frank Riga (1992) does. Whereas Plato's cave is a shadow that "cannot be transformed and thus . . . must be transcended," for MacDonald, Riga says,

> the Incarnation of Christ has transformed the world, since, as one of the creeds has it, the Incarnation worked "not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the Manhood into God." Christ's assumption of a body saves and sanctifies the world of flesh since he has not "fallen" into flesh, but has raised it up. At the end of time, then, the transformed cave, and the glorified flesh that dwells within it, will be part of transcendent reality. (p. 113)

So while "Plato's world remains discarnate . . . for MacDonald . . . . the flesh, too, has claims . . . . [and] the work of MacDonald . . . is finally a comedy, a comedy at once human and divine" (p. 129). This difference is dramatized, for example, in the grandmother's appearance in the cave to Curdie and his father, transforming the cave with light and the two miners with spiritual sight. Arguably, MacDonald's incarnational view of reality and so of education explains his comfort with metaphorical thinking. Unlike Plato's ambiguous view of metaphor, for MacDonald truth is not so much an ideal removed from the shadow-lands, but rather embodied, present, inhabiting and enlightening these shadowed places.

A Metaphorical Education Fostering Inventiveness

A second curriculum implication of childlike wonder is MacDonald's exploration of metaphorical thinking—the comparative thinking by which we transfer the meaning of one object or idea to another. Although metaphor is all too often disregarded as a poetic

addition that is at best decorative, and at worst obscures logical thinking ("Cut the poetry; just tell me what it means"), this rationalistic view is erroneous because it takes for granted its own metaphors. For example, Ralph Tyler's (1949) paradigm of curriculum development, design, implementation, and evaluation, inhabits the industrial metaphors of factory production, metaphors like "output," "quality control," and "utility." And certainly there is substantial good to the concrete and sequential ways of thinking that an industrial conception of education offers. Strong teachers tend to have clear objectives, high standards, and all sorts of rational ways to encourage excellence. But they also tend to honour how abstract and random insights lead towards generative ways of thinking. Trouble arises when the industrial model of education precludes abstract and random ways of thinking, and this happens more easily in an environment that uncritically employs (an economic metaphor) its favourite metaphors to the exclusion of all others. Said more cynically, abstract and random ways of thinking—all imaginative inventiveness—are discouraged in a learning environment that pits industrial metaphors against artistic ones.

George MacDonald's imaginative education, however, informed by the storytelling tradition of Jesus, celebrates the power of metaphor as an accurate means to insight. Whereas Plato criticizes metaphor as the means to knowledge because art is "at the third remove from reality" (p. 329), and insists that the divine would never dissimulate his Form through a disguise (pp. 73-5) (though this criticism is rather ambiguous since Plato himself was a master at metaphorical thinking), MacDonald emphasizes the need for metaphor to achieve multi-faceted learning. In particular, Irene's great-grandmother of many names and shapes can only be experienced and understood

through shifting metaphors. So this "Lady of the Silver Moon" is both old and young, and her many shapes are vivid but never conclusive approximations of who she is. As she explains to Curdie,

> "Shapes are only dresses, Curdie, and dresses are only names. That
> which is inside is the same all the time."
> "But then how can all the shapes speak the truth?"
> "It would want thousands more to speak the truth, Curdie; and then they
> could not." (*PC*, pp. 54-5)

The important lesson of metaphorical learning is to discern the "inside." In the fairy tale "Cross Purposes" (1867a), the children learn to distinguish between inner reality and surreal deceptions. They discover the little crooked old man's tricks by which he makes a cat appear as a mountain, and the space in which hands may join as the vast distance across a wide courtyard. So MacDonald's characters learn to discern truth from surreal deceptions, and distinguish appropriate shapes and names for larger truth. Whereas concrete thinking emphasizes learning in which "things are as they appear, having a single meaning," the abstraction encouraged in metaphorical thinking emphasizes learning in which "things may not be as they first appear, but may have layers of meaning." For MacDonald, and the biblical tradition he identifies himself with, moral education is achieved partly through such metaphorical training.

And MacDonald's metaphorical education has parallels with what some curriculum thinkers say of metaphor. For example, Huebner (1985) notes, "The use of metaphor is a way of shedding new light on an already existing phenomenon, by looking at and speaking about that phenomenon from a totally different perspective. In this way we obtain a transfer of meaning, and thus an opening up of awareness" (p. 358). Similarly, Maxine Greene (1995) speaks of "cultivat[ing] multiple ways of seeing and

multiple dialogues" through metaphor (p. 16). In view of the fixedness of our industrial

metaphors for education, it cannot perhaps be overemphasized that a metaphorical

education like MacDonald's requires an openness to flexibility and "not knowing."

As MacDonald discusses in *Orts* (1893), with literature, as with music,

> the best way . . . is not to bring the forces of our intellect to bear upon it,
> but to be still and let it work on that part of us for whose sake it exists.
> We spoil countless precious things by intellectual greed. He who will be a
> man, and will not be a child, must—he cannot help himself—become a
> little man, that is, a dwarf. (pp. 321-2)

Using the image of the firefly, MacDonald speaks of letting meaning "flash and fly" in

the dark rather than attempting to capture and so extinguish its light (p. 321). The tension

we might experience with such an open, temporarily non-analytical experience of

metaphor is evident in C.N. Manlove's response to mythopoeic work: on the one hand,

impatience with the multiplicity of MacDonald's symbolism (1975, pp. 66-90); on the

other hand, insight into fixity as death (1987, p. 220). I will return to this discussion in

Chapter 5. The key feature of MacDonald's metaphorical education, shared by thinkers

like Huebner and Greene, is a confidence in metaphor joined with a pedagogical humility

so that understanding, to borrow MacDonald's images, is like "the moon of our darkness,

by which we travel towards the east; not dear as the sun whence her light cometh"

(1867b, p. 55).[7]

Metaphorical education, as I have been arguing, encourages deeper intellectual

understanding and inventiveness. Certainly, in MacDonald creativity is the distinguishing

feature of education. In the *Princess* books Curdie is chiefly a poet whose only weapons

against the evil goblins are neither conventional warfare nor rational discourse, but the

rhymes he invents and sings. As the narrator explains,

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the chief defence against [the goblins] was verse, for they hated verse of every kind, and some kinds they could not endure at all. I suspect they could not make any themselves, and that was why they disliked it so much. At all events, those who were most afraid of them were those who could neither make verses themselves nor remember the verses that other people made for them; while those who were never afraid were those who could make verses for themselves; for although there were certain old rhymes which were very effectual, yet it was well known that a new rhyme, if of the right sort, was even more distasteful to them, and therefore more effectual in putting them to flight. (*PG*, p. 50)

In a further gently ironic attack on rationalist education, MacDonald suggests that non-linear thinking is a truer approach to reality, increasing rational powers by "non-rational" means. When Curdie and his father discuss their plans to outwit the goblins, they refer to their new discoveries with the observation that one plus one very often will make three (*PG*, p. 165)—demonstrating how un-thought of factors interject themselves and invite expansion into whole families of ideas. And in Irene and Nycteris, creativity reveals itself in their keen perception of nature as permeated with a Wordsworthian kind of glory. Irene finds that entering the grandmother's soft light "made her feel as if she were going into the heart of the milkiest pearl" (*PG*, p. 101), and solid walls gave way to "the starry herds, flashing gloriously in the dark blue" (105). Nycteris's "rapture" upon seeing the night sky for the first time is a "resurrection . . . a birth" by which she sees "indeed what many men are too wise to see," and her aliveness to the gentle night air "likest a woman's breath"

was like a spiritual wine, filling her whole being with an intoxication of purest joy. To breathe was a perfect existence. It seemed to her the light itself she drew into her lungs. Possessed by the power of the gorgeous night, she seemed at one and the same moment annihilated and glorified. ("The Day Boy and the Night Girl," p. 253)

Creativity fostered by metaphorical awareness then, especially its potential for considering spirituality and the transcendent, and not mere industrial production that often and wrongly denies metaphor altogether, is, for MacDonald, the more humane education. The way through our theoretical blinders has much to do with developing metaphorical aptitude. The learner who is willing to be conscious of his metaphors, at least some of the time, is more likely to employ many with greater rigor, challenge others, and invent new ones. MacDonald's metaphorical education fosters such intellectual inventiveness with a particular emphasis on spirituality.

A Pedagogy of Nurture: The "Feminine" Heroic

A third curriculum implication of childlike wonder is MacDonald's exploration of a pedagogy of nurture. To look at this question I would like to consider his portrayal of female characters as free moral agents, his subversion of classical heroism with humility, and his portrayal of the divine with qualities associated with the "feminine." Together all of these features create a curriculum of nurture that potentially challenges and repairs educational approaches that stifle nurture.

First, the question of MacDonald's portrayal of his female characters offers an interesting field of study. Overall, MacDonald might be regarded as a "feminist" who views females as potentially free moral agents on par with males. That he does all this nearly a century after the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's "feminist manifesto," *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), is perhaps no coincidence. Wollstonecraft's criticism of the long history of patriarchalism treating women as, in Aristotle's words, 'inferior males' (cited in Whitbeck, 1976, p. 56), powerfully ushered in the possibility, if not necessity, of viewing women as moral and intellectual equals. No longer should

middle and upper class women think and act as "coquettish slave[s]" (p. 108) or "mere

dolls" (p. 263) adorning their husbands; instead, as their social inferiors have all along,

such socially privileged women should become rational creatures engaged in "the serious

business of life" (p. 113), free "moral agents" (p. 306) who work for the good of their

families and society. Certainly all of MacDonald's characters are treated as potentially

free moral agents who are in a state of either spiritual evolution or devolution. If any

gender distinctions are to be made then, arguably, the female characters are quicker than

the male characters to become heroic.

In *The Princess and the Goblin*, Irene first discovers the stair up to the great-

grandmother and introduces, unsuccessfully, the unbelieving Curdie to her. In answer to

her incredulous son, Joan Peterson relates her strange encounter with the moonlight and

the white pigeon that saved her from the cobs one night, concluding that she is inclined to

believe in this mysterious event (pp. 163-4). In "The Day Boy and the Night Girl,"

Nycteris first ventures out of her tomb-cavern on several occasions to discover the

outside world, and her bravery contrasts with the sobbing Photogen who only encounters

the to-him-unknown night by accident. At any rate, MacDonald more than fulfills

Wollstonecraft's hope for her gender to become moral agents. As Cordelia Sherman

(1992) argues,

> Women are the moral backbone of MacDonald's world. When men's
> daring leads them into sin or despair, women are always there to lead them
> back to righteousness, if they are willing to be led. The Grandmother
> performs this function for mankind, and on a smaller scale, Mrs. Peterson
> performs it on her husband. Irene performs it for Curdie on a literal as well
> as metaphorical level when she follows the Grandmother's thread into the
> goblins' mine where Curdie has been imprisoned. (p. 202)

Nonetheless, one feminist reading of MacDonald criticizes his portrayal of females as heroines inferior to the heroes. Susan Lehr (1995) describes Princess Irene as "a real person who pouted, was spoiled, and had a saucy tongue," but insists that she is a heroine after "the Victorian model of the angel in the house," not a hero, male or female, someone who journeys and overcomes odds independently (pp. 195-99). Lehr says that "MacDonald . . . offered the female an active role in fantasy," but that she remains a good girl on a pedestal who will "learn to control her childish impulses" in order to take on her role as a young woman, a presumably dependent creature whom Curdie will then "take care of ... control ... and tame" (p. 199). But this reading overlooks the "feminine" heroic of obedience and faith that MacDonald advocates. It is not the classical heroism of active "masculine" warfare that defeats evil, but a so-called "passive" obedience to the divine. Both Irene and Curdie struggle with agnosticism and must learn to submit to the invisible guiding thread. When they exercise "feminine" faith and trust in the grandmother, they become saviours.

So, contrary to much of the history of patriarchalism, MacDonald holds in high regard the quality of nurture associated with the feminine. One snapshot that perhaps summarizes MacDonald's "feminist" moral education is offered in "The Castle" (1864). When the characters grow virtuous their strength is described in terms of increasing capacity for both "feminine" softness and complementary "masculine" decisiveness: "The voices of the men were deeper, and yet seemed by their very depth more feminine than before; while the voices of the women were softer and sweeter, and at the same time more full and decided" (p. 167).

Second, in a subversion of classical heroism, MacDonald offers a pedagogy of nurture through his esteem for the "feminine" qualities of humility and obedience in both genders. While C.N. Manlove (1975) complains that MacDonald is "almost pathologically addicted" to the word 'obedience,' and regards this to be a suppression of intellect and self (p. 63), it is important to consider that for MacDonald intellectual and moral development flourishes through this attitude.

In "Little Daylight" (1871b), the prince is an outcast who tenderly cares for the decrepit old woman and so discovers the princess. In "Cross Purposes" (1867a), Richard, the son of a poor widow, serves his mother and remains gallant toward Alice, the snobby daughter of the squire. Then both Richard and Alice discover that love for the other allows each to see the other person's path, though not their own, and so, together, the two are able to find their way (p. 148). In the *Princess* books, the king is portrayed as a servant-leader "who ruled for the good of his people and not to please himself" (*PC*, p. 12); thus royalty is defined as the spiritual quality of humility. As readers learn, "the truest princess is just the one who loves all her brothers and sisters best, and who is most able to do them good by being humble towards them" (*PG*, p. 173). Similarly, Curdie serves his parents and the royal household with loyalty and energy, and chooses continued service in the mines and with his parents over and above a more prestigious offer in the king's bodyguard (*PG*). In *The Princess and Curdie*, Irene cares for her ailing father, and then is joined by Curdie. Joan Peterson has "killed" her beauty in service to her husband and child (*PC*, p. 78), as has Peter given his life in care for his family. The old woman, Derba, entertains the strangers and then becomes the king's chateleine (*PC*, p. 187). In "The Day Boy and the Night Girl," Nycteris consoles the frightened Photogen

all night, and Photogen, who first selfishly leaves her to enjoy his own Apollo-like glory, later learns to protect her all day. As these examples illustrate, a caring nurture defines MacDonald's moral education.

Now in view of this pedagogy of nurture one might wonder what to make of Curdie's military posture as he routs the goblins in *The Princess and the Goblin* as well as the physical battle of the heroic figures in *The Princess and Curdie*. Are these contradictory examples? Before concluding that they are, it is worth considering the hilarity of Curdie's posture, both in his poetry (as noted above) and in the comic pose by which he counters the goblins' classical "rage of despair" (*PG*, p. 186) with "dancing and gyrating and stamping and singing like a small incarnate whirlwind" (p. 183). And the battle over Gwyntystorm evokes a further childlike hilarity in the fact that the forces of treachery and imperialism are defeated by an unlikely group—a handful of soldiers, the deformed collection of "Uglies," and white pigeons that obey the signal to become "living javelins" (*PC*, p. 211). Arguably then, the militarism of MacDonald's moral characters is in response to evil, operates out of childlikeness, and upholds the ethos of nurture.

Perhaps nowhere is MacDonald's pedagogy of nurture so evident as in the third feature, his portrayal of the divine with qualities associated with the feminine. Both the "wise woman" in the story by that title and the great-grandmother in the *Princess* books offer moral education out of a motherly kind of love, and they are, doubtless, MacDonald's imaginative answer to the judgmental "masculine" image of God he rejected. So in "The Wise Woman" an erring and needy child is enfolded inside the folds of the wise woman's magical cloak and whisked off to begin moral education. (This is

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surely a fantasy that might occasionally appeal to a frustrated teacher or parent. "Take

them away, teach them some goodness," a teacher/parent might complain, "for I can do

no more with them in their present hostile state." And the storyteller does, imaginatively.)

This female divine director of moral education is especially well developed in

MacDonald's great-grandmother.

Nancy Willard (1992) wonders if perhaps the great-grandmother is a goddess

descendent of Diana, "virgin goddess of the moon, caretaker of the woods and the wild

creatures in it," or if she is "Frau Berchte, the goddess of distaff and spindle, whose name

in Old High German means luminous, and of whom Jacob Grimm (1888) writes: 'In

snow-white garments she shows herself by night in princely houses, she rocks or dandles

the babies, while their nurses sleep: she acts the old grandmother or ancestress of the

family'" (cited in Willard, p. 68). Both her role as goddess of the moon who is also

caretaker of the earth and its inhabitants, as well as goddess of the spinning wheel,

underscore the female qualities of divinity. She is the archetypal Mother who is, for

MacDonald, the best image of God. As MacDonald writes in *A Dish of Orts*,

> There is no type near the highest idea of relation to a God, as that of a
> child to his mother. Her face is God, her bosom Nature, her arms are
> Providence—all love—one love—to him an undivided bliss. (p. 44)

This is not to suggest that MacDonald views the divine as exclusively female because he

most consistently and comfortably addresses God as Father and indeed moves fluidly

from female to male images of God.[8] Rather, his emphasis on the "feminine" qualities of

God—compassion, mercy, all-encompassing love—is understandable as the rejection of

his Calvinist heritage which emphasized "masculine" judgment to the apparent exclusion

of love.

The grandmother is a divine image of the "maternal character" of compassion and nurture. She is a gentle healer of both children who waits for and never forces what must come through the individual's volition: belief. Like a nursing mother she takes the young child Irene into her bed, and there in her bosom Irene falls asleep dreaming the "loveliest dreams" (*PG*, p. 86). When Curdie brings her the pigeon he wounded, her pathos suggests a mother's healing love. "The old lady put out her hands and took it, and held it to her bosom, and rocked it, murmuring over it as if it were a sick baby" (*PC*, pp. 28-9). Similarly, the image of "the wounded bird [which] had . . . spread out both its wings across her bosom, like some great mystical ornament of frosted silver" (p. 34), emphasizes her role as the Mother whose comfort has the power to heal. After his moral conversion Curdie experiences nature as emblematic of "one universal arm of love" (p. 37), and when the princess's wheel stops her subsequent laughter is "sweeter than song and wheel; sweeter than running brook and silver bell; sweeter than joy itself, for the heart of the laugh was love" (p. 65). It is this "maternal" love, more than anything, which educates the children into awareness of the divine and of their own selves as moral beings.

Our understanding of MacDonald's grandmother is possibly enhanced by Mary Aswell Doll's (2000) discussion of the North American Spider Woman legend, a female power figure of many names including Spider Old Woman, Changing Woman, and Grandmother of the Light (p. 194). Doll relates how the "multiple personae" (p. 193) of the Spider Woman are "the composites of opposites necessary for divinity. She is as old as time but as young as eternity; she speaks in hisses but she gives forceful commands; she stays in one place but travels in a whisper at an ear" (p. 195). Like the Spider

Woman, MacDonald's grandmother is a kind of omniscient and omnipresent figure who is beyond mortal danger. Her invisible spider-web thread (*PG*, p. 83) spans from the secret tower room to the depths of the mountain, and her influence even to the faraway city of Gwyntystorm. She is known by many names, all of them accurate, but none of them definitive (*PC*, pp. 54-5). To wish to reduce her to one metaphorical name would be like "trying to bottle a sunbeam."[9] She offers a guiding light even for those who, like Lootie, do not understand and reject the concept of her presence (*PG*, p. 206). Faith in her is a gift that she hopes everyone will one day have (p. 104).

Importantly, the Spider Woman/grandmother introduces a "feminine" intuitive way of knowing. As Doll (2000) comments, "the urge to know, seen as a godly heroic quest, [that is] male, heroic, rational, and driven" contrasts with "female knowing" which "lies hidden within the female body," and is related to a woman's menstrual pattern and the womb (p. 190). Furthermore, this feminine pedagogy suggests a curriculum of discovery where the process co-creates the goal. In Doll's words,

> Further, it would seem that web spinning begins in unknowing. There are no preconceived goals, no predetermined objectives for the web spinner, because the point of attachment cannot be seen. Senses must be re-sensed, re-visioned, con-fused. Surely, this process of web spinning is like art in the making, where nothing is ever known in advance . . . . Spider-seeing is prepositional, involving overtone, undertone, undersense. What is sensed is emergent, sense emerging throughout the making, not just at the end.
> (p. 193)

So too Curdie enters a "feminine" or intuitive consciousness with the grandmother's spinning wheel. He realizes that her spinning wheel, a feminine image, is the source of both creative and moral wisdom (*PC*, p. 25). Hesitating outside her door, Curdie

> heard the noise of a spinning wheel. He knew it at once, because his mother's spinning wheel had been his governess long ago, and still taught

him things. It was the spinning wheel that first taught him to make verses, and to sing, and to think whether all was right inside him; or at least it had helped him in these things. (*PC*, 25)

He is now in an alternate state of consciousness where "the wheel went on and on, spinning in his brain songs and tales and rhymes, till he was almost asleep as well as dreaming" (p. 25). In the grandmother's presence, Curdie's classical masculine heroism is undone: "Curdie shook. It was getting rather awful. The heart that had never much heeded an army of goblins trembled at the soft word of invitation" (p. 26). And with the grandmother's spinning, moral revelation is 'spun' into Curdie so that he undergoes a spiritual transformation, recognizing and repenting of his moral failings and unwillingness to hear the truth (pp.30- 1).

One wonders though, as I have suggested elsewhere (Hilder, 2002b), whether Doll's celebration of the earth goddess may not confusingly assign female gender to imaginative thinking and so suggest another exclusivity. Though she describes the Spider Woman motif as being "not limited to a female role, because roles, like labels, are straight jackets" (p. 193), she also seems to gender both the problem and the solution when she insists that "the possiblities for future development here do not come from semen" (p. 193). The absence in Doll of an emphasis on the Jungian *anima-animus* principle in all humans suggests another potential chauvinism. By contrast, MacDonald's education through nurture does much to repair the old dualism of male/female, aggressor/victim, active/passive, heroic/non-heroic, by advancing the holistic view of a "feminine" spirituality that is gender-inclusive.

Together, all of these features—characters as free moral agents, an ethos of humility, and the "feminine" portrayal of the divine—can help shape an imaginative curriculum of nurture.

Conclusion

George MacDonald provides an imaginative education that nurtures the moral imagination. The distinguishing feature of his education is this childlike wonder that, unlike rationalistic and emotionally alienating pedagogy, engages the learner's imagination and emotions in mythic experience, fosters inventiveness through metaphorical thinking, challenges disembodied moralizing through a pedagogy of nurture, and in all this potentially awakens desire for moral development. Goodness is not some disembodied ideal disconnected from "ordinary" life, more likely harsh than kind, but a beneficent universal force transfusing all of life, embodied, intimately connected. Moral education, for MacDonald then, should not be an arrogant pontification or coolly rational "top-down" instruction, but an educative journey in humility involving the emotions (the "feeling intellect") in which there is a continuous unfolding of spirituality—a sometimes difficult, but vital curriculum.

Arguably, MacDonald's imaginative moral education is profoundly useful in the classroom. In the *Princess* books, like Irene, the learner (student and teacher alike) must be a traveller on an educative journey who follows the thread to an unknown but worthy destination. Like Curdie, the traveller overcomes "goblins" by inventing and singing out his own poetry. Like Photogen and Nycteris in "The Day Boy and the Night Girl," the traveller finds wholeness in embracing the stranger and the mysterious. Like the grandmother in the *Princess* books and the wise woman in the story by that title, the

educator awakens the imagination to unfolding possibilities of goodness. And as with Richard and Alice in "Cross Purposes," in reward for moral courage heroic travellers are given visiting privileges to Fairyland. Education then, for MacDonald and those he influences, is the shared enterprise of weaving an open-ended web of learning that is both "full of reason and of wonder."

And what remains of our pedagogical gifts but faith, hope, and love? Perhaps the knowledge that the greatest of these is love—what best characterizes effective moral education. Certainly George MacDonald's curriculum of childlike wonder offers educators the opportunity to rethink and reinvent education for its imaginative and spiritual possibilities.

CHAPTER THREE
SURPRISED BY THE FEMININE IN C.S. LEWIS'S
CHRONICLES OF NARNIA

Of the three children's fantasy writers of this study, C.S. Lewis is the most

controversial because of the charge of sexism and even misogyny that is put to him, and

how we respond to this charge has everything to do with how we come to regard the

nature of heroism in the *Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-1956). If there is good reason to

concur with this charge then the educational questions surrounding the *Chronicles of*

Narnia are not only "how" but "why" we should teach these books. And if we concur

with the sexist charge, do we then regard these classics as artifacts, of some historical

interest but otherwise obsolete, and needing a big fat warning label reading, "Beware!

Products of another 'dead white male poet'; captivating art is flawed with chauvinism.

Proceed only with extreme critical caution"? The educational experience then would be

marked by enhancing students' critical thinking skills in sensitizing them to and

empowering them to combat sexism—a fairly worthy task if Lewis is indeed guilty of

this, though perhaps deemed more suitable for the university student than anyone much

younger? For the elementary and secondary students might the choice then be made to

censor C.S. Lewis out of the curriculum altogether, thus protecting girls and boys from

imbibing and/or suffering from sexism? Of course, one is reminded of the élan with

which some would censor out "dead white male" (and some female) poets from any

curriculum on various charges of sexism and racism in order to "protect" students. So the

questions are well worth asking, "Is C.S. Lewis sexist? If so, to what extent is he sexist?"

Conversely, if we have better reason to reject this charge, we ask, "If he is not sexist, or

emphatically not in the sense that he is accused of being, why not? And if not, what

might his work offer to the culture wars of our time and the future? That is, of what

educational relevance is his work?"

It is my argument that C.S. Lewis's heroic achievement in the *Chronicles of

Narnia*, together with the balance of his work, offers a profound view on the problem of

sexism—a surprisingly "feminine"[1]answer—that, to date, goes largely unsung. Like his

mentor, George MacDonald,[2] before him, and like Madeleine L'Engle after him, Lewis

portrays a "feminine" heroic (for both genders) that not only addresses the problem of

chauvinism (in both genders), but is acutely relevant to the imaginative education of the

child. As I have argued in Chapter 1, the intentionally "feminine" face of heroism

characterized by an imagination which Wordsworth calls the "feeling intellect," shaped

by an *ethos* of humility, marked by qualities such as nurture, servant-leadership, and

childlike wonder (in short, these and all the related qualities considered inferior to the

dominant Western heroic), is essential to the education of the moral imagination. Let's

begin then by looking at the nature of the discussion surrounding the charge of sexism

and misogyny put to Lewis.

Is Lewis sexist or is he not? On one side of the debate critics denounce his

disparaging sexism (Barfield, 1972, in Green & Hooper, 1974, pp. 213-214; Elwood,

1979; Filmer, 1993; Fredrick and McBride, 2001; Hannay; 1975; Hopkins, 1995; Myers,

1971), and on the other side of the debate critics emphasize (though sometimes with

qualifying statements) his affirmative attitude towards women (Carnell, 1977; Downing,

1992; Ford, 1980; Green and Hooper, 1974; Jones, 1987; Lindskoog, 1976; Patterson, 1979, 1986). The nature of the discussion explores the exclusivist male academic culture he had inherited and lived in (Fredrick & McBride, 2001),[3] sexist comments he had made (Green & Hooper, 1974; Hannay, 1975), Christian doctrinal questions he addressed (Fredrick & McBride, 2001; Patterson, 1986), speculation as to whether or not his female students felt comfortable with him (Downing, 1992; Green & Hooper, 1974), charming anecdotal evidence of his humorous dismissal of his reputation as a woman-hater (Lindskoog, 1976), allusions to his early sadistic sexual fantasies (Christopher, 1987; Fredrick & McBride; Sayer, 1988), ponderings on his possible later sexual relations (Fredrick & McBride, 2001), and musings as to how his marriage might have fostered his non-sexism (Hannay, 1975, 1976). Though this biographical research is not only interesting, but informative, some of the speculation is so deep-going that one is tempted to invoke the privacy of confession as well as the silence of the grave. And will Lewis ever be forgiven for the inane, though witty, mockery he composed in a letter to E.R. Eddison? In his words,

> it is a thing openlie manifeste to all but disards [idiots] and verie goosecaps that feminitee is to itself an imperfection, being placed by the Pythagoreans in the sinister column with matter and mortalitie. Of which we see dailie ensample in that men do gladlie withdraw into their societie and when they would be either merrie or grave stint not to shutte the dore upon Love herself, whereas we see no woman . . . but will not of good will escape from her sisters and seeke to the conversation of men, as liking by instincte of Nature so to receyve the perfection she lacketh.
> (1942, cited in Green & Hooper, 1974, p. 213)

Perhaps not. But then there are several more edifying comments that he has made about gender, including the one to Sister Penelope (1952): "there ought spiritually to be a man in every woman and a woman in every man. And how horrid the ones who haven't got it

are; I can't bear 'a man's man' or a 'woman's woman' . . . ." (*Letters*, 1966, p. 237).[4]

And when the many magnifying lenses have done their work trying to determine the

degree of fallibility in "St. Clive,"[5] we still are left with the most important question: do

the *Chronicles of Narnia* convey sexist attitudes?

Sexism in Narnia

It can hardly be surprising that there is plentiful sexism in the *Chronicles of*

Narnia. If Lewis's fiction is at all a realistic treatment of humanity, how could it be

otherwise? So the question is not "Is there sexism in Narnia?" but "Whose sexism is it?

The author's own or that of his characters and society?" To say that Lewis is sexist on the

basis of the sexism of his characters is like saying that Shakespeare and Mark Twain are

racist on the basis of racism in *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Adventures of*

Huckleberry Finn, respectively—not nearly as useful an idea, it seems, as to regard

authors as relatively liberated moral agents in the business of illustrating (judging and

sometimes offering redemption for) the sins of their characters and society.

On this question of the degree of sexism in Narnia Paul F. Ford (1980) argues,

"Although the books are filled with superficially sexist references, Lewis's insights into

character often reveal a basic sympathy for the equality of women," and he observes that

the last four books show that he is "more in touch with the reality of women and

therefore more willing to see them as free individuals, capable of exploding cultural

strictures and stereotypes" (pp. 374-5). He then offsets his praise with examples he

regards as sexist lapses in Lewis's maturing non-sexism. Margaret Patterson Hannay

(1975, 1976) also suggests that Lewis's misogyny lessened, attributing this to the

influence of his wife, Joy Davidman. (Less is said of how his gradual conversion from

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atheism to Christianity by 1931 might have affected his views; this would also make a

useful field of discussion.) Other critics reject the thesis of Lewis's growing

enlightenment, considering him to be as badly sexist as he ever was, though deserving,

certainly, our empathy for his erroneous ways (Filmer, 1993; Fredrick & McBride, 2001).

I, however, consider him essentially unchanged, though not in the negative sense that

Kath Filmer, Candice Fredrick and Sam McBride mean this. I do not regard Lewis as a

misogynist, or even a sexist in the sense of disparaging women as lesser beings, but

rather a hierarchical thinker who argued for male leadership in marriage[6] and the church.[7]

This is an important distinction (and one that continues to spark controversy). He was

informed by the traditional Christian gender metaphor by which "feminine"

submissiveness or responsiveness to "masculine" love is an image of the ideal relation

between humanity and God. Moreover, what is so intriguing about his hierarchical

thinking is that it is surprisingly egalitarian—emphasizing the "feminine" ethos as vital

for all of humanity—certainly biblical and largely overlooked. As pronounced in

Ransom's compelling words to the astonished Jane in *That Hideous Strength* (1945a),

"The male you could have escaped, for it exists only on the biological level. But the

masculine none of us can escape. What is above and beyond all things is so masculine

that we are all feminine in relation to it" (p. 194).[8] As he argues in *The Abolition of Man*

(1947a), submission is the *Tao* or the Way to become human (pp. 39-63). Given Lewis's

sexist cultural baggage then, together with the weight of his own participation in the

same, his espousal of a heroic ethos that upholds "imperfect feminitee" for both genders

is all the more remarkable.

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"What then is Lewis contributing to the problem of sexism?" To begin to address this concern it is helpful to consider at least three types of sexism that occur in the Chronicles: 1) "stock responses to women in the mouths of [male] fools" (Ford, p. 370); 2) self-limiting attitudes of "Barbie doll" females; and 3) dangerous misogyny from classical (and would-be classical) heroes, male and female.

First, various males make foolish sexist remarks throughout the Chronicles and these reflect, arguably, not Lewis's own sexism, but irony directed at the speakers' sexism. (Perhaps a somewhat penitent later Lewis, conscious of his own earlier sexism, was mocking this foolishness?) It is a pattern for these males to hide their own moral failings behind angry sexist rhetoric, clumsily blaming their female companions in order to deflect fault from themselves. So when Edmund mumbles about Lucy being "just like a girl, sulking somewhere, and won't accept an apology" (*LWW*, p. 32),[9] this reflects ironically rather his spitefulness and unwillingness to admit his own error (p. 42). Similarly, when Polly shrewdly challenges Digory's assertion that "the Magic" is enticing him to seek adventure by striking the bell in *The Magician's Nephew*, whereas, as she points out, he is in this instance just as reckless as his power-mongering Uncle Andrew, Digory retorts with an angry, "That's all *you* know. It's because you're a girl. Girls never want to know anything but gossip and rot about people getting engaged" (p. 50).[10] That Polly does not shrink back from adventure itself but rejects immoral recklessness is evident. That Digory proceeds to strike the bell, and so initiates events that usher evil into Narnia (a nice revision of the tradition of blaming Eve and all her daughters) could be regarded as a penultimate misogynistic act—"let all hell break loose so long as I, "male," subjugate the world, "female,"[11] to my indomitable will". In *The*

Silver Chair, when Eustace is confused about directions and solicits Jill's help without success, it seems that fear and frustration at his own ineptitude motivate his dismissal: "It's an extraordinary thing about girls that they never know the points of the compass" (p. 16).[12] This is doubly ironic, first because of Eustace's own directional confusion, and second in light of Jill's later superior accomplishments as a scout, but is not, as Fredrick and McBride suppose, evidence of girls' general inferior ability with scouting (2001, p. 148). And in *Prince Caspian*, Edmund makes a similar derogatory generalization: "That's the worst of girls. They never can carry a map in their heads."[13] Lucy's retort is more interesting: "That's because our heads have something inside them" (p. 105). Though this is an example of female sexism, as well as perhaps a tacit admission to gendered weakness, it also emphasizes the real possibility that prowess in the wilds is not the ultimate measure of human worth, thus pulling Edmund's bluff. And in *The Silver Chair*, it is while under the evil enchantment that Prince Rilian makes sexist comments against Jill's ability to assess his political character, something she does with accuracy (p. 138). Once liberated, Rilian is as amiable as he is moral. Overall then, it appears that sexist remarks in the *Chronicles* appropriately and humorously illustrate the degree of foolishness in the male speakers, the intensity with which they wish to vent frustration over their own ineptitude, and also their duplicitous attempts to repress moral concerns. Though annoying, these sexist attitudes are, like Rilian's enchantment, curable. (I say this last sentence with some whimsy, out of hope. However, my experience teaching, for example, Alice Munro's story "Boys and Girls" (1968) to freshmen classes over the years, convinces me of how difficult it really is to unsettle sexist thinking. It never ceases to amaze me how many 18-year-olds of both genders uncritically accept narrow

parameters for "a girl's place in life" and justify this with general fear of feminism. Perhaps sometimes serious things are best treated lightly.)

Second, it is worthwhile to consider the self-limiting attitudes of "Barbie doll" females in Narnia. I use the image of the commercial doll as a recognizable metaphor for the problem of the female who internalizes and so enacts the chauvinist paradigm of a woman's identity and role bound up in the pursuit of her own physical beauty and of leisure as the ultimate good. The two examples illustrating the "Barbie doll" phenomenon are Lasaraleen in *The Horse and his Boy*, and Susan, especially in *The Last Battle*. Lasaraleen is depicted as the shallow socialite exclusively "interested in clothes and parties and gossip" (*HHB*, p. 87).[14] She appears deaf to Aravis's story of adventure and moral struggle, failing to comprehend that a girl (she dismisses Aravis as always having been "a queer girl") would possibly want more than "pearls and palaces" (p. 88). Ford (1980) views her characterization as being Lewis's "caricature of the kind of dissipation the leisured class is prone to," noting that her name, derived from *lasar*, is a Scottish form of "leisure" (p. 265). More complex, certainly, is Susan, a teachable heroine who overcomes her inclination for "safety-first"[15] and embraces heroic adventure, but then in the end dismisses Narnia with a false sense of maturity. Having traded in childlike participation in the mythic for the lesser good of "nylons and lipstick and invitations" (*LB*, p. 124),[16] she chides her siblings about Narnia: "Fancy you still thinking about all those funny games we used to play when we were children" (p. 124). The lament over Susan from a genuinely mature heroine is noteworthy.

> 'Grown-up, indeed," said the Lady Polly. "I wish she *would* grow up. She wasted all her school time wanting to be the age she is now, and she'll waste all the rest of her life trying to stay that age. Her whole idea is to

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race on to the silliest time of one's life as quick as she can and then stop there as long as she can.' (p. 124)

Unlike Lasaraleen who never knows anything more than superficiality, Susan degenerates into an anti-heroic parody of herself. Here Fredrick and McBride again wonder if Lewis is sexist, viewing "women [as] more likely than men to experience eternal damnation," and suggest that the loss of Susan shows expediency on Lewis's part, both to achieve the perfect number of seven faithful ones at the close of *The Last Battle*, as well as illustrating the follower who loses the faith (p. 149). But this seems unfair, both to Lewis and the integrity of freedom of choice. As for gender, one ironic masculine parallel to Susan's self-worship is seen in aging Uncle Andrew's vain attempt to appear physically attractive to Jadis (*MN*, pp. 73-4). And certainly Edmund and Eustace both experience perilous states, although for different reasons. With his "Barbie doll" characters it is more likely that Lewis is critical not of women's particular propensity to moral peril, but of the self-inflicted (first socially imbibed) sexism by which some women (as well as some men) delude themselves out of the higher good of moral agency. One could regard the impact of Lewis's treatment of the "Barbie doll" problem as concurring with Wollstonecraft's (1792) feminist argument on the necessity of pampered wealthy women relinquishing a life of self-indulgence in order to become free, rational human beings who contribute to the well-being of their own children and society.

Certainly this second kind of sexism is rather serious because of how the imprisonment is perpetuated by the victim herself, who, smugly self-satisfied, is indifferent to mental and spiritual growth. This poses a highly relevant educational concern. Interestingly, my university students have an easier time recognizing this second kind of sexism when we look at Marge Piercy's poem "Barbie Doll" (1973), sometimes

even recognizing the parallel problem in male "Ken Dolls." It's the high school students I worry about more here, especially the girl who brags about wanting to become a porn star. Nice joke. Just where does the teacher begin the education of such an adolescent? The girl thinks she owns her erotic attraction, her means of power, and she's partly right; but what she doesn't realize is how much she is owned and abused by reducing her identity to her sexuality. The beginning of a moral education has something to do with helping students recognize this. Arguably, having "flakes" like Lasaraleen and the later Susan set in an arena populated by many liberated heroines help grow students' moral imagination.

Third, it is vital to see how dangerous forms of sexism stem from classical heroism where egotism and military warfare easily turn to violent misogyny to achieve its ends. Certainly the classical Calormene culture is permeated with sexism. As Ford notes, Calormene women are considered chattel whereas Narnian women enjoy equality (p. 369). So in *The Horse and his Boy*, the young Calormene noblewoman, Aravis, is subject to her father's decision to marry her off to old Ahoshta Tarkaan, the manipulative Grand Vizier who seeks power, so that she considers suicide as her only option. And Prince Rabadash, a prime example of Calormene culture, plans to conquer and subjugate Susan as a matter of personal prestige, a plan he intends to execute with unmitigated brutality: "I will never desist till I have dragged to my palace by her hair the barbarian queen, the daughter of dogs" (p. 183). So Uncle Andrew in *The Magician's Nephew* enacts the fairytale wolf-ogre, easily sacrificing the little girl Polly to his schemes and dismissing the moral question Digory raises as childish and female (p. 29), hardly appropriate for a profound (and male) sage of his stature (p. 23). Nor is classical misogyny limited to male

characters. The image of Jadis in *The Magician's Nephew* travelling by seizing Polly by the hair embodies the misogynist who at first does not even consider the female child worthy of a glance (pp. 53-4), then realizes that she not only requires but will injure the female child in pursuit of power (pp. 63-4). Her temptation of Digory to seize the apple of youth and reign with her forever depends upon injuring both Digory's mother with endless suffering as well as leaving behind "the little girl," Polly. And the Queen of Underland in *The Silver Chair* is the evil enchantress who begins her enslavement of the prince by murdering his mother. Peter J. Schakel (1979) cites the Queen of Underland as a Circe figure who "dislikes motherhood, creativity, and men" (p. 69). Clearly, classical heroism demands giving injury to females, especially the moral ones who bar the way to success. All these examples continue to be sadly relevant to the violence directed against women in our society.

So the plentiful sexism in the *Chronicles of Narnia* affords rich opportunities for students to recognize and resist sexism in its various forms. This isn't the work of a chauvinist, but of an imaginative moral storyteller offering revision to an entrenched problem, challenging perpetrators and victims of both genders.

Female Competency

One area that critics contend is the question of competency in Lewis's female characters. The question has to do with whether or not the girls are "as good as" the boys. Corbin Scott Carnell (1977) argues that the female characters in Lewis's stories are "not passive, submissive, or less intelligent than his male characters" (p. 154). In "Girls in Narnia: Hindered or Human?", Karla Faust Jones (1987) argues that none of the heroines are limited by cultural stereotypes, displaying prowess "as athletes, leaders, soldiers, and

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adventurers," and that Lewis, despite "occasional sexist remarks . . . [which] are neutralized by the girls' actions," shows "a basic sensitivity to females as people" (p. 19). And certainly there is sufficient evidence of his heroines' competency in active areas traditionally associated with males—physical prowess, military valour, and overall courage of spirit. Lucy, known as Queen Lucy the Valiant, is introduced as a keen adventurer in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and praised by Corin in *The Horse and his Boy* as being "as good as a man, or at any rate as good as a boy" (p. 155). (Granted, this is sexist praise, but it is the highest praise that "macho" Corin can currently think of offering, and is surely not unkindly meant.) In *The Magician's Nephew*, Aunt Letty is fearless and Polly is not only an active adventurer, but more logical than the impetuous Digory, remembering to mark the pool for their return (p. 39). In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Lucy courageously undertakes her solo journey to find the magic book and remove the spell of invisibility, risking a meeting with the magician, something the boys are afraid of doing. In *The Horse and his Boy*, Aravis, an accomplished Calormene equestrienne and storyteller, is a resilient rebel who forsakes luxury and power for an unknown destiny. In *Prince Caspian*, Susan, an excellent swimmer, helps rescue Trumpkin and later defeats him in archery. In *The Silver Chair*, Aslan gives Jill the task to remember the signs which will guide them on their journey, and in *The Last Battle* Tirian praises her archery and names her "the bravest and most wood-wise of all [his] subjects" (p. 64). The superlatives describing Lewis's heroines only stop short of a hymn to "invincible females." And in view of so many leading females, it is curious then that Lisa Hopkins (1995) argues that Lewis's "legitimate" authority figures are male, his "illegitimate" ones female (p. 364). But then she is focusing on the "powerful female

figures" (p. 366) like the White Witch and the Lady of the Green Kirtle, not childlike servants like Queen Helen and Ramandu's daughter, and does not address the deeper issue that the most significant leaders are the children, and many of them female—a pattern dramatically opposed to everything classical.

Interestingly, Hopkins regards Lucy's archery and non-involvement in "love-intrigues" (isn't Lucy a little young?) as a compromise of her femininity (p. 364). Melanie Rawls (1984) voices this problem in her general concern that "all too often the heroines of modern fantasy and science fiction are simply males in drag" (p. 12). But creating "males in drag" is one sin rarely attributed to Lewis. If anything, critics complain that his female characters are too traditionally feminine. Ford (1980) views Lucy and Aravis's interest in clothing as Lewis's "lapse" into sexism (p. 370); Jones (1987) sees it as a breach in their humanity (p. 17). Similarly, Filmer (1993) regards it offensive that Lucy is so "intensely feminine" (p. 105) because "there was nothing [she] liked so much as the smell and feel of fur" (*LWW*, p. 12). With such critical opponents, how indeed is a girl to win? If she "wins" because she behaves "like a boy" she is faulted by some; if she behaves "like a girl" after having "won like a boy" she is shunned by others. The issue here is this: "Must a female excel in heroism traditionally associated with males in order to prove fully human?" And "does activity associated with females lessen her humanity?" These questions reflect an entrenched sexist either/or position and I suggest that Lewis's response is remarkably enlightened: in Lewis's imagination a female can excel in "masculine" activities, even more so than many males, and at the same time celebrate "feminine" activities without loss. The traditional masculine standard is not Lewis's measure of humanity. To be whole a female must be both *anima* and *animus*, to cite C. G.

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Jung (1959), as must the male. Therefore to praise Lewis only for his "competent females" is to miss the more important point: namely that both genders must reflect the "feminine" face of heroism in order to be fully human. The question, "Are the girls 'as good as' the boys?" is not only answered with a resounding "yes," but is followed by, "Are the boys 'as good as' the girls?"

Classical Heroism Dethroned: A Pedagogy of Subversion

In order to consider the nature of heroism in the *Chronicles of Narnia* in any useful way we need to consider how Lewis treats the classical heroic paradigm addressed in Chapter 1. Like Milton, Lewis (1942a) views "the Satanic predicament" (p. 95) of self-elevation as an inevitable regression into the ridiculous. And though deeply impressive and doubtlessly attractive as it is temporarily effective, this egotistical ethos associated with "masculine" qualities such as physical action, superior intelligence, and conquest, is doomed to defeat. Throughout the *Chronicles* then Lewis depicts this "larger-than-life" sort of power only to subvert its impact and elevate the "feminine" qualities such as patience, trust, and spiritual health.

We repeatedly meet the classical hero of might, beauty, pride, and hatred in the demonic enemies of Narnia. In *The Magician's Nephew*, Jadis is "seven feet tall and dazzlingly beautiful" (p. 61), and has "a look of such fierceness and pride that it t[akes] your breath away" (p. 48). Her hatred of anyone who stands in the way of her absolute tyranny is evident in all she says and does, and is perhaps best summarized in her learning and using "the Deplorable Word" with which she destroyed her former world, Charn—an image of universal destruction considered to be a likely reference to the atomic bomb. In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* she is known as The White

Witch, "a great lady, taller than any woman that Edmund had ever seen," with "a beautiful face . . . proud and cold and stern" (p. 33). Her reign of terror is symbolized in her having enslaved Narnia for a hundred years of winter without Christmas, and her malevolence culminates in the slaughter of Aslan. The Queen of Underland in *The Silver Chair* is yet another variation of the evil enchantress type, a formidable figure who relies on conquest and slavery. And in *Prince Caspian*, when posing as "a poor old woman," the witch summarizes the classical ethos by saying, "No one hates better than me" (p. 142). As one dwarf says, "And the lesson of it all is . . . that those Northern witches always mean the same thing, but in every age they have a different plan for getting it" (p. 193). Of course it has been pointed out that Lewis's main supernatural images of evil are exclusively female, unlike Tolkien's male ones in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (Fredrick & McBride, p. 147). But this is not true of the *Chronicles* when one considers the impact of the Calormene god Tash, nor is it true of his adult trilogy, and we might view the witches in the children's stories not as the product of "a bachelor's misogyny" but as well within the fairytale genre.

The classical hero is also well represented by natural (i.e. not supernatural) enemies of Narnia. The Calormene "are a wise, wealthy, courteous, cruel and ancient people" (*VDT*, p. 58),[17] and, as true imperialists, pose a continual threat to Narnians and Archenlanders. Their ruthlessness, in character with their god Tash who demands human sacrifice, is characterized in Prince Rabadash, "a most proud, bloody, luxurious, cruel, and self-pleasing tyrant" (*HHB*, p. 60), and in his father, the Tisroc, whose calculating disregard for his son's life shows a lovelessness that is only matched, by contrast, with his love for "the glory and strength of [his own] throne" (p. 104). Similarly, Miraz, who

embodies the Telmarine legacy of usurpation, is a murderer who imagines kingship as everyone's highest ambition (*PCaspian*, p. 42). Uncle Andrew's pretensions to intelligence and quest for power and affluence through magic fit this type (*MN*), as well as Eustace's snobbery and deep selfishness (*VDT*).

And even Narnian friends show classical tendencies. Digory succumbs to the temptation to pursue adventure regardless of moral risk, and when he awakens Jadis he admires her classical pose: "She's wonderfully brave. And strong. She's what I call a Queen" (*MN*, pp.55-6). Caspian listens to the siren call to accompany Reepicheep to the World's End and, looking momentarily "not unlike his uncle Miraz," is ready to "break faith with all [his] subjects" (*VDT*, pp. 202-3). Similarly, Rilian finds it difficult to pass up the singular opportunity of a "marvellous adventure" to Bism, the land at the center of the earth, where no mortal man has been or will ever again have the opportunity to go, presumably to prove himself as he regards his father having done before him (*SC*, pp. 176-7). And both Aravis and Bree share Calormene vanity and pride, and Aravis a degree of callousness, so that their journey to the north is an education, a leading out, of the classical heroic.

The educational journey of Aravis and Bree out of the classical heroic depicts what Lewis achieves as a whole. Certainly the demise of larger-than-life classical enemies achieves the defeat of the old paradigm. So the White Witch is vanquished by Aslan, Jadis departs with his arrival, and the Queen of Underland, who takes on her true serpent form, is slain. But Lewis also dethrones classical heroism through the lessons of suffering, and perhaps especially through surprise, games, and humour.

The lessons of suffering reveal that classical heroism is as faulty as it is pain-

filled. So the splendour of the city of Tashbaan enjoyed by Calormene rulers is tarnished

by the suffering of the unwashed people crowding onto streets littered with refuse (*HHB*,

p. 52). The self-determination and wit that Aravis applied to flee Calormen is undermined

by the cruel indifference she shows to the fate of her servants whom she uses to escape,

and she learns to recognize this through the wounding Aslan gives her in return (*HHB*,

pp. 169-70). Some unrepentant classical types experience futility as they wail in terror

like Captain Rishda when Tash comes to take him away (*LB*, pp. 120-1), and become

witless like the cat Ginger (*LB*, pp. 100-1). And Lewis's subversion of classical heroism

through the portrayal of suffering culminates when Eustace, transformed into the physical

dragon befitting his supreme selfishness, weeps when realizing the futility of being the

richest, meanest, most powerful terror. As the narrator notes, "A powerful dragon crying

its eyes out under the moon in a deserted valley is a sight and a sound hardly to be

imagined" (*VDT*, p. 83). So suffering offers opportunity to subvert classical heroism

through moral criticism.

Another subversive method is the surprise that mere children, not conventional

warriors, are sent to vanquish the foe, and that military valour is not the means to victory.

So Trumpkin takes a condescending view of his "dear little friends," assuming that the

absence of "great warriors" means that "no help has come," and when he is beaten by

them in fencing and archery admits, "I've made as big a fool of myself as ever a Dwarf

did" (*PCaspian*, pp. 91, 96). Similarly, Jill and Eustace are called to the search for Prince

Rilian that has defeated dozens of brave champions (*SC*, p. 53). This sets the stage for

Lewis's illustration of the more surprising argument that the real battle is not physical,

but spiritual. So while Aslan commends Peter on his soldierly thinking, he adds, "it doesn't really matter" (*LWW*, p. 133). The real battle is that of his suffering death for the sake of Edmund, and when he returns to the battlefield with Lucy and Susan, victorious, this martial battle, like an after-thought, "was all over a few minutes after their arrival" (p. 162). Likewise in *The Silver Chair*, after the enchantment is defeated, all the subsequent dangers seem to be either a game or sport, not too serious, and Eustace's appearance in the Great Snow Dance brandishing his sword is a humorous interruption. Similarly, the great battle Caspian and his warriors "had hung their hopes on," and fought prior to Aslan's arrival, failed (*PCaspian*, p. 83). The deepening surprise is that the dramatic focus is not on martial achievement at all, but on Aslan's celebrative romp that awakens all of Narnia, the trees, animals, river-god, Bacchus and the Maenads (*SC*). So while the boys are engaged in battle Aslan invites the girls to join him in "mak[ing] holiday" (p. 168). And the Telmarine army does not experience defeat until Aslan's army arrives with "leaping and dancing and singing, with music and laughter and roaring and barking and neighing" (p. 174). In a particularly moving moment Lewis exorcises the old "masculine" heroic of bloody victory with the "feminine" one of care: we are told that "the first thing that happened [with the arrival of Aslan on the battlefield] was that the old woman slipped off Aslan's back and ran across to Caspian and they embraced one another; for she was his old nurse" (p. 174). Since Caspian's nurse combines love with mythic understanding—her appearance here is symbolic of the nature of the victory.

It is perhaps through humour that Lewis most easily subverts the classical heroic. In his preface to *The Screwtape Letters* (1942b) he cites Martin Luther's notion of the power of laughter: "The best way to drive out the devil, if he will not yield to texts of

Scripture, is to jeer and flout him, for he cannot bear scorn."[18] Already embedded in the terror that the evil ones exercise are humorous suggestions of their defeat. It is no coincidence that the threatening towers of the White Witch's house look "like huge dunce's caps or sorcerer's caps" (*LWW*, p. 85), as if these were interchangeable. Her descent into the ridiculous is emphasized by the hilarity of Giant Rumblebuffin wondering, "Where's that dratted little Witch that was running about on the ground" (p. 155). Laughter, at least from the reader, follows her when at Aslan's roar she "pick[s] up her skirts and fairly r[uns] for her life" (*LWW*, p. 131). More apparently ludicrous is the depiction of the Ape, Shift, as a classical caricature who wears a paper crown and ill-fitting clothes that remind him of his own greatness (*LB*). Then the stupid giants in *The Silver Chair* hurting each other until they all "s[it] down and beg[in] to cry . . . . howling and blubbering and boo-hooing like great babies" (p. 75) look as silly as Dwarf Trumpkin when Aslan shakes him once so that "all his armour rattled like a tinker's pack" (*PCaspian*, p. 134). Most memorable are the humiliations of Uncle Andrew and Prince Rabadash. Uncle Andrew is reduced to Jadis's slave, "looking like a dog with its tail between its legs" (*MN*, p. 70), and in Narnia he is chased by Talking Beasts who first decide that he is a tree that needs planting and watering, then decide he is "their strange pet" (p. 157). The arrogant magician's humiliation is sufficient to teach him to never try magic again for the rest of his days. And Rabadash the Ridiculous caught on a hook on the castle walls, later still trying to look alarming by responding to Aslan with a "long mirthless grin like a shark" (*HHB*, p. 182), then finding himself transformed into a donkey, shatters the idolatry of the classical hero with continual peals of iconoclastic

laughter. So all the classical (and would-be classical) heroes become caricatures in this universe.

The delightful surprise then is that life is not serious like a classical battle, after all, but divinely comic. With a pedagogy of subversion Lewis consistently dethrones classical heroism which emphasizes strengths associated with the "masculine" and elevates rather a spiritual heroic emphasizing strengths associated with the "feminine."

So far we have been looking at what Lewis does *not* do in the *Chronicles*. He is *not* a sexist. He does *not* limit female competency to traditional patterns. He does *not* espouse classical heroism which elevates values culturally associated with the "masculine." These are all important considerations as we think about what the "feminine" ethos looks like. Yet in a sense we have been looking at the question backwards, perhaps because it is impossible to get away from the classical paradigm of heroism. Everything we think and say in some sense is in response to its authority. For example, I catch myself using the word "patriarchy" to denote oppression, but in fact I honour my own excellent patriarchs just as I honour my excellent matriarchs, and so need to distinguish exploitive from nurturing patriarchy (and matriarchy), thus disabusing myself and others of a more recent cultural prejudice. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire (1970) has pointed out the tendency of the oppressed to take on the language of the oppressor (pp. 30-1). Similarly, Wayne C. Booth (1988) writes,

> *Freedom from* is easier to talk about than *freedom to*. Every critical
> revolution tends to speak more clearly about what it opposes than about
> what it embraces . . . . But all revolutionaries depend on their oppressers
> [sic] far more than they know. Revolutionary critics are enslaved by a

nasty law of nature; I can only say what I *can* say, and that will be largely what I have learned to say from the kings and queens I would depose.

(pp. 386-77)

Now I have and will continue to argue that a good deal of feminist criticism is rooted in classical heroism, so perpetuating its own chauvinism when assuming that conventional female traits constitute a lesser state. But it would be a real feat to move beyond responding to the old oppression, not only by resisting offering another one, but by actually offering a truly liberationist heroic. Let's try then for a movement *towards freedom* as we look at Lewis's "feminine" face of heroism for what it is.

Learning the Feminine Heroic

In this discussion I will address three aspects of Lewis's surprisingly "feminine" heroism: nurture, chivalric valour, and childlike wonder.

Learning Nurture

One striking aspect to the "feminine" heroic is Lewis's education in nurture—a quality more often associated with the feminine. In contrast to the fierce "masculine" individualism of each of the classical tyrants, from imposing enemies like the witches, the Tisroc, and King Miraz, to lesser beings like Uncle Andrew, and the not-yet-reformed Edmund and Eustace, the successful heroic characters learn to be interdependent "feminine" nurturers of each other. So the various children enter the community of the Talking Beasts and move from squabbling amongst themselves (*LWW*, *MN*, *SC*) and sometimes disbelief (*LWW*) to striving together for the common cause. In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, they join the battle that breaks the spell of the White Witch's enchantment over Narnia. In *Prince Caspian*, *The Silver Chair*, and *The Horse and his*

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Boy, their efforts assist in overcoming tyranny and the restoration of just rule. In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, the community of travellers assist each other in practising heroic virtue. In *The Magician's Nephew*, Digory's quest, as Myers (1998) notes, is concerned with nurturing both the older and younger generations (p. 198). In *The Last Battle*, the fidelity and courage of Jill and Eustace accompany Tirian in his darkest hours. And always, the children depend on each other as well as on their various companions to get the job done. For example, in *The Silver Chair*, Eustace needs Jill to remember the four guiding signs; likewise she needs Eustace's spirit, and both children need their serious but steady Marshwiggle companion. Throughout the *Chronicles*, the children learn heroic qualities that affirm one another, like penitence, when Eustace confesses to Jill, "I was—gosh! what a little tick I was" (*SC*, p. 13). They learn mercy, like Edmund who, having experienced first-hand the power of forgiveness, says of Rabadash, "But even a traitor may mend. I have known one that did" (*HHB*, p. 180). And they learn trust, like Susan when she declares, "Then in the name of Aslan . . . . let us go on and take the adventure that shall fall to us" (*LWW* , p. 169). Each child expects and receives help from every other, and together the heroic children with their guides and helpers form a community of caring which foils the plans of the strongest "lone ranger."

The distinguishing feature of their nurturing community is compassion where the heroes are consolers, healers, and redeemers. This is seen in the loving nurture that Nurse and Doctor Cornelius give young Caspian—a mythic education about Old Narnia that is, in Cornelius's case, instrumental in saving his life (*PCaspian*). It is dramatized in Lucy's use of "the magical cordial which would heal almost every wound and every illness" (*PCaspian*, 29)—a parallel to Aslan's work of "restor[ing] those who had been turned

into stone" (*LWW* 163). Unlike the classical hero who prides himself on victory, Susan doesn't enjoy beating Trumpkin in archery because she is "tender-hearted" (*PCaspian*, p. 95). Lucy, empathetic, responds to the weeping dragon-that-had-been-Eustace with her cordial and kisses—and so leads to the discovery that this is indeed Eustace (*VDT*, pp. 86-9). When Reepicheep, the incarnate chivalric hero, ever noble, becomes "the most constant comforter" for the dragon-that-was-Eustace (p. 91), this underscores that compassion is central to greatness. And the great lion Aslan reduces himself to a mere cat to comfort Shasta during his night at the tombs (*HHB*). He again shows keen compassion in his reaction to the suffering of Digory's mother:

> What [Digory] saw surprised him as much as anything in his whole life.
> For the tawny face was bent down near his own and (wonder of wonders)
> great shining tears stood in the Lion's eyes. They were such big, bright
> tears compared with Digory's own that for a moment he felt as if the Lion
> must really be sorrier about his Mother than he was himself.
>
> (*MN*, pp. 131-2)

The supreme image of compassion is that of Aslan in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* submitting to mockery, torture, and death to save Edmund—the "Deep Magic" of blood sacrifice that leads to the "magic deeper still" of atonement where "Death itself [begins to work] backwards" (p. 148). His quiet grief surpasses all of the witch's rage. Indeed, his act of humility is the highest heroic act; as Lucy observes, "the shorn face of Aslan looked to her braver, and more beautiful, and more patient than ever" (p. 139). And what is particularly striking about Aslan's act of compassion is its re-enactment in Susan and Lucy. Whereas all the children are affected by Aslan's sombre mood as he approaches death, the boys prepare for conventional battle as instructed by Aslan and then sleep (an echo of the sleeping male disciples in Gethsemane), and so do not discover the reason for his grief. If anything, this is a reverse sexism, since, as an exercise in

obedience, the boys are limited to conventional warfare by Aslan's instructions, as discussed earlier, whereas the girls participate in the central battle that determines the outcome of the war. In contrast to the boys, we see the girls so attuned to Aslan's emotions that they remain wakeful and persist in accompanying him, sharing his grief, and so help him in the ultimate heroic choice of self-sacrifice. With only an intuitive understanding they cry bitterly as they cling to him (p. 136). Aslan, "glad of company" (p. 135), welcomes their presence: "I am sad and lonely. Lay your hands on my mane so that I can feel you are there and let us walk like that" (p. 136). Susan and Lucy then exercise the heroic function of consolation and, after the Galilean model, are "fellow-sufferers" (cf. Alfred North Whitehead, 1929b, pp. 520-33). As consolers, Susan and Lucy overcome fear and grow heroic. "At any other time they would have trembled with fear; but now the sadness and shame and horror of Aslan's death so filled their minds that they hardly thought of it" (*LWW*, p. 142). This heroism of nurture certainly informs Lewis's view of domesticity—a frequently unrecognized and disparaged heroic.

Some of the criticism of Lewis as a sexist author centers around the question of female domesticity. Kath Filmer (1993) criticizes what she regards as Lewis's "exclusive identification of the spiritually whole, psychologically individuated woman with total domesticity" (p. 94), noting that Lewis approves of Earth Mother female figures and dislikes "chatty lovers of make-up and frippery" (p. 105) as developed in Susan and Lasaraleen. It is not quite clear as to whether Filmer disapproves of Earth Mother types entirely, or only objects to what she regards as Lewis's representation of all modern women as "self-centred and mindless" (p. 106) (a rather contentious conclusion in view of his full cast of characters), but it does seem apparent that Filmer does not regard it

possible or likely for spiritual and psychological wholeness to characterize a woman who has identified herself with "total domesticity." An affinity with domesticity itself is the ethos which Filmer objects to when she describes Mrs. Beaver in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* as another Earth Mother who is "deeply maternal . . . domestic, submissive and amiable" (p. 107). But if Filmer is suggesting that the Earth Mother's role as provider for the fellowship gathering around the table signifies her oppression, it would follow that every domestic provider of hospitality is in an inferior state of being, whether it is Professor Digory offering his home as a refuge to the four Pevensie children during the World War II bombings, the faun Tumnus serving Lucy tea, or Aslan himself providing his miracle feasts (like Aslan, just how did Mrs. Beaver manage it all?). But these facts indicate an opposite persuasion—namely that domesticity, as embodied in someone like Mrs. Beaver and not foreign to many males, mythical Aslan being the supreme example, is in fact inseparable from the heroic ethos Lewis espouses. Further, Lewis's sense of hospitable domesticity has sacramental dimensions in view of his use of the biological metaphor of God as host.[19] So Mrs. Beaver's "fussy domesticity" (Hannay, 1976, p. 15) actually constitutes an often unrecognized greatness. I think it makes better sense then to acknowledge Lewis's (1955) stated opinion that "a housewife's work," as much as it must seem "like that of Sisyphus . . . . is surely in reality the most important work in the world . . . . that people may be fed, warmed, and safe in their own homes . . . . [the] job . . . for which all others exist" (*Letters*, 1966, p. 262). Nancy-Lou Patterson also challenges the old paradigms when she explores what Lewis (1948) called "the unfathomable feminine principle" (cited in Patterson, 1986, p. 4). She contradicts much feminist critique in insisting that "for [Lewis] to say something was "humble, almost

domestic," was to praise it" (p. 10). So rather than perpetuating a chauvinistic dismissal of domesticity in females, or extend that to males, it would be more useful to contrast good domesticity (in both genders) with a harmful imitation such as the White Witch's offering of Turkish Delight to Edmund, or with none at all. Good domesticity, rooted as it is in hospitality, may be regarded as a spiritual strength, a sacramental act.

As part of her argument against domesticity, Filmer objects to Mrs. Beaver as "not . . . intellectually well-endowed" because she considers taking her sewing machine on the flight from the sure wrath of the White Witch (p. 107). Granted, the half-wish to take the sewing machine is humorous, but it is one of her vital tools, after all. Also, might this joke not illustrate a deeper, feisty hilarity, a faith that evil shall be overcome and they will all live well for years to come? Moreover, when Mr. Beaver and the children are about to flee in panic, this domestic female of "questionable intelligence" is the only one who "very coolly" (p. 93) makes wise provisions for the company. As well, she is the one who assesses their chances of escape with soldierly accuracy, suggesting stealth and surprise as their only chance (p. 94). Overall, domestic Mrs. Beaver is a hero, not someone to be trifled with. Commitment to domesticity then—providing for kin and strangers—contrary to its reputation as a lesser moral and intelligent state, seems to be an excellent way of knowing and being after all, and one experienced by both genders, though perhaps the female is shown to be the leader here.

A rather disturbing component of the criticism of domesticity is the dim view of the maternal as a lesser state. The best (sometimes perceived as worst) example of the struggle to become maternal in Lewis's fiction that critics object to is the choice of Jane Studdock in *That Hideous Strength* (1945a) to forgo an academic career in order to

submit to motherhood (Filmer, p. 101; Fredrick & McBride, pp. 144-46, 166). But isn't a dim view of the maternal itself a serious act of condescension, one that erroneously implies that raising the next generation is a less worthy calling, requiring less intelligence and fortitude, than another vocation? Contrast this with Mary Wollstonecraft's (1792) feminist view of motherhood as the serious enterprise of a free moral agent, as well as the claims of contemporary feminist theologians who cite the "devaluation of nurturance" of children as patriarchal (Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, 2001, p. 461), and similarly view parenthood as a spiritual discipline (Beverly Harrison, 1981, cited in Miller-McLemore, p. 464). Let's consider a Narnian example of motherhood, the nameless Ramandu's daughter, who, we are told, "became a great queen and the mother and grandmother of great kings" (*VDT*, p. 210). If we are to dismiss her as "just another woman defined by her ability to nurture males," then we overlook how instrumental she is at Aslan's table, in singing in the dawn with her father, and that she is a self-directed woman who even instructs Prince Caspian as to how he may win her. But if we regard motherhood as a powerfully rational as well as compassionate state of being, then her identification as a mother, even a nameless one, is no insult. Lewis's treatment of the maternal is further developed in characters like Queen Helen, the young wife with soapsuds on her hands, whose humility qualifies her for royal responsibility (*MN*, pp. 127-8), as well as in Mabel Kirke who celebrates restored health in frivolous play with the children like "the biggest baby of the three" (*MN*, p. 169), and, not least, with Aslan when he is compared to a mother cat whose game with Trumpkin displays the competence of gentle maternal strength (*PCaspian*, pp. 133-4). Overall, Aslan's nurturing character emphasizes divine "femininity." While Filmer (1993) believes that Lewis is unaware of the biblical image of

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God as both masculine and feminine (p. 111), it rather seems that Lewis is very much aware of this.

The educational question then is this: what does the maternal offer educators? How does one repair the devaluation of motherhood and its implications in the curriculum? Arguably, Lewis's regard for the ethics of care associated with the maternal and domesticity as a superior heroic provides a key. Biological parenthood can then be a metaphor for a teacher's sense of social responsibility and care—we impact not "other people's children" but our community's children, my daughter, my son, my grandchild. Commitment to young people, the willingness to forgo one's own self-gratifying agenda, and intelligent nurture seasoned with healing levity are some of the maternal qualities of an effective teacher.

Learning Chivalric Valour

A second aspect to the "feminine" heroic is Lewis's education in chivalric valour. In his inaugural lecture as the Professor of Medieval and Renaissance English Literature at Cambridge University in 1954, Lewis describes himself as "the spokesman of Old Western Culture"(1954a, p. 12), a "specimen" or "dinosaur" (p. 14) who believes deeply in a rational and objective universal truth that he finds celebrated in older literature (up to and including Jane Austen) and elsewhere refers to as the *Tao* (1947a). Similarly, he holds the highest regard for many of the lessons to be learned from chivalric heroism. The chivalric code with its emphasis on courage, loyalty, honour, mercy, and courtesy, has a central place in his work, as various scholars note (Filmer, 1993; Ford, 1980; Myers, 1994). Of courtesy Lewis says, "only the courteous can love, but it is love that makes them courteous" (1936, p. 2). Of mercy he says, "The essential act of mercy was

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to pardon; and pardon in its very essence involves the recognition of guilt . . . . Mercy, detached from Justice, grows unmerciful" (1949a, p. 294).[20] And of the primary virtue Lewis says, as the senior devil Screwtape advises his nephew Wormwood,

> courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point, which means, at the point of highest reality. A chastity or honesty, or mercy, which yields to danger will be chaste or honest or merciful only on conditions. Pilate was merciful till it became risky.
> (1942b, pp. 148-9)

Ethical valour, certainly, is central to every Narnian hero.

Now at first glance it might seem odd to associate chivalric valour with the feminine because Medieval chivalry is primarily thought of as active male heroes demonstrating martial courage in rescuing passive females. And we have an example of this in *The Silver Chair* when the knightly Prince Rilian, Puddleglum, and Eustace slay the serpent-witch while the "Damsel" Jill watches and then quietly sits down, thinking, "I do hope I won't faint—or blub—or do anything idiotic" (pp. 158-9). However, we have at some length already discussed how alternate examples of female competence and the ultimate inferiority of physical battle next to spiritual battle diversify this view of Lewis's female characters. And to stop with this narrow view of chivalry as "masculine" is to miss the distinctly "feminine" quality of meekness in the knight that Lewis emphasizes.

In "The Necessity of Chivalry" (1940),[21] Lewis speaks of this unique paradox in the Medieval heroic, citing the words Sir Ector speaks over the dead Sir Launcelot in Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* (1485)[22] as its best expression: "Thou wert the meekest man that ever ate in hall among ladies; and thou wert the sternest knight to thy mortal foe that ever put spear in the rest" (XXI, xii, cited in Lewis, 1940, p. 13). As Lewis elaborates,

> The knight is a man of blood and iron, a man familiar with the sight of smashed faces and the ragged stumps of lopped-off limbs; he is also a demure, almost a maidenlike, guest in hall, a gentle, modest, unobtrusive man. He is not a compromise or happy mean between ferocity and meekness; he is fierce to the *n*th and meek to the *n*th. When Launcelot heard himself pronounced the best knight in the world, "he wept as he had been a child that had been beaten." (XIX, v, cited in Lewis, 1940, p. 13)

This dual nature of chivalric heroism is striking: the ideal masculine hero embodies both the military valour associated with classical heroism, though not its spirit, as well as the meekness associated with the feminine, perhaps to our surprise. And in the *Chronicles* chivalric meekness is clear in male examples such as Reepicheep's consolation of Eustace (*VDT*), the gentle unicorn Jewel whose grace and softness belies his terrible fierceness in battle (*LB*, p. 81), King Lune's gracious treatment of Rabadash in view of "his youth and the ill nurture, devoid of all gentilesse and courtesy, which [he] doubtless had in the land of slaves and tyrants" (*HHB*, p. 181), and the courtesy of the Calormene noble, Emeth, when he addresses Peter, "I know not whether you are my friend or my foe, but I should count it my honour to have you for either" (*LB*, p. 145). That chivalric meekness does not undermine combative ability is evident in such female examples as Susan, the "tender-hearted" archer (*PCaspian*, p. 95), and Jill whom King Tirian exhorts with "If you must weep, sweetheart . . . turn your face aside and see you wet not your bow-string" (*LB*, p. 112). Overall, the heroes, male and female, acquire an integrity that overcomes barbarism in themselves and others. And possibly we might concur with Lewis's view (1940) that this Medieval ideal is acutely relevant today, "offer[ing] the only possible escape from a world divided between wolves who do not understand, and sheep who cannot defend, the things that make life desirable" (p. 16).

In addition to the "feminine" meekness, the chivalric focus on moral virtue is contrary to the classical "masculine" pursuit of oppressive power. Certainly much of the thrust of Lewis's intention in imaginative writing is to provide an education in virtue. As he argues (1947a), the task of the modern literature teacher is to "irrigate [emotional] deserts" (p. 24), training the emotions so that students will eventually have "stable sentiments" (p. 34) that reflect the *Tao*. Though careful to resist the opposite folly of emotion ruling over reason (p. 30), Lewis insists it is an "outrage" (p. 34) that people without "just sentiments" (p. 24) or "Magnanimity," whom he calls "Men without Chests" (p. 34), should be thought of as "Intellectuals" (p. 35). With the *Chronicles* he intends such an imaginative education into correct "stock responses" (cf. 1942a, pp. 54-61) or "just sentiments." He argues (1942a) that "in poetry passion is present for the sake of imagination, and therefore, in the long run, for the sake of wisdom or spiritual health—the rightness and richness of a man's total response to the world" (p. 54). As he explains in how and why he writes for children (1952a), "a generation which is born to the Ogpu and the atomic bomb . . . . is so likely [to] meet cruel enemies [that he would like to] let them at least have heard of brave knights and heroic courage" (p. 31).[23]

To begin with, much of the heroic learning has to do with the children exercising or acquiring instinctive moral discernment, having the right feelings or "stock responses" to figures of good and evil. Critics Hannay (1981) and Schakel (1979) are among those who discuss this at some length. So in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, the truthful children, Peter, Susan, and Lucy, react to the first mention of Aslan's name with instinctive joy—Peter feeling "suddenly brave and adventurous," Susan feeling "as if some delicious smell or some delightful strain of music had just floated by," and Lucy

feeling as if she had just woken up to the realization that it was "the beginning of the holidays or the beginning of summer" (p. 65). The spiteful Edmund, by contrast, feels "a sensation of mysterious horror" (p. 65) because he has failed to respond to the clues that the Witch he'd aligned himself with was evil, though "deep down inside he really knew that the White Witch was bad and cruel" (p. 83), and undergoes a painful process towards freedom. Over the course of their many journeys the children all learn to admit when they are lying to themselves, like Digory admitting he was "only pretending" to be "a bit enchanted" when he struck the bell (*MN*, p. 126), Susan admitting she'd lied about not believing that Lucy saw Aslan (*PCaspian*, p. 132), and Lucy after she is tempted by vanity and curiosity (*VDT*). As they submit to Aslan's guidance, developing increasingly "just sentiments," they also respond to danger with valour.

So like Susan who first worries about whether Narnia, Aslan, or statues coming to life is "quite safe" (a reflection of Lewis himself as mentioned earlier), the children learn courage. In *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, Father Christmas gives them "tools, not toys" (p. 10) so that they can engage in the high seriousness of fighting for peace, justice, and mercy. Peter, feeling more sick than brave, "win[s] his spurs" by slaying Maugrim, captain of the White Witch's secret police, the wolf after his sister Susan (*LWW*, pp. 119-21). On their flight from Underland, Prince Rilian encourages the others with, "Friends, when once a man is launched on such an adventure as this, he must bid farewell to hopes and fears, otherwise death or deliverance will both come too late to save his honour and his reason" (*SC*, p. 165). Lucy learns bravery in heeding Aslan's call to follow him regardless of the disbelief and annoyance of her siblings (*PCaspian*, pp. 124-31). An exhausted Shasta, who "had not yet learned that if you do one good deed

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your reward usually is to be set to do another and harder and better one," overcomes faint-heartedness when instructed by the Hermit of the Southern March to warn King Lune of the coming army and to "waste no time on questions, but obey" and "run . . . without a moment's rest . . . . run, run: always run" (*HHB*, p. 124). Jill, who had once been afraid of going through a black hole between caves (*SC* p. 165), voices ultimate bravery in *The Last Battle*: "I'd rather be killed fighting for Narnia than grow old and stupid at home and perhaps go about in a bath-chair and then die in the end just the same" (p. 88). The children then all receive an education in a useful and worthy life being about resisting the pursuit of personal safety, comfort, and pleasure, in order to endure the heroic risk that results in genuine wellness.

It is important to see too that Lewis does not take chivalric valour with ultimate seriousness, but rather sees it as a useful paradigm, even a game, one of the several pictures that the Landlord sends,[24] but not the goal. Chivalry is not an end in itself but a means or path to truth. Unlike the classical hero whose goal is to secure worldly power, for Lewis the heroic lessons of chivalry are that life is a journey towards eternity—a curriculum that develops the whole person. As Farsight the Eagle says when he delivers bad news in *The Last Battle*, "remember that all worlds draw to an end and that noble death is a treasure which no one is too poor to buy" (p. 85). Lewis achieves this playful attitude towards chivalry perhaps best by depicting the incarnation of such heroism in "the last thing Caspian [and many readers] expected—a Talking Mouse" (*PCaspian*, pp. 72-3). Whereas Walter Hooper (1971) considers Peter as the one who "best fulfills the chivalric ideal" (p. 87), I think there is no better knight in all of Narnia than mighty mouse Reepicheep whose indomitable courage puts everyone else in a lesser light. For

example, when the company encounters the psychological terror of the dark island in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Reepicheep remains resolute, admonishing the discouraged captain with, "So far as I know we did not set sail to look for things useful but to seek honour and adventures" (p. 152). And when Caspian orders the retreat because "there are some things no man can face," Reepicheep, "with a very stiff bow," replies, "It is, then, my good fortune not to be a man" (p. 156). Clearly, Reepicheep's 'mousehood' is gentle irony of traditional—and flawed—male chivalric activity. Further, the chivalric ideal comes under scrutiny when Aslan criticizes the tailless Mouse for thinking too much of his own honour, and when his faithful fellow mice vow to cut off their own tails in deference to their leader, Aslan makes clear that he will restore the tail not for chivalric dignity but for the sake of a higher ethos: love and kindness (*PCaspian*, pp. 177-78). Finally, the fact that the chivalric code is a heroic learning tool in a temporary world is beautifully dramatized when Reepicheep, floating away in his "little coracle" towards Aslan's country, flings the now useless sword "far away across the lilied sea" (*VDT*, p. 206). With this one gallant gesture Lewis emphasizes that the heroic lessons that chivalry teach have been learned; the dream that the chivalric code wakened is but a shadow of the Good to come and now the accoutrements of chivalry can be discarded like an old costume dress.

So, for Lewis, the chivalric heroic code with its celebration of the misunderstood feminine principle of meekness as a strength, and ethical valour as a way of life, is a vital education. Though sometimes flawed with a focus on personal honour (to say nothing of the issue of adultery),[25] chivalry nonetheless offers an excellent picture of how to face and overcome evil. The educational implications seem obvious: what better gift to offer

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children than moral courage? The "feminine" models of valour in imaginative literature can do much to foster a student's sense of moral vision, self-worth, and hope.

Learning Childlike Wonder

The third and perhaps key aspect to the "feminine" heroic is Lewis's education in childlike wonder—a celebration of the attitude of humility and "foolish weakness" that is prerequisite to mythic understanding. This focus on being childlike as a way of life is rooted in the teaching of Jesus when he welcomes little children and emphasizes to the astonished and hostile male disciples (cf. Mark 10:13), "unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3, New International Version). As I noted in Chapter 1, various contemporary feminist theologians argue that Jesus subverts the exploitive patriarchal social world that esteems economic power and rationality in favour of childlike humility and weakness. Corresponding scriptures are "a little child shall lead them" (Isaiah 11:6, King James Version) and "God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong" (I Corinthians 1:27, New International Version). Needless to say, there is excellent reason to link the "feminine" with childlike wonder, if only because historically women and children have been dismissed together as lesser beings. As Lissa Paul (1987) says, there is good reason for a feminist reading of children's literature since children, like women, have been regarded as "helpless and dependent" and "have been invisible and voiceless for so long" (p. 181). The *Chronicles* too emphasize the link between the feminine and the child in the various evil adults and witches who erroneously dismiss mythic truth as false tales told by old women that are only believed by gullible children. The Telmarine king, Miraz, a murderous usurper, is

one striking example (*PCaspian*, pp. 43-4). Also, as mentioned earlier, Uncle Andrew in particular rejects the idea of a moral law applying to himself as a foolish notion belonging to children and women (*MN*, pp. 23, 29). But these and all others like them are defeated by the childlike heroism they both disparage and are also fearful of. To grow heroic then is to learn the "feminine" practise of childlike wonder.

Now the idea that anyone could "learn to have childlike wonder" is an oddity if you think that children are naturally this way. But Lewis, like his mentor MacDonald, does not share Wordsworth's view of chronological childhood itself as being particularly imaginative or open to mythic wonder. As he says of the child characters who "grow up" in Narnia, "I don't think age matters so much as people think. Parts of me are still 12 and I think other parts were already 50 when I was 12: so I don't feel it v.[ery] odd that they grow up in Narnia while they are children in England" (1953, *Letters to children*, 1985, p. 34).[26] It is important to distinguish here between the child*like* and the child*ish*, between the imaginative openness to wonder and immaturity. As discussed in Chapter 2, George MacDonald, unlike Wordsworth who views the child's closeness to mythic wonder as a passing stage, says, "The child is not meant to die, but to be forever freshborn" (*Princess and Curdie*, p. 18). Nor does MacDonald think that all children are open to the mythic. Similarly, in the *Chronicles* the childlike of all ages are open to the mythic, but the sceptics of all ages are not. As the narrator in *The Silver Chair* observes, "Even in this world [earth], of course, it is the stupidest children who are the most childish and the stupidest grown-ups who are most grown-up" (pp. 202-3). Equally Ford notes, "Lewis uses 'grown-up' as a synonym for wrong thinking" (p.1). So the powerful and thoroughly practical "adult" witch Jadis is proven wrong in her low opinion of children as

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being incapable of breaking the spell that binds her (*MN*, p. 53). And the childlike adult,

Professor Digory, whose training in logic assists him in openness to mythic possibilities,

is proven correct (*LWW*, pp. 46-9). The childishly fearful are called to bravery, as Peter

admonishes Susan with, "it's no good behaving like kids now that we are back in Narnia.

You're a Queen here" (*PCaspian*, p. 26), while adults who talk down to children, like the

giants of Harfang (*SC*), look ridiculous. Not surprisingly, it is the childlike, a few adults

and many more children, who are the heroes in Narnia.

Nonetheless, some are surprised. Doris T. Myers (1994) follows the discussion of

those who find this troublesome (p. 118-19). C. N. Manlove (1987) says of *The Lion, the*

Witch and the Wardrobe, "we feel the uneasy juxtaposition of children and child-adults:

quite what are we doing except in wish-fulfillment with a child who leads an army into

battle?" (p. 123). Similarly, Marcus Crouch (1972) says it "is a fundamental weakness of

the 'Narnia' books" that "a group of schoolchildren, not notably brave or clever, [should]

becom[e] kings and queens in a magical world" (p. 124). To this reaction Myers

comments that Lewis's books "feel natural" for people who "have felt about the same age

all their lives," and observes that the agelessness of characters on Aslan's Mountain as

well as the fluctuation between mature and immature behaviour conveys the "need for

being treated as a person instead of an age category . . . being met" (p. 119). I think that

this discussion raises an interesting educational question: how much can we expect of our

children to transform the world? Madeleine R. Grumet (1988) critiques what she regards

to be our naïve view of the powerless child redeemer transforming adult corruption,

arguing that we misunderstand the Isaiah 11:6 passage. "Isaiah's understanding that the

child can only be as innocent as the world that welcomes him is lost to us as we burden

our children with an impossible task" (p. 154). Her solution is that "if we hope that our children will transform our world, we had better heed Scripture and transform theirs" (p. 162). I think though that Manlove and Crouch's concern together with Grumet's criticism is answered in the *Chronicles*: as in Scripture, the hope of social transformation lies with the childlike of all ages. Growing younger in the right ways then— penitence, openness to the mythic—is progress, as readers witness in the retired star, Ramandu, whose daily diet of a fire-berry reduces his age until he will be like a new-born child to rise again and "once more tread the great dance" (*VDT*, p. 177).

In his celebration of childlike wonder Lewis emphasizes the paradoxical weakness and smallness of the child-hero. So Digory's story begins in tears (*MN*, p. 32). The child Caspian runs for his life (*PCaspian*). Eustace appears "very grubby and untidy and generally unimpressive" (*SC*, p.34). Like the infant Moses cast adrift in a hostile world, the child Cor is designated to be the saviour of the Archenlanders (*HHB*, p. 173). Jill, disobedient and ignorant, is given the four vital signs needed to accomplish the task of rescuing the enchanted prince, and indeed, this is an 'impossible' task which has defeated many adult champions (*SC*, p. 53). The children together with the beavers keep under cover and so, unsuspected by the power-driven enemy, get through to Aslan (*LWW*). The *Dawn Treader* herself, the small but seaworthy ship "shining like a great bright insect" (p. 39) with which its child leaders battle physical and spiritual tempest, is a metaphor for the 'impossible' nature of childlike heroism. In Narnia's last days it is the youngest children of the Seven Friends of Narnia, Eustace & Jill, who aid the king. Similarly, older heroic characters illustrate the unlikeliness of the child-hero. With lovely humour, "fat little" Trumpkin is wheeled on a little chair harnessed to a donkey not much

bigger than a big retriever (*SC*, pp. 34-5). And Hwin, the female horse who is shy, gentle, "easily put down," weaker, and more tired, is the one who "set[s] the pace" for their journey in both physical and moral terms as she recognizes the need for a humble appearance and quickly responds to Aslan (*HHB*, pp. 117, 169). The lesson here is not to be fooled by the apparent ineptitude of the hero and to rather see it as essential. Not assuming one is competent for the job is the prerequisite to competence, as Prince Caspian (*PCaspian*, p. 175) finds out, because that attitude of humility leads to learning how to do the job well. What a liberating idea for the struggling student.

Importantly, for Lewis it is the youngest child, and perhaps especially the female child, who is a metaphor for openness to mythic wonder. So Lucy, the youngest child, explores a wardrobe that is much larger than expected and we all share her surprise when she steps out into a cold wood with softly falling snow (*LWW*). So Lucy awakens to Aslan's voice while all the others are sleeping and enjoys the dance of the trees, then gets beyond them to enjoy the lion's company (*PCaspian*, pp. 120-6). And just as Lucy is the pioneer sojourner into the magical world of Narnia, so she is the one who is most often with Aslan, and the one who remains a leader of the frequently dumbfounded older siblings. Her reports of mythic reality are met with logical incredulity. "Poor old Lu, hiding and nobody noticed!" jeers Edmund (*LWW*, p. 27), "A jolly good hoax," congratulates Peter (p. 28), and "Where did you think you saw [Aslan]?" asks Susan (*PCaspian*, p. 110). The challenge her older brothers and sister repeatedly experience is the same one Lewis puts to all his readers: how do you overlook the obvious facts (the solid back of the wardrobe which the youngest claims was an open doorway; the fact that no one else can see the lion Aslan) and entertain the mythic (that Narnia is a real country;

that Aslan is truly there and visible to Lucy)? Madeleine L'Engle's (1978b) discussion of

the youngest child as representing our openness to wonder is useful here. Every fairy tale

character resides within each of us, from princess to beast and "youngest" child to "elder"

sibling. The challenge is to suspend the sceptical, hubris-filled elder child within and let

the receptive, characteristically humble youngest child lead. This is seen, for example,

when Edmund repents of his earlier grown-up attitude of disbelief and votes for

following Lucy, the only one who can see Aslan beckoning them (*PCaspian*, p. 112).

And the association of the child-leader with the feminine is also evident in Nancy-Lou

Patterson's (1979) exploration of Lucy's role as seer in terms of the Jungian concept that

the feminine *anima* (Jung, 1959) has particular gifts of sight.

Another key scene that dramatizes how childlike wonder leads to mythic

understanding is the climactic one in *The Silver Chair* where the Queen of Underland

tries to hypnotize the liberated Prince Rilian, the Marshwiggle Puddleglum, and Jill and

Eustace into the belief that the upper world of Narnia is all a dream. With some success,

echoing the prisoners in Plato's cave, the witch instructs that the sun and the lion that

Puddleglum speaks of are only dreams modelled after her lamp and cats they have seen.

Stephen M. Smith (1998) views this as Lewis's attempt "to break the enchantment of the

naturalistic worldview and its claim that all concepts of the Divine are merely

fabrications of the imagination or dreams with no real cognitive status" and offer a

"counterprejudice" (pp. 178-9). Certainly the famous passage from *Weight of Glory*

(1949b) fits here with the kind of enchantment Lewis wishes to break—and the alternate

one he wishes to create:

> Do you think that I am trying to weave a spell? Perhaps I am; but
> remember your fairy tales. Spells are used for breaking enchantments as

well as for inducing them. And you and I have need of the strongest spell that can be found to wake us from the evil enchantment of worldliness which has been laid upon us for nearly a hundred years. (p. 5)[27]

Significantly, the witch dismisses the Marshwiggle's resistance to the enchantment as childish stories and tricks (*SC*, pp. 151-55). What is noteworthy is how Puddleglum breaks the naturalistic spell. At some physical cost to himself (burnt feet while stamping out the witch's enchanting fire), the Marshwiggle affirms the superiority of the mythic vision accessed by childlike imagination over her narrowly logical dismissal of the mythic. As he argues,

> Suppose we *have* only dreamed, or made up, all those things—trees and grass and sun and moon and stars and Aslan himself. Suppose we have. Then all I can say is that, in that case, the made-up things seem a good deal more important than the real ones. Suppose this black pit of a kingdom of yours *is* the only world. Well, it strikes me as a pretty poor one. And that's a funny thing, when you come to think of it. We're just babies making up a game, if you're right. But four babies playing a game can make a play-world which licks your real world hollow. That's why I'm going to stand by the play-world. I'm on Aslan's side even if there isn't any Aslan to lead it. I'm going to live as like a Narnian as I can even if there isn't any Narnia. (pp. 156-7)

And so, in a real sense, Puddleglum's willingness to suspend his disbelief and try childlike imagination is not only an act of bravery, but one that also increases his ability to engage in logical argument. The ability to ever ask, "Suppose" and "What if" is certainly the hallmark of an educable person. It is the falsely adult characters in the *Chronicles* who are no longer asking questions that are beyond educability, beyond hope. In *The Last Battle*, these include Susan, whom Ford considers to be a "lapsed child" (p. 106), the Calormene captain Rishda who becomes prey to the god Tash after he called upon him without believing in him, and the dwarves firm in their mistaken belief that they inhabit a dark stable when all the childlike ones have entered the true Narnia. Prince

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Rilian, on the other hand, is one prototype for childlike characters: as with Prince Rilian, the entry of the childlike into mythic truth restores them to knowledge of their true selves (*SC*, p. 147). They are the educable ones, heirs to hope.

So, as we see with the various childlike characters of all ages, to be heroic is to be willing to exercise wonder. This aspect of Lewis's heroism hinges, of course, on a key educational question: do we educate for the particular stage we assume a child is in (as in Piaget's sense of stages in cognitive development), or do we educate to give rebirth and sustenance to the childlike at all times? The education Lewis offers is clearly the latter. And one of the challenges he offers educators is this: encourage wisdom in the child by fostering childlike openness to wonder. Assume the child knows more than he thinks he knows, even when he displays ignorance and indifference, for that is at least partly true and the best assumption for encouraging potential. Draw out the sage and redirect childish immaturity. And do all these things together, graciously, wherever possible without the child's notice, like a host who is the ultimate servant.

Conclusion

Perhaps Lewis himself would be surprised by the "feminine" face of heroism he creates, though I think not, if only because Lewis favours the imaginative capacity to convey truth and gives credence to the idea that our literary creations are "smarter" than we are. As Patterson (1986) points out, Lewis (1954) says that "the imaginative man in [him] is older, more continuously operative, and in that sense more basic than either the religious writer or the critic" (*Letters*, 1966, p. 260), and insists that "it is impossible that we shd. [should] ever know the whole meaning of our own works, and the meaning we never intended may be the best and truest one" (1943, *Letters*, 1966, p. 203). Certainly

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his work illustrates, as Patterson (1986) argues, a reversal of his famous statement to read, "What is above and beyond all things" must also be "so feminine that we are all masculine in relation to it" (p. 35). While Lewis most likely would have disagreed with Patterson's revision out of commitment to traditional hierarchy, his imaginative work nonetheless suggests it to his readers, as I have argued. In spite of Lewis's sexist heritage then, the better and truer meaning of his work surpasses the old tyranny with a remarkable grace. Nor is this so very surprising in a worldview that paradoxically honours the weak.

If this reading of Lewis is correct, then the *Chronicles of Narnia* offer much to the culture wars of our time and the future. We are still entrenched in the oppression that equates traditional feminine traits with inferiority. Often our attempts at revolution turn out to be an unwitting perpetuation of the old oppression in a revised form. The "feminine" heroic, however, is a dynamic idea that helps teachers and students disentangle repressive from liberating discourse—an exciting approach that is missing in many critical studies to date. In particular, Lewis's focus on nurture, chivalric valour, and childlike wonder for both genders repairs the notion of gender dualism that is rooted in Western classical heroism and one of its several by-products, sexism. Moreover, his education of the moral imagination shows how wise nurture of the imagination can transform perception—not only of sexism but of any harmful cultural assumptions—and so engage both educator and learner on the journey towards wholeness.

CHAPTER FOUR
THE DEEPENING PLACES: A MYTHIC WAY OF KNOWING
IN MADELEINE L'ENGLE'S "WIND" TRILOGY

Madeleine L'Engle (1918-), the American author, wife, mother, and grandmother,

is another voice in children's literature who nurtures the moral imagination with mythic

stories. Like George MacDonald, whom she cites as her primary literary influence (1972,

1990), and also like C.S. Lewis, L'Engle explores an imaginative pedagogy that

potentially educates the virtuous human being. With MacDonald and Lewis, L'Engle

shares the capacity to create a vision of goodness that engages the reader's emotions and

intellect. In this, as with the other authors of this study, L'Engle offers a mythic vision

that challenges a narrow rationalism, exploring rather an imaginative and spiritual way of

knowing. Well beyond a pragmatic, "factual" education that educates young people only

for technical proficiency and social function, an important but limited curriculum,

L'Engle's fantasy literature educates for what may be regarded as the greater good of

existential thinking: about what it means to be human, and how one best ought to live in a

conflicted and often irrational world. Her primary task then is to nurture with existential

hope and courage those readers who might otherwise go without.

Perhaps the outstanding feature of L'Engle's stories is her ability to create a

cosmos that is permeated with a love, both human and supernatural, that overcomes evil,

and through this experience of pervasive love generates in her characters, and so possibly

in her readers, the willingness to respond to suffering and injustice with moral courage.

To do this she offers a curriculum of "Deepening Places" in which the individual is encouraged to move beyond his rationalistic limitations into spirituality, to "make believe," in order to engage in mythic possibility. As the cherubim Proginoskes observes to Meg, "human beings need Deepening Places, too. And far too many never have any. Think about your Deepening Places" (1973, *A Wind in the Door*, pp. 156-7). In this chapter I will consider how in her "Wind" trilogy,[1] *A Wrinkle in Time* (1962), *The Wind in the Door* (1973), and *A Swiftly Tilting Planet* (1978a), as well as in other writings, L'Engle nurtures the moral imagination with experiences of "Deepening Places." To do this I will discuss how her vision of imaginative education emphasizes mythic knowing and, grounded in the consolation of love, develops an ethical education.

Mythic Knowing: The Deepening Places

Mary Aswell Doll (2000) cites "literalism" as the problem of contemporary culture and seeks to find ways of listening to the mythopoetic (p. xiii). And mythic fiction, stories which embody eternal human truths beyond literalism, may be regarded as the highest form of fiction, not so easily attained by the writer, but memorable when it is. These stories have the quality of penetrating and unsettling our thinking, "shock[ing] us more fully awake than we are for most of our lives" (Lewis, 1946, p. 29). Madeleine L'Engle (1977) puts it this way:

> myth is the closest approximation to truth available to the finite human being. And the truth of myth is not limited by time or place. A myth tells of that which was true, is true, and will be true. If we allow it, myth will integrate intellect and intuition, night and day; our warring opposites are reconciled, male and female, spirit and flesh, desire and will, pain and joy, life and death. (p. 114)[2]

We have considered mythic education in Chapter 2 and will return to this discussion in Chapter 5. Here it is worth emphasizing that Madeleine L'Engle excels in creating mythic fiction with her exploration of the cosmic battle between good and evil and its everyday implications. Her achievement has parallels with Dwayne Huebner's (1985) argument for the value of religious metaphors in educational discourse. As Huebner warns,

> If knowledge is not seen within the fabric of a faith community, if it is separated from the pull of the transcendent, and the duty and responsibilities of love, then we risk idolatry . . . . Idolatry exists where knowledge is presented as if it is removed from those who construct it and use it . . . . Idolatry exists when interpretations and meanings are standardized by textbooks or standardized evaluation forms. Idolatry exists when teachers present knowledge, forms, symbols, as if interpretation and conversation are frills rather than duties informed by love and responsibility. (p. 367)

In her writing, L'Engle arguably challenges the idolatry of literalism. She offers, one might say, her own iconography or windows onto widening mythic possibility.[3] And in the classroom then, the educator/learner inspired by her mythic fiction lives in an open universe free to ask the huge existential questions such as "Who are we? Why are we here? Is there meaning to the cosmos?" (cf. Noddings, 1993, 1995, 2002). Such an educator listens to the silence with "the *faithfulness* of doubt" (L'Engle, 1980, p. 118), and with true pluralism hears the diverse, sometimes conflicting answers with reverent awe. This certainly may and sometimes should happen in the discipline of literature.

As an author of mythic fiction, like C.S. Lewis (1946) who cites George MacDonald as his "master" (p. 33), L'Engle (1990) cites the Victorian writer as her primary mentor, "probably the most important influence in deepening [her] mythic understanding" (p. 113). She speaks of gratitude to "Grandfather George" who often "rescue[d]" her from "doubt or confusion," saying, "Like all great fantasists, he has

taught me about life, life in eternity rather than chronology, life in that time in which we

are real" (1972, p. 158).[4] Of the importance of mythic knowing, L'Engle (1990) explains,

> Jung says that we are a sick society because we have lost a valid myth to
> live by, and in my small back room [in her childhood apartment] I was
> absorbing a mythic view of the universe, a universe created by a power of
> love far too great to be understood or explained by tenets or dogmas. That
> power of love was offered me by those writers and artists whose
> imaginations took me beyond literalism . . . . George Macdonald . . . .
> comforted me, but not with cozy platitudes. The mythic world he offered
> me promised no easy solutions. Rather, it gave me solid ground under my
> feet, a place where I could stand in a world which was confusing and
> dangerous and unfriendly . . . . And the world widened. (p. 113)

And of *A Wrinkle in Time*, she says she was "quite consciously writing [her] own

affirmation of a universe which is created by a power of love" (1972, p. 218). Unlike

"logical explanations of the totally mysterious scandal of particularity" (pp. 240-1),

L'Engle imaginatively explores the mystery of the possible meaning of particularity

within a universe often characterized by violence. She concludes, "we need to be aware

that if we deny the world beyond the world of technology and provable fact, we do so to

our peril" (1990, p. 121), esteeming instead imaginative education. In her words,

> It is . . . through the world of the imagination which takes us beyond the
> restrictions of provable fact, that we touch the hem of truth. The world we
> live in, the world we are able to know with our intellect, is limited and
> bounded by our finiteness. (1972, pp. 92-3)

And it is this finiteness of intellectual knowing, narrowly defined, that L'Engle is

determined to stretch through mythic exploration. In deference to the Greek distinction

between two kinds of time, *chronos* and *kairos*, chronological and ontological time (p.

245), L'Engle explores in her mythic fantasies this ontological time in which we may

experience being and meaning. Rolland Hein (1998) regards L'Engle as "on occasion

singularly successful in achieving the level of myth" because of her ability, reminiscent

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of MacDonald, to show "the eternal [as] permeating the temporal" and "mak[ing] goodness attractive and [revealing] the moral beauty of higher reality" (pp. 249, 252). Also reminiscent of MacDonald's childlike wonder, L'Engle (1972) speaks of learning as exercising "that special kind of creative courage which is unself-conscious," opposite to hubris (as in the pedagogy of humility explored in Chapter 1), such as when "learning to jump into a rope swung by two other children, learning to jump in without breaking the rhythm and tripping over the rope" (p. 11). Similarly, she speaks of writing for children who have not yet, like many adults, "closed themselves off with fear of the unknown, fear of revolution, or the scramble for security," and so are "still familiar with the inborn vocabulary of myth" (pp. 198-9).

As with any imaginative writer, Madeleine L'Engle plays "let's make believe," and in her fictions of pervasive love, perhaps her most distinctive contribution to imaginative thinking, L'Engle's mythic universe is characterized by joy. Icons of joy proliferate in her vision, like her own white china laughing Buddha who restores her from taking herself too seriously (1972, pp. 22-3), like the hilarity of the three Mrs. Ws who enjoy the joke of playing their conventional Hallowe'en witch personas on a rather serious moral enterprise (*Wrinkle*, p. 60),[5] or like the stray dog Ananda in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet* whose name in Sanskrit means "That joy in existence without which the universe will fall apart and collapse" (p. 40).[6] So mythic truth celebrating the value of each human life offers a powerful alternative to rationalistic education.

In nurturing the moral imagination with mythic stories L'Engle gives the reader experiences of "Deepening Places," both in experiencing cosmic joy and in a participatory response to that joy. For example, in *A Wrinkle in Time* on the planet Uriel

the children witness many creatures gathering to perform joyous music which Mrs. Whatsit translates as a paean of praise:

> "Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof. Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift their voice; let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains. Let them give glory unto the Lord!" (pp. 67-8)[7]

As a result Meg and Calvin experience "a pulse of joy" that "flowed through them, back and forth between them, around them and about them and inside them" (p. 68). And throughout the trilogy in response to this cosmic joy the children learn to practise kything, a superior form of mental telepathy with which they communicate with each other as well as with other characters, minute or large. This in turn becomes a way or tool for battling evil—the ultimate weapon of love. As L'Engle (1985) explains, the old Scottish word *kythe* "means to communicate with someone with love, beyond barriers of time and space. It is far more than ordinary ESP, which does not necessarily include love. Kything cannot happen without love" (p. 129). As in *A Wind in the Door*, to kythe Meg is encouraged to become "other," to commune with the "Deepened creatures [farandolae] moving in the intricate pattern of song, of the loveliness of rhythm, of joy" (p. 157). It is with this mythic way of knowing (in the old idea of knowledge as love) that the children win spiritual battles that are measurable in biological and cosmic terms.

And in her education of mythic knowing, Madeleine L'Engle (1972) is keenly aware of her moral responsibility as a writer. In asking "What is the responsibility of the writer today?" she asserts that while stories are always entertainment they should also include a "moral response" to the world (pp. 96-7). With a certain urgency in considering

the 'deepening shadows' (p. 246) of evil she argues for the need of writers and teachers

alike to offer moral education (p. 98). In her words,

> To refuse to respond is in itself a response. Those of us who write are
> responsible for the effect of our books. Those who teach, who suggest
> books to either children or adults, are responsible for their choices.
> Like it or not, we either add to the darkness of indifference and
> out-and-out evil which surround us or we light a candle to see by. (p. 99)

Like C.S. Lewis (1952a) who insists that the value of exploring the battle between good

and evil through imaginative literature is to equip children for life, L'Engle (1972) speaks

of giving children weapons against evil, one of the greatest being laughter (p. 99). Citing

Thomas Mann (n.d.), she suggests that the richer moral imagination of authors and their

readers has the potential to prevent political evil (p. 123), and finds it "frightening" that

so many educators teach only for pragmatic knowledge (p. 203). Echoing the response of

many others, Madeleine L'Engle asks some provocative educational questions: "What

have we educated [young people] for? Have we given them too heavy a diet materially

and neglected them spiritually?" (p. 103).

I turn now to her mythic education as it is grounded in the consolation of love.

The Consolation of Love

For many of us the words "consolation" and "love" are probably not the first

words that come to mind when we think of educational theory and practice, or even

necessarily what we associate with the experience of reading literature. As Dwayne

Huebner (1985) has noted,

> Love is a sticky wicket in educational circles. The word appears to be
> verboten in education as if it conjures up images of softness, privatization
> and indulgence. Too bad. We owe it to ourselves to explore the distortion
> of that word, its misuse and hence our hesitation to use it. (p. 363)

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And although many of us would perhaps share Huebner's hesitancy about having neither

the time nor the expertise to engage in such exploration, perhaps we can nonetheless open

windows onto the concept and its experience through literature like Madeleine L'Engle's

that does the very thing. Arguably, the discipline of literature provides a unique space in

which we can explore "the consolation of love" in a personally meaningful, existential

way.

The verb "console" is derived from the Latin *sōlārī*, which means "to console" or

"to comfort," and certainly in L'Engle's stories this consoling love, human and

supernatural, has nothing to do with superficial softness or indulgence. Instead, the love

she portrays in its various forms such as affection, friendship, eros, and charity (cf.

Lewis, 1960), suggests a keen sense of personal and cosmic meaning in the midst of

doubt and potential despair. Her stories radiate with the hope penned by Julian of

Norwich (1343-1413), "But all shall be well and all shall be well, and all manner of thing

shall be well" (cited in L'Engle, 1980, p. 156), and it is with this hope that she creates for

her readers the possibility of "bring[ing] cosmos out of chaos" (p. 158).

As noted, Madeleine L'Engle's imaginative education is grounded in the vision of

both human and supernatural love. First, L'Engle consistently portrays the consolation of

human love against the assault of danger and evil. For example, in the opening of *A*

Wrinkle in Time on "a dark and stormy night," Meg Murry enjoys "the familiar comfort

of the kitchen" where her young brother, Charles Wallace, who has "an uncanny way of

knowing when she was awake and unhappy," intuitively knows she will need his

company and, in anticipation, has already prepared the milk for hot chocolate (pp. 11, 5).

Moreover, love helps characters overcome the fear of being a misfit and instead be more

fully themselves, enabling them to help others. So a maturing Meg, often still miserable

about her self-perception as "snaggle-toothed . . . myopic . . . [and] clumsy," is able to

take the hand of "a popular and important boy like Calvin" and "offer him comfort and

strength" (*Wrinkle*, p. 96). Similarly, though more dramatically, the habitually

despondent principal, Mr. Jenkins, is able to save the dying Meg by filling her with his

"strength and love" (*Wind*, p. 194).

This human love always has powerful implications, saving individuals, even a

planet. In *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*, the love that the Murry family shares proves greater

than their vulnerability. In the threat of nuclear destruction, they joins hands and voices in

"*Dona nobis pacem . . . Give us peace*" (p. 19), emblematic of how a small circle praying

for peace may widen, include individuals across time and space, until the threat is

defeated. There is always the sense in L'Engle's fiction of a warm family open to others

where triumph over danger and evil feels like the "tremendous happy jumble of arms and

legs and hugging" at the end of *A Wrinkle in Time* (p. 210). In this readers may, with

Calvin, "have the funniest feeling . . . [of] going home!", and some, like Calvin, "for the

first time in . . . life" (p. 37). And readers may, with Charles Wallace, consider the

importance of love in its most immediate sense: "If there is to be any peace or reason, we

have to create it in our own hearts and homes" (*STP*, p. 29).

Second, L'Engle consistently portrays the consolation of supernatural love against

the assault of danger and evil. She voices this hope in Mr. Murry who affirms faith in

spite of considerable evidence to the contrary by echoing Romans 8:28, saying of their

dangerous mission, "We were sent here for something. And we know that all things

work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his

purpose" (*Wrinkle*, p. 172). With her imaginative creation of various supernatural beings,

including former stars materializing as old women in Hallowe'en costume (*Wrinkle*), a

flaming cherubim with many eyes and wings (*Wind*), and a radiant unicorn (*STP*),

L'Engle establishes a sense of the universe as not "empty" but rather populated with

beneficent figures acting together with human characters to sustain cosmic harmony.

And in each shared "hardship assignment" (*STP*, p. 47) in the battle against evil, the

children gain a strong sense of a numinous presence—a loving presence—acting together

with them. They come to know this supernatural community with gratitude when, for

example, Mrs. Which, the oldest angelic messenger, triumphantly announces their arrival

in a crisis: "WWEEE ARRE HHERRE!" (*Wrinkle*, p. 191). Joy and love are greater

when they are present (p. 210).

Also, these supernatural figures illustrate some of the many faces of love. Mrs.

Whatsit, "the comforter" (p. 88), assuages grief when she enfolds the wildly sobbing Meg

in her great wings until Meg feels "comfort and strength pouring through her" (p. 74).

Aunt Beast helps heal spiritual wounds when she responds to Meg's rage with

unconditional love:

> The gentle words, the feeling that this beast would be able to love her no
> matter what she said or did, lapped Meg in warmth and peace. She felt a
> delicate touch of tentacle to her cheek, as tender as her mother's kiss.
>
> (p. 183)

And Blajeny, a coolly rational Teacher, illustrates the power of mature love to remain

indifferent to the childish wish for easy solutions when he insists, instead, that the young

people exercise their indispensable talents (*Wind*, pp. 58-9). In every instance, the love of

supernatural beings coaches the human characters into heroic action.

So this widening sense of cosmic love and meaning, first known in the particular

human sphere, inspires the young people to develop moral courage.

Growing Moral Courage: An Ethical Education

The necessity for growing moral courage is vital in Madeleine L'Engle's view of

a universe where evil abounds. Her work answers the somewhat rhetorical question, "Is

there such a thing as evil?", with a resounding "yes." Evil, for L'Engle, is an insidious

and pervasive spiritual force that requires vigilant resistance, both in one's inner life and

in the outer world. In *A Wrinkle in Time*, when the children wonder what "the Dark

Thing" is that overshadows the beauty of the earth, Mrs. Which declares, "Itt iss Eevill.

Itt iss thee Ppowers of Ddarrkknesss!" (p. 88). Throughout the trilogy evil assaults the

characters, their loved ones, society at large, and the cosmos. In *A Wrinkle in Time*, the

children and the father, Mr. Murry, are battling a villain in the form of a disembodied

brain, IT, who threatens to overtake their freedom of thought and movement, their very

selves, and subdue them into ultimate conformity to ITself, just as IT has conquered the

now zombie-like planet Camazotz. As L'Engle (1980) observes, IT illustrates the

viciousness of the brain "when it is disengaged from the heart" (p. 172).[8] In *A Wind in the*

Door and in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*, the characters battle the Echthroi,[9] ancient evil

beings or, paradoxically, now "non-beings," who practise nihilism on themselves and all

of life. In *A Wind in the Door*, they are the inventors of irrational violence, from the

context of bullying, drugs, flu-like deaths, and malicious break-ins in the immediate

neighbourhood, to stars vanishing, and the central action of Charles Wallace's struggle

with mitochondritis. In *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*, they are the instigators of interconnected

histories spanning centuries that could culminate in planetary destruction through nuclear war.

Importantly, the battle against evil occurs in and is first and foremost resisted in one's inner life. This is evident in the danger when Meg struggles with her own spiritual damage, "Disappointment . . . as dark and corrosive in her as the Black Thing" (*Wrinkle*, p. 171). It is also evident in Charles Wallace when his hubris blinds him to the folly of self-reliance, such as when he chooses to enter the influence of the man with red eyes (*Wrinkle*), and whenever he tries to control his destiny instead of trusting the providential wind (*STP*). As mentioned earlier, L'Engle's intention in dealing with the problem of evil, like Lewis's stated intention, and presumably MacDonald's, is to educate readers into the moral battle.

In each of the books of the trilogy, the characters are called to participate in this exhilarating cosmic battle that spans time and space. To borrow J.R.R. Tolkien's dramatization of the concept of a "fellowship" of moral warriors,[10] and like the sense of the "communion of saints" cited in Chapter 1 but here applied to the characters, the children learn that they are being asked to join forces with all valiant moral fighters that have been, are, and will be. As they hear in *A Wrinkle in Time*, "And we're not alone, you know, children," came Mrs. Whatsit, the comforter. "All through the universe it's being fought, all through the cosmos, and my, but it's a grand and exciting battle" (p. 88). Part of her exhilaration is due to the concept of interdependence where every person, indeed the tiniest organism, makes the difference. As Mrs. Whatsit explains,

> "I know it's hard for you to understand about size, how there's very little
> difference in the size of the tiniest microbe and the greatest galaxy. You
> think about that, and maybe it won't seem strange to you that some of our

very best fighters have come right from your own planet, and it's a *little* planet, dears, out on the edge of a little galaxy. You can be proud that it's done so well." (pp. 88-9)

The illustrious catalogue of fighters is typified by Jesus, whose story embodies the hope of ultimate victory—"'And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not'" (p. 89)—and includes others like Leonardo da Vinci, Madame Curie, Buddha, and St. Francis.[11] Certainly the greatest reason for her optimism is the hope of the frequent and overall ultimate victory of good.

In all seriousness the children are asked to join these ranks in the belief that they have vital roles to play. As Blajeny says to the ailing Charles Wallace, "Nevertheless you are called, and anybody who is invited to study with one of the Teachers is called because he is needed. You have talents we cannot afford to lose" (*Wind*, p. 59). Similarly, the cherubim woos the microscopic farandola, Sporos, when he is tempted to reject the task of "deepening" inside Charles Wallace's body: "You are created matter, Sporos. You are part of the great plan, an indispensable part. You are needed, Sporos; you have your unique share in the freedom of creation" (p. 193). However, within this seriousness of the call to moral battle it is also important to recognize the paradoxical kind of abandonment to profound hilarity that arises from the faith that optimism will be realized. As noted above, L'Engle speaks of giving children one of the greatest weapons against evil: laughter. And with rich fun the Mrs. Ws enjoy the "game" of representing themselves in Hallowe'en costume, "f[alling] into each other's arms in gales of laughter" (*Wrinkle*, pp. 93, 60). In response to Charles Wallace's cold annoyance, Mrs. Which instructs, "Anndd wee mussttn'tt loooose ourr sensses of hummorr. Thee onnlly wway ttoo ccope withh ssomettthingg ddeadly sseriouss iss ttoo ttry ttoo trreatt itt a llittlle lligghtly" (p. 61). The

gift of laughter as a powerful means to growing moral courage is perhaps especially vital for notoriously serious or self-absorbed adolescents.

Certainly the children and others who join them quake with the sense of their inadequacy for the battle. An exhausted Calvin concludes, "Meg, they're asking too much of us" (*Wrinkle*, p. 148). Grumpy over Meg's ignorance and at the dangerous mission, the cherubim Proginoskes wonders, "Why couldn't they have sent me off some place *quiet* to recite the stars again? . . . . I'm too young, I'm scared" (*Wind*, p. 81). Meg, perplexed over the ordeal before her and that the cherubim asks her for direction, angrily protests, "This is too much responsibility! I'm still only a child! I didn't ask for any of this!" (*Wind*, p. 90). An older Charles Wallace is tempted to retreat into narrow realism and dismiss the idea of being called to cosmic battle, then is acutely aware of his fear (*STP*, pp. 34, 54). In the words of Mrs. Whatsit, "Only a fool is not afraid" (*Wrinkle*, p. 102). And overall, L'Engle (1980) affirms this "impossible" nature of participation in the cosmic fight, citing various "unqualified" figures who accomplished remarkable things, declaring, "We are all asked to do more than we can do" (p. 61). But in answer to the temptation to abdicate, the characters of whom "too much" is required are rallied by the call to courage.

Fear is acknowledged and shared, as the unicorn Gaudior articulates to Charles Wallace (*STP*, p. 54), but the characters learn to move beyond debilitating fear to heroic action. The maxim from Euripides, "Nothing is hopeless; we must hope for everything" (*Wrinkle*, p. 61), envelops them. When Meg panics at the enormity of the task set before her, Mrs. Whatsit counsels, "My child, do not despair. Do you think we would have brought you here if there were no hope? We are asking you to do a difficult thing, but we

are confident that you can do it" (*Wrinkle*, pp. 74-5). Though the temptation to decline

the call to battle is great, like the Happy Medium's reluctance to look at unpleasant

realities, irresponsibility is no option for the ethical thinker. As Mrs. Which reprimands

the Happy Medium, "Therre willl nno llonggerr bee sso many pplleasanntt thinggss too

llookk att iff rressponssible ppeoplle ddo nnott ddoo ssomethingg abboutt thee

unnppleassanntt ones" (*Wrinkle*, p. 86). When Mrs. Which rallies the children with her

exultant call to battle, "Wee wwill cconnttinnue tto ffightt!", the strength of her

confidence raises their determination (p. 88). And as Aunt Beast declares to Meg, the

moral fighter is not dependent on his own resources: "Good helps us, the stars help us,

perhaps what you would call *light* helps us, love helps us" (p. 186). Like Charles

Wallace, the young heroes enter the strength of fellowship within a community that

"speak[s] the ancient harmony," "belong[s] to the Old Music," (*STP*, p. 46), and so help

restore cosmic harmony.

In the invitation to practise courage, L'Engle emphasizes the paradox of unlikely

success through the analogy of the sonnet form. When asked if she has the courage to

return to Camazotz on her own to try to rescue her brother, Meg flatly admits she doesn't

and emphasizes that this is not the relevant question: what matters is that she attempt to

do the only thing that is right (*Wrinkle*, p. 197). In response, Mrs. Whatsit compares their

lives to the creative possibility of the sonnet, saying, "You're given the form, but you

have to write the sonnet yourself. What you say is completely up to you" (p. 199). In

spite of the constraints which sometimes may be regarded as limitations (gender, age,

health, temperament, upbringing, opposition), creative courage is invented within and

perhaps because of these constraints. In *A Circle of Quiet* (1972), L'Engle speaks of this

analogy in the novel as illustrating the principle that moral structure liberates (p. 121).

Whereas evil structure imprisons, as on Camazotz where freedom of choice has been lost,

"obedience" to moral structure "liberates, sets us free to become growing, mature human

beings" (p. 121). This is clear in Meg's growth from the disappointed child who had

hoped her father would "fix" all their problems to the maturing girl who chooses "the

privilege of accepting this danger" (*Wrinkle*, p. 200)—and undertakes the possibly fatal

but more likely victorious journey on her own. In contradiction to the nurturing adult's

tendency to wish to protect the child by removing difficulties (if they only could), or

indeed fighting their battles for them, as Mr. Murry illogically still hopes to do for Meg

(p. 200), and so effectively prolonging their immaturity, the children find themselves

thrust into the moral arena and expected to do battle. So when Meg complains to Blajeny

about Charles Wallace's trouble at school, as if solving that problem were the purpose of

the Teacher's mission, he dismisses her plea with, "That is hardly my problem," rejecting

the overly serious self-centeredness that demands easy solutions— "My dears, you must

not take yourselves so seriously. Why should school be easy for Charles Wallace?"

(*Wind*, p. 58)— and counsels that her brother "will have to learn to defend himself" (p.

59). Similarly, the changed principal, Mr. Jenkins, expects Charles Wallace to learn to

fight and win his own battles (p. 207). Within their various constraints then, the child

heroes engage in moral battle and creatively affirm that the opposite to evil is to live, to

overcome evil with good. Joy prevails.

So Madeleine L'Engle's ethical education challenges her characters, and perhaps

by extension her readers, into the importance of growing moral courage. In the following

discussion I will look more closely at several principles of her mythic curriculum.

Three Principles of L'Engle's Mythic Curriculum

In what is arguably a dismantling of the pragmatic limitations of a rationalistic curriculum, Madeleine L'Engle's mythic curriculum explores an imaginative and spiritual way of knowing. As I have said, instead of a curriculum that educates primarily and perhaps exclusively for technical proficiency and socialization, her mythic curriculum educates for existential thinking about what it means to be human, and how one best ought to live in a conflicted and often irrational world. Her primary task, as I have argued, is to nurture readers with existential hope and courage, and she achieves this with exploring the "Deepening Places" in which the individual may move beyond rationalistic limitations into spirituality. Now I would like to turn to several principles that help create these "Deepening Places" in her fantasy literature: 1) the pedagogy of humility; 2) the importance of imaginative risk-taking; and 3) the celebration of love as heroic action.

The Pedagogy of Humility

The principle of the pedagogy of humility, identified as the unifying principle of these authors in Chapter 1, is also central to L'Engle's mythic curriculum. As discussed in the earlier chapter, this principle disrupts and repairs traditional cultural values so that the "masculine" quest for military and intellectual power of the classical Western tradition is undone by the "feminine" quest for love and humility in the Christian paradigm. This ethos of humility can hardly be over-emphasized since it is often misread or misunderstood. Our tendency seems to be to admire the classical hero of physical and intellectual strength, and disregard the spiritual hero characterized foremost by love and humility. For example, as noted in Chapter 3, some critics consider it incongruent that

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fallible children should succeed in battle in the imaginative world (Crouch, 1972;

Manlove, 1987). But, as I have argued throughout, this paradox is indeed the point: it is

precisely the "unlikely" childlike leaders—the underdogs—a few of them adult, who

subvert and overcome the powerful hegemonies that oppose them. And the physical

battle, as I've discussed, is a metaphor for the spiritual battle. A second area of

misunderstanding is in the presentation of the "feminine" heroic. As discussed in

Chapters 2 and 3, some critics consider the representation of the female characters with

qualities traditionally associated with the feminine to be problematic (Filmer, 1993;

Fredrick and McBride, 2001; Lehr, 1995). But again, as I have argued, this is indeed the

object: the "feminine" heroic of obedience and faith in both genders is the means to

spiritual victory. And in this discussion of her Wind trilogy, I would like to address how

this pedagogy of humility informs L'Engle's vision of the paradoxical heroism of foolish

weakness.

Throughout the trilogy, the child-heroes are portrayed as weak and defenceless—

unlikely candidates to defeat evil. In *A Wrinkle in Time* it is the child/adolescent Margaret

Murry who feels like a misfit and is considered by her teachers to be a poor student (her

abilities are unrecognized), who is asked to do what no one else seems able to do:

overcome the disembodied brain, IT. She is daunted by the task, deeply aware of her

comparative intellectual inadequacies: "her own puny little brain was no match for this

great, bodiless, pulsing, writhing mass on the round dais" (p. 160). On her own journey

towards discovering the one weapon that she has and IT does not—love—Meg must

become like an infant again and receive aid from Aunt Beast (pp. 180, 187). This

consciousness of her inadequacy is a prerequisite to her heroic action,[12] as it also clearly

is for Charles Wallace in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet* when he learns to forego self-reliance. In *A Wind in the Door*, the ailing child, Charles Wallace, illustrates the principle of interdependence where whatever happens to one person, in this case his battle with death, happens to everyone. As the principal Mr. Jenkins tries to fathom, "Man. The mean point in the universe. And Charles Wallace—is that it? At this moment in time Charles Wallace is the point of equilibrium?" (p. 147). Importantly, the Teacher Blajeny instructs, "Size is really quite relative" (p. 145). When the bewildered Mr. Jenkins later protests, "But a child— One small child—why is he so important?", the cherubim announces, "It is the pattern throughout Creation. One child, one man, can swing the balance of the universe. In your own Earth history what would have happened if Charlemagne had fallen at Roncesvalles? One minor skirmish?" (p. 179). In this scheme of things, mere children assisted by such unlikelies as a loving stray dog (*STP*) or a shrewd garden snake (*Wind*) slay spiritual giants. So, the cosmic battles are fought within the seemingly small but potently significant framework of the child-saviour.

The unlikely success of "foolish weakness" is also evident in those characters who would be identified as intellectual inferiors. In *A Wrinkle in Time* Mr. Jenkins is a weak, unimaginative, and incompetent school principal, but in *A Wind in the Door*, though at first still obtuse, he grows heroic through humility and openness to the mythic that his rational mind cannot grasp at first. In *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*, the shifting vision of brain-damaged Chuck Maddox conveys to the sensitive listener a powerful logic that is instrumental to the battle against evil. Similarly, the reader is struck by the paradox where hidden within the ugly narrowness of toothless, unkempt Beezie O'Keefe who beats her children and is suspicious of intellectuals like the Murrys, deep within the old woman

who "learned not to feel, not to love, not even her children, not even Calvin. Not to be hurt" (p. 253), is the treasure of the rune that helps save Charles Wallace and the planet. Her self-sacrifice for Charles Wallace typifies the nature of the ethos of humility. By contrast, the intellectual feats of Meg's father, Mr. Murry, and her brother, Charles Wallace, sometimes lead to disaster (*Wrinkle, STP*).

It is worth emphasizing too that in this pedagogy of humility Madeleine L'Engle, like MacDonald and Lewis, addresses and repairs the injustice that is associated with the masculine/feminine dualism that has prevailed in Western thinking. For instance, one observes, like Nancy-Lou Patterson (1983), the androgynous nature of the three angels in *A Wrinkle in Time*. The children wonder if the being they call Mrs. Whatsit is "She? he? it?" (*Wrinkle*, p. 65). But more persuasive, perhaps, even than the androgynous quality of the Mrs. Ws is L'Engle's agreement (1978b) with Jung on the integrating principles of *anima/animus* within all human beings. In her words,

> Biologically we are all complicated combinations of both male and female genes, and I think Jung was right in saying that we need to discover within ourselves our opposite genes; women need to recognize their *animus*; men need to understand their *anima*. By and large women have been luckier than men here, because over the centuries men have been taught to repress their anima, their intuitiveness, their gentleness, their ability to weep real tears. But women have been allowed to remain in touch with our intuitive side, that part of our psyche which helps us to see the truth beyond the limited truth of provable fact, and so it is easier for us than for men to see fairy tales as mirrors of our wonderful complexity and richness. (p. 450)

Elsewhere L'Engle (1980) again contrasts disadvantaged men who have been taught to address life with rational thinking with advantaged women who, "involved as they are in the nurture and upbringing of children far more than men, have thereby been helped to retain the child and the dreamer in themselves" (p. 70). Certainly it is apparent in

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L'Engle's trilogy that it is the so-called foolish weak "feminine" hero/ines in these stories, both male and female, who overcome evil with good.

So, as Katherine Schneebaum (1990) argues, in *A Wrinkle in Time*, Meg learns from Aunt Beast to be "a woman and a mother" in order to save her brother. But to regard this traditionally feminine love as inferior is erroneous. This "passive power" as Schneebaum refers to it is singularly successful whereas classical active heroism fails. In *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*, Meg is the pregnant woman (without another career to justify or celebrate her existence), hardly observable, inactive as she spends considerable amounts of time resting in bed for the sake of the baby, who is instrumental in helping her brother, Charles Wallace, prevent nuclear disaster. And the means by which Meg assists her brother—kything, as described earlier—is singularly "feminine" in nature. To kythe with another's thoughts is to become a receptacle for that other person, to become pregnant with or conceive his ideas. Meg then is comparable to the archetypal Mother who conceives, gestates, and gives birth to the Word that saves the world. Likewise, the male figures who celebrate their *anima* grow heroic. As mentioned, emotionally and imaginatively frozen Mr. Jenkins begins to unfold his "feeling intellect" and so is able to save Meg from death (*Wind*). Calvin O'Keefe is a kything figure whose intuitive awareness of others is instrumental to the heroic action (*Wrinkle*, *Wind*). The crippled writer Matthew Maddox transforms his loss of strength and virility into love and help towards his twin brother and the one woman they both love, and his "passive" role becomes a significant link in Charles Wallace's quest to save the planet (*STP*). And throughout the trilogy, Charles Wallace, a superior kyther, is just as much a Mother figure as his sister when he becomes a willing vessel, giving space to Idea.

The pedagogy of humility is a concept that can transform how we read and teach

literature. L'Engle's discussion of the artistic process in feminine imagery has parallel

value for the learning process. In place of "artist," read "teacher/learner" because we are

similarly speaking of the generative imaginative process. In her words,

> The artist is a servant who is willing to be a birthgiver. In a very real sense
> the artist (male or female) should be like Mary who, when the angel told
> her that she was to bear the Messiah, was obedient to the command I
> believe that each work of art, whether it is a work of great genius, or
> something very small, comes to the artist and says, "Here I am. Enflesh
> me. Give birth to me." (1980, p. 18)

She cites an atomic physicist's words on the necessity of humility preceding revelation

(p. 75), and speaks of artistic struggle as "gestation and birth-giving [which] are basic to

any form of creation" (p. 81). Like Meg, like Calvin, like Charles Wallace, who all

relinquish the ego in order to engage in spiritual battles, the artist must paradoxically die

to self. As she says,

> To serve a work of art, great or small, is to die, to die to self. If the artist is
> to be able to listen to the work, he must get out of the way; or, more
> correctly, since getting out of the way is not a do-it-yourself activity, he
> must be willing to be got out of the way, to be killed to self (as Juan
> Carlos Ortiz sees the mythic killing of baptism) in order to become the
> servant of the work. (pp. 193-4)

So the teacher may also become a birth-giver who invites students to conceive,

gestate, birth, and nurture ideas. Part of the learner's deepening then is taking on the

"feminine" role of receptivity to ideas. To do this requires relinquishing the classical

heroic model of independent control and conquest, associated with the masculine, and

embracing the spiritual heroic model of interdependent acceptance and humility,

associated with the feminine. Paradoxically, the "strong and wise" successful ones who

become self-satisfied with their achievements fail in further learning, like IT in *A Wrinkle*

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in Time and the ruthless leaders in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*. It is the so-called "weak and

foolish," like the child-heroes, the Murry parents, and the various angelic guides

throughout the trilogy, who are dissatisfied with their success or lack thereof, and so

remain seekers, the better and true life-long learners. This discussion is developed further

in "Literature as Engagement: A 'Feminine' Way of Reading" in Chapter 5.

Imaginative Risk-Taking

The second principle of imaginative risk-taking is also important to L'Engle's

mythic curriculum. L'Engle is firm in her rejection of the Western elevation of

intellectual reason and consequent suppression of the intuition, and emphasizes the need

to foster imaginative thinking. Importantly, in *A Wrinkle in Time* evil is associated with

the disembodied brain IT, reason that is divorced from imagination. As Rolland Hein

(1998) says of *A Wrinkle in Time*,

> The story mounts a strong imaginative attack against a demonic
> rationalism. L'Engle suggests the danger confronting any society is
> mindless conformity to pure intelligence divorced from all else that makes
> people fully human: emotions, intuition, imagination, common sense,
> humane judgment, and above all faith. (pp. 256-7)

L'Engle (1980) herself identifies IT as illustrating the principle "that the brain, when it is

disengaged from the heart, turns vicious" (p. 172). Similarly, she criticizes "the

pragmatic, Cartesian world" where we equate self with the conscious mind ("Cogito, ergo

sum" or "I think, therefore I am"*)*, and emphasizes that the creative and mystical person

is "willing to accept Plato's 'divine madness,' with its four aspects of prophecy, healing,

artistic creativity, and love" (p. 91).

But a word of caution here. L'Engle's fiction does not invite the revision of Cartesian thinking to "I *feel*, therefore I am." Instead, L'Engle warns against the opposite danger of elevating the subconscious mind, speaking of how "the heart, when it is disengaged from the brain, can become sentimental and untruthful" (p. 172), and emphasizes that the "intellect and intuition are meant to work together, to collaborate together, to *know* each other, so that something may be born" (1978b, p. 448). Rather in the spirit of Wordsworth's "feeling intellect," arguably, L'Engle encourages the individual to move beyond rationalistic limitations into the "deepening places" of spirituality. In her characters, to trust in intellectual strength alone is to fail in the heroic quest; to trust in intuitive in/direction is to succeed.

So, throughout the trilogy the children are encouraged to learn to trust in their own intuition as well as angelic in/direction. Thus, Blajeny tells them, "Believing takes practice" (*Wind*, p. 134), and in practising "make believe," the children successfully engage in spiritual battles that are measurable in both biological and political terms. In *A Wrinkle in Time* the trio ventures off with their angelic guides, Mrs. Whatsit, Mrs. Who, and Mrs. Which, on the interplanetary journey to save Mr. Murry. Enroute Meg accepts the magical properties of Mrs. Who's glasses and so is able to rescue her imprisoned father. More daunting, she must later venture off alone to save her brother from the destructive power of the disembodied brain, IT, without having any prior rational knowledge of how she is to accomplish this. In *A Wind in the Door,* Meg, Calvin, and school principal Mr. Jenkins, along with the angelic guides Blajeny and Proginoskes, commit the "impossible possible" of entering the microcosmic world of Yadah, one of Charles Wallace's mitochondria. There they must help the "mouse-shrimp-farandola"

Sporos to deepen, to sing in harmony with all of creation, or Charles Wallace will die through lack of energy. In *A Swiftly Tilting Planet,* an adult Meg assists the adolescent Charles Wallace in preventing nuclear disaster by kything with him as he enters various characters' minds to prevent an interconnected series of disastrous Might-Have-Beens.

Repeatedly, various human and angelic characters criticize the tendency to reliance on reason. In *A Wrinkle in Time*, the angelic guide, Mrs. Who, quotes Pascal: "The heart has its reasons, whereof reason knows nothing" (p. 35). Similarly, the children's mother, biologist and bacteriologist Mrs. Murry, speaks of having "a willing suspension of disbelief" (p. 47), and cautions Meg "that you don't have to understand things for them to *be*"(p. 23). In *A Wind in the Door*, Calvin kythes to Mr. Jenkins, "Most major scientific discoveries have been made by crackpots—or at least, people who were thought to be crackpots" (p. 175). The physicist father, Mr. Murry, declares to his wife, "you and I have good enough minds to know how very limited and finite they really are. The naked intellect is an extraordinarily inaccurate instrument" (p. 87). And in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*, when her brother Sandy urges her to "be reasonable," Meg complains of the ineffectiveness of reason as a weapon against the irrational destructive forces of the world: "Why? We don't live in a reasonable world. Nuclear war is not reasonable. Reason hasn't got us anywhere" (p. 26).

Instead of reliance on discursive reason alone, the various angelic guides urge the children to grasp difficult concepts "in a flash," intuitively, overriding the slowness of rational analysis. In *A Wrinkle in Time,* Meg suddenly grasps Mrs. Which's explanation of the concept of the tesseract, travelling in the fifth dimension, where they take the shortcut by "wrinkling" through space and time (pp. 74-8). Later Mrs. Who challenges

Meg "to understand not word by word, but in a flash, as you understand the tesseract,"

the spiritual paradox where "foolish weakness" overcomes conventional wisdom and

strength (pp. 201-2). Similarly, the sightless beasts on the planet Ixchel are not limited by

their senses or empirical ways of knowing. As Aunt Beast declares,

> We do not understand what this means, *to see* . . . . We know what things
> *are* like. It must be a very limiting thing, this seeing . . . . We look not at
> the things which are what you would call seen, but at the things which are
> not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal. But the things which
> are not seen are eternal. (pp. 181, 186)

In *A Wind in the Door,* Blajeny insists as he instructs Calvin and Meg about the relation

between farandolae and a mitochondrion in relation to its human host: "Don't try to

comprehend with your mind. Your minds are very limited. Use your intuition" (p. 128).

And in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet,* the unicorn Gaudior continually tells Charles Wallace to

let himself go and follow the leading of the wind. So he reprimands the self-reliant hero,

saying, "We don't have to know everything. We have a charge laid on us, and we have to

follow where it leads. You've been so busy trying to do the leading that we almost got

taken by the Echthroi" (dark angels) (p. 105). In the same way, Gaudior challenges

Charles's erroneous perception of reality and what is important.

> "What is real?" Gaudior replied infuriatingly.
> "It's important!" [Charles Wallace cried.]
> "We do not always know what is important and what is not. The wind
> sends a warning to hurry, hurry. Climb up, and hold very tight." (p. 210)

The unicorn's question, "What is real?", persists throughout the trilogy. The children are

continuously challenged to distinguish between a narrow empirical vision of reality and a

mythic one—a significant educational mandate. And an important reminder is implied:

we do not necessarily know what is important and so might be encouraged to take on the role of the somewhat reckless sower of seeds (cf. Matthew 13: 1-23).

But learning to trust intuition and angelic in/direction does not come easily. While Calvin speaks of obeying feeling or compulsion, and cheerfully embraces confusion as direction (*Wrinkle*, pp. 33, 44-5), Mr. Jenkins despairs that he doesn't have "very much intuition," and believes he is "too old to be educable" (*Wind*, p. 130). Meg herself longs for omnipotent adults who will fix her problems and vehemently protests her own role as a heroic saviour (*Wrinkle*, pp. 172, 189, 193-5; *Wind*, p. 90). And Charles Wallace, intellectually the brightest of the already bright children, indeed, a "different," "new" sort of person in both rational and intuitive brilliance (*Wrinkle*, p. 46), in particular makes the near fatal error of self-reliance. So, in *A Wrinkle in Time* he pits his own excellent rational abilities against those of IT and is overwhelmed. In *A Swiftly Tilting Planet* he repents of his habitual attempts to control events, admitting, "It was trying to use my high I.Q. and trying to control things that got us into trouble in the first place. I don't know what I'm supposed to use, but it's not my intellect or strength" (p. 200). Gradually, repenting of his mistakes, Charles Wallace learns to go where "the wind" sends him, going within the minds of several characters across time and space, including the brain-damaged Chuck Maddox, temporarily losing himself and his rational control in their stories, and so subtly helping them battle evil. Gradually, and sometimes with a rude awakening, the child-heroes, Meg and Charles Wallace Murry, as well as Calvin O'Keefe, realize the inefficacy of their own intellect on the battlefield between good and evil. On their journey, they all learn to suspend disbelief, let go of rational control, and practise belief.

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To exercise imaginative risk-taking in tandem with rational knowing requires a quality I would venture to define as "heretical creativity." Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991) have applied the clone/heretic distinction in their comment on "the common observation that knowers come in a range of types, from clones to heretics" (p. 116). In my reading of L'Engle, I would suggest that the merely rational figure, in the narrow sense without moral imagination, is a "clone" who unreflectively perpetuates concepts. Such an extreme type is a person locked inside a conceptual paradigm to the extent that other paradigms are outright dismissed as false. Anyone outside his conceptual parameters must be dismissed as a "heretic," someone contrary to the "true doctrine." This is dramatized in the citizens of Camazotz in *A Wrinkle in Time* who have abdicated moral struggle in succumbing to IT, the "Prime Coordinator" (p. 137) who promises ease without responsibility. They think as with one mind, IT's, and their life is characterized by fear of individual difference. As the mother declares when Charles Wallace tries to return the ball her son dropped, "Oh no! The children in our section *never* drop balls! They're all perfectly trained. We haven't had an Aberration for three years" (p. 106). It is similarly dramatized in Mr. Murry's imprisonment in a transparent column, like Ariel confined in a "cloven pine" by the witch in Shakespeare's play *The Tempest* which also serves as an image of Charles Wallace's intellectual, emotional, and spiritual imprisonment when he is absorbed into IT.

By contrast, the "heretical thinker," so dismissed by the "clone" type, is the morally imaginative thinker who reflectively considers paradigms, thoughtfully holding to some while thoughtfully rejecting others. All concepts are subject to re-evaluation. It may be noted that many or most learners are not so "heretically" inclined, but operate

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within known parameters most of the time. Certainly our tendency is to long for a comfort zone. Nonetheless, the interesting and vital paradigm re-evaluations or outright shifts occur whenever learners are willing to risk "heretical creativity." This is dramatized in *A Wrinkle in Time* when Mr. Murry walks through the imprisoning column into freedom by wearing Mrs. Who's supernatural glasses that rearrange the atoms of his prison. Similarly, with the force of Meg's love, Charles Wallace escapes the confines of his mental prison. In *A Wind in the Door*, L'Engle challenges clone-like "single" vision with the multiple vision of the Teacher, Proginoskes, a cherubim with multiple eyes. So the experience of teaching/learning should be to view many things at once. And the shift from closed paradigm thinking to "heretical" re-evaluation is humorously dramatized in Calvin's conversation with one of Charles Wallace's farandola, Sporos.

> Calvin looked horrified. "You're mad. I've studied biology.
> You're not possible."
> "Neither are you," Sporos replied indignantly. "Nothing *important* is.
> Blajeny, is it my misfortune to be paired with one of these earthlings?"
> (p. 139)

So the potentially "heretical creative" thinker may "rearrange the atoms" of a conceptual prison and go free. The likelihood for this increases when the learner covets conceptual astonishment. In the words of Aristotle (trans. 1996), which L'Engle (1980, p. 15) also refers to, "Astonishment gives pleasure . . . . Probable impossibilities are preferable to implausible possibilities" (*Poetics*, p. 41). This discussion is developed further in "Heretical Creativity" in Chapter 5.

Again, L'Engle's (1980) discussion of the artistic process as imaginative risk-taking has rich parallels for the learning process. When she speaks of the need to give up tight rational control, in place of "artist," read "teacher/learner." Her central image of

Peter walking on water because "he didn't remember that he had forgotten how" (p. 101) embodies the imaginative freedom the creative person must and does exercise. In a sense that is what the teacher/learner must do: take imaginative risks because he doesn't allow himself to think that he can't. In her words, "To be an artist means to approach the light, and that means to let go our control, to allow our whole selves to be placed with absolute faith in that which is greater than we are" (p. 161). Similarly,

> We live under the illusion that if we can acquire complete control, we can understand God, or we can write the great American novel. But the only way we can brush against the hem of the Lord, or hope to be part of the creative process, is to have the courage, the faith, to abandon control.
> (p. 161)

And in such imaginative exercise, L'Engle again speaks of a collaboration of reason and imagination, and insists, "The challenge is to let my intellect work *for* the creative act, not against it. And it means, first of all, that I must have more faith in the work than I have in myself" (p. 179). She urges on, saying,

> In prayer, in the creative process, these two parts of ourselves, the mind and the heart, the intellect and the intuition, the conscious and the subconscious mind, stop fighting each other and collaborate. Theophan the Recluse advised those who came to him for counsel to "pray with the mind in the heart," and surely this is how the artist works. (p. 162)

In education this concept of rational knowing in tandem with imaginative release is so important because we all too easily trust in what we know or think we know to the loss of what we could still learn.

To know and yet ever be a learner through a collaboration of reason and imagination requires a willingness to engage in the meditative practice of active listening. The artist (teacher/learner) must be willing to "listen to the work, and to go where it tells him to go" (p. 149). "Ultimately," L'Engle insists, "when you are writing, you stop

thinking and write what you hear" (p. 149). To illustrate this necessity L'Engle cites the words of a Hawaiian Christian, Mother Alice Kaholusuna:

> Before the missionaries came, my people used to sit outside their temples for a long time meditating and preparing themselves before entering. Then they would virtually creep to the altar to offer their petition and afterwards would again sit a long time outside, this time to 'breathe life' into their prayers. The Christians, when they came, just got up, uttered a few sentences, said Amen, and were done. For that reason my people called them haoles, "without breath," or those who failed to breathe life into their prayers. (pp. 181-2)

The imaginative learner, in contrast to the "haoles," must, like any musician, inhale. More air in the lungs and a keener ear are needed. Listening to the creative work in process, relinquishing rational control and listening with the intuition, is a meditative act that breathes life into education. To learn well is to listen with one's whole self, and to listen well is to enter one's own Deepening Places. The role of the educator is to guide both himself and his students into entering these Deepening Places. He listens for unarticulated biases that he or others take for granted, features that inform (deform) our thoughts and actions. She creates a space to listen to the "silence"—hearing our unexamined assumptions—and courageously ignores or proceeds with her assumptions at the same time that she listens with respect to other voices. A learner is a listening collaborator on a shared journey. This discussion is developed further in "Creating a "Listening" Space" in Chapter 5.

Love as Heroic Action

The third principle of love as heroic action is equally important to L'Engle's mythic curriculum. As I have argued, her vision of imaginative education is grounded in the consolation of love, and comes full circle in love as ethical action. Her view of

offering a "moral response" to the world through her fiction (1972, pp. 96-7) is to give love to a world characterized, for example, by the cosmic scream of vanishing stars and a child's ailing mitochondria, "a world which has become so blunted by dishonor and violence that people casually take it for granted" (*Wind*, p. 86). Again, this love is not some sappy, sentimental obscuring of pain and injustice, but a strong determination to distinguish good from evil and, informed by a vision of the Good, to so nurture others with existential hope and courage. As W.H. Auden (1967) says of George MacDonald, this is a rare literary experience "about which there is nothing phony or moralistic" (p. 105), but rather is compelling. In this discussion, I will address love as a "policy," its sacrificial nature, the seriousness of its absence, and its function as "naming" others.

First, our hesitancy to apply the much abused, inflationary word "love" to educational discourse needs to be revisited, as Huebner (1985) suggests. Arguably, Madeleine L'Engle's fiction, like MacDonald's and Lewis's, allows readers to do so. To disentangle the idea of love as heroic action from its primary association with changeable and often selfish emotions (or hormonal impulses), L'Engle (1972) emphasizes the nature of love as a rational mode of being, citing a friend who said, "Love is not an emotion. It is a policy" (Bishop, n.d., in L'Engle, p. 45). This is apparent when Meg wrestles with the apparent 'impossibility' of loving Mr. Jenkins, and cries, "Progo! Help me! How can I feel love for Mr. Jenkins?" The cherubim replies, "What a strange idea. Love isn't *feeling*. If it were, I wouldn't be able to love. Cherubim don't have feelings" (*Wind*, p. 117). At her protest the cherubim observes, "Love isn't how you feel. It's what you do" (p. 118). Again, "It must be extremely unpleasant to have feelings" (p. 119). The importance and value of love as policy in emotional human beings becomes evident in

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Meg when, at the height of the critical test of naming Mr. Jenkins, "suddenly she did not feel. She had been pushed into a dimension beyond feeling" (p. 120). At another critical test helping Sporos deepen, Meg "once again . . . moved into that strange place which is on the other side of feeling" (p. 156). So L'Engle challenges readers with a heroic love that is far more powerful than warm emotion. This concept of love as policy certainly underscores the ethical nature of the "feeling intellect"—and can help restore, I would suggest, the word love to educational discourse.

Second, love has a sacrificial nature. The call to love can require the highest price of martyrdom. In *A Wrinkle in Time*, readers learn of the necessity of staking one's life for the truth (p. 63) through the example of a star, Mrs. Whatsit, losing her former life in the battle. In the pivotal chapter, "The Foolish and the Weak," Meg travels to Camazotz to free her brother and, at the risk of her own life, exercises the one saving weapon that IT cannot comprehend: Love. In *A Wind in the Door*, the farandolae who startled the Echthroi to save Meg extinguished or Xed themselves in the process (p. 162), and similarly "Proginoskes fling[s] his great cherubic self into the void of the Echthroi who were Xing Mr. Jenkins and Calvin and Meg—and Charles Wallace" (p. 202). And in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*, like Mrs. O'Keefe when she intercedes for Charles Wallace who is "inside" the dying Matthew Maddox, the various characters in an attitude of self-sacrifice practise the Irish rune when interceding for the needy one:

> "With Chuck in this fateful hour,
> I place all Heaven with its power
> And the sun with its brightness,
> And the snow with its whiteness,
> And the fire with all the strength it hath,
> And the lightning with its rapid wrath,
> And the winds with their swiftness along their path,
> And the sea with its deepness,

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And the rocks with their steepness,
And the earth with its starkness,
All these I place
By God's almighty help and grace
Between myself and the powers of darkness!" (pp. 247-8)

Through these dramatic examples L'Engle teaches love as "standing in the gap"—

wherever that gap urgently presents itself to the individual—certainly a vital feature of

ethical education.

Third, L'Engle shows the seriousness of love's absence. As Proginoskes tells her,

"You're full of love, Meg, but you don't know how to stay within it when it's not easy"

(*Wind*, p. 100). So when Meg declares her hatred for Mr. Jenkins, she is in danger of

losing him to the Echthroi, the "Sky tearers. Light snuffers. Planet darkeners. The

dragons. The worms. Those who hate" (p. 101). Similarly, the saved Mr. Jenkins learns

that those who are unloved are in danger of becoming hosts to the Echthroi (p. 177).

Another example of the seriousness of the failure to engage in love as heroic action is in

the witch-hunting incident in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*. There the Eurocentric hubris of the

Puritan pastor, Duthbert Mortmain, dismisses the Native Indians, the People of the Wind,

as "pagans," and incites the superstitious and drought-desperate community into lust for

violence against the innocent Indian girl, Zylle. Zylle, a young wife and mother with the

gift of second sight who has married into the white settlement, counters Mortmain's

prejudice with her genuine spirituality, dismissing his cultural ignorance which includes a

narrow view of storytelling as lies of the devil: " I do not know what pagan means. I only

know that Jesus of Nazareth sings the true song. He knows the ancient harmonies" (p.

126). But in the absence of love, the pastor's power-mongering, if unchecked, will lead to

destruction. In the narrator's words, when "people are afraid of knowledge that is not yet

theirs" (p. 120), "a gallows is more easily built than a house, or a bed, or a table" (p.

131). The pastor's lovelessness would have been another Echthroi victory if 12-year-old

Brandon Llawcae, helped by Charles Wallace, had not summoned the courage to defy his

witch-hunting community and cry out the Irish rune—the action that brings judgment on

the church and saves his innocent sister-in-law from the gallows. In a cynical age,

examples like these could illustrate staying within love when it's not easy.

Fourth, the function of love is to "name" others. This is particularly evident in *A*

Wind in the Door where Meg's first moral test is to discern the identity of, and so name,

the real Mr. Jenkins from the two imposter Echthroi look-alikes. In doing this, she saves

him from extinction; now he is known, and therefore loved, and as an affirmed person is

able to grow heroic. In the words of the cherubim to Meg,

> "one of [the Echthroi's] chief weapons is un-Naming—making people not
> know who they are. If someone knows who he is, really knows, then he
> doesn't need to hate. That's why we still need Namers, because there are
> places throughout the universe like your planet Earth. When everyone is
> really and truly Named, then the Echthroi will be vanquished." (p. 98)

And he emphasizes, "Love. That's what makes persons know who they are" (p. 99). This

function of love to name and so save others is further evident when Meg learns with

astonishment that she must even name the Echthroi with love in order to save the others.

She cries out,

> "I hold you! I love you, I Name you. I Name you, Echthroi. You are not
> nothing. You are."
> . . . .
> I Name you, Echthroi. I Name you Meg.
> I Name you Calvin.
> I Name you Mr. Jenkins.
> I Name you Proginoskes.
> I fill you with Naming.
> Be! . . . .

Echthroi! You are Named! My arms surround you. You are no longer nothing. You are. You are filled. You are me.
You are
Meg. (pp. 203-5)

The "naming" function of love is also evident in *A Wrinkle in Time* when Meg blossoms through the experiences of loving affirmation from her family, Calvin, Aunt Beast, and the Mrs. Ws. In *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*, Charles Wallace must love, or know, in the old sense, each key character in order to kythe with them. The other side to the same coin is that the successful "namer" of others first needs to know or love his own self. As the cherubim explains, "Kything is not going to be easy for Mr. Jenkins, because it has been a great many years since he's known himself, his real self" (*Wind*, p. 153). Similarly, the mature fara, Senex, from whom Sporos comes, insists on this paradox: "It is only when we are fully rooted that we are really able to move" (p. 190).

Throughout this chapter I have explored aspects of L'Engle's curriculum of "Deepening Places" in which the individual is encouraged to move beyond his rationalistic limitations into spirituality, to "make believe," in order to engage in mythic possibility. Now the context of the metaphor of finding one's "Deepening Places" comes precisely through this function of naming, and so perhaps heroic love in the act of naming is most powerful in developing insight. As Meg learns,

> "Be a fara," [Proginoskes] told her. Make believe. Do the inhabitants of Yadah seem more limited than human beings because once they have taken root they can't move from their Deepening Place? But human beings need Deepening Places, too. And far too many never have any. Think about your Deepening Places, Meg. Open yourself into kything. Open."
> (pp. 156-7).

This is the lesson: the willingness to relinquish selfish freedom results in a deepening into true identity. So when the adolescent, pleasure-seeking Sporos decides to deepen, he

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discovers his "indispensable part" (p. 193) in "the song of the universe . . . . the rhythm of creation" (p. 180), and saves himself and others from extinction. This discussion is developed further in "Nurture" in Chapter 5.

Conclusion

Madeleine L'Engle's mythic curriculum calls the educator/learner to move into his Deepening Places, discovering herself as an integral part of a meaningful cosmos. L'Engle's intent, grounded in the belief in the consolation of love, is to nurture the moral imagination with existential hope and courage. She attempts to do this with her esteem for the pedagogy of humility, imaginative risk-taking, and the celebration of love as heroic action. Throughout the trilogy she offers mythic glasses that rearrange the atoms of a rationalistic prison, asking the learner to become an iconoclastic "heretic" in an open universe.

Ethical education of such potential magnitude may appear as a daunting challenge to the literature teacher, and perhaps it should. But to this concern Madeleine L'Engle (1972) offers the following words:

> All teachers must face the fact that they are potential points of reference. The greatest challenge a teacher has to accept is the courage to be; if we *are*, we make mistakes; we say too much where we should have said nothing; we do not speak where a word might have made all the difference. If we are, we will make terrible errors. But we still have to have the courage to struggle on, trusting in our own points of reference to show us the way.
>
> <div align="right">(p. 181)</div>

Teaching in this consciousness then becomes an act of grace.

CHAPTER FIVE
GROWING THE INTELLIGENT HEART:
THE IMAGINATIVE EDUCATION OF GEORGE MACDONALD,
C.S. LEWIS, AND MADELEINE L'ENGLE

The thread that unifies George MacDonald, C.S. Lewis, and Madeleine L'Engle

is their commitment to moral education through mythic storytelling. As I have explored

over several chapters, each writer rejects the classical heroism of egotistical power and

might in favour of a "feminine" heroism characterized by the "foolish weakness" of

humility—a radical idea that challenges how we think and feel, live and teach. Informed

by their Christian faith and a deep commitment to the educative power of imaginative

literature, MacDonald, the former Calvinist preacher who wrestles with the stern doctrine

of divine punishment in view of his faith in a loving God, Lewis, the former atheist who

wrestles with the modern loss of belief in an objective moral standard in contrast to his

own adherence to this old idea, and L'Engle (1980), who wrestles with having faith in "a

loving Creator" in a universe marked by "evil and unfairness and horror" (p. 118), all

affirm that the central human concern is the battle between good and evil that is fought in

the individual human soul. Their primary contribution to imaginative education, as

Gilbert Meilaender (1978) and Peter J. Schakel (2002) note of Lewis, and Vigen Guroian

(1998) of all three, is to offer a moral vision of the Good, and invite readers into moral

growth through the imaginative experience of story.

Of course the subject of moral education, how we should live, as Plato says, "is

no light matter" (*The Republic*, I. 353, p. 37). And in our pluralistic society this subject

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sometimes raises a few eyebrows as well as ire from different voices, whether from those who reject that there is a universal code and favour the moral relativism of education as "values clarification,"[1] or from those who worry that their moral vision is not being honoured by those who may not share it. (These polarized positions are an over-simplification, but perhaps a helpful outline nonetheless.) It has been noted that we can understand ourselves by our conflicts (MacIntyre, 1984, pp. 163-4), and I would suggest that the battleground over what moral education is or should be, as well as the somewhat embarrassed silence on the subject, tells us much about the moral crisis we find ourselves in. For if the problem of the past was "how to conform the soul to reality" (Lewis, 1947a, p. 88), the contemporary problem is how to decide if a) there is a reality to conform our soul to, b) if this "reality" is our own invention, individual or societal, and, c) in either case, what this "reality" might be. While a rigorous examination of these questions is beyond the scope of this discussion, and for this I must defer to those engaged in moral philosophy, the issue nonetheless calls for the educator's response (at every turn).

In some way or other, we are always teaching students how to live, and it is more honest to admit that we are than to pretend that we are not. In the words of G.K. Chesterton (1910), "Dogma is actually the only thing that cannot be separated from education. It *is* education. A teacher who is not dogmatic is simply a teacher who is not teaching" (p. 197). Every curriculum choice and every pedagogical action (overlooking our blunders) is an intentional effort to "put in" or "draw out" a particular development in a student (cf. Chesterton, pp. 202-3). To avoid the mistake of proselytizing, we may honestly try to separate spirituality from pedagogy, as does Mary Rose O'Reilley (1998) in her claim to extract pedagogical technique from her spirituality as a "Catholic, Quaker,

and Buddhist" (p. 3). But I do not think that it can be done so neatly. How can we impart

Buddhist technique without somehow also imparting a Buddhist perspective? And why

would we want to? What are we thinking? That our students are stupid and don't

understand our beliefs or, more importantly, don't want to understand the beliefs of

historical and fictional characters? Or do we truly think that keeping students ignorant is

protecting them from immature choices? But Reilley's thoughtful response to this

contentious issue raises a vital educational question: "how to be grounded in one's own

spirituality and/or convey other spiritual traditions without trespassing on students'

sacred right to self-development?" For one, I think that the important distinction between

communicating spirituality (one's own sometimes and, more often, that of others) and

proselytizing must be honoured. Nel Noddings (1993) speaks the familiar language of the

need for teachers to be "pedagogically neutral" so that they can "present all significant

sides of an issue in their full passion and best reasoning" (Vandenberg, 1983, cited in

Noddings, p. 122). Kieran Egan (1992) calls this "epistemological modesty in the

classroom" (p. 57). And developing this is a fair challenge: this is indeed a pedagogical

area that needs to be addressed. Two, it seems to me that Noddings (1995) has it right

with her sense that we have a moral obligation to ask existential questions with our

students, and that the failure to do so is "morally irresponsible" (p. 182). High school

students, many of whom will never attend university she reminds us, need to have the

opportunity to explore the various spiritual persuasions of thinkers across the ages in a

thoughtful way, as part of the informal curriculum, in order to educate them for

"intelligent belief or disbelief" (*Educating for Intelligent Belief or Unbelief,* 1993). The

failure to educate for existential questions then is a failure to educate for the whole person.

Perhaps we can temporarily set aside what looks like a philosophical impasse on how we arrive at morality and agree that the subject of moral education is nonetheless vital to us all. Wayne C. Booth (1988) argues for the necessity to practise ethical criticism in reading and teaching literature to determine whether a narration offers itself as a potential friend of strong moral character or whether it presents itself as an "exploiter," a "bully," a "quack" (p. 222). In the words of John Gardner (1983), "Fiction seeks out truth. . . . The writer who can't distinguish truth from a peanut-butter sandwich can never write good fiction" (p.79). Should we be any less concerned for the reader who "can't" or doesn't? But the question of truth does concern children. As math educator, Nel Noddings (1993, p. 78), and child psychiatrist, Robert Coles (1990), observe, children do ask the big existential questions about life and death, possible eternity and meaning; and as Coles emphasizes, they ask them "more intensely, unremittingly, and subtly than we sometimes imagine" (p. 37).[2] As a subject of literary criticism on children's literature, however, Vigen Guroian (1998) notes that there is little reflection on "children as moral learners" and on how literature educates the moral imagination (p. 8).[3] We speculate freely on various analytical approaches to literature, be they psychoanalytical, sociopolitical, feminist, or deconstructionist, for example, but on the traditional approach that the aim of education should be to produce the virtuous human being we are strangely silent (except for some protests on the "religious" or "moral" nature of some children's literature from those who hate it). This is an intriguing gap in view of the professional and parental voices that look to children's literature for moral

substance. The psychiatrist Bruno Bettelheim (1975) emphasizes that fairy tales, unlike the bulk of "children's literature" intended to be entertaining and/or informative, meets the deep need children have for finding meaning in their lives (pp. 3-4). In particular, he argues, children need a "moral education which subtly, and by implication only, conveys to [them] the advantages of moral behavior, not through abstract ethical concepts but through that which seems tangibly right and therefore meaningful to him" (p. 5). The moral philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre (1984) notes that moral learning occurs through mythic stories, observing, "Deprive children of stories and you leave them unscripted, anxious stutterers in their actions as in their words" (p. 216). Similarly (though perhaps not with such an explicit concern for ethical education?), fantasy author Jane Yolen (1981) worries that in depriving children of knowledge of mythological stories we are denying them their humanity (pp. 13-19).

The object to nourish the moral imagination of children then, as do these three authors with their mythic stories, is the primary one. The alternative of moral and imaginative malnourishment might suggest to us Charles Dickens' two spectre orphans, Ignorance and Want, and their many offspring: Lust, Violence, Materialism, Boredom. And it especially makes sense to nourish children's moral imagination through stories. Why? Because we are story-telling creatures, and stories are the best way to satisfy existential thinking because they help us to both think and feel about our deepest questions. (The second best way, of course, is the kind of conversation we are having now, not exactly the dance that stories offer, but then conversation is usually needed to initiate a dance.) [4] Along these lines, as noted earlier, Kieran Egan (1988) refers to Levi-Strauss (1962) in describing stories as "*bonnes à penser*" "(good things to think with)"

(p. 93), and says that this is due to their "power . . . to fix affective responses to the messages" (p. 104). "Our emotions, to put it very crudely," Egan comments, "are better things to remember with than are our intellects" (p. 104). And what Schakel (2002) suggests is the primary appeal of the *Chronicles of Narnia* can be applied to the particular power of all these heroic fantasies. Mythopoeia, he argues, deals with basic existential questions that children ask, and do not yet even know how to ask, and satisfies, not in the sense of giving definitive answers, but in the sense of offering perspective (p. 62). So while science gives one kind of answer, myth arouses and imaginatively satisfies existential wonder. For example, as Schakel (p. 63) notes, in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Eustace's claim that "a star is a huge ball of flaming gas" is answered by Ramandu, the "star at rest," with an enlarged vision: "Even in your world, my son, that is not what a star is but only what it is made of" (p. 177). The thing is to listen to our deep existential questions, to ever wonder, and in this questioning wonder grow an intelligent heart that responds to the world with wisdom and hope.

In this chapter I will look at how George MacDonald, C.S. Lewis, and Madeleine L'Engle educate the "intelligent heart" through their view of the function of the imagination, fairy tale and the importance of the mythopoeic, and literature as moral education. I will then address how their feminine heroic suggests teaching principles such as literature as engagement, childlike wonder, listening, nurture, and heretical creativity.

The Function of the Imagination

As we have explored over several chapters, for these children's writers imagination is the "golden key"[5] to wisdom. George MacDonald (1893) views imagination as the "architect" under which intellect must labour (p. 11). Lewis (1939)

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says, "reason is the natural organ of truth; but imagination is the organ of meaning" (p. 265). And L'Engle (1980) speaks of "hav[ing] the courage, the faith, to abandon [tightly rational] control" (p. 161) and "walk on water" (her title, *Walking on Water*) in order to create story. For all three the discovery of truth is an imaginative process, not to the exclusion of intellect, nor as invention in the primary sense,[6] but as a pathfinder. Imagination, they believe, enables us to entertain possibilities that our reason would easily dismiss. So Lewis (1946) speaks of the experience of George MacDonald's fantasy literature as a 'baptism' of the imagination that can initiate intellectual and ethical transformation (p. 34). He considers how in story one can "steal past those watchful dragons" of rationality or prejudice that impede alternate perspectives (1956b, p. 37). Mythopoeia, he says, "hits us at a level deeper than our thoughts or even our passions, troubles oldest certainties till all questions are reopened, and in general shocks us more fully awake than we are for most of our lives" (1946, p. 29). MacDonald (1893), similarly, speaks of imaginative education as "a noble unrest, an ever renewed awaking from the dead, a ceaseless questioning" (p. 1).

This attitude of imaginative wakefulness, resistant to repose, enables the learner to experience "the only real 'other world' we know, that of the spirit" (Lewis, 1947b, p. 12). Our wakefulness leads to an enlargement, a "leading out" of the self into other selves, a vital process, for, as Wayne C. Booth (1988) writes, "from birth onward our growth depends so deeply on our ability to internalize other selves" (p. 69). Lewis (1961a) speaks of such experience as healing the loneliness of the self and "correct[ing] its provincialism" (pp. 138-9). In his words,

Those of us who have been true readers all our life seldom fully realise the enormous extension of our being which we owe to authors . . . . The man who is contented to be only himself, and therefore less a self, is in prison. My own eyes are not enough for me, I will see through those of others. . . . Literary experience heals the wound, without undermining the privilege, of individuality. There are mass emotions which heal the wound; but they destroy the privilege. In them our separate selves are pooled and we sink back into sub-individuality. But in reading great literature I become a thousand men and yet remain myself. Like the night sky in the Greek poem, I see with a myriad eyes, but it is still I who see. Here, as in worship, in love, in moral action, and in knowing, I transcend myself; and am never more myself than when I do. (pp. 140-1)[7]

I am reminded of a criticism (or an unrecognized compliment?) made of an English teacher who was working with her high school students "as if they were all going to become novelists." This raises an important question for educators: "Can literary studies become excessive? What should teachers reasonably aim for?" If we agree with these fantasy writers, then no literary appreciation can be "excessive." All students are entitled to deep imaginative experience. As MacDonald (1893) argues, though few will develop "artistic faculty . . . . it is necessary that all should feel . . . . that all should understand and imagine the good" (p. 41). The mandate of the teacher then is to so mediate literary experience that students awaken out of repose into developing their "feeling intellect" because that is how we become more fully human. If it seems like we are subordinating our rationality to the experience of strange wonders, it is because this submission to wonders leads to greater wholeness. This leads us to have another look at the fairy tale genre and the power of mythopoeia in these authors.

Fairy Tale: The Importance of the Mythopoeic

"What is myth and mythopoeia?" The term *myth*[8] suggests all the fantastic narratives told by oral cultures to explain nature, their society, and their relation to the

gods. The fairy tale with its celebration of the marvellous, and its revisited form in these heroic fantasies, is part of this tradition. Myths are sacred stories that modern scientific societies quickly dismiss as false. But *myth* also suggests any grand story that embodies a cultural belief, such as the "great (North) American dream," the myth of "scientific progress," or the myth of "nature as nurturer." A myth then can be regarded as any cultural story that embodies some vital and therefore sacred truth, at least as particular to that culture, at best as embodying some universal human truth. Rather than ask, "Is this myth literally true?", it makes more sense to ask, "What is true about this myth? How does this myth enlarge our sense of what it means to be human?" And the invention of new myths, or of stories reminiscent of old myths—*mythopoeia*—is informed by the vision that timeless truths can be conveyed through the metaphorical power of story. Dabney Adams Hart (1984) writes, "Myth is, basically, any kind of story that succeeds in transcending the laws of mathematics, the whole being greater than the sum of its parts" (p. 13). Rolland Hein (1998) describes *mythopoeia* as "stories that are composed in time, but which suggest (however dimly) something covert but eternally momentous" (p. 5-6), and says that the best mythopoeia "intimates something that cannot be told, but when fully known will be eternally satisfying" (p. 6). In answering the question of the importance of mythopoeia in these authors, it is worth drawing our attention to these features: 1) fairy tale's power to convey universal truths; 2) the experience of the numinous; and 3) fairy tale's power to unsettle our thinking.

The purpose of the fairy tale as an education into truth raises interesting educational questions along the lines of "age-appropriateness" and their relation (or sometimes deemed lack of relation) to "the world we live in." J.R.R. Tolkien's (1947, pp.

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33-4) and Lewis's (1952a, pp. 26-7) mid-20th century observation that fairy tales had only recently and wrongfully been relegated to the nursery, outside the sphere of adult attention where they have always been, is, to some extent, thankfully changing with the ever rising interest in fantasy literature in the second half of the 20th century and extending into the 21st. Doubtless, their own imaginative literature has much to do with this turn in taste. The nursery door is at least open. Certainly the exceptional literary phenomenon of our time, Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* notwithstanding, is the popularity of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* stories and, as Emily Griesinger (2002) argues, similarly to this study, its appeal is in its imaginative experience of "hope that in an age where moral goodness does not seem important and where evil is on the rise, one little nerdy person, not terribly smart or good-looking [there's that inescapable *Magnificat* again], can make a difference" (p. 478). But the question of the purpose of the fairy tale in its relation to educating children to live "in this world" is still with us. Some ask, "Isn't the fairy tale an escapism out of reality at a time when children very much need to be learning about the world?"

The underlying implication of the question is that "realistic" fiction achieves this. And it is certainly fair to say that realistic fiction informed by a moral vision does do this very well. If you want to learn about the historical struggles of slavery read Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. If you want to learn about the adolescent struggle for identity read Katherine Paterson's *Jacob Have I Loved*. But we'd be quite wrong to say that these "realistic" stories have nothing to do with mythic vision. Stowe's stage includes heaven and hell, and Paterson's, to say the very least, is shaped by fairy tale. As L'Engle (1993) says, "True art has a mythic quality in that it speaks of that which was

true, is true, and will be true" (p. 199).[9] So the question we must ask of both realism and fantasy is this: "does the story suggest a dangerous retreat into egotistical wish-fulfillment or does the story wrestle with truth?" Lewis (1952a) answers the charge that fairy tales are "dangerous wish-fulfillment" by saying that the longing that the "realistic" tale arouses is the truly dangerous one because "it is all flattery to the ego" (p. 29). School stories which raise "false expectations" of success "sen[d] us back to the real world undivinely discontented," whereas fairy tale, by contrast, arouses a longing for an unknown that is well beyond the self and actually deepens appreciation of the known world (1952a, p. 29). Ursula K. Le Guin's (1974) criticism echoes Lewis's moral concern. She says, "Fake realism is the escapist literature of our time" (p. 32), but fantasy offers an escape into moral education. Also,

> fantasy is true, of course. It isn't factual, but it is true. Children know that. Adults know it too, and that is precisely why many of them are afraid of fantasy. They know its truth challenges, even threatens, all that is false, all that is phony, unnecessary, and trivial in the life they have let themselves be forced into living. They are afraid of dragons, because they are afraid of freedom. (p. 34)

The alternative to a healthy imagination suggests itself in pornography, materialism, and violence. Similarly, MacDonald (1893) recognizes "that evil may spring from the imagination" but insists that "infinitely worse evils would be the result of its absence," and concludes "that the antidote to indulgence is development, not restraint" because imagination will always work, for evil or for good (pp. 26-9). The task of the English teacher then, as Lewis (1947a) argues, and the task of the imaginative writer, I add, is to "irrigate [emotional] deserts . . . . [by] inculcat[ing] just sentiments" so that "the little human animal" trained to have the right emotional responses will become "a [human] of gentle heart" (pp. 24, 26-7). This is the first aspect of mythopoeia in these authors: the

power of myth to teach universal truths through emotional engagement. The German word for fairy tale, *Märchen,* as well as the Old English for gospel, *gōdspell,* is informative: *die gute Mär* is the "good spell" that has redemptive powers.

A second aspect to the importance of mythopoeia in these authors is the experience they offer of the numinous. The authors accomplish this by making the abstract "numinous Other" a concrete experience—an imaginary incarnation. In Lewis's (1944) words, "In the enjoyment of a great myth we come nearest to experiencing as a concrete what can otherwise be understood only as an abstraction" (p. 66). So in *The Princess and the Goblin* Irene steps into the numinous when she encounters her mysterious (and ageless) great-great-grandmother in the garret. There the child receives ointment for her injured hand and then falls asleep in the lady's bosom, "dreaming in the midst of the loveliest dreams—of summer seas and moonlight and mossy springs and great murmuring trees, and beds of wild flowers with such odours as she had never smelled before" (p. 86). Another time she bathes in the lady's "large silver bath" where "she saw no bottom, but the stars shining miles away, as it seemed, in a great blue gulf" and later feels "every bruise and all weariness were gone" (pp. 158-9). In Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* the golden Lion Aslan romps with the children and initiates feasts and Dances. He looks "so bright and real and strong that everything else beg[ins] at once to look pale and shadowy compared with him" (*SC* , p. 200). When Susan wonders if he is a ghost, "Aslan stoop[s] his golden head and lick[s] her forehead. The warmth of his breath and a rich sort of smell that seemed to hang about his hair c[omes] all over her" (*LWW,* p. 147). And in L'Engle's time trilogy the angelic guide, Mrs. Whatsit, metamorphoses into a marble, horse-like creature (*Wrinkle,* p. 64) who enfolds Meg in

her great wings and pours comfort and strength through her (p. 74). When the cherubim, Proginoskes, "materialize[s in the schoolyard], delicately unfolding wing after wing to reveal his myriad various eyes," the principal faints (*Wind*, p. 121). So the reader imaginatively enters into a mysterious experience which suggests that the heart of the universe rings with the laughter of love. As the narrator says of the great-great-grandmother, "her laugh was sweeter than song and wheel; sweeter than running brook and silver bell; sweeter than joy itself, for the heart of the laugh was love" (*PC*, p. 65). These fantasies then offer the reader an imaginary experience of deep hope and joy, creating, as they do, an experience of those deep existential questions that children already are, or are not quite yet, thinking about.

In exploring the numinous these writers challenge a naturalistic view of the universe. What Kath Filmer-Davies (2000) says of Lewis can be said of all three: they "brin[g] the sacred into the mundane world, and se[t] it in its rightful pre-eminent place" (p. 285). As noted in Chapter 3, Lewis (1949b) speaks of creating literary enchantment to break the spell of materialism (p. 5). All of these heroic fantasies can be seen as literary "spells" intended to awaken us from the truncated "factual" or materialistic view of the universe into a mythic awareness. Their stories first and foremost convey a sense of spirituality as plausible. In doing so, they address the deep hunger for spirituality that is not heeded in a naturalistic perspective. The price of ignoring spirituality, some think, is high. As noted in Chapter 4, Mary Aswell Doll (2000) cites "literalism" as the problem of contemporary culture and seeks to find ways of listening to the mythopoetic (p. xiii). And L'Engle (1990), as noted, concludes, "we need to be aware that if we deny the world beyond the world of technology and provable fact, we do so to our peril" (p. 121).

Dwayne E. Huebner (1985) similarly warns that the separation of religion and education (p. 358) risks an "idolatry" of given educational practice "as if interpretation and conversation are frills rather than duties informed by love and responsibility" (p. 367). He speaks of education as "the lure of the transcendent—that which we seem is not what we are for we could always be other" and urges that there is a need to regard "humankind's participation in the Divine or the Eternal" (p. 360). In this Huebner defers to Alfred North Whitehead (1929a) who claims that "The essence of education is that it be religious . . . . an education which inculcates duty and reverence" (pp. 25-6). Certainly MacDonald's, Lewis's, and L'Engle's exploration of the numinous satisfies the urge to consider the numinous and is central to their moral vision. In this they fulfill what is in Tolkien's view, as noted in Chapter 1, "the true form of fairy-tale, and its highest function": the "eucatastrophic" tale which "denies (in the face of much evidence, if you will) universal final defeat and in so far is evangelium, giving a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief" (p. 68).

A third aspect to the importance of mythopoeia in these authors is the fairy tale's power to unsettle our thinking. Lewis (1956b) speaks of the restorative power of myth "to throw off irrelevancies" (p. 38), saying that, "the value of the myth is that it takes all the things we know and restores to them the rich significance which has been hidden by 'the veil of familiarity'" (1955a, p. 1374). Similarly, Maxine Greene (1997) says, "metaphor not only involves a reorientation of consciousness, it also enables us to cross divides, to make connections between ourselves and others, and to look through other eyes" (p. 21). This restoration is achieved in part through the ironic distance by which we can see humanity anew. So the Jackdaw wonders if the children are the "Second Joke" of

creation (*MN*, p.113), and the faun, Tumnus, who owns a book entitled *Is Man a Myth?*,

asks Lucy, "You are in fact Human?" (*LWW*, pp. 16, 19). The cherubim Proginoskes

announces, "Not everybody is able to see me. I'm real, and most earthlings can bear very

little reality" (*Wind*, p. 81). This displacement outside our usual paradigms renews

perspective, like Lucy's telescopic clarity of vision in *The Last Battle* (p. 163).

Importantly, the perspective is vast, unlike the narrowness of any abstraction. In Lewis's

(1944) words,

> every myth becomes the father of innumerable truths on the abstract level.
> Myth is the mountain whence all the different streams arise which become
> truths down here in the valley; *in hac valle abstractionis* ['In this valley of
> separation']. Or, if you prefer, myth is the isthmus which connects the
> peninsular world of thought with that vast continent we really belong to. It
> is not, like truth, abstract; nor is it, like direct experience, bound to the
> particular. (p. 66)

And the perspective of myth promises to widen. Lucy discovers that Aslan looks bigger

as she gets older (*PC*). When she comments that the garden, like the Stable, is far bigger

on the inside than the outside, the Faun comments, "Of course, Daughter of Eve. The

farther up and the farther in you go, the bigger everything gets. The inside is larger than

the outside" (*LB*, p.162). Blajeny speaks of the "High Calling" of Teachers and

repeatedly asks the children, "What is real?" (*Wind*, pp. 66-7). To ever ask, "What is

real?" and never settle for one abstraction, that, in a nutshell (one more poor abstraction)

is the educational power of myth.

So the power of myth to explore universal human truths, to offer us hope through

the experience of the numinous, and to unsettle our thinking so that we ever ask, "What is

real?", brings us to the heart of MacDonald's, Lewis's, and L'Engle's mythopoeia: how

heroic fantasy offers a moral education.

Literature as Moral Education: Training the Intelligent Heart

To treat "literature as moral education" as a separate category from the rest of our discussion when, in fact, it constitutes the whole, is a bit of an artifice, but my purpose here is to draw our attention to key features that illustrate how these authors develop moral growth in their characters. To do this I will frame observations through a few concepts that are central to growing the intelligent heart: 1) that moral choices matter; 2) the call to engage in moral battle; and 3) that moral action produces courage and hope.

First, the characters in these heroic fantasies quickly discover the inevitable truth that moral choices matter. The classical idea of individualism fails in view of the interconnectedness of all things. So Curdie in *The Princess and Curdie* thoughtlessly kills a pigeon and when he picks up the corpse begins to comprehend the terrible truth that for some time he has stopped being a saviour of the world and instead has been becoming a destroyer (p. 20). So Digory in *The Magician's Nephew* discovers that his fatal choice to ring the bell in Charn introduces evil into the newly created world of Narnia. And Charles Wallace in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet* learns how individual choices across history weave a web that can lead either to destruction or healing. In a moral universe it is dangerous to be naïve like the donkey, Puzzle, in Lewis's *The Last Battle*. As even the allegorical names imply, Puzzle is guilty of deferring to the tyrant, the ape Shift, out of a false sense of ignorance, not entirely unlike students who preface their good insights with "I don't know, but. . . . ". Clearly, all these characters are asked to act on the little instinctual moral knowledge they possess and resist evil, and the effect is certainly, among much else, to inspire confidence in doing so.

Moreover, all these stories show that every moral choice serves to either lessen or

increase, ultimately abolish or affirm, humanness. MacDonald particularly emphasizes this in his view that all of humanity is on a journey of moral "becoming" where we grow either increasingly human or monstrous. In *The Princess and the Goblin* we learn that the ugly goblins were once human and see how in the regenerate goblins their skulls and hearts grow pliable and their pilgrim feet tougher. Similarly, in *The Princess and Curdie* we see in Curdie the tension between "continuous dying" and "continuous resurrection." The boy is becoming increasingly "stupid" and "commonplace," "believ[ing] less and less in [mythic] things he had never seen," and so is in danger of "believ[ing] in nothing but his dinner" (pp. 17-18). Lewis, as Meilaender (1978, pp. 179-80) notes, emphasizes this in the Talking Beasts who revert to Dumb Beasts and especially in an observation like Lucy's when she ponders the idea that this degeneration could occur in humans: "Wouldn't it be dreadful if some day, in our own world, at home, men started going wild inside, like the animals here, and still looked like men, so that you'd never know which were which?" (*PCaspian*, p. 107). And L'Engle dramatizes this in the battle between the Echthroi, the fallen angels who attempt to extinguish—"X"—creation and those who prevent extinction by the affirmative act of "naming" (*Wind*).

Knowledge of the importance of moral choice is underlined by the call to spiritual discernment. The reader, like the characters, is initiated into the idea that the main task of life is to identify the ethical nature of things and to act accordingly. So Curdie thrusts his hands into the grandmother's fire of the roses and gains extraordinarily sensitive hands that can discern upon touch whether a person is growing beastward or noble (*PC*, pp. 69-70). Through another kind of refining process, more slowly, Digory in *A Magician's Nephew* learns to identify and resist evil in distinguishing between the right and the

wrong way to pluck and eat fruit. While the wrong way produces the endless misery that

Jadis experiences, the right way results in joy and healing. And Charles Wallace through

many mistakes gradually learns to mistrust pride in his own intellectual ability and

choose humility (*Wrinkle, STP*).

One large aspect of moral education then is to battle what Guroian (1998) calls

the "diabolical imagination" (p. 134) by fostering emotional and thoughtful engagement

in the exercise of virtue.

Second, these characters hear and answer the call to engage in moral battle.

Without exception they discover "the pattern throughout Creation. One child, one man,

can swing the balance of universe" (*Wind*, p. 179). Like the children in *A Wrinkle in

Time*, they are asked to join the ranks of the many fighters in the "grand and exciting

battle" that is being fought against the powers of darkness all through the ages (pp. 88-9).

Their actions save individual lives, kingdoms, even whole planets. And without

exception, they illustrate L'Engle's (1980) observation of the nature of such battle: "We

are all asked to do more than we can do" (p. 61). Also without exception, these characters

learn to flex and strengthen their moral muscle in the process. So Irene, we are told, "got

older very fast" (*PG*, pp. 11-12), and, as Guroian emphasizes, this signifies that the

nature of her relation to her great-great-grandmother is moral education (p. 143).

Similarly, Lucy in *Prince Caspian*, as Doris T. Myers (1998, pp. 189-90) and Guroian

(1998, pp. 170-73) also discuss, experiences a call to deeper maturation in her

commitment to Aslan. When the Lion tells her to wake her skeptical siblings and ask

them to follow her as she follows him, unseen to them, her dismayed response illustrates

the child's wish that the adult or, failing that, the numinous Other, will relieve her of the

necessity to act. She laments, "Oh dear, oh dear. . . . And I thought you'd come roaring in and frighten all the enemies away—like last time. And now everything is going to be horrid" (p. 125). Only when Lucy announces her readiness does she hear Aslan say, "Now you are a lioness. And now all Narnia will be renewed" (p. 126). Similarly, Meg in *A Wrinkle in Time* needs to work through her temper tantrum over the fact that neither her father nor the angelic guides can save her brother, but that she alone has a special role to play. So the reader, with the characters, discovers that renewal occurs when the individual responds to the call to engage in moral battle. The fact that these characters must act out of a moral courage they don't know they possess underscores the principle that moral action in spite of fear leads to victory.

Third, the moral action of these characters produces courage and hope.

Regardless of how weak and incompetent the children feel themselves to be, and indeed are, they exercise the paradoxical courage that G.K. Chesterton (1908) defines as "a strong desire to live taking the form of a readiness to die" (p. 170). And in their willingness to act courageously in the face of significant trials, these heroes, to cite the words of St. Paul, experience how "suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope" (Romans 5: 3-4, New International Version). Importantly, the courage practiced by these children is of the kind that Josef Pieper (1965) has called "mystic' fortitude" (cited in Guroian, p. 156), where their connection to the numinous (MacDonald's guiding grandmother, Lewis's Aslan, L'Engle's community of angelic guides) inspires them to action that exceeds their own expectations. So with young Princess Irene we see a girl face danger with growing courage as she learns to "follow the thread wherever it leads [her]" (*PG*, p. 108), finding that the thread vanishes

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when she tries to retreat into the familiar, and so persists through obstacles until she is able to lead Curdie out of captivity deep inside the mountain. And Curdie himself, though a veteran hero against the goblins, is similarly asked to undergo a tremendous trial in "trust and obedience" when the great-great-grandmother instructs him to thrust his hands into the great fire of roses mentioned above. The reader experiences the boy exercise courage: "h[olding] the pain as if it were a thing that would kill him if he let it go—as indeed it would . . . . in terrible fear lest it should conquer him" (*PC*, p. 67). The outcome of this trial is not only that Curdie's new hands have the ability to discern moral character in others (as long as he never uses this perception for his own ends), but that this act of courage prepares him to proceed on the little he knows on a journey of hope that leads to purging corruption and restoring the king to rule. In the *Chronicles of Narnia* all of the heroes, like Prince Rilian, learn to "bid farewell to hopes and fears" and engage in adventure valiantly so that deliverance is timely (*SC*, p. 165). So in *The Silver Chair* Jill and Eustace, together with Puddleglum, persist in a dangerous journey that results in the defeat of the witch and the rescue of Prince Rilian. In *The Last Battle* the children, with King Tirian, resist evil and stand firm in Narnia's darkest hour (p. 134). In *A Wrinkle in Time*, Meg's willingness to act with a courage she doesn't believe she has leads her to do something no one else for a variety of reasons is able to do: save her brother from the clutches of a most powerful foe, the disembodied brain, IT. In *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*, the 12-year-old Brandon Llawcae summons the courage to defy his witch-hunting community and cry out the Irish rune, an action that brings judgment on the church and saves his innocent sister-in-law from the gallows. All of these children learn that life is a dance that occurs on the cutting edge where "a strong desire for living [meets] with a

strange carelessness about dying" (Chesterton, 1908, p. 171). They learn that "Seeing is not believing—it is only seeing" (*PG*, p. 156) and that they must believe in order to see, and seize courage in order to find hope.

I turn now to how the moral imagination of these authors suggests teaching principles such as literature as engagement, childlike wonder, listening, nurture, and heretical creativity. Each of these principles repairs and transcends a narrowly conceived rational education.

Literature as Engagement: A "Feminine" Way of Reading

Too many readers recall hating the analysis of literature as practised by their teachers. They complain about close structural analysis that spoiled the story for them. And our three authors (all, in some capacity, teachers) share this concern. MacDonald (1893) notes the absurdity of providing "any key to a work of imagination," comparing this to 'boiling roses'(p. 321). Lewis (1947a) muses, "Perhaps . . . analytical understanding must always be a basilisk which kills what it sees and only sees by killing" (p. 90). L'Engle (1993) says her "struggle is to let [her] intellect work *for* what [she] is working on, not against it" (p. 200). Certainly, teachers should ask whether or not the practice of analysis in their classroom increases or eclipses students' personal enjoyment and understanding. How to see without "killing"? How to read *with* and not *against* literature?

In considering how these writers answer these questions it is helpful to examine the metaphor of mastery that we use in education. When we praise someone's learning we say they have "mastered" the subject, often not considering the classical heroic

connotations of oppression, subjugation, and sheer inability to listen. In this, we assume the role of the wrong kind of master who subordinates all things to himself. We have "understood" a Shakespeare play. We now "own" the correct meaning. We wish to ensure that our young charges are able to share this understanding and wield their newly acquired insight in effective academic prose. And every time this sort of "mastery" happens, we risk reading ourselves instead of the author. When this also becomes a reductionist exercise in technical understanding we risk losing sight of the whole in the particulars.

Conversely, we wouldn't easily dream of praising someone as being the "mistress" of a subject because this metaphor has been reduced to the meaning of the "kept" woman-as-object. (Doubtless there is danger in the wrong sort of "feminine" pedagogy where the learner/educator is subsumed by a master idea or narrative without much reflection or conscience.) We have forgotten the older meaning of "Mistress of the Home" suggestive of the strong heroic of domesticity and nurture. Her qualities of "submission," "receptivity," and "humility"—characteristics of every good reader—seem vague and ineffectual. The reason is clear: the pursuit (another classical metaphor) of knowledge is often a quest for power and control rather than a journey towards personhood. Hence, too many students are never "at home" with literature. They are tempted to read the critics first and foremost, rather than first discover and explore their own thoughts and feelings and further questions (and then chat with the critics later). Some want to have "the answer" (quickly) and are hostile to exploring possibilities.

On this question of *how* to read literature these writers suggest a "feminine" pedagogy of imaginative engagement where the reader is not the chauvinistic master but

the "mistress" who submits to the text by suspending disbelief, listening to story, and entering into its magic. So C.S. Lewis (1961a) speaks of reading as primarily an imaginative activity requiring "surrender" rather than an analytical exercise suggesting conquest. In his words,

> The first demand any work of any art makes upon us is surrender. Look. Listen. Receive. Get yourself out of the way. (There is no good asking first whether the work before you deserves such a surrender, for until you have surrendered you cannot possibly find out.) (p. 19)

He warns against using rather than receiving story, and worries about scholars who, in the race to secure publications, "do things" to the text rather than experience what the text "can do to [them]" (pp. 16-17). This in turn forfeits what should be the primary literary experience for themselves and their students—"Reader Meets Text" (pp. 128-9). Similarly, George MacDonald (1893) criticizes the "intellectual greed" with which we "bring the forces of our intellect to bear upon [story]" instead of "let[ting] it work" on us (pp. 321-2). Likewise, Madeleine L'Engle's view (1980) of the artist as a "birthgiver" who, like Mary, was obedient to the calling to give flesh to Word, has educational implications (p. 18). To know what we think and feel we must first have understood what others in the story are thinking and feeling, imaginatively see with their eyes, and so become enlarged by story like a woman who conceives, gives birth, nurses, weans, and nurtures a child. On this note Northrop Frye's (1957) metaphor of the midwife for the poet's birthing of a poem is just as relevant for the teacher "delivering" a literary text for the students:

> He is responsible for delivering it in as uninjured a state as possible, and if the poem is alive, it is equally anxious to be rid of him, and screams to be cut loose from all the navel-strings and feeding tubes of his ego. (p. 98)

These three authors then offer the idea that the best approach to story is not the distance of objective rational analysis but the closeness of subjective engagement. While we may be more used to looking *at* the sunbeam, rationally, to borrow Lewis's metaphor in " Meditation in a Toolshed" (1945b), we need to grow increasingly comfortable looking *along* the sunbeam, imaginatively, to what it illuminates. Elsewhere (1961b) he derides the attempt to grasp understanding merely by the intellect as "trying to bottle a sunbeam" (p. 95). The good kind of analytical "master" that I have only hinted at knows first and always how to be the "mistress of the hearth."

Childlike Wonder: The Daily Fire-Berry

I've heard it said that senility begins at around age 25. Dour thought. But my own view is more pessimistic: "senility" or decreasing intellectual activity and interest can begin somewhere with puberty, sometimes earlier, when children wrestle with "putting away childish things" in the turbulent years of growing up. This is the time when older siblings mock the younger one's wide-eyed wonder (with rolled eyes and clucks). This is the time when young children imitate their adolescent siblings' jaded demeanour ("So co-ool!"). This is the time when many children "tune out" in school with a bored attitude. This is also about the time when some of the "successful" students decide that education=career is all about "giving the teacher what he wants." I recall the year I was teaching both creative writing to grade three students and literature to first year university students. I'll confess that sometimes I tested out my theory of senility with asking my different classes the same questions. And lo and behold, while my eager 8-year-olds came up with some rather profound things, most of my 18-year-olds stared at me with blasé expressions, thinking, I venture to guess, "What's her problem? What has this got

to do with anything? How is this going to help me write the essay I don't want to write?"

I suppose these older ones couldn't quite match what my line of questioning had to do

with their GPA (Oh, if only they had figured it out! How those transcripts would have

glowed.). The few that ventured out courageously came up with remarkable ideas, just

like the 8-year-olds.

Surely the trouble with the loss of curiosity and willingness to take risks is not

only hormonal. I think Huebner (1959) is right in his claim that our over-emphasis on

"conformity and functional performance in this world of technical proficiency"

suppresses what he calls our "capacity for wonder" (p. 1). Before him, Chesterton (1905)

warns against the "tendency to be weary of wonders" and describes the cure in terms of

exercising "childlike" enthusiasm or "humility . . . which is for ever renewing the earth

and the stars" to us (p. 164). Fortunately the early tendency to senility is not irreversible.

In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, every morning a bird brings the retired star

Ramandu a fire-berry from the valleys in the Sun, a gift that takes away a little of his age

until he will "become as young as the child that was born yesterday" and rise again as a

new star (pp. 176-7). I believe we can do the same for ourselves and our students as we

persist in pedagogy that looks for "the *quality* of unexpectedness" (Lewis, 1947b, p. 17),

as opposed to adding a new fact to the other facts that do not (yet) engage our interest.

Learners who retain or regain a sense of wonder are the ones who exercise the ability to

dream and think. They exercise "supposal," like Digory in the wood between the worlds

who wonders, "Supposing there was a world at the bottom of every pool!" (*MN*, p. 36),

and goes on to find one, whereas here in "the In-between place" (p. 45) of possibility the

pragmatic Jadis weakens and experiences terror (p. 66). What classical heroes cannot

achieve, the childlike can—newness around every corner. Like Digory and Polly jumping into a pool to discover what world this action will lead them into, there is an attitude of playfulness that is vital to learning that the "stodgy, accepting, pliant, unresponsive" (Huebner, 1959, p. 1) students have discarded. Citing Bacon, MacDonald (1893) speaks of learning as the invitation "to be playfellows with God" in this game of discovery (pp. 41-2). Along with this playful exuberance, learners who exercise their capacity for wonder clearly practise a reversal of "chronological snobbery"[10] where they refuse to assume that the latest idea is the best one and the early ones worth discarding. As Lucy discovers that Aslan grows larger with every year that she is older (*PCaspian*, p. 124), so the imaginative learner's world grows larger, not smaller, with age. Every act of childlike wonder, like Ramandu's fire-berry, takes away a little of our jadedness, a little of our settled thinking; and it is this imaginative willingness to believe that makes sight possible. In the words of a friend and colleague, Thomas Merton scholar, Lynn Szabo (personal communication, 2001), "When you don't understand, you obey the mystery." This openness to mystery is, I think, partly what MacDonald meant with "The child is not meant to die, but to be forever freshborn" (*PCurdie*, p. 18).

Creating a "Listening" Space

Teachers frequently think of some of their students as being poor listeners. Perhaps with less frequency do we ask or articulate for ourselves in what ways we are listening to students and helping them to listen to story and to each other. Certainly the questions cannot be abstracted from our technological society where we seem to have made a virtue out of everything that makes contemplation unlikely. We are (or think we are) over-saturated with sound, adept at tuning out unwanted information, and accused of

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being poor listeners (and worse conversationalists). Solitude is frequently regarded with suspicion. A pause, a hiatus in conversation, is often felt as an embarrassment, a mistake, a gap where something that ought to be there is missing. We seem to have lost the sense that in this "gap" (the teeming chaos before creation) much potential meaning resides, sometimes resting, also forging new links, swimming towards the surface at an un-logged pace. And in the classroom we are also guilty of racing past the place for creative listening, and so finding neither the repose in the eye of the storm, nor the not-yet-thought-of pieces of the equation floating in the opaque subconscious. Add to this the fact that much of what characterizes academic listening is, as O'Reilley (1998) criticizes, "critical listening" where "[w]e tend to pay attention only long enough to develop a counterargument . . . mentally grade and pigeonhole each other" (p.19), and there you have some of the ingredients for the recipe of a non-listening classroom.

But there is another way of practising pedagogy in creating a "listening" space[11] where we affirm tentative ideas with receptivity and so, possibly, as O'Reilley hopes, "*listen someone into existence*" (p. 21). To counteract or help heal what she diagnoses as "people . . . dying in spirit for lack of [deep listening]" (p. 19), we might try to engage in "a deep, openhearted, unjudging reception of the other" where the "spirit begins to expand" (p. 19). In her words,

> deep listening . . . . Like all contemplative disciplines, it deals with the whole rather than with the parts: it attends not to the momentary faltering but to the long path of the soul, not to the stammer, but to the poem being born. It completes the clumsy gesture in an arc of grace. One can, I think, *listen someone into existence,* encourage a stronger self to emerge or a new talent to flourish. Good teachers listen this way, as do terrific grandfathers and similar heroes of the spirit. The critical hearer, by contrast, crushes our spirits, leaves us with the sense of inner defeat Henri Nouwen speaks of. (p. 21)

To teach, to learn, one must practise the art of listening.

Some teachers, as I am, are convinced of the effectiveness of the Socratic method of asking questions in order to foster listening. The fear is that sole reliance on the lecture "delivery" method (as important as that is) leaves too many students out of the process of arriving at conclusions, and the belief is that discussion heightens awareness and increases learning. Socratic teachers believe that it is only when the engaged learner "wrestles" with the tough questions that readiness is created for learning. So the Socratic teacher does not supply "all the answers," certainly not before the class has had opportunity to engage with the material and develop approaches. The Socratic teacher strives to emphasize the variety of excellent answers to hard questions, so underscoring the learner's personal authenticity or voice. To do this well, the teacher has to practise L'Engle's sort of "cherubic multiple vision," sometimes anticipating and certainly responding to all sorts of individual students' visions. The teacher also has to become a "kyther," willing to converse with others, interpreting both the spoken and the unspoken word. Certainly, the teacher is an affirmer who believes that there is a potential gem in every rough answer, a purpose that can and must be elicited with intelligent patience. With practice, we come to listen "not to the stammer, but to the poem being born."

And the moral imagination of these three children's writers contributes much to creating a potential listening space within each person in the classroom setting. In these heroic fantasies the characters discover themselves, each other, and the task before them through contemplative listening. In MacDonald's *Princess* books Irene and Curdie learn to listen to the wise old lady's spinning wheel and follow the invisible thread that directs them through danger. In *The Silver Chair*, Eustace and Jill enter the "immense silence"

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on the Mountain of Aslan (p. 19), and there Jill begins to learn to heed the signs which will be harder to recognize in the thicker, confusing air of Narnia (pp. 30-1). In *A Wrinkle in Time*, the company of listeners hear out Meg's temper tantrum until the child comes to the place of "grace and understanding" where she is able to take on the heroic task before her with remarkable maturity, of her own volition (pp. 194-200), and later she discovers for herself the one weapon she has that IT has not. And in *A Wind in the Door*, when the cherubim Proginoskes asks Meg to communicate with the farandolae inside her brother's mitochondrion, his instruction captures the need for contemplative space:

> "Be a fara,' he told her. 'Make believe. Do the inhabitants of Yadah seem more limited than human beings because once they have taken root they can't move from their Deepening Place? But human beings need Deepening Places, too. And far too many never have any. Think about your Deepening Places, Meg. Open yourself into kything. Open."
>
> (pp. 156-7)

As Meg opens herself to this "communion so rich and full that silence speaks more powerfully than words" (p. 171), she realizes the paradox that "it is only when we are fully rooted that we are able to move" (p. 190). One of our greatest needs then is to dare to "root" ourselves in those "deepening places" where we can grow quiet enough to hear what is being said (and not being said). One of our ongoing pedagogical tasks is to assist students in this process.

To encourage this, we might ask ourselves and our students some of the following questions: "What things do you enjoy listening to and which not? What things prevent you from listening? When and how have you 'silenced' someone, 'listened someone into existence'? When and where have you been able to listen profoundly—to yourself, to

others. What did you hear? Is there anything threatening about listening? Have you

followed any 'invisible threads,' looked for 'signs,' found 'deepening places' ?"

To teach, to learn, one must practise the art of listening. The listening teacher

helps his students come to voice. She listens for unarticulated biases that she or others

take for granted, features that inform (or skew) our thoughts and actions. He creates a

space to listen to the "silence"—hearing our unexamined assumptions—and

courageously ignores or proceeds with his assumptions at the same time that he listens

with respect to other voices. She "translates" known and unknown languages. A learner is

a listening collaborator on a shared journey.

Nurture

The moral imagination of these authors is also informed by the idea that education

is an act of nurture. As we have discussed over several chapters, from MacDonald's

great-grandmother, to Lewis's Aslan, to L'Engle's Aunt Beast, the images of nurture as

an act of "maternal" love multiply in these children's fantasies. The characters'

experience of an education of nurture inspires them to assume moral responsibility for

themselves, others, kingdoms, and whole planets, suggestive of a pedagogy of care that

educators like Nel Noddings (1984, 2002) and Dwayne Huebner (1985, 1993) articulate.

Our word "nurture" is derived from the Latin *nūtrīre*, which means "to feed, to

care for." Undoubtedly, the idea of education as an act of caring must seem patently

clear: we promote the development of the student by feeding his needs and supporting his

strengths and weaknesses. As Huebner (1985) says, "Those who claim to be educators

must care for, indeed love, those whom they would presume to educate" (p. 364). And

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yet the word "love" invites many associations that have little to do with promoting a student's development. As noted in Chapter 4, Huebner (1985) observes that the term "love . . . . appears to be verboten in education" (p. 363). It would certainly be useful to counteract our false image of love as coddling and so prolonging weaknesses, in fact disabling students, with the kind of "tough love"[12] which challenges students to strengthen their weaknesses, refine their strengths, and enables them to become free moral beings. But far too often, instead of being concerned with love as educational practice, schools teach the classical heroic of might and power to the detriment of moral development. In our focus on the academic achievement of the individual as the primary good, we lose sight of the fact that the individual's achievement should be tied to his spiritual development and the betterment of society. The scholastic star who cares only for his own advancement and not for how his ability might help others is morally stunted. In Huebner's (1993) words,

> Schools are a major institution of the principalities and powers, and a major source for teaching the myth of redemptive violence—that the world can be corrected and redeemed through power (including the power of knowledge) and might, but not through love. (p. 407)

And in this discussion of how images of "maternal" love inform teaching I would like to emphasize two features of the nurturing teacher: one, Lewis's magician who practices "rough magic" on ungrateful students, and two, L'Engle's "namer" who helps students become who they essentially are and ought to be.

First, Lewis's portrayal of Coriakin in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* assists us in thinking about what must be a primary obstacle to providing a nurturing education: the teacher's sheer physical and emotional exhaustion in working with "ungrateful"

students. The magician Coriakin is in charge of the foolish and obstinate dwarves, the Duffers, presumably as a punishment for sins committed in his former life as a star (an icon of sorts for all teachers who've ever felt they've suffered when the little children came unto them). Aslan asks him a question that might well be addressed to any teacher from time to time: "Do you grow weary, Coriakin, of ruling such foolish subjects as I have given you here?" (p. 138). Coriakin's response is insightful.

> No, they are very stupid but there is no real harm in them. I begin to grow rather fond of the creatures. Sometimes, perhaps, I am a little impatient, waiting for the day when they can be governed by wisdom instead of this rough magic. (p. 138)

The magician does what in fact constitutes much of teaching: devising and implementing a curriculum for immature students who are not yet self-directed, who imagine they are working for a demanding teacher because they cannot yet grasp that whatever work they are doing is actually for themselves. So while teachers are not called to be "nursemaids" in the sense of indulging weaknesses, they are called to be nurturing magicians like Coriakin, fully engaged in the difficult task of educating the sometimes foolish and obstinate, always waiting for the day when their "rough magic" will one day be replaced by the student's own wisdom. (Arguably, some students may also need to educate a few Dufflepud teachers out of prejudice and ignorance, proving to these teachers that they are not a) stupid, b) indifferent, but, rather, c) wondering or even terribly confused but eminently capable.)

Second, L'Engle's dramatization of "naming" in *A Wind in the Door* reminds us that a teacher is primarily called to be a "namer" who helps students become who they essentially are and ought to be. As the cherubim Proginoskes explains to Meg:

When I was memorizing the names of the stars, part of the purpose was to help them each to be more particularly the particular star each one was supposed to be. That's basically a Namer's job. Maybe you're supposed to make earthlings feel more human. (p. 78)

And the loving act of "naming" that teachers are called to is a moral mandate that, as Meg finds out, may have nothing to do with pleasant emotions. The teacher needs to act out of hope, believing that a student can excel, in spite of the evidence before him. MacDonald speaks of this in his view of "regard[ing] men not as they are merely, but as they shall be; not as they shall be merely, but as they are now growing, or capable of growing" (1946, p. 40). Similarly, Whitehead (1929a) emphasizes this kind of vision in citing Archbishop Temple's comment on the surprising success of a boy who had been "somewhat undistinguished" at school: 'It is not what they are at eighteen, it is what they become afterwards that matters'" (p. 13). So instead of dismissing a student with, "She isn't too bright," or "He won't go very far," the teacher must distinguish between the many false faces of the student (boredom, hostility, stupidity) with faith. He must believe in the potentially competent adult in the immature child, the mighty oak in the acorn, remembering that at least one of Einstein's pessimistic teachers was dead wrong. And like Blajeny, the believing teacher nurtures out of a "tough love," seeing a child as someone with "talents we cannot afford to lose" (*Wind*, p. 59). This faith, importantly, does not degenerate into an excuse to coddle the student, trying to "fix" his problems for him (as if one could). Instead this faith becomes a challenge for the child to learn to fight his own battles—to live in "this cruel country" (*MN*, p. 114), and not only survive but thrive.

So the nurturing educator must be both a patient magician wielding "rough magic" in preparation for future wisdom as well as a "namer" of things hardly visible but in the making. True nurture, without coddling, is training for ethical maturity.

Heretical Creativity

As I discussed in Chapter 4 under "Imaginative Risk-taking," Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991) have applied the clone/heretic distinction on learner types (p. 116), and I have ventured to define a disposition towards learning within and especially beyond conceptual parameters as "heretical creativity." People who claim to have all the answers are the first ones who "don't want to be confused by the facts." They have been there and done that; they are smug knowers and espousers of their learning. They certainly don't want to "waste" their time reading fantasy literature (or perhaps any literature). They are the "clones" in the business of making other like-minded clones. They are sure of their own brand of political correctness, quick to spot the heretics and drag them to the stake. They live in a closed universe. They are, in Plato's metaphor, chained by the leg and by the neck, unable to move, seeing only in front of them, convinced that the shadows playing on the wall of their cave constitute reality. Clones, like Plato's prisoners, are apt to mock and, if they could, kill any prophet who would venture to tell them that the sunlight outside the cave is more radiant than the firelight inside. And, as teachers know, many of these clones are students, and too sudden a revelation is blinding, resulting in a combination of confusion, intimidation, and sometimes anger. The prophet/educator's difficult task, as Plato explains, is "not . . . to put knowledge into a soul which does not possess it, as if they could put sight into blind eyes," but to turn the eye of the soul into the direction of the light until it "can bear to

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contemplate reality" (p. 232). Gradually, by degrees, preferably with gentleness and grace, the teacher might lead his flock, luring rather than bullying them about their "stupidity." This requires faith, of course, that the "ignorant" soul either possesses moral knowledge and/or can respond to moral education.

It is to these clones (and the clone in each of us) that these fantasy writers suggest "impossibilities" that defy ordinary logic. There is a great-great-grandmother in the garret, Princess Irene tells Curdie (*PG*). You get to Narnia through the back of the wardrobe, Lucy tells her older siblings (*LWW*). "There are dragons in the twins' vegetable garden," Charles Wallace tells his older sister Meg (*Wind*). The principle that these authors contribute to imaginative education is that of encouraging learners to become "heretical" creative thinkers—they ask us to question our conceptual parameters, "to think outside the lines" of what we consider possible, so that in thinking beyond the familiar constructs we might "scaffold" (MacDonald, 1893, p. 13) hypotheses which could prove correct. These writers, like Professor Digory speaking with the skeptical older siblings in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, try to increase the readers' "plausibility structure" (Smith, 1998, p. 172). As Calvin insists in *A Wind in the Door*, "Most major scientific discoveries have been made by crackpots—or at least, people who were thought to be crackpots" (p. 175). And creative scientists like the Murrys in L'Engle's time trilogy have learned to think outside the lines and make their discoveries precisely because they don't assume they know all the answers. Mrs. Murry says, "one thing I've learned is that you don't have to understand things for them to *be*" (*Wrinkle*, p. 23). Mr. Murry emphasizes that "the naked intellect is an extraordinarily inaccurate

instrument" (*Wind*, p. 87). It takes this kind of willingness to be "heretical"—challenging personal and cultural beliefs—in order to learn.

Unlike the chained clone, the true life-long learner who has escaped the cave maintains a heretical stance. He questions in order to deepen understanding; she holds to a creed in a profoundly reflective way. He does not needlessly perpetuate old cultural paradigms only because he has inherited them, because "they are there," or because they have meant so much to others. Instead he rethinks (and feels) every orthodoxy and revolutionary shift. So her thinking deepens, either moves away from the orthodoxy or embraces it. On this last point Lewis reminds us of the mistake of "chronological snobbery" mentioned earlier, the assumption that progress means improvement and that the latest thought is best. And Mary Aswell Doll's (2000) idea that any creed represents a "hardening," a failure to think, is, I think, a mistake. As I have said elsewhere (2002b), her idea that only "blockheads" adhere to creeds while the true learner is by definition fluidly creedless is questionable because the idea of the necessarily creedless learner is another kind of creed, another form of what she calls "hardening." I think the image of the "blockhead" refers better to any unreflective person (and does such a person exist?) whereas fluidity, arguably, describes reflectiveness, whether specifically creeded or in transformation. Some old ideas just don't die easily—and for good reasons. So any creed must be questioned, rejected, or re-embraced. To live is to move, to change. To dance, we are reminded, is to be ever a little off-balance. The kind of "hardening" that Doll rightly worries about would be in the smugness that further questioning is no longer required. A kind of spiritual stasis (or small death) occurs when this happens. In L'Engle's (1980) words, "Generally what is more important than getting water-tight answers is learning to

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ask the right questions" (p. 15). Similarly, she comments, "The minute we begin to think we know all the answers, we forget the questions" (p. 32). So, the heretical learner has a profound willingness "to learn the *faithfulness* of doubt" (p. 118). She asks questions, wrestles with answers, and then asks some more. He would prefer any fate to that of returning to staring at the shadows on the cave wall. She lives in an open universe. And without such "heresy" there can be no truly ethical response.

To teach in a heretically creative way takes a considerable willingness to be iconoclastic, to challenge the powers that be—to always ask, "What does this mean?" and to try both new ways of seeing and speaking, of being. Clones do not survive in such a learning environment because each individual is required to ponder old paradigms and create new responses. An odd clone may choose to tell the same old story about the shadows on the wall in front of him but, more often than not, he will get bored with his clone-ness and discover the heretic within, then begin exploring old stories retold and new stories unfolding. While the clone can only perpetuate, the heretic can reframe, reshape, revision—and so create. For myself, I always feel we have moved a few steps toward this when a student quietly confesses that although he started out hating a novel we were studying he had come to enjoy it. For the rare student who insists, "Don't you ever *ever* teach this again!", I smile to myself and think, "Just for you, babe, and for me too, I will teach this one every single year."

Conclusion

We have discussed how the moral imagination of George MacDonald, C.S. Lewis, and Madeleine L'Engle, contributes to imaginative education. Following their commitment to moral education through mythic storytelling, we have considered how

their work addresses what has been largely overlooked by literary scholars—growing the intelligent heart. Their heroic fantasies are "good spells" that awaken a moral vision of the Good. Their imaginative power is to "baptize" the reader into an ethical education. As we have seen, they achieve this by debunking classical heroism with the "feminine" heroic of humility. Moreover, their work suggests pedagogical principles that repair the effects of a narrowly conceived rational education. It is through the intelligent heart that the door opens to understanding (cf. MacDonald, 1893, p. 12). As G.K. Chesterton (1908) observes, "Every man who will not have softening of the heart must at last have softening of the brain" (p. 75). Perhaps it is because we have attempted to erect a tower of Babel in scientific analysis that we have lost the ability to understand each other as ethical beings. Speaking with the mythic imagination to the intelligent heart is the attempt that these writers offer at translation.

CHAPTER SIX
TEACHING TO NURTURE THE MORAL IMAGINATION:
PRACTICAL PEDAGOGY
THROUGH CHILDREN'S FANTASY LITERATURE

This last chapter, as is indeed the entire thesis, is written with the dedicated and extremely busy teacher in mind who always wonders, and rightly so, if and how an educational study will aid them in the classroom. Good theory and literary analysis should transform classroom practice—as indeed it does—but given the constraints of teaching many students on a demanding schedule, as well as the issue of the logistics of accountability, it is no wonder that many teachers insist, "Give me practical examples. What can I actually use in the classroom?" Perhaps we should add, "What can I learn in five minutes that could begin to make a difference to my students? (And hurry, the bell's about to ring.)" So the practical suggestions in this chapter are intended to facilitate the implementation of the theoretical and analytical exploration of the previous five chapters. To begin with, any one of these suggested exercises is an example of what one could do in the classroom.

In my approach, rather than taking a somewhat linear one in examining the texts book by book, chapter by chapter, or perhaps grouped by author, I have taken a more integrative approach in which pedagogical strategies are organized thematically. My hope is to create designs for learning that could be applied to any of these novels, as well as to a much wider range of literature, and so help us with our students towards new ways of seeing. The examples, of course, are by no means comprehensive, but are instead

suggestions offered to spur further invention of teaching ideas. I have taken the position that the best response to an imaginative piece of literature is creating another imaginative piece of literature (cf. Kazemek, 1995, p. 91), and I do this fully conscious of the wariness university English professors have of "those secondary school English teachers who don't teach their students to write academic essays." This wariness, which I share to some degree, having the happy "double-vision" of both a secondary school and a university English teacher, deserves several responses. One is C.S. Lewis's humorous distinction between the Calormene children being taught story-telling which people wanted to hear, and English children being taught essay-writing which no one wanted to read (*HHB*, p. 36). Another is that imaginative responses to literature, when practised with high expectations for form and content, can only develop the imaginative thinking required for strong essay-writing. Third, the suggestions here are not intended to displace learning to write in the more objective voice of the academic essay. Having said this, it is not my intention either to displace all the effective and vital things we are already doing with students, such as the basic structural approaches of understanding grammar and literary devices, but rather to help us focus our teaching with the ultimate goal of educating for moral feeling. The highest purpose of our pedagogical efforts may be summarized in four words: nurture the moral imagination.

In this chapter the discussion of practical application is organized under the following themes: experiencing the mythic; teaching moral courage; the ethical journey; the pedagogy of humility; and sexuality. As well, I address maxims and other quotables that could be highlighted in the classroom. Then I look at ways to practise the five curriculum principles in the literature class: literature as engagement: a "feminine" way

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of reading; childlike wonder; creating a "listening" space; nurture; and heretical creativity.

Experiencing the Mythic

These writers excel in giving readers an experience of goodness that isn't moralizing or boring, but instead is attractive, exciting, and awe-inspiring. And importantly, readers do not remain on the "outside" looking at goodness, but are drawn "inside" the experience. In these writers goodness is centered in the mythic or numinous Other—a profound sense of the presence of cosmic love and meaning, and therefore hope—and the nature of this experience for the characters, and so perhaps for the readers, is characterized primarily by love and joy. The following exercises are designed to help students consider the imaginative experience of such deep existential hope—of falling in love with the Good and wanting it.

1) Choose an incident from the story where a human character meets a supernatural being or suggestion of their presence, such as Irene finding her way by the grandmother's lamp at night (*PG*), Lucy and Susan having a romp with Aslan (*LWW*), or Charles Wallace riding on a unicorn (*STP*). Or create your own, either borrowing a character and placing him in a different situation, or inventing another incident altogether. Imagine yourself as the human character encountering the mythic and reflect on your thoughts and feelings, as well as physical sensations during the meeting. What difference did this encounter make to you then? What difference does it make at a later point in time?

2) In *The Magician's Nephew*, Aslan creates Narnia with his call: "Narnia, Narnia, Narnia, awake. Love. Think. Speak. Be walking trees. Be talking beasts. Be divine waters" (p. 108). Many voices reply, "Hail, Aslan. We hear and obey. We are awake. We love. We think. We speak. We know" (p. 109). Choose one aspect of Narnian creation (a tree/dryad, a river/god, a talking beast), and narrate this person's experience of his beginning. Refer to some or each of the verbs in the above quote in your creative response.

3) A number of characters are indifferent to the mythic, such as Lootie and Curdie in MacDonald, Edmund and later Susan in Lewis, and pragmatic Sandy and Dennys in L'Engle (who have an adventure of their own in her novel *Many Waters*). Describe how an indifferent character is influenced by the mythic. Does his or her indifference remain or not?

4) Curdie thrusts his hands into the Great-Grandmother's fire of roses—a painful but healing experience which gives him the ability to discern both the hidden evil and the hidden good of another person (*PC*). Describe a situation where a person is helped by the "fire of roses" or some other purging experience of mythic dimensions. How is he changed? What abilities does she acquire and how does she apply them?

5) In "Cross Purposes," the fairy remarks about dreaming flowers that appear to children every night (p. 136). Choose an image such as a flower, an animal, or some other natural motif and give it a personality with purpose and influence in a child's life. Demonstrate that this natural image of mythic stature influences a child in the "ordinary" world. What difference does it make?

6) In *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*, Pastor Mortmain persecutes the storytellers and those with the gift of second sight. He is then punished by the mythic powers that are greater than his psychological terror. Write from the point of view of a chastened parishioner or a chastened Pastor Mortmain who reflects on what has occurred. Or create another scenario in which power-mongering action is quenched by mythic powers.

Teaching Moral Courage

The children in these stories are all asked to do "impossible" things that they feel they cannot do—and they are afraid. However, they each come to the point where they choose to act courageously, at the risk of their lives, knowing that they are loved and that they must act courageously in order to be loving themselves. The following exercises invite imaginative exploration of moral courage.

1) As discussed in Chapter 4, L'Engle's understanding of the sonnet is as a metaphor for courageous living. We are given a difficult form; but what we say in the lines is up to us. And if we tell our students of the original purpose of a sonnet being a little love song, we could convey the idea that courageous living means writing your little love song—your life—back to the world. As an opening exercise (also possibly expanded into a larger assignment), students could be asked to consider their constraints, those things they blister under. Then they could be asked to consider what possible strengths the constraints draw out. Subsequently they could begin to draft key ideas they would like their life to stand for. In this exercise of the moral imagination we challenge both ourselves and our students to develop fortitude and wisdom.

2) In each of the stories the characters are given "magical" gifts, such as the great-grandmother's invisible guiding thread (*PG*), Father Christmas's healing potion to Lucy (*LWW*), and Mrs. Who's special glasses to Meg (*Wrinkle*), and with these gifts they are able to fulfill their mission. Imagine that a loved one is in danger—trapped by an evil force, either another character or group of characters, or by his own failing such as pride or bitterness. You are the only one who can save him, but the likelihood of your succeeding does not appear great. Choose a gift from one of these stories (or create your own gift wish-list), and go to battle. The gift must be used at least once, but the gift itself is no magic wand that rids you of trouble: you still have to act valiantly.

3) Growing moral courage has something to do with developing what I have called "relaxed tenacity." For example, in *The Princess and the Goblin*, Irene learns to follow the thread deep into goblin territory and when she tries to retreat into the familiar, the thread vanishes. Her only option is to proceed into the unknown with faith and determination, and when she does she is able to save Curdie. Choose a situation, real or imaginary, from which you or a fictional character would desperately wish to escape but the only way out is through. Does the term "relaxed tenacity" describe parts of your experience? What else did you learn?

4) Saving humour is evident in all three authors as a response or weapon against evil. The rhymes by which Curdie defends himself against the goblins are sure to appeal to readers' earthy sense of fun: "Ten, twenty, thirty—/You're all so very dirty!/Twenty, thirty, forty—/You're all so thick and snorty" (*PG*, p. 125). Lewis has readers giggling at the demise of the enemy, for example the poetic justice of having Rabadash dangling

from a hook in the castle wall (*HHB*) or of the Narnians planting and watering Uncle

Andrew (*MN*), as well as enjoying the many light-hearted festivities, such as when Jill is

accidentally hit by a snowball in the mouth when she cries for help during the Great

Snow Dance (*SC*). And as addressed in Chapter 4, L'Engle regards humour as a weapon,

such as the costume hilarity of the three Mrs. Ws (*Wrinkle*). Students could be

encouraged to create a scenario in which humor serves to help defeat evil—not because

moral battle is not serious, but because it is. Jokes, hilarious coincidences, comic poetic

justice—all these help create the levity that replaces despair.

5) Reepicheep, as I've argued in Chapter 3, is the outstanding example of

chivalric courage. Consider his behaviour in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* and *Prince*

Caspian and how Lewis revisits the chivalric code with this. How does this contrast with

classical heroism? The notion of the combination of meekness and sternness of the knight

deserves comparison with the familiar "macho" code. Three elements of Reepicheep's

experience stand out: a) his determined fearlessness, especially memorable at the dark

island (*VDT*); b) his fidelity and that of his friends; and c) the gesture of throwing away

his sword when no longer needed, as discussed in Chapter 3. Create a scenario in another

time and setting in which a character embodies one or all three of these elements.

The Ethical Journey

The children in these stories are on an ethical journey where they are growing

either stronger or weaker, better or worse, in making ethical choices. They all become

increasingly aware that life consists of a moral battle and that their individual choices

have consequences. Like Curdie in *The Princess and Curdie*, and like Edmund in *The*

Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, the children discover the consequences of unethical choices and learn to fight for the good. The following exercises invite imaginative exploration of making ethical choices.

1) Consider the outright nasty children in these stories: Curdie when killing the pigeon (*PC*), Edmund (*LWW*), Eustace (*VDT*), the unnamed bullies of Charles Wallace (*Wind*), Gwydyr, murderous brother of Madoc (what was he like as a child?) (*STP*), and Duthbert Mortmain, son of the witch-hunting pastor (*STP*). Or consider those children who appear reasonably pleasant but are struggling with ethical choices: Irene when she doubts the grandmother's existence (*PG*), Lucy giving in to her older siblings when she should have followed Aslan (*PCaspian*), Susan who is no longer a friend of Narnia, dismissing it as child's play (*LB*), Meg who struggles with hatred and despair before she understands that she alone is called to save her brother (*Wrinkle*), Charles Wallace when he gives in to hubris (*Wrinkle, STP*), and Davey Higgins, ambivalent between fidelity to his friend, Brandon Llawcae, and the witch-hunting fervour (*STP*). Write from the "inside" of one of those characters, showing how the world looks from his or her nasty or ambivalent viewpoint. Give voice to their thinking. Trace the gradual revelation that would occur as these characters change for the better. If no revelation is given in the story (Susan, Gwydyr, Duthbert), create one set at a later time.

2) In MacDonald's story, "The Wise Woman," the spoiled princess Rosamond is a "puppet of her moods" (p. 46), greedy, cowardly, impertinent, and selfish to the point of rage and cruelty. In the gradual process of teaching her to grow ethical the wise woman uses a "mood chamber" in which Rosamond has the opportunity to undergo three ethical

trials, each successively harder. She fails the first two and, at last, when she feels true remorse, succeeds with the third. Create a story where a person who had succumbed to a particular or series of faults similarly has the opportunity to be tested again. Are any of the trials enactments of a previous failure? When and how does the character experiencing a particular nasty mood overcome that mood in favour of a better way? Who plays a role in each trial and therefore aids them? Show how the gradual willingness to make ethical choices occurs.

3) The adolescent boy Curdie is growing "faster in body than in mind—with the usual consequence, that he was getting rather stupid—one of the chief signs of which was that he believed less and less in things he had never seen" (*PC*, p. 17). Create a scenario between two friends of the same age: one, like Curdie, is becoming "stupid" towards spirituality and shows interest only in selfish pleasure (he is "cool" in his view); the other has retained sensitivity to spirituality and struggles in the friendship. What happens? Does the "stupid" one recover insight? How? What does it take for him to wake up? Does the discerning one grow "stupid"? Do either or both learn something in the process?

4) In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the culprit, Edmund, is rescued by Aslan's army and then has a private but, to him, unforgettable conversation with the lion (p. 126). After this he is restored to "his real old self again" (p. 163) and joins the others as a valiant hero. Create the conversation that he and Aslan might have had. Or alternately, choose or create another character who has experienced moral failure, is rescued, and design a conversation with the rescuer. What thoughts and emotions do the

speakers have? What is said and what is left unsaid? What occurs that becomes life-changing? How does the restored culprit think of this event years later?

5) The Teacher Blajeny persistently asks, "What is real?" (*Wind*), challenging the children to distinguish between a narrow empirical vision of reality and a mythical one of existential meaning. Generate lists of the everyday stuff that often absorbs us along these subheadings: a) "I want . . . ."; b) enticing advertisements; c) social pressures; d) personal goals; e) worries associated with any of these or other possibilities. Then create a drama or "talk show" presentation where characters voice the things that absorb them, and intersperse their comments with a mythical person's question, "What is real?" Will the mythical character talk about permanence (faith, hope, and love)? Will the characters come to any revelation? Will the "What is real?" question make a difference?

The Pedagogy of Humility: Lessons from the Underdog

As discussed in Chapter 1, the pedagogy of humility rooted in Christianity, particularly as articulated by Milton, as well as the Romantic poet, Wordsworth, is at the core of these three children's authors' work. All dethrone the classical heroic of egotistical strength in favour of the spiritual heroic centered in humility. All offer essentially an education *out* of the classical heroic and *into* the paradoxical strength of "foolish weakness." All espouse the reversal of the moral "underdog" who overcomes the immoral giant. The following exercises are designed to foster this pedagogy of humility.

1) As argued in Chapter 1, our interpretive task as literature teachers continues to be a wrestling match with the "bogie" of classical heroism. We need to help our students see that we are in a moral arena where egotism is the heroic that enslaves, and humility,

paradoxically, is the superior heroic that liberates. Along these lines I posed a number of questions in that chapter, such as "To what extent are we . . . 'classical heroes' who seek self-gratification?" and "To what extent is there a wrongful focus on self at the expense of otherness?" As an opening exercise in class discussion or in small group discussion and/or short writing exercises students could be asked to work with some of the following questions: a) When do I feel superior to others and why?; b) "When do I seek self-gratification at the expense of others?"; c) "When have I acted as a 'servant' to another and what was it like?"; d) "Who are my heroes and why?"; e) "What kind of a mentor would I like to become one day?" A longer assignment could trace the conflict between classical and underdog heroic models. For example, pit an oppressive classical hero (maybe a peer who seeks personal glory) against an oppressed underdog (a peer who doesn't know the strength of his humility). How and when does the underdog come to celebrate humility? Is the classical hero changed? How does the conflict and outcome affect other peers? The community?

2) Examine examples of heroic reversals where the underdog succeeds. As noted in Chapter 2, MacDonald illustrates the motif of the oldest and wisest person appearing as a child. Other MacDonald examples include Richard in "Cross Purposes," the shy, awkward son of a poor widow who serves his mother and is gallant to the snobby Alice; the prince in "Little Daylight" who flees for his life and is "glad to have lost kingdom and everything for the hope of being near [the girl]" (p. 119); the rejected elder brother in "The Castle," a servant-leader, through whom the other siblings learn that genuine liberty and individuality comes through obedience; Curdie's humble service to the king (*PC*); the reversals of the king's servants such as the misshapen Lina, the old woman Derba, the

king's warhorse as "gentle as a child," and the pigeons like a "white-winged army of heaven" (*PC*, pp. 207, 213). In Lewis examples include the child-warriors who wage battle (*LWW, PCaspian, HHB, LB*), and, more importantly, the consistent pattern of children on perilous journeys overcoming human and supernatural enemies in each of the books. So Polly and Digory subvert Uncle Andrew's and then Jadis's purposes (*MN*), and Jill and Eustace with the Marsh-wiggle, Puddleglum, succeed in the rescue effort of Prince Rilian where all great warriors have failed (*SC*). In L'Engle, the "belligerent," awkward-feeling child, Meg, overcomes the evil force IT (*Wrinkle*); the formerly incompetent and non-intuitive principal, Mr. Jenkins, becomes a primary ally in the battle for Charles Wallace's life (*Wind*); and the resentful, toothless, unkempt, and ailing Mrs. Beezie O'Keefe is instrumental against the darkness (*STP*). Choose an "underdog" in the story and write from his viewpoint. How does he regard himself, so differently from those who recognize his potential, and trace his journey. Or write from the viewpoint of an enemy who recognizes the potential of the "underdog" and tries, in vain, to thwart him.

3) The pedagogy of humility has at its heart the principle of dying to the ego in order to find the fulfilled, healthy self, along the lines of Matthew 16:25-6: 'He who would keep his egotistical life might gain everything that can be bought by materialistic ambition, but in the process will lose the only life worth having—one of faith, hope, and love. But he who loses his egotistical life will gain the true one, and with that all the world worth gaining' (my paraphrase). Examples of egotistical self-imprisonment include Rosamond and Agnes ("The Wise Woman"), Edmund (*LWW*), Eustace (*VDT*); and Meg (*Wrinkle*). Explore a situation in which a character in the story or an invented one

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experiences the struggle of relinquishing the ego and begins to experience liberty. What is the nature of his delusion, and how does the turning point occur? What influences shape her and how does she respond? Were there any early indications that change was a possibility?

4) In MacDonald's "The Wise Woman" this wisdom figure undertakes the moral education of Rosamond and Agnes. Such wisdom figures who teach the children occur in all the stories: the Great-Grandmother in the *Princess* books, Aslan and lesser figures like the Beavers (*LWW*) and Puddleglum (*SC*) in the *Chronicles of Narnia*, the 3 Mrs. Ws (*Wrinkle*), Blajeny and Proginoskes (*Wind*), and Gaudior (*STP*). Write from the viewpoint of a wisdom figure, from the story or invented, creating a history that shows how he came to be a guide for others. Was he once a star, like Ramandu in retirement (*VDT*), or Mrs. Whatsit who lost her star-life in battle (*Wrinkle*)? Is his role of guidance a kind of punishment or trial for former failures, like Coriakin's (*VDT*), or as a result of her giftedness or willingness (or some combination)? What are some of the lessons this person has learned and how is he finding the challenge with his newest charge?

5) One motif of the underdog heroic is that of the intellectual inferiors who battle and partially succumb to evil. Examples include MacDonald's partial human-beast concept in Lina (*PC*), Lewis's Puzzle (*LB*), and L'Engle's examples as noted in Chapter 4, including the brain-damaged Chuck Maddox (*STP*). Write from the viewpoint of one of these weaker characters or of an invented character. How does she regard the superior classical types? What are his frustrations? Does he experience satisfaction or victory and in what ways? Is there something about her weakness that allows her to be more open to

moral education? Alternatively, create an exchange between a so-called intellectual inferior and an intellectually stronger character. What is the outcome of the different viewpoints?

6) As discussed in Chapter 3, the lessons of suffering offer an education *out* of the classical heroic and *into* the paradoxical strength of "foolish weakness." The pathos of the weeping dragon-who-was-Eustace in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* is a symbol for all would-be classical heroes who discover through suffering the futility of the classical stance. Other examples include Curdie moved to moral feeling by the suffering of the white pigeon he thoughtlessly killed (*PC*), and in L'Engle's stories the histories of the various "misfits," like the awkward adolescent Meg (*Wrinkle, Wind*), the unloved Calvin (*Wrinkle, Wind*), the bullied Charles Wallace (*Wind, STP*), the weak, despondent Mr. Jenkins (*Wind*), the crippled Matthew Maddox (*STP*), and the brutalized Chuck Maddox (*STP*), all dispose them to becoming servant-heroes. Write from the viewpoint of a character, from the story or invented, whose suffering has become an education out of classical heroism and into spiritual strength. What was the nature of the suffering and how has this wounded him? How has this helped her see the futility of classical heroism and embrace spirituality? What difference has this made to him, to others?

7) Humour is another means of educating for humility, and is especially pronounced in C.S. Lewis, as discussed in Chapter 3. (Compare comments made under "Teaching Moral Courage," exercise # 4.) Rabadash the Ridiculous caught on a hook on the castle walls and still trying to look alarming in *The Horse and his Boy* is a memorable example. But MacDonald's creation of the army of Uglies who defeat the classical heroes

is also a humorous surprise (*PC*), and L'Engle's interaction between the supernatural figures and the children invites laughter, such as the Mrs. Ws in costume (*Wrinkle*), and Proginoskes' annoyance at being called to be in the same class with "immature earthlings" (*Wind*, p. 56). Invent a scenario in which humour is the instrumental means to educating for humility. Suggestions include a classical hero looking foolish and indeed losing his power through his own proud behaviour, the laughter of supernatural guides encouraging the weak players in the battle, and the humorous exchange between somewhat haughty supernatural guides and their weak subjects as they learn about each other's giftedness.

Sexuality: Sexism or Well-Being?

In this study I have found that these authors achieve moral education through a subversion of the cultural privileging of "masculine" values of reason, autonomy, and egotistical power and, concomitantly, by a celebration of "feminine" values of imagination, interdependence, and humility. As discussed in Chapter 3 especially, where I have considered the view that C.S. Lewis is sexist or even misogynistic and have argued rather that he offers liberation from sexist cultural assumptions, these writers all offer a rich curriculum in repairing repressive cultural discourse. The "feminine" heroic, as I have argued throughout this study, is a dynamic idea in these stories that helps us disentangle repressive from liberating discourse in sexuality or gender identity. The following exercises are designed to educate the moral imagination for a critical view of personal and cultural perceptions of sexuality—asking, "Is this sexism or well-being?"— in order to foster an increasingly humane view.

1) Consider examples of sexism or misogyny in these stories. In addition to the discussion of Lewis in Chapter 3, consider in MacDonald Curdie's dismissal of Irene's explanations about the Great-Grandmother as nonsense (*PG*), some of the miners' attitudes towards "Old Mother Wotherwop" (*PC*), and in L'Engle the violence of Gwydyr claiming his brother's bride, Pastor Mortmain's lust to see Zylle hang, and Duthbert Mortmain's abuse of his wife, mother-in-law, and stepchildren (*STP*). Consider that sexism crosses gender lines, and that misogyny is a classical phenomenon directed against the feminine heroic and is perpetuated in supernatural characters (MacDonald's goblins, Lewis's witches, L'Engle's Echthroi). Create a scenario where sexism and/or misogyny is fought across gender lines.

2) Consider the characters whose lives demonstrate well-being rather than sexism. Various strong female characters show a femininity that is liberating rather than repressive: in MacDonald, Curdie's mother, Joan Peterson (*PG, PC*); in Lewis, Lucy (*LWW, PCaspian, VDT*), Polly (*MN*), Jill (*SC, LB*), Aravis (*HHB*), and Mrs. Beaver (*LWW*); in L'Engle, Meg, Mrs. Murry (*Wrinkle, Wind, STP*), and Dr. Louise (*Wind*), to name several. Also consider those males who demonstrate (or learn) the "feminine" heroic, among them being Curdie (*PG, PC*), Digory (*MN*), Eustace (*VDT, SC*), Calvin (*Wrinkle, Wind*) and Charles Wallace (*STP*). Consider too the supernatural figures who show well-being: MacDonald's Great-Grandmother, Lewis's Aslan, L'Engle's Aunt Beast (*Wrinkle*), Blajeny and Proginoskes (*Wind*), and Gaudior (*STP*). Create a scenario in which one of these enlightened characters, or someone like them, meets a chauvinist. Keep in mind that chauvinism may be alive and well in either gender.

3) I have addressed the "Barbie Doll" phenomenon in Chapter 3 where Lewis addresses the self-limiting attitudes of females in characters like Lasaraleen in *The Horse and his Boy*, and Susan in *The Last Battle*, whose identity is bound up in the pursuit of physical beauty and leisure. Discussion could center on the ways in which the fashion industry and other influences inculcate such thinking. To what extent do we accept or reject these influences? A useful comparison could be made with Marge Piercy's poem, "Barbie Doll" (1973). Some of my first year literature students presented the ideas in Piercy's poem as a dramatic production that extended Piercy's criticism to both genders, showing how the idolatry of physical appearance dehumanizes both females and males. Also, the following comment by Maria Tatar (1992) is helpful here: "Ironically, it is our own day and age that, in the tales of "Cinderella" and "Snow White," has intensified maternal malice while placing a premium on physical beauty as the source of salvation for a woman" (p. 138). What is the connection between the "premium on physical beauty" and the idea of especially villainous females? Create a scenario in which some characters are susceptible to "Barbie" or "Ken" doll idolatry, and others show critical resistance.

4) List cultural and then personal assumptions of sexuality/gender identity. Name things that girls/boys "typically" enjoy, think, and do. For example, consider these assumptions: girls enjoy making jewelry and giggling about favourite male movie stars; boys roughhouse in the swimming pool and play intensively with toys that build something. Which assumptions do you consider accurate or false? Potentially harmful? The object is not to advocate "sameness," but to revisit assumptions and consider their accuracy, value, and potential harm. And how might our perception of gendered

behaviour influence the next generation? For example, when several youths died in a high-speed car crash that they instigated, one father (not of one of the dead boys) made the inane comment, "Boys will be boys." What does a gendered comment like this illustrate? To what extent is it harmful? What better ways could we imagine of responding to "gender differences"? Create a scenario that shows the harmful nature of repressive gender assumptions as well as liberating ones. Perhaps a chauvinist is challenged into liberatory thinking. Perhaps a repressed character struggles with harmful self-perception. Or perhaps a character enjoys her/his "gendered" preferences (jewelry, repairing old cars) and illustrates well-being (this makes for a humorous contrast with the gendered thinking that traditionally female activities are inferior to traditionally male ones).

5) Romantic love is perhaps the first and foremost thing we associate with the topic of sexuality. And in our somewhat "disposable-minded" society with its idolatry of erotic experience and high divorce rates, the idea of a romantic love that is more sincere than selfish, and more lasting than ephemeral, is surely desirable. These stories offer many examples of romantic love that weathers storms, and any one of them or a combination could be integrated into an exercise. Consider these examples. In MacDonald's "Little Daylight," only the prince who kisses the old woman in true charity is worthy of the young princess. Also, the narrator humorously wishes that many girls would sleep until the right prince arrives at the right time because "it would be happier for them, and more agreeable to their friends" (p. 111). In "Cross Purposes," there is the hilarity of Alice and Richard falling in love in the fairyland setting, almost against their will (touches of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), and the dramatization of the principle that

loving another causes one's own eyes "to send forth light" so that one can see the beloved and her path but not one's own, and so in mutuality the lovers are able to find their way through the dark (p. 148). In Lewis's *The Horse and his Boy*, Aravis and Cor "were so used to quarrelling and making it up again that they got married so as to go on doing it more conveniently" (p. 188). In L'Engle, the young love between Meg and Calvin matures into a marriage of complementary partnership over the course of the trilogy. Couples like Madoc and Zyll, Ritchie and Zylle Llawcae, battle fierce social pressures to stay together (*STP*). Contrast these positive examples of romantic love with alliances based on lust and/or financial concerns: the goblin plot to kidnap Princess Irene and have her marry the goblin prince, Harelip, by force, in a political manoveur against the upper world (*PG*); Aravis's intended match with the old, wealthy Ahoshta, and Lasaraleen's similar marriage to a great Calormene (*HHB*); Gwen's potential alliances first with the cruel Jack O'Keefe, then with the arrogant Gedder which would have produced the dictator El Rabioso or Mad Dog Branzillo (*STP*), and Beezie Maddox's problematic alliance with Paddy O'Keefe where she learned not to feel or love (but Calvin is their wonderful son) (*STP*). Students could choose one of these characters and write from his or her viewpoint. Or they could create a scenario in which two or more characters interact. Writing a subsequent scene is another approach. The object is to develop an "ethics of eros" to help students think about romantic love in more meaningful, humane ways.

Maxims and Other Quotables

Maxims or other quotables are like nuggets that help us engage with the text in an immediate way. These novels, like most perhaps, are rich in maxims or other quotable

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sayings that distill some profound insights that each story explores. Now while some editors as well as writers, educators, and readers, seem to have an allergic reaction to any obviously stated moral as in some folk and fairy tales, preferring that writers tell the truth "slant," as Emily Dickinson suggests, and not "straight on," an argument could also be made for the value of these writers shamelessly offering obvious propositions (however neatly "slanted" or embedded in the flow of the plot and character development) for the reader to consider. And how many people do not enjoy reciting maxims, whether in agreement or in ironic disagreement? Chanting sayings is a trademark of childhood, and even erupts later, such as in sports events when the crowd breaks into a musical chant ("Na-na-na-na . . . Hey-hey-hey, Hey-hey"). The advertisement industry, like politicians, thrives on the fact that we are susceptible to slogans. Maxims encapsulate cultural assumptions, and in these stories they perform the similar function of giving the reader reference points. So maxims can be regarded as a core learning tool to initiate students into a quick, but immediate experience of the literature.

A short opening exercise could involve giving students, in groups of two and up to four or so, a maxim to prepare for a 60 second presentation to the class. Students, of course, can also be encouraged to find maxims or other interesting quotations in the novels, as well as creating some of their own. A five minute preparation time at the beginning of class would suffice and immediately engage their abilities. Presentation ideas could include developing a rap or other chant-like performance, perhaps integrated with a dramatic monologue. Physical actions (clapping and other synchronized movements) could be incorporated. Students could do as cheerleaders do: "Give me an "H," give me an "O," a "P," and an "E." This kind of exercise encourages imagination

that is *embodied*, experienced in mind and body, and does so quickly, inviting performers

and the class audience inside the story's proposed truths. Students should be encouraged

to consider the maxim, discuss its value, test the truth and/or limitations, and re/invent

their own. Naturally the exercise could be expanded but need not be. The object is to

actively experience the text and make it come alive for others—without eliciting the

immediate complaint, "Oh no, a homework assignment!" Instead, the sheer fun of this

kind of thing can be catching.

In a workshop I held, teachers in pairs, after overcoming the usual shyness many

of us feel about performance, tried out the following examples.

> a) "Therre willl nno llonggerr bee sso many pplleasanntt thinggss too
> llookk att iff rressponssible ppeoplle ddo nnott ddoo ssomethingg abboutt
> thee unnppleassanntt ones." (Mrs. Which, *Wrinkle*, p. 86)

Two teachers alternated reading parts of Mrs. Which's sentence (about 4 words at a

time), and the effect of the extra consonants so shared accentuated something that I could

describe as "speaking through water"—a perfect and intuitively brilliant act which

conveyed the fact that Mrs. Which never can quite find the time and energy to fully

materialize into an earthly body.

> b) "Size is really quite relative." (Blajeny, *A Wind in the Door,* p. 145)
> "But a child— One small child—why is he so important?" (Mr. Jenkins)
> "It is the pattern throughout Creation. One child, one man, can swing the
> balance of the universe." (Blajeny, p. 179)

This one puzzled the teachers—it is more than a neat maxim, and just where did I get the

idea that the possibilities for this exercise are endless, anyway? With a little

encouragement and emphasis on the importance of chanting and repetition, they created

an exchange where one person repeated "Size is really quite relative" in a patient,

consistently assertive voice, inserting this response (about 6 times in total) as the other

person read Mr. Jenkins' and Blajeny's lines in a reflective voice with appropriate pauses

to allow for the repeated maxim. Simple and effective.

> c) "We do not always know what is important and what is not."
> (Gaudior, *STP*, p. 210)

One teacher got excited about the possibility of illustrating this concept through a

dramatic monologue of a character who was convinced of his absolute correctness in

waging a "holy war" against what he perceived to be a false and dangerous religious

group. He gave his argument in excited prose, *in medias res*, so that his listeners, not at

first knowing his assumed identity (though otherwise very familiar with his source idea,

the story of Saul of Tarsus persecuting the Christians, Acts 9), experienced the intensity

of the character's psychological state. The other teacher dramatized the interjecting voice

that changed the speaker's thinking, and their dramatic exchange opened and closed with

the pair repeating the illustrative maxim in unison.

Again, developing a maxim is an opportunity for learners to imagine the

dynamics of the text and practise their dramatic skill. Below is a fuller selection of

maxims and other quotable sayings to try in the classroom. When not said in the

narratorial voice, the speaker is identified.

- "But there is very little indeed to be done when we will not do that which we have to do" ("Wise Woman," p. 31).

- "The farther you go, the nearer home you are" (Fairy, "Cross Purposes," (p. 136).

- "Any honest plan will do in Fairyland, if you only stick to it. And no plan will do if you do not stick to it" ("Cross Purposes," pp. 146-7).

- "a real princess cannot tell a lie . . . . a real princess is never rude . . . . a princess must do as she promises" (*The Princess and the Goblin*, pp. 27, 199).

- "If you're not afraid of them, they're afraid of you" (Curdie, *PG*, p. 40).

- "that is the way fear serves us: it always sides with the thing we are afraid of" (*PG*, p. 97).

- "It is when people do wrong things willfully that they are the more likely to do them again" (Great-Grandmother, *PG*, p. 102).

- "no one ever gives anything to another properly and really without keeping it" (Great-Grandmother, *PG*, p. 107).

- "follow the thread wherever it leads you . . . . remember . . . you must not doubt the thread" (Great-Grandmother, *PG*, p. 108).

- "People must believe what they can, and those who believe more must not be hard upon those who believe less" (Great-Grandmother, *PG*, p. 153).

- "Seeing is not believing—it is only seeing" (Great-Grandmother, *PG*, p. 156).

- "they think so much of themselves! Small creatures always do" (Joan Peterson, *PG*, p. 167).

- "whoever is diligent will soon be cheerful ...." (*The Princess and Curdie*, p. 14).

- "The child is not meant to die, but to be forever freshborn" (*PC*, p. 18).

- "whoever does not mean good is always in danger of harm" (Great-Grandmother, *PC*, p. 29).

- "Things come to the poor that can't get in at the door of the rich. Their money somehow blocks it up" (Great-Grandmother, *PC*, p. 53).

- "where there is no truth there can be no faith" (*PC*, p. 152).

- "Once a king or queen in Narnia, always a king or queen" (Aslan, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, p. 165).

- "Then in the name of Aslan . . . . let us go on and take the adventure that shall fall to us" (Susan, *LWW*, p. 169).

- "Those who run first do not always run last" (Centaur, *Prince Caspian*, p. 81).

- "If you had felt yourself sufficient, it would have been a proof that you were not" (Aslan, *PCaspian*, p. 175).

- "no one is ever told what would have happened" (Aslan, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, p. 137).

- "You can't know. You can only believe—or not" (Ramandu's daughter, *VDT*, p. 170).

- "Aslan's instructions always work: there are no exceptions" (Puddleglum, *The Silver Chair*, p. 107).

- "the more enchanted you get, the more certain you feel that you are not enchanted at all" (*SC*, p. 151).

- "if you do one good deed your reward usually is to be set to do another and harder and better one" (*The Horse and His Boy*, p. 124).

- "If you funk this, you'll funk every battle all your life. Now or never" (Shasta, *HHB*, p. 157).

- "Grown-ups are always thinking of uninteresting explanations" (Digory, *The Magician's Nephew*, p. 15).

- "most witches . . . are not interested in things or people unless they can use them; they are terribly practical" (*MN*, p. 71).

- "Children have one kind of silliness . . . and grown-ups have another kind" (*MN*, p. 73).

- "Now the trouble about trying to make yourself stupider than you really are is that you very often succeed" (*MN*, p. 117).

- "All get what they want: they do not always like it" (Aslan, *MN*, p. 162).

- "remember that all worlds draw to an end and that noble death is a treasure which no one is too poor to buy" (Roonwit and Farsight, *The Last Battle*, p. 85).

- "The farther up and the farther in you go, the bigger everything gets. The inside is larger than the outside" (Tumnus, *LB*, p. 162).

- " you don't have to understand things for them to be" (Mrs. Murry, *A Wrinkle in Time*, p. 23).

- "Nothing is hopeless; we must hope for everything" (Euripides. Mrs. Who. *Wrinkle*, p. 61).

- "Wee wwill cconnttinnue tto ffightt!" (Mrs. Which, *Wrinkle*, p. 88).

- "And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not" (Mrs. Who, *Wrinkle*, p. 89).

- "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Mr. Murry, *Wrinkle*, p. 172).

- " you must not take yourselves so seriously. Why should school be easy. . . . ?" (Blajeny, *A Wind in the Door*, p. 58).

- "Part of the trial is that you must discover for yourself what it is" (Blajeny, *Wind*, p. 63).

- "most earthlings can bear very little reality" (Proginoskes, *Wind*, p. 81).

- "Love isn't how you feel. It's what you do" (Proginoskes, *Wind*, p. 118).

- "Believing takes practice" (Blajeny, *Wind*, p. 134).

- "We must not give way to panic" (Proginoskes, *Wind*, p. 162).

- "It is only when we are fully rooted that we are really able to move" (Senex, *Wind*, p. 190).

- there is no such thing as coincidence" (Mr. Murry, *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*, p. 30).

- "It is not an easy thing to refuse to be worshipped" (Reschal, *STP*, p. 82).

- "People are afraid of knowledge that is not yet theirs" (Maddok, *STP*, p. 120).

- "I've learned that every time I've tried to control things we've had trouble" (Charles Wallace, *STP*, p. 150).

- "What happens in one time can make a difference in what happens in another time, far more than we realize . . . . Nothing, no one, is too small to matter. What you do is going to make a difference" (Matthew, *STP*, p. 236).

Five Curriculum Principles

The following discussion offers practical ways to implement the five curriculum principles in the literature classroom as discussed in Chapter 5.

Literature as Engagement: A "Feminine" Way of Reading

This first curriculum principle is foundational to strong literary appreciation as well as to educating the moral imagination. As discussed in Chapter 5, in approaching literature as engagement we are fostering qualities such as submission, receptivity, and humility towards the text, letting the literature "do things to us" rather than "doing things" to the text. Once the "mistress of the hearth" or this subjective engagement is in place, then the analytical "master" has good things to think and speak with. It would be helpful to discuss these differences with students, emphasizing suspension of disbelief and vigilance against the primary fear of not grasping "what the text means" as well as the more sophisticated but narrow analysis that fixates meaning or "kills by seeing." The object is always to encourage students to feel increasingly "at home" with literature—not because many will necessarily become professional literary people but because all, as MacDonald (1893) emphasizes, need to feel (p. 41). The following exercises are designed to foster this attitude.

1) The classical heroic characters who live by "mastery" of all things to themselves fail to comprehend and enjoy goodness. For example, in *The Magician's Nephew*, Jadis grows physically weaker in the woods between the worlds, that primary place of "supposal" which leads to any number of other worlds, and later hates the Magic, stronger than her own, that creates Narnia. Similarly, Uncle Andrew dislikes the creative Voice, and thus can only regard the new world, as the old, in terms of exploitation. By contrast, the children and other "engaged" characters thrive in the presence of goodness and grow in the experience. Choose a character like Jadis or Andrew, or invent someone like that, and place them in a situation of "stronger Magic"

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which they are unwilling or unable to receive. Then create another character who is receptive and tries to help redeem the character who lives by "mastery." How much does the egotistical character understand? Does he change for the better? Is the receptive character also tempted by "mastery"? How and why does the receptive character gain deeper understanding?

2) The children in these stories all learn to relinquish ego and/or inclinations and grow receptive to new ideas in order to engage in moral battles. For example, Susan in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* overcomes her inclination for "safe" parameters and heroically enters the adventures Aslan sends them. And Charles Wallace in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet* struggles with his inclination to impose his limited understanding on how to respond to a crisis and submission to the providential winds that guide him to a deeper, more effective response. Choose or invent a character who is reluctant to relinquish his ego and/or inclinations and trace his gradual receptivity to adventure and new insights. Trace the development in terms of conception, gestation, birth, and nurture of new ideas. What difference does his experience make? Is there anything of lasting value?

3) Keen sensitivity to others is fundamental in all these stories. Irene and Curdie develop awareness of the Great-Grandmother's guidance, as do the other children of the various mythic figures. In L'Engle's stories this sensitivity takes the form of a deeper telepathic kind of knowing, kything, which is informed by love. Develop a scenario in which a character is learning to kythe with another. What problems do they have? How does this empower them? What do they learn? How does this change them and what difference does this make to themselves and others?

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4) In *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*, the series of interconnected "Might-Have-Beens" which Charles Wallace and Meg, through supportive kything, intervene in, emphasize that engagement averts disaster. Invent one or a series of disastrous "Might-Have-Beens" and divert the evil by assisting the other person to make a good choice. What is the nature of the struggle? How high are the stakes? What difficulties do you encounter in intervention? How are you changed by the experience?

5) As cited in Chapter 5, Lewis speaks of how literary experience heals the pain of individuality while keeping its privilege, whereas mass emotions heal the pain but destroy the privilege. Create a scenario in which mass emotions seem to heal the pain at first, but don't, and remove individuality in a dangerous way. Suggestions could include political frenzy such as crowd adulation of the dictator in the Third Reich, some sports events and rock concerts, and the immediate experience of students gathering at the scene of peers fighting, and other incidents of peer pressure. Write from either the viewpoint of an individual in the crowd who was swayed, or one who was not. Why is submission of the self to the group tempting? What does it take to resist? What is the relation between "mastery" and managing the crowds? (This last one is perhaps too obvious a question but a necessary component of the process.) Very importantly, what is the relation between the individual's resistance and "engagement" with and "submission" to goodness?

6) In *A Wind in the Door*, Meg encounters Mr. Jenkins in triplicate, two of these characters being false Echthroi projections, and the test is to distinguish the actual character from the deadly imposters. She learns to listen deeply and discovers that though the two demonic imposters appear in many ways as pleasanter and "better" people, the

actual human Mr. Jenkins with all his faults and weaknesses is the potentially loving one

who is, of course, instrumental, to the moral drama. Choose a character from a story, or

invent one, and list all her faults and good qualities (be very honest). Create two imposter

characters that pop up alongside her; they seem better, more desirable, but are actually

destructive. Develop a scenario in which another character, like Meg, must correctly

identify the genuine from the fake. Remember, as with Meg, that to make the mistake of

confusing a projection for the actual character would result in that character's

annihilation by demonic takeover. She learns to listen and let love guide her choice. The

stakes can't be higher; submit to the dynamics of the true character; listen well.

Childlike Wonder

This second curriculum principle also informs literary appreciation as well as

educates the moral imagination. As discussed in Chapter 5, childlike wonder is often at

stake in education. Our mandate then always is to foster childlike wonder, and the

following exercises are possible approaches.

1) A Family Circus cartoon illustrates two siblings enthusiastically reclaiming

"the best toy ever"—something so versatile it is a fort, a space shuttle, a bus, a pirate

ship, a sled, a clubhouse, and a castle all in one—because "Mommy was just gonna throw

[the empty used box] away!" A catchy illustration of childlike wonder widening vision

and joy pitted against reductive utilitarian rationalism. So in these stories the "ordinary"

is rather extraordinary: an upper room is not just a place for dust balls but a magical place

where mythic love is embodied in a person; a wardrobe is not just a place to hang your

clothes but a doorway to another world; a star-watching rock is not just a spot in a pasture

but a place from which to travel through time and space on a unicorn. Choose an ordinary object, ignore its obvious singular function, and name some of its many other possible purposes. A pencil, for example, is a conductor's staff, a magician's wand, a powerful talking stick, a sign-post, a javelin, a prophet's stick that becomes a serpent and then a stick again. Choose one of these metaphors, or several, and create a scenario in which the "ordinary" is clearly a thing of wonder. This could serve as an excellent warm-up opening exercise, but also be developed into a longer piece.

2) Literature, arguably, offers adventures of wonder into created characters. By the act of reading we have the opportunity to see with another pair of eyes, and yet retain our own (cf. Lewis, 1961a). One of my children's literature students, Verena Melzer, celebrated this one day by bringing Mucko Von Melzer, her stuffed monkey, to class and introducing him.[1] Verena talked about Mucko's light-hearted personality, how he used to be a bus driver and now is developing hobbies, that he went to an Amish funeral on Christmas Day, that he has birthday parties and that Verena's friends and co-workers give him gifts. I have since heard that Mucko enjoyed the trip to a family reunion in Saskatchewan where he particularly loved the Saskatoon Berry pie, and I now own a photo of Mucko engrossed in reading a book entitled *Moral Choices*. This zany kind of humor that Verena exudes (and Mucko, of course) could be very helpful in widening or affirming students' sense of creative wonder. Similarly to Verena's choice to bring Mucko to class, they could be asked to create and introduce a character. To focus this sort of assignment on the literature, students could choose a story character to introduce to the class. Or they could introduce their created character (stuffed animal?) to a story character. The newly created character could enter the story, or the story character could

enter another context. This is not only amusing but requires a sustained act of the imagination. And a rich sense of fun, indeed, accompanies childlike wonder.

3) Children are perpetual questioners. "Why is the sky blue?" "What makes the rain?" "Where do the seasons come from?" "Why do we have to do it?" "Why do we do it like this?" Our concern, of course, is when students cease to wonder. Essentially, in imaginative education, we are asking students to wonder *why*—to question in order to understand as well as to think of alternatives. As an opening exercise that could also be developed into a longer piece, ask students to list things they wonder about, perhaps in categories such as physical objects, specific people, social situations, politics, and spirituality. Then have them jot down their questions for as many items as they can, perhaps within a 15 minute period, beginning with "I wonder why. . . ." This could also be tied in to character development by asking the same question from the viewpoint of a character in the story ("I wonder why Eustace is so crabby," Lucy might think in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, and so on). Follow this up with discussion in small groups, then later share with the class. Certainly this could lead to a substantial assignment.

For example, an education student, Terra Friesen (2003), responded to an assignment of a similar nature by writing a poem she entitled, "Wonder," and painted several water colour pictures to illustrate her text.[2] Her title, "Wonder," later reflected in the line, "*This is the air I breathe*," encapsulates the all-pervasive nature that wonder has. The following stanza conveys the perpetual openness to fresh wonderings:

Staring at the ocean puts my mind in motion,
Swimming deep below are creatures we may never know.
And I wonder—what is there that I may never see
All the living life that may still be.

Especially striking is Terra's impressionistic painting of white handprints in a blue Alberta sky which serves as a metaphor for childlike wonder—with our imagination we may reach far, even touch something of the mysteries that astonish us.

4) In his fairy tale, "The Shadows," MacDonald dramatizes the necessity of shadows (that here appear as characters) for knowledge. As the Shadow explains,

> It is only in the twilight of the fire, or when one man or woman is alone with a single candle, or when any number of people are all feeling the same thing at once, making them one, that we show ourselves, and the truth of things. (p. 97)

The Shadow also bemoans the increasing artificial light that threatens their existence, and so decreases the possibility of people becoming "silent and thoughtful" (p. 98). Discuss how the desire for mastery or control of the environment can lead to decreasing space for reflection and therefore less development of moral feeling. And consider how time spent in nature can open us to new ways of seeing. How does time spent in nature or during an electrical power outage shape our behaviour and thinking? Perhaps look at how the technique of chiaroscuro, the interplay of light and dark, in a painting like Leonardo Da Vinci's "The Virgin of the Rocks," creates a sense of mystery. Create a scenario in which the presence of shadows facilitates rest, reflection, and the growth of moral feeling. What is the nature of the childlike wonder that arises when a person spends time alone, meditatively, or in a group that then "all feel[s] the same thing at once"? Perhaps students

would choose to use MacDonald's technique and personify shadows that teach humans special moral lessons, perhaps through fear, but also by providing solace.

5) C.S. Lewis (1952a), as does Ursula K. Le Guin (1974), particularly warn against what one might call the "immoral imagination"—all those wish-fulfillment wonderings which are indeed dangerous because they arise out of selfishness and undermine moral thinking. Healthy fantasy literature, they argue, nourishes the imagination in such a way as to prevent the development of a corrupted one. Discuss examples of unhealthy wish-fulfillment longings in the stories, such as Edmund's addiction to Turkish Delight (*LWW*) and Uncle Andrew's desire for control through his use of magic (*MN*). Ask the students to discuss their own contemporary examples of an immoral imagination. Then turn to examples of healthy longings in the stories that are associated with childlike wonder that might avert or cure the unhealthy longings, like Lucy's desire to waken the trees (*PCaspian*), Digory's desire to search for a cure for his dying mother (*MN*), and Meg and Charles Wallace's belief in the powers of a unicorn (*STP*). Again, ask students to discuss their own contemporary examples. Then create a scenario in which a character's unhealthy longing is confronted with a healthy one, his own or someone else's. What is the nature of the encounter? How is the person changed? What difference does it make to the individual and to others?

6) As noted in Chapter 5, C. S. Lewis speaks of "chronological snobbery" whereby people assume that the latest idea is the best one and that earlier ideas are necessarily inferior. The class could discuss to what extent they are susceptible to this kind of snobbery. What kinds of things do they feel they have outgrown? What ideas

have they personally dismissed? What older ideas do they feel that society at large has dismissed? Then do they sense any error in any of these dismissals? Conversely, what old things and ideas will they never wish to outgrow and wish society would always cherish? Students might choose to create a debate that represents, on the one side, the snobby dismissal of an old idea, and on the other side, the childlike enthusiasm for an old or ever new idea. Or students might wish to illustrate in any genre the clash between the attitude of bored superiority and that of enthusiastic engagement with something older.

Creating a "Listening" Space

Creating a "listening" space is, arguably, something that all artists do—writers with their nets of words invite us inside an imaginative place where we may be asked to listen to some of our deepest human questions as well as ventured answers. But listening well, as we have discussed in Chapter 5, is something we have difficulty with. Now with especially unruly classes, it's been thought that teachers who have the most success are particularly soft-spoken. (Lower your voice, pretend you have laryngitis; it's amazing how much, sometimes more, can be done at a low volume). And in creating a listening space in our classes we are essentially asking students to lower their voices, sometimes to quiet the tongue altogether, and always to listen in expectation of learning. In Chapter 5 I've asked a number of questions that we can ask ourselves and our students to prepare ourselves for a readiness to listen. The following exercises are designed to further this.

1) The Murry family frequents their country star-watching rock, their "best listening place" (*STP*, p. 36). In *Prince Caspian*, readers encounter how "all night Aslan and the Moon gazed upon each other with joyful and unblinking eyes" (p. 181). And in a

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largely urban culture where we are inundated by high speed and noise, and over-saturated with technological entertainment, we are asking young people to consider a more serene way of living as possibly desirable—rather challenging. We might begin by asking, "What happens to people when they have a listening place?" And "What happens to people who do not have this or do not seek this out?" A discussion about possible and highly innovative "listening places" would be helpful. Students should be encouraged to name or find a "listening place" where they can grow quiet—especially challenging and all the more important in an urban environment. Then they could write about "the best listening place," about seeking this out, perhaps losing it and finding another, and, especially, when it becomes a difficult discipline. How important is it to you, and why? An alternative would be to imaginatively visit the Murry star-watching rock, or imagine yourself as either Aslan, the Moon, or some unnamed listener on that summer night in Narnia. What was it like?

2) Think of a time when you have been "silenced" by someone. How and why do you think it happened? Think of a time when you have "silenced" someone else. Again, how and why? The reference in Chapter 4 to the Hawaiian story about "haoles," people "without breath," might be helpful here too. Choose one of these incidents and a viewpoint, yours or another person's, and write about it.

3) Mary Rose O'Reilley, as discussed in Chapter 5, celebrates the concept of "listening someone into existence." A helpful passage to introduce this is the creation scene in *The Magician's Nephew* where the witch hates the singing so much she would destroy all worlds to stop it (p. 95), and the cabby (who becomes King Frank) insists that

"Watchin' and listenin' 's the thing at present; not talking" (p. 98). In what ways are we like the witch, in what ways like Frank? Imagine someone who for very particular reasons is not very aware of his "existence," and take on the challenge of listening to him in such ways that your act of listening draws him into a fuller sense of self and purpose. This exercise would lend itself particularly well to a dramatic dialogue, and could be first explored in pairs through a drama game, then written.

4) In *A Wind in the Door*, Proginoskes demands, " Meg, when have you been most *you*, the very most *you*?" (p. 104). She discovers the paradox that she was most herself when least thinking about herself because she was helping Calvin, her favourite person, do what he needed to do and what she happens to do best—math. It would be a useful activity to ask students to think of a time when they seemed most themselves— "the very most *you*"—and respond to that in writing. Did they also have Meg's experience of how self-forgetfulness leads to self-discovery? What would enable them to experience that again? What sorts of things hinder it? What could they do to foster it?

5) In *A Wind in the Door*, Proginoskes insists, "Time isn't any more important than size. All that is required of you is to be in the Now, in this moment which has been given us" (p. 151). This could open discussion into the ways in which we "postpone" living and so are not as fully alive to the moment as at other times. Again, what kinds of things distract us, and how can we resist that? Pre-writing exercises on the five senses as well as journaling on present mental/emotional experience would be helpful. This could lead to a developed piece about living in the NOW, perhaps linking it usefully to past and future but without diminishing the present. L'Engle's *A Circle of Quiet* also explores this.

Nurture

These stories abound with images of nurture, both supernatural characters

nurturing humans and humans nurturing each other. It would be helpful to emphasize

that, as in these stories, nurture consists of both the pleasanter aspects of affirmation and

the less pleasant task of reproof. The following exercises could help learners engage with

nurture.

1) Choose one of the many images of nurture in these stories, from major figures

such as MacDonald's Great-Great-Grandmother, Lewis's Aslan, or L'Engle's Aunt

Beast, or from minor figures such as the child Barbara in *The Princess and Curdie*,

Reepicheep towards the dragon-that-was-Eustace in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, or

Dr. Louise Colubra in *A Wind in the Door*. Write either from the viewpoint of the

nurturer or of the recipient. Describe his or her inner conflicts and hopes. Or place that

nurturing character in another situation and describe what new difficulties that character

encounters and how he deals with them.

2) Several characters in these stories experience wounding, sometimes physically,

but certainly psychologically and spiritually. Examples of this include Curdie in *The

Princess and the Goblin*, Eustace-as-dragon in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader,* Meg in

A Wrinkle in Time, and Mrs. O'Keefe in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet.* Write from inside that

character and describe the process from wounding to possible healing. Was the character

nurtured to health? Why or why not? In what sense? Or create another wounded character

who requires nurture, and follow his or her journey to possible wellness. The following

comment by John Gardner (1978) on the relation between pain and art could be useful in introducing this activity.

> Art begins in a wound, an imperfection—a wound inherent in the nature of life itself—and is an attempt either to learn to live with the wound or to heal it. It is the pain of the wound which impels the artist to do his work, and it is the universality of woundedness in the human condition which makes the work of art significant as medicine or distraction. (p. 181)

3) Gardner's comment that "Art begins in a wound" lends itself to asking students to select one of their own painful experiences and reflect on it in a genre of their choice. It is helpful here to consider how reflection is part of the healing process. It is also helpful to consider how we can see the universal in the particular—that our particular stories matter and that through listening to our own and other's particular stories we can help live with or even heal "the universality of woundedness." This is no easy feat, but if we believe in nurturing the "feeling intellect" then we are perhaps obligated to try. Also, work like this surely needs to be balanced by other work focusing on the concept that humour is one of the best weapons against evil; see exercise # 4 in "Teaching Moral Courage" and exercise # 7 in "The Pedagogy of Humility."

4) The idea of nurture can make us feel squeamish, especially when we associate it with something overly sentimental or, for any number of reasons, would rather not be too conscious of our emotions. Create a character who is resistant to nurture, like Meg when she is angry (*Wrinkle*), or Eustace when he is selfish (*VDT*). Then place that character in a situation where another person needs nurture and trace the development from the self-centered, non-nurturing tendency to a nurturing behaviour. Perhaps the nurturer behaves more like the coolly rational Teacher, Blajeny, in *A Wind in the Door*?

Heretical Creativity

As I have discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, "heretical creativity" is a term I apply to that sort of generative thinking which allows us to consider alternatives to our current conceptual parameters. Unlike "clones" which perpetuate ideas in an unthinking way, like the citizens of Camazotz in L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time*, the so-called "heretics," like Emeth in Lewis's *The Last Battle*, are able to re-evaluate their concepts in a thoughtful way, and either hold to them or reshape them. The following exercises are suggestions to help learners wrestle with this potentially troublesome, but also enriching and liberating aspect of imaginative education.

1) Create a story about one of the dwarves in *The Last Battle* mentioned in Chapter 5, or some other imaginary character who is locked inside a mental prison. What events in his life led to his narrow thinking? Document his emotions. Does he ever experience private doubt, or have any inkling about being wrong? To what extent? An alternative assignment would be to write from the viewpoint of someone outside such a loved one's prison. Does this person try to change his friend? How does this person act and what is he thinking? Another possibility would be to create a dramatic dialogue between two or more such characters.

2) Write from the viewpoint of Emeth[3] in *The Last Battle*, or about an imaginary character who, like Emeth, always was a "heretical" thinker and didn't know it. How did he arrive at the disappointing place where he found that the myth he took to be fact was actually false? What was it like to move through the disappointment of being mistaken to embracing the new myth he used to misunderstand and reject? What was it like to turn

from hatred to love? (This would provide another opportunity to revisit the term "myth."

C.S. Lewis, for example, speaks of Christianity as the myth or "sacred story" that became

Fact.) [4]

3) In *A Wrinkle in Time*, the one Camazotz boy drops his ball and when Charles

Wallace tries to return it the mother declares, "'Oh no! The children in our section *never*

drop balls! They're all perfectly trained. We haven't had an Aberration for three years'"

(p. 106). Write from the viewpoint of the boy, his mother, or a neighbour. To what extent

does the character experience conflict? Does he resolve it, and how? Or, ask students to

list behavioral "aberrations" for their peer group or larger culture, and then create a code

of "acceptable" or "normal" behaviour. What things would you do? Never do? Evaluate

your list. Would you like to make any changes? Then create a scenario based on this

"acceptable code" and/or with "desired aberrations."

4) In *A Wrinkle in Time*, Mrs. Who's special glasses have the power to rearrange

the atoms of the transparent column that is a prison. Create a scenario in which such

special glasses, or some other tool, allow a character to walk into freedom. Decide

whether the imprisonment is physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual—or any

combination of or all of these.

5) In *A Wind in the Door*, the shift from closed paradigm thinking to "heretical"

re-evaluation is humorously dramatized in Calvin's conversation with one of Charles

Wallace's farandola, Sporos.

Calvin looked horrified. "You're mad. I've studied biology.
You're not possible."

"Neither are you," Sporos replied indignantly. "Nothing *important* is.
Blajeny, is it my misfortune to be paired with one of these earthlings?"

(p. 139)

List "impossible possibles," especially things you would wish for because they could

make a better world, but do not believe possible. Then create a scenario in which a

character is confronted with a reality that once seemed impossible. Consider how to

ensure that this new reality will indeed make a better world. What sort of vigilance would

be required to resist abuse?

6) G.K. Chesterton (1905) describes us as "creed-making" beings (p. 67). An

interesting assignment to help learners gain understanding of a character is to write that

person's creed. Define what he believes, why, and consider what he is rejecting in the

process. Alternatively, or subsequently, learners may be asked to draft their own creed.

As with many creeds, draft statements of belief, ask, "What does this mean?", and offer

explanations.

Conclusion

In working out practical ways to implement nurturing the moral imagination, we

battle various giants, not only rationalism and moral relativism, but our own fear that this

imaginative education is "just too much work" as well as that of some laziness in

students' actual preference for worksheets over creative ventures. However, if we are

convinced that these giants are wrong, and that the effort of imaginative education is not

only worthwhile but energizing, then we simply carry on out of a conviction that this kind

of pedagogical nurture is a privilege. And on those days when we're unsure about the

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value of our efforts, we might operate in the confidence that our teaching designs are "smarter" than we are, and our students potentially wiser beyond anyone's guess. The alternative to educating the moral human being through imaginative pedagogy is none at all.

AFTERWORD

In this study, I have explored the education of the moral imagination through literature and imaginative pedagogy. As a student and now also a teacher of English, I have been haunted by several key things: students' complaint against the "depressing" nature of much of the literature we teach; the concern over moral education or the lack thereof ("Why do intelligent, educated people commit acts of violence?"); the suspected link between a utilitarian and rationalistic education and the outcome not only of unimaginative thinking but of materialism characterized by ethical malaise; and the tendency in contemporary academic literary discussion to ignore literature's most serious purpose: to teach virtue. And I have been alternatively nourished by the many voices who argue for moral education as not only the oldest but most vital curriculum, look to literature as the most effective means to moral development and, most importantly, the many stories themselves that "baptize" the imagination. Stories do it best because stories engage the emotions as well as reason through the imagination, leading the reader "inside" the experience of moral goodness, and so may educate not only for cognitively knowing the Good in the narrower sense, but wholly falling in love with it—with the "feeling intellect"—and wanting it. Again, as several caution, not all stories do this, but stories informed by a moral vision of possibility—of hope in alternatives that are better, more wondrous, more humane—do this. In a sense these good stories, to borrow from John Lennon and Paul McCartney (1968), "take a sad song—and make it better" (*Hey Jude*).

To this end, I have limited my attention to the fantasy literature of George MacDonald and two authors he directly influenced, C.S. Lewis, and Madeleine L'Engle—not in any exclusive sense, but because they speak to this curriculum with remarkable fluency. With some surprise (and then again, not) I have found that they achieve their education into the "feeling intellect" in a subversion of the cultural privileging of the traditionally viewed "masculine" values of reason, autonomy, and egotistical power and, concomitantly, by a celebration of the traditionally viewed "feminine" values of imagination, interdependence, and humility. Their stories potentially liberate us from repressive thinking. And so these authors are "original" in the sense of being counter-cultural, or potentially transformative in their subversion, but, as I have argued in more detail in the discussion on Milton in Chapter 1, their pedagogy of humility is really a very old idea that is primarily rooted in the Christian Gospel. The importance of this is enormous: for MacDonald, Lewis, and L'Engle, human depravity is redeemable. Moral failure can be transformed through grace. Humility is the key. Faith, hope, and love inform the universe. And in the field of literature as it educates the moral imagination, the idea of such redemptive hope with the consequence of heroic courage is a significant contribution.

My bold hope, now, is not only that greater familiarity with these authors, and implementation of the theoretical and practical curriculum implications that their work suggests, would help considerably towards increasing and deepening our success with the imaginative teaching of literature, and moral education through literature especially, but also help us to ever listen for the many others whose voices join the "communion of saints" in moral imagination. And as we teach, we would do well to often remember that

"imagination is the air in which new knowledge breathes, as it is the salt preserving the savour of the old. 'Knowledge', it has been said, 'does not keep any better than fish.'" (Walsh, 1959, p. 24).

As I have noted in the Introduction, curriculum thinkers have contributed much work towards repairing the faulty dichotomization of reason/ imagination, with all its implications for education. But much more work remains to be done. This study, in effect, is a call to literature teachers to such work: to shed the "survival mode" we are all prone to and instead instigate what Lochhead (1977) calls a "renaissance of wonder" because we need this "*holiness* in the magic" (pp. 2, 164). Education that omits educating the moral imagination, as I have argued, is a failure in education. Our highest mandate then is to nourish the moral imagination with literature that facilitates the development of spiritual wholeness and well-being. To achieve this, we need to engage students in literary experiences, both with the original story and their own imaginative responses, which foster creative courage and hope. It is not imperative that all or even most students should become published writers. It is, however, imperative that all should be educated through literature to become mature, moral beings. As I noted in Chapter 5, George MacDonald (1893) argues that though few will develop an "artistic faculty . . . . it is necessary that all should feel . . . . that all should understand and imagine the good" (p. 41). Also, to re-echo Madeleine L'Engle's (1972) words cited in Chapter 4, as teachers we will make mistakes, but we need to "have the courage to be," mistakes mixed with blessings, if we are to make some difference (p. 181). And so we need to grasp the present moment in the classroom as it comes to us, moment by moment (conflicted, as it usually is, by all sorts of messy, competing constraints), because, as in the words of C.S.

Lewis (1942b), "the Present is the point at which time touches eternity . . . . in it alone freedom and actuality are offered" (p. 76). Whatever we do then with such intentions could become a gift worth receiving.

ENDNOTES

Introduction

[1] In defining imagination Alan R. White (1990) defers to Ludwig Wittgenstein, noting how the philosopher's equal use of the German terms 'sich denken' and 'sich vorstellen' helps us think about imagination not only in terms of visual imagination but as alternative conceptualization which may not involve visualization.

[2] *Note.* From *A Dish of Orts*, by George MacDonald, 1893, Whitethorn, CA: Johannesen. Copyright 1996 by Johannesen. Reprinted with permission (as are all quotes from this edition).

[3] *Note.* From "The Enemy's Gospel: Deconstructing Exclusivity/Inventing Inclusivity Through the Power of Story," by Monika B. Hilder, (in press), *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, Austin, Texas. Copyright Holder *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision.* Adapted with permission.

[4] It is erroneous to depict the false dichotomization of reason/imagination as a "Western" phenomenon. Though the West gave rise to industrialization and the technological environment we find ourselves in, it is more accurate to speak of how the technological frame of mind, as does Jacques Ellul in *The Technological Society* (1964), splits consciousness. Whether Western, Eastern, or otherwise situated, what dehumanizes is the idolatry of size and speed at the expense of spirituality.

[5] *Note.* From *The Abolition of Man*, by C. S. Lewis, 1947a, New York: Macmillan. Copyright 1943, 1946, 1978 by C.S. Lewis Pte. Ltd. Reprinted with permission (as are all quotes from this edition).

Chapter 1

[1] In this study it has neither been within my scope nor my purpose to consider how the exclusive claims of Christianity may or may not interact with other worldviews. Instead, it has been within my scope and purpose to consider how the inclusive possibility of the Gospel—the good story of redemption—and particularly as it informs literature and pedagogy, contributes to the forum on moral education.

[2] *Note.* I cite with permission Meguido Zola (personal communication, 2003) who, borrowing from the Apostle's Creed, described a community of writers that share a moral vision as belonging to a "communion of saints." A.N. Whitehead (1929a) also

speaks of the "great and inspiring assemblage" of writers as "the communion of saints" (p. 15).

[3] Alasdair MacIntyre (1984) comments that Aristotle would regard the New Testament virtue of humility "as one of the vices relative to magnanimity" (p. 182).

[4] The *Magnificat* is, for example, recited at every Anglican evensong service.

[5] *Note*. From *A Wind in the Door*, by Madeleine L'Engle, 1973, New York: Dell. Copyright 1973 by Crosswicks, Ltd. Reprinted with permission from Farrar, Straus & Giroux, LLC (as are all quotes from this edition).

[6] I wish to acknowledge John M. Steadman's (1968) *Milton's epic characters: Image and idol* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press) in helping me shape my argument of the relation between image and idol. As well I would like to acknowledge here my indebtedness to the teaching and scholarship of my M.A. thesis supervisor, Jan de Bruyn, Professor Emeritus, The University of British Columbia, whose significant argument on the heroism of Eve is developed in his book, *An Essay on Paradise Lost,* Unpublished manuscript.

Chapter 2

[1] It has been noted that the enthusiasm of the MacDonald children for the manuscript of "Uncle Dodgson's" *Alice in Wonderland* led to its publication (Hein, 1982, p. 31).

[2] The nature of his religious vision, though not regarded to be without error but rather esteemed as singularly Christ-like by Lewis (1946, p. 31), "heterodox" by Hein (1982), and "eclecti[c]" but "logical and consistent" by Reis (1972, p. 33), is discussed by various critics (Hein, 1982, 1993; Lewis, 1946; Manlove, 1975; Reis, 1972; Robb, 1987).

[3] *Note*. From *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872), by George MacDonald, 1976, Harmondsworth, England: Puffin. Copyright 1964 by Puffin, Penguin Books. From *The Princess and Curdie* (1882), by George MacDonald, 1975, Harmondsworth, England: Puffin. Copyright 1966 by Puffin, Penguin books. Reprinted with permission (as are all quotes from these editions).

[4] *Note*. From *The Wise Woman and other Fairy Stories* ("The Castle" (1864a), "Cross Purposes (1867a), "Little Daylight" (1871b), "The Wise Woman, or The Lost Princess: A Double Story" (1874)), by George MacDonald, 2000, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans. Copyright 1980 by Wm. B. Eerdmans. Reprinted with permission. From *The Complete Fairy Tales of George MacDonald* ("The Shadows" (1864b), "Cross Purposes", "The Golden Key" (1867b) , "The Carosyn"(1871a), and

"The Day Boy and the Night Girl" (1879)), by George MacDonald, 1977, New York: Schocken. Copyright 1977 by Random House. Reprinted with permission.

[5] Though we are perhaps inclined to agree that there can be no intellect without imagination, MacDonald's phrasing "there were no imagination without intellect" emphasizes that imagination is integral to intellect, is intellectual, and that intellect that is apparently unimaginative is inferior.

[6] Melba N. Battin's (1992) close study of this story is helpful.

[7] The context for MacDonald's confidence in metaphor and emphasis on pedagogical humility is his rejection of a biblical literalism that he would consider idolatrous. The full quotation partially cited above reads,

> Till we thus know Him, let us hold the Bible dear as the moon of our darkness, by which we travel towards the east; not dear as the sun whence her light cometh, and towards which we haste, that, walking in the sun himself, we may no more need the mirror that reflected his absent brightness. (*USI*, 1867c, p. 55)

[8] One example of MacDonald's fluid use of feminine and masculine imagery for God is in his poem, February 27, in *Diary of an Old Soul* (1975), p. 25:

> I would not have it so. Weary and worn,
> Why not to thee run straight, and be at rest?
> Motherward, with toy new, or garment torn,
> The child that late forsook her changeless breast,
> Runs to home's heart, the heaven that's heavenliest:
> In joy or sorrow, feebleness or might,
> Peace or commotion, be thou, Father, my delight.

[9] Cf. C.S. Lewis (1961b) on trying to grasp teaching by the intellect alone in *Reflections on the Psalms*, p. 95. *Note*. From *Reflections on the Psalms*, by C.S. Lewis, 1961b, London & Glasgow: Collins, Fontana. Copyright 1958 by C.S. Lewis Pte. Ltd. Reprinted with permission.

Chapter 3

[1] Borrowing from the title of his autobiography, *Surprised by Joy* (1955), which he acknowledges in turn as having borrowed from Wordsworth, I'd like to emphasize that Lewis's "feminine" answer to the question of heroism is as potent as it is, indeed, surprising.

[2] Lewis (1946) claims the influence of George MacDonald in his own writing in the strongest terms: "I have never concealed the fact that I regarded him as my master;

indeed I fancy I have never written a book in which I did not quote from him"(p. 33). *Note*. From *George MacDonald: An Anthology,* by C.S. Lewis (Ed.), 1946, London: Fount. Copyright 1960 by C.S. Lewis Pte. Ltd. Reprinted with permission (as are all quotes from this edition).

[3] Fredrick and McBride (2001) note just how exclusive traditional Oxford was, with only 5 women's colleges existing alongside 30 men's, fellows permitted to marry only as of 1877, most dons unmarried, and "even in the 1950s marriage was considered a failing at one's profession" (p. 4). However, to this one might observe Lewis's (1921) shrewd assessment of Oxford as "a close corporation of jolly, untidy, lazy, good-for-nothing, humorous old men, who have been electing their own successors ever since the world began" (*Letters*, 1966, p. 60). In this context, then, one can perhaps better appreciate the self-deprecating humour with which Lewis had commented that he is now "just a married man."

[4] *Note*. From *Letters of C.S. Lewis*, by C. S. Lewis (Lewis, W.H. (Ed.), 1966, New York: Harcourt, Brace & World. Copyright 1966 by C.S. Lewis Pte. Ltd. Reprinted with permission (as are all quotes from this edition).

[5] Hannay (1975) notes so he was "affectionately known" in her student days (p. 1).

[6] Lewis discusses his views on male leadership in marriage in *Mere Christianity* (1952/1974), London: Collins, pp. 92-100, and in his chapter "Eros" in *The Four Loves* (1960/1974), London: Collins.

[7] For Lewis's (1948) views on church hierarchy see his essay, Priestesses in the church? in Walter Hooper (Ed.), (1970),*God in the dock: Essays on theology and ethics* (pp. 234-39), Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans.

[8] *Note*. From *That Hideous Strength*, by C. S. Lewis, 1945a, London: Pan. Copyright 1945 by C.S. Lewis Pte. Ltd. Reprinted with permission.

[9] *Note*. From *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, by C. S. Lewis, 1950, Harmondsworth, England: Puffin. Copyright 1950 by C.S. Lewis Pte. Ltd. Reprinted with permission (as are all quotes from this edition).

[10] *Note*. From *The Magician's Nephew*, by C. S. Lewis, 1955b, Harmondsworth, England: Puffin. Copyright 1955 by C.S. Lewis Pte. Ltd. Reprinted with permission (as are all quotes from this edition).

[11] In "The Unfathomable Feminine Principle" Nancy-Lou Patterson (1986) explores Lewis's reference to the Greek idea of Form as masculine and Matter feminine (p. 3).

[12] *Note*. From *The Silver Chair*, by C.S. Lewis, 1953, Harmondsworth, England: Puffin. Copyright 1953 by C.S. Lewis Pte. Ltd. Reprinted with permission (as are all quotes from this edition).

[13] This example differs from the others of this type because Edmund is wood-wise here, though it is noteworthy that his competence doesn't help—in the end what's needed is that they all follow Lucy following Aslan. *Note*. From *Prince Caspian*, by C.S. Lewis, 1951, Harmondsworth, England: Puffin. Copyright 1951 by C.S. Lewis Pte. Ltd. Reprinted with permission (as are all quotes from this edition).

[14] *Note*. From *The Horse and his Boy*, by C.S. Lewis, 1954b, Harmondsworth, England: Puffin. Copyright 1954 by C.S. Lewis Pte. Ltd. Reprinted with permission (as are all quotes from this edition).

[15] This cautious self-preservation is an echo of Lewis's own character. See *The Four Loves* (1960), p. 110.

[16] *Note*. From *The Last Battle*, by C.S. Lewis, 1956a, Harmondsworth, England: Puffin. Copyright 1956 by C.S. Lewis Pte. Ltd. Reprinted with permission (as are all quotes from this edition).

[17] *Note*. From *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, 1952b, Harmondsworth, England: Puffin. Copyright 1952 by C.S. Lewis Pte. Ltd. Reprinted with permission (as are all quotes from this edition).

[18] *Note*. From *The Screwtape Letters*, by C. S. Lewis, 1942b, London: Fontana. Copyright 1942 by C.S. Lewis Pte. Ltd. Reprinted with permission (as are all quotes from this edition).

[19] See C.S. Lewis, (1960), *The Four Loves*, p. 116.

[20] *Note*. From *God in the Dock: Essays on theology and ethics*, by C.S. Lewis, 1970, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans. Copyright 1970 by C.S. Lewis Pte. Ltd. Reprinted with permission (as are all other quotes from essays published under this title).

[21] Note. From *Present Concerns: Essays by C.S. Lewis*, 1986, London: Collins. Copyright 1986 by C.S. Lewis Pte. Ltd. Reprinted with permission.

[22] Note Malory's spelling, *Le Morte Darthur*.

[23] *Note*. From *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories*, by C.S. Lewis, 1994, Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace. Copyright 1982 by C.S. Lewis Pte. Ltd. Reprinted with permission (as are all other quotes from essays published under this title).

[24] Lewis develops the idea of the allegorical Landlord sending truth in a series of pictures throughout history in *The pilgrim's regress: An allegorical apology for christianity, reason and romanticism* (1933).

[25] Filmer complains that Lewis is guilty of having a Madonna/whore complex towards women (p. 88). But, as Terry Lindvall (1996, p. 312) points out, Lewis is acutely aware of the idealism/cynicism problem in his discussion of *Frauendienst*, or the worship of women (1936, p. 145). Elsewhere Lewis (1960) criticizes our "ludicrous and portentous solemnization of sex" (p. 90) and cautions that eros, "notoriously the most mortal of our loves" (p. 104), "honoured without reservation and obeyed unconditionally, becomes a demon" (p. 101). *Note*. From *The Four Loves*, by C. S. Lewis, 1960, London: Collins. Copyright 1960 by C.S. Lewis Pte. Ltd. Reprinted with permission.

[26] *Note*. From *Letters to Children*, by C. S. Lewis, 1985, New York: Touchstone. Copyright 1985 by C.S. Lewis Pte. Ltd. Reprinted with permission.

[27] *Note*. From *The Weight of Glory*, by C.S. Lewis, 1949b, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans. Copyright 1949 by C.S. Lewis Pte. Ltd. Reprinted with permission.

Chapter 4

[1] Nancy-Lou Patterson (1983) suggests the title "The Wind Trilogy" because "the symbol of wind appears as the operative spirit image" and that the novels "may be read as meditations upon the Spirit, the divine wind or breath of the Holy Spirit in action in the world" (p. 202). This parallels L'Engle's (1980) distinction of the different aims of meditation in Eastern and Western traditions.

For the easterner the goal is *nirvana*, which means "where there is no wind," and for us the wind of the Spirit is vital, even when it blows harshly. We do not move from meditation into contemplation, into self-annihilation, into death, in order to be freed from the intolerable wheel of life. No. We move—are moved—into death in order to be discovered, to be loved into truer life by our Maker. To die to self in the prayer of contemplation is to move to a meeting of lovers. (p. 194)

Note. From *Walking on Water: Reflections on Faith and Art*, by Madeleine L'Engle, 1980, Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw. Copyright 1980 by Crosswicks, Ltd. Reprinted with permission of WaterBrook Press, Colorado Springs, CO (as are all quotes from this edition). All rights reserved.

[2] *Note*. From *The Irrational Season*, by Madeleine L'Engle, 1977, New York: HarperCollins. Copyright 1977 by HarperCollins. Reprinted with permission.

[3] L'Engle discusses iconographic vision somewhat in *A Circle of Quiet* (1972) and extensively in *Penguins and Golden Calves: Icons and Idols* (1996).

[4] *Note.* From *A Circle of Quiet* by Madeleine L'Engle, 1972, New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux. Copyright 1972 by Madeleine L'Engle Franklin. Reprinted with permission from Farrar, Straus & Giroux, LLC (as are all quotes from this edition).

[5] As I have mentioned in the Introduction, L'Engle's use of the witch persona is troublesome for some Christians. The choice to represent, in part, the angelic nature of the three Mrs. Ws with the Hallowe'en convention is considered to be a dangerous flirtation with the occult. It is not my intention to dismiss the seriousness of this concern. On this book-worthy topic I would like to suggest here just three points to ponder: 1) the evil that is associated with the occult is precisely what these three beings are fighting; 2) the sheer hilarity of their costume and manner arguably redeems the witch concept from the conventional darkness that is associated with, for example, the three witches in *MacBeth*, whom they sometimes parody; and 3) their presence requires the exercise of moral discernment so that the characters and readers must ever ask, "What is truly evil, what is truly good?"

[6] *Note.* From *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*, by Madeleine L'Engle, 1978a, New York: Dell. Copyright 1978 by Crosswicks, Ltd. Reprinted with permission from Farrar, Straus & Giroux, LLC (as are all quotes from this edition).

[7] *Note.* From *A Wrinkle in Time*, by Madeleine L'Engle, 1962, New York: Dell. Copyright 1962, renewed 1990 by Madeleine L'Engle Franklin. Reprinted with permission from Farrar, Straus & Giroux, LLC (as are all quotes from this edition).

[8] Importantly, L'Engle (1980) is also quick to warn that "the heart, when it is disengaged from the brain, can become sentimental and untruthful" (p. 172), and this is illustrated, for example, in the emotional witch-hunting fervour in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*.

[9] L'Engle traces the origin of the name Echthroi to the Greek letters "Epsilon, chi, and theta" in her exploration of these "un-Namers, non-Namers" (*Wind*, pp. 88-9). In *A Swiftly Tilting Planet* she links them with the biblical story of the fallen angels: "Echthroi," Gaudior repeated. 'The ancient enemy. He who distorted the harmony, and who has gathered an army of destroyers. They are everywhere in the universe" (p. 48).

[10] The reference is to J.R.R. Tolkien's dramatization of the concept of a "fellowship" of moral warriors as developed in the first volume of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954).

[11] This catalogue of moral fighters raises the issue of universalism for some Christian readers. Their concern is that L'Engle regards all of these fighters to be equal to Jesus. When I asked her what her intentions were here, she answered: "To widen our understanding of good. We tend to be very narrow about it. 'Only those who believe the way I believe can be saved.' Well, I don't think that's true . . . . That does not

make me a heretic or a blasphemer" (personal communication, Sept. 26, 2000).
Earlier, she also rejects universalism (1980, p. 32).

[12] L'Engle (1980) also notes absence as a prerequisite to presence when she speaks of "the *faithfulness* of doubt" as "a prerequisite for a living faith" (p. 118).

Chapter 5

[1] The subject of education as "values clarification" is discussed by C.S. Lewis (1947a), Vigen Guroian (1998, pp. 27-33), Gilbert Meilaender (1998, pp. 211-12), and Nel Noddings (1993, pp. 139-44). Guroian shares with Lewis the concern that the term "value" undermines any meaning to the term "moral" whereas Noddings views discussion of values as the opportunity to gain intelligent understanding of moral and religious perspectives.

[2] While I acknowledge that it is theoretically possible to separate ethics from spirituality, at least as an arguable construct, this is not done by these three authors and my discussion reflects what they regard as a unity.

[3] As I mentioned in the Introduction, Peter J. Schakel (2002, p. 163) notes that the recently popular term "moral imagination" originated with Edmund Burke.

[4] I am alluding to one of Lewis's favourite quotations from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* where when Caroline Bingley complains, "I should like Balls infinitely better if they were carried on in a different manner . . . . It would surely be much more rational if conversation instead of dancing made the order of the day," her brother replies, "Much more rational, I dare say, but it would not be near so much like a Ball" (cited in Schakel, 2002, p. 111).

[5] I'm alluding to Macdonald's use of the expression in his fairy tale entitled, "The Golden Key."

[6] MacDonald (1893) distinguishes between imagination in the primary sense as belonging to the divine and in the secondary sense as human (pp. 2-5).

[7] *Note.* From *An Experiment in Criticism*, by C.S. Lewis, 1961a, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. Copyright 1961 by Cambridge University Press. Reprinted with the permission of Cambridge University Press (as are all quotes from this edition).

[8] For a brief introduction to the genre of myth with particular application to C.S. Lewis see Maria Kuteeva (2000), Myth, in Thomas L. Martin (Ed.) *Reading the classics with C.S. Lewis* (pp. 265-84), Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

[9] *Note.* From *The Rock That is Higher*, by Madeleine L'Engle, 1993, Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw. Copyright 1993 by Crosswicks, Ltd. Reprinted with permission from WaterBrook Press, Colorado Springs, CO (as are all quotes from this edition). All rights reserved.

[10] Lewis uses the term "chronological snobbery" to denote the erroneous assumption that the latest idea is the best in *Surprised by Joy* (1955/1976), London: Fontana, p. 166. *Note.* Copyright 1955 by C.S. Lewis Pte. Ltd. Reprinted with permission.

[11] Mary Rose O'Reilley (1998) cites Parker Palmer who in his workshops says, "To teach is to create a space. . . ." (p. 1).

[12] I borrow this expression from James C. Dobson (1983), *Love must be tough: New hope for families in crisis,* Waco, TX: Word, 1983.

Chapter 6

[1] Verena Melzer, a communications student at Trinity Western University, Langley, B.C., brought her created character, Mucko Von Melzer (copyright Verena Melzer, 2003), to one of my classes, and the incident is cited here with permission.

[2] Terra Friesen's illustrated poem, "Wonder" (copyright Terra Friesen, 2003), was created in an undergraduate education class given by Professor Kimberly Franklin at Trinity Western University, Langley, B.C., and is cited here with permission.

[3] Responding to the charge of racism that is sometimes put to Lewis for his references to the dark skinned Calormenes, Schakel (1979) points out the convention of romance in which the Moors are viewed as the "traditional enemy." What is more important than Lewis's use of the convention, Schakel argues, are his departures from it in characters like Emeth and Aravis, besides the fact that most of the enemies in the *Chronicles* are light-skinned (pp. 13-14).

[4] Lewis, C.S. (1944/1970). Myth became fact. In Walter Hooper (Ed.), *God in the dock: Essays on theology and ethics* (pp. 63-7). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans.

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