CIRCLES OF QUIET:
THE JOURNALS OF MADELEINE L'ENGLE

by

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Abstract

This is a study of Madeleine L'Engle's published journals. I analyze the genre and literary criticism pertaining to it after I examine Mary Warnock's Memory. L'Engle's journals and fiction illustrate her conscious use of memory to explore and invent herself. Any writer, who is as conscious of these processes as L'Engle, requires that the reader understand her concepts of ontology and time. Thus, her references to *is*ness, *kairos* and *chronos* are examined in relation to Transcendentalists like Henry David Thoreau and Annie Dillard who also share with L'Engle a fascination with natural and scientific detail. Furthermore, I examine those elements in L'Engle's writing which express her belief system: the need for a circle of quiet in her life, her life-long journey with faith and religion, and the healing power of words. The collection The Intimate Critique: Autobiographical Literary Criticism, edited by Diane P. Freedman, Olivia Frey and Frances Murphy Zauhar, and the article "Me and My Shadow" by Jane Tompkins inform the approach for my thesis. Personal criticism such as this allows me to include my own journal entries before each chapter. Finally I explore L'Engle's belief that story functions at an anagogical level to reveal deeper truth in both fiction and journals. Her experiences at the physical, emotional, and spiritual level deepen through her writing.

Dedication

I would like to thank my family and friends for supporting me during my search for Madeleine and myself. Also thanks to the Wheaton College Archives for a wonderful week of exploration. I will certainly visit again. A big thank you to Acadia for patiently waiting for me, and for the inspiration that Dr. Hilary Thompson, Dr. Graham Adams and Dr. Richard Davies have freely given me. There are not enough words to express how wonderful it has been getting to know Hilary and Madeleine at the same time in my life. I will be forever grateful.

A big hug to Glenn for loving Madeleine as I do, Blake for his constant faith and my Lunenburg, life-long friends for being there for me. Please go to the bookstore or the library and find Madeleine as I have. You will not be disappointed.

"If you're going to care about the fall of the sparrow you can't pick and choose who's going to be the sparrow. It's everybody, and you're stuck with it" (L'Engle The Arm of the Starfish).

Introduction

The Beginning Questions

As long as I have been writing reports, I have wanted to write about Madeleine L'Engle. I first read L'Engle in grade six -- I was eleven years old in 1981 and her novel was the famous A Wrinkle in Time (Winner of the Newbery Award, 1963). In November 1993, I went to Wheaton, Illinois to explore the Archive Collection of L'Engle's work.[1] While in Wheaton, I found in her published journals a L'Engle who was new to me.

In this thesis I examine L'Engle's published journals while using the journal form in my own way to open new doors and explore changing directions in literary criticism. People have been writing in journals and diaries for centuries and what they have had to say is important, not just for themselves but for their readers as well. We all feel the need to find this thing called *self* -- and watching the journey of another often shows us our own road. In the journal form, the author and reader form a personal connection. In L'Engle's exploration of ontology, the word "about the essence of things; the word about being" (Quiet 6), I am able to recognize her *is*ness, as well as my own.

L'Engle's ontological self is present in all of her books. In her fiction she shares an ageless self that is truly alive for readers. I want to know where the lines exist between her journals and her fiction. In Mary Warnock's book Memory, I discovered truths about all forms of writing in relation to memory. Memory leads to questions of self. I remember L'Engle's influence on my reading, my life and my interpretation of my life. L'Engle uses memory to construct herself and her stories.

L'Engle's writing career spans fifty-two years and the childhoods of many readers. Her conscious exploration of her writing process in her journals has developed over seventy years. (She began journal writing as an adolescent.) L'Engle published her first novel in 1945 at the age of twenty-seven. In the years that followed up to the present day, she has created both fiction and non-fiction, and she continues to lecture and run workshops, as she has done all of her life. Since the publication of The Small Rain in 1945, L'Engle has written and published over forty-five works. She has been granted numerous awards, including the Newbery Award, the American Book Award, the Caldecott Award. As the librarian/writer in residence at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City, L'Engle continues to work in her chosen field to this day.

This thesis is designed specifically around L'Engle's uniqueness. It is a study of her autobiographical writings. At times this study will include L'Engle's relationship to other journal writers. Her reflections are titled Journals, yet she uses her unpublished diaries in the writing process. Her published journals are edited. All these forms (diary, journal and fiction) are explored by L'Engle and lead to questions about her belief in the effect of her writing process on herself and on her readers. Thus I include several of my own personal journal entries to accompany my thoughts on L'Engle and to add an appropriate emotional response to her work.

Memory is a tool which is used in the search for identity and *is*ness. The lines of time, like the lines between L'Engle's fiction and autobiographical writings, are often fluid. The experiences of her protagonists represent echoes from her own life. She writes, obviously, from the place she knows: her place, her heart and soul.

And what is the link between memory and identity? The line drawn between these two phenomena is a tightrope. Memory plays a large role in the development and sustenance of identity. As a writer, L'Engle requires her journal to sustain both her memory and her sense of spiritual equilibrium. She writes out of a truthful sense of her own *isness;* experience for her is both physical and spiritual. Without memory there is no cumulative identity, spiritual or otherwise, and without identity one may question where the meaning is in memory.

L'Engle and her characters are on an endless search for the truth of self, and, even when parts of the self are recognized, they, and she, continue to develop throughout their life span. It is memory that provides the link between the self of today and the self of the past. The journal format represents a journey -- a never-ending road leading to self-discovery and awareness. The self is the subject in the genre of autobiographical writings, and the act of writing is an affirmation of the value of the self. L'Engle, like Thoreau before her and Annie Dillard as a contemporary, has moments of transcendentalism in her journals: this journey is spiritual as well as physical. Without such a journey, a writer like L'Engle cannot give depth to her poetry or fiction.

Before we step into the body of the thesis, I need to share an important moment in my reading. While reading critical works on autobiography, I discovered a book that I could not put down. Before I knew what had happened, I had read all twenty-six articles and I felt wonderful. Never have I read a collection that has moved me in this way. The book that has given me such hope is The Intimate Critic: Autobiographical Literary Criticism. To have found it while reading L'Engle's work has been a real joy; no longer do I feel uneasy to express how her work makes me feel, how it changes me, how

I relate to it, and, essentially, what her writing means to me. This collection of essays reminds me that it is natural to enjoy reading, that my personal response to L'Engle's writing should have a loud voice in my writing. L'Engle reaches out to me through her writing. I critically respond to her in this intimate way because this is the way that L'Engle herself writes in her journals. She stimulates this kind of response in her readers because she is her own intimate critique:

> Like all love letters, it [her journal A Circle of Quiet] is personal; there isn't any other way for me to write it. Just as I realized, that first morning at O.S.U. [when she was guest Writer in Residence for a special program of Reading Fellows at Ohio State University] that I was standing in front of a group of people all of whom were experts in the field in which I was supposed to lecture to them, and my only hope was not to try to be an expert but to offer them myself and all that writing has taught me in the past half century, so my only hope in this book is to do the same thing. (Quiet 27)

Each journal is a personal response and exploration of what is most important to L'Engle.

The articles expressed some of my own inner feelings and doubts and encouraged me to continue writing from my heart. For me, and many of the writers assembled in the collection, it is impossible to step outside of oneself to write an essay. Responses to any work of literature are influenced by who one is, what is happening in one's life, or simply how one is feeling that particular day. Jane Tompkins's article "Me and My Shadow" jumped out at me from the beginning. Here is a published professor of English speaking of one of my primary concerns. Does anyone else feel the way that I do? The

inability to distance myself from my writing has worried me. But I do not want to be distanced; I want to be connected. That is why I write and study, not to write an authoritative text on any author, but to explore how a work makes me feel. Reading and writing makes me feel alive; should not my paper reflect that feeling? Listen to what Jane Tompkins has to say:

> The problem is that you can't talk about your private life in the course of doing your professional work. You have to pretend that epistemology, or whatever you're writing about, has nothing to do with your life, that's it's more exalted, more important, because it (supposedly) *transcends* the merely personal. Well, I'm tired of the conventions that keep discussions of epistemology, or James Joyce, segregated from meditations on what is happening outside my window or inside my heart. The public-private dichotomy, which is to say, the public-private *hierarchy*, is a founding condition of female oppression. I say to hell with it. The reason I feel embarrassed at my own attempts to speak personally in a professional context is that I have been conditioned to feel that way. That's all there is to it. (25)

I know that I do not always stand by my beliefs that my writing be non-adversarial and personally connected, but I wish I could. I have been strengthening my courage and trying to find my own voice, but it is never easy to be vulnerable. Reading this collection has come at the perfect time in my life, when I have been questioning my own thinking. I worried also about my love of quotations and how they take over some of my writings; but I have always believed that I was sharing a piece of the writer through

that writer's own words, that we may have even been connecting or conversing together. Once again, Jane Tompkins spoke to me in her article:

> I find that having released myself from the duty to say things I'm not interested in, in a language I resist, I feel free to entertain other people's voices. Quoting them becomes a pleasure of appreciation rather than the obligatory giving of credit, because when I write in a voice that is not struggling to be heard through the screen of a forced language, I no longer feel that it is not I who am speaking, and so there is more room for what others have said. (29)

To be able to share the words of a writer with others is important to me, especially in this thesis. I want L'Engle to be heard in her own voice, as well as my own.

My response to L'Engle's voice began when I was a child. Frances Murphy Zauhar's article "Creative Voices: Women Reading and Women's Writing" touches on the enthusiasm we had as young readers, that should not change as we get older, because "most literature was meant to be read by a totally engaged, emotionally involved reader" (107). I continue to rediscover L'Engle's voices as I reread her work; each time they are different, each time I am different. Ellen Brown's essay "Between the Medusa and the Abyss: Reading *Jane Eyre*, Reading Myself" talks of this same attachment to a book or a writer over the course of a life:

> I've been reading *Jane Eyre* since I was about twelve. That means that for the last eighteen years I've been trying to integrate Bronte's novel into my life, putting it down, but always coming back to it, finding another reason to read it, another way to absorb its mysteries and myth, another way to identify with

> the plain and penniless heroine. I keep rereading *Jane Eyre* and revising myself. (225)

In a similar way, sometimes I remember L'Engle's characters like childhood friends: Vicky, Meg, Polly, Camilla, Charles Wallace, Sandy, Dennys, and all the many others, have remained in my memory, and each time I return to a novel, I find out more about them, and much more about myself. That is the wonderful thing about literature; it is alive, but it exists only when the reader engages with it, and it changes with each reading.

The collection of articles assembled in The Intimate Critic speak together of the need for a personal voice in literary criticism. Who we are as writers is important to how we relate to the works we are studying, especially in the study of journal writing. Like Frances Murphy Zauhar, many of us see "the relationship between the reader and the text as collaborative rather than submissive, demonstrating that the reader's choice to listen to the speaker is not a matter of subordination but of cooperation, because she finds her own voice enabled rather than silenced by the influences of the text" (107). I listen to L'Engle because she speaks to me, and she helps me speak to myself. For me, personal response is important in the discovery of journal writers -- L'Engle and myself included.

{ Journal Entry: On Memory }

I suppose I don't remember the first time I remembered. One day it simply became important, but we often take it for granted. I know how much I rely on my journals -- I can't sleep without writing first. It's unbelievable to me that it has become an extension of myself, a safe haven where it all can be said and said and said again, until I'm sick to death of the subject. ME ME ME. That's the funny thing. I'm not even that interested in myself, but it's the one thing that I know best and I must begin there. If I know even the basic questions before I die, I won't worry about the answers.

But memory fascinates me. I watch my grandmother remembering the Halifax Explosion, or a moment from her childhood, and she mentally steps out of the room. Her eyes become focused on one spot, but she is looking inside of herself. At that moment of recollection, she is there, in that time, being. And we all do it; it's just easier to recognize in others. It is highly important to have a sense of continuity, to look at my past and see myself. This is not only a human need to find meaning in life, but also a creative need to see patterns and images and form in all that we do. Memory shows us ourselves. The good, the bad, and the ugly, but always me. I like that. And as a person I also need to know others; to know if they feel the same, think the same. To share and to not be alone. And as I remember, so do we all.

Chapter I

Memory and Life Writing

The Remembered Self

Mary Warnock speaks of the use of memory to explore the path of truth, as well as the inner need to affirm one's life through writing: "If we ask why people keep diaries, or write their autobiographies, the answer is not straightforward, but it is undoubtedly related to that sense of the continuity of the individual self which has emerged as something uniquely valuable to human beings" (Memory 103).[2] The process of writing about one's life is an attempt to not only come to terms with what has happened, or to grow from experience, but also to preserve the past, to aid memory by having an accessible written record of one's past actions and thoughts:

> The writing of a diary ensures the real existence of the life we lead. If it is there on paper it happened, and was not a dream. If we write about what we did and thought, we can return to it; it is not gone for ever. In this way a real diary is not so much an exploration or a celebration of memory as a substitute for it. Rather as a shopping list is a concrete object standing in the place of memory, or protecting us from forgetfulness, so a diary, it may be thought, should ideally be a record of everything that has happened, everything that was thought or felt, as it was thought or felt, leaving no room for forgetfulness. A diary should render concrete and permanent that which would otherwise be fading and evanescent. It should be a shopping list in reverse. Viewed in this light, the diarist may think of his diary as something

> perhaps one day to be used. If he ever wanted to write his autobiography, or the story of some episode or other in his life, his diary would be there to be consulted. It would constitute the raw material out of which something else could be made. (103)

And this is exactly what L'Engle has done. Her personal diaries have not only provided the substance of her published journals[3], but also the raw materials for her fiction. Her characters are able to feel and act every age that she creates[4]; L'Engle can step into her past at any time to re-experience everything. In this way she is every one of her young protagonists; memory and imagination fuse.

Memory is a writer's tool, like a pen or paper, but it is more than important: it is necessary. Memory is a writer's, or any human's, way of cheating death:

> But simply because the separation of past from present remains, there is in memory, necessarily, a sense of loss: we look back to a country to which we cannot return. ... Memory then comes as a savior. Like a Messiah, it is to save us from the otherwise inevitable destruction of death. ... What is re-created is my life. (Warnock 141-42)

The constant search for self and meaning, strengthened throughout life by memory, is a method for living beyond the moment to somehow touch eternity by recognizing the present as a continuation of the past. The self that is L'Engle recognizes diversity within, allowing for a number of manifestations to co-exist. By reading more and more of L'Engle's representations, the reader is able to find layers of the author's self in different disguises. This meshing of different aspects of self is a fascinating

process for the reader, as each fictional character adds a new dimension to the self that is L'Engle:

> Most writers have forgotten who they were when they were young. People have asked me if my young protagonists are my daughters. Certainly not! They're me. I've written journals since I was about eight years old. The value of having a journal is that when you write something down, you don't forget it. It allows you to remember what it feels like to be young. (L'Engle quoted in New York Newsday, Dec. 21, 1989)

The value of a diary is priceless.[5] Not only does it contain her story, but it also contains her self, or selves. Memory, accompanied by words in her diaries, together with her imagination and rewritings, give L'Engle the necessary tools to create fiction. The experiences, attitudes and feelings of her many selves are made available through the language she speaks in her published journals.

Language and Memory

Virginia Woolf spoke of memory as a way to fully understand and find expression of our emotions about life experiences: "The past is beautiful because one never realizes an emotion at the time. It expands later, and thus we don't have complete emotions about the present, only about the past" (quoted in Warnock 112). Mary Warnock sees language as the tool for this expansion (112). Writers use language to polish the past, allowing the awareness of the present time to enter the emotional world of the past. As Woolf notes:

> The past only comes back when the present runs so smoothly that it is like the sliding surface of a deep river. Then one sees through the surface to the depths. In those moments I find one of my greatest satisfactions, not that I am thinking of the past; but that it is then that I am living most fully in the present. For the present when backed by the past is a thousand times deeper than the present when it presses so close that you can feel nothing else, when the film on the camera reaches only the eye. (Virginia Woolf quoted in Warnock 136)

Memory, in this way, can be the beginning of the creative process, either leading to the "what ifs" of fiction, or the "this is how it is" of journalling. L'Engle taps both of these sources, allowing her memories, and past diaries, to lead her on their own paths. Some journeys come to bloom in fiction, some in journals; both are creative, and, dare I say, both are autobiographical, and both are legitimate forms of literature. And memory is the stem of this flower.

L'Engle uses her journals to question life, to ponder human needs and concerns: "The primary needs can be filled without language. We can eat, sleep, make love, build a house, bear children, without language. But we cannot ask questions. We cannot ask, 'Who am I? Who are you? Why?' .... Mankind is always in the human predicament, and this is what people write about" (Quiet 196). Writers are interested in people, specifically what affects people personally as human beings. Writers cannot create without some part of themselves entering in. Writers exist, and this is why they need language to question and investigate -- in song, in the theatre, at the computer, anywhere their hearts or minds lead them. Life demands to be shared, and writers use the opportunity of language to reach other people with their

vision. When writers express themselves, they express life, and somehow what is true for one human is important to others:

> The truth, if it can be discovered, can also, necessarily, be shared. But this is a misleading way to put it. The struggle to discover it and the struggle to share it are one in the same. This is as much so in the case of a diary never intended to be read by any eye other than the diarist's as it is in the case of the novel or any other work, destined from the outset for publication. Merely to state what is true is potentially to communicate it; for language, even a code or a cypher, is essentially, not just accidentally, common. (Warnock 111)

Humans need verbal expression to reach out to others, not only for response, but also for re-affirmation of their own selves.

The Diary and Self-Discovery

People have been asking since the beginning of time: "Who am I?" This search for self and for self-awareness is an important part of autobiographical writings. There is a value appointed to human life, a fascination with individuality, self, and identity. People have written about it for centuries, spent millions of dollars in the quest for identity at the psychiatrists' office, but the most candid search may be found in a diary. People, notably women, have been recording their lives, and often themselves in the process, in diaries, and journals, and letters for ages.[6] The published journal has become, for L'Engle, a place to talk with oneself, to communicate emotions, to evaluate and contemplate, and often to explore life. In a diary, the self is the subject of the writing:

> The act of autobiographical writing, particularly that which occurs in a periodic structure, involves the writer in complex literary as well as psychological processes. It is a paradox that the process whose frequent goal is to establish self-continuity involves at its heart a dislocation from the self, or the turning of subject into object. Even in some of the earliest American women's diaries we can see this kind of "double consciousness," as the self stands apart to view the self. (Culley 8)

The diary writer uses the paper as a mirror to view the self. However, as we will see in Chapter III, the self that is constructed is affected before the writing stage by other "mirrors" in the writer's life. These "mirrors" are the people who give L'Engle feedback on who she has become. How she sees herself through others' eyes in her journals helps to shape her own notions of self.

Shari Benstock speaks of the mirror stage of early self-development as " ... a realization of wholeness, completeness ... and a shock of awareness that the image (which may not be seen in a mirror, but rather in a parent's or a sibling's face) is that of an *other*" (The Private Self 14). L'Engle recounts in her journal A Circle of Quiet her moment of recognition:

> I first became aware of myself as self ... when I was seven or eight years old. We lived in an apartment on East 82nd Street in New York. My bedroom window looked out on the court, and I could see into the apartment across the way. One evening when I was looking out I saw a woman undressing by her open window. She took off her dress, stretched, stood there in her slip, not moving, not doing anything, just standing there, being.
>
> And that was my moment of awareness (of ontology?): that woman across the court who did not know me, and whom I

> did not know, was a person. She had thoughts of her own. She *was*. Our lives would never touch. I would never know her name. And yet it was she who revealed to me my first glimpse of personhood.
>
> When I woke up in the morning the wonder of that revelation was still with me. There was a woman across the court, and she had dreams and inner conversations which were just as real as mine and which did not include me. But she was there, she was real, and so, therefore, was everybody else in the world. And so, therefore, was I.
>
> I got out of bed and stood in front of the mirror and for the first time looked at myself consciously. I, too, was real, standing there thin and gawky in a white nightgown. I did more than exist. I *was*.
>
> That afternoon when I went to the park I looked at everybody I passed on the street, full of the wonder of their realness. (Quiet 32-33)

This moment in L'Engle's journal shows the crossing of the two roads of self and memory. This first memory of the sense of self is an important moment in the life of L'Engle the person, and of L'Engle the writer. Warnock explains this process: "...the account of childhood is of unique importance .... Childhood experiences, that is to say, are not to be understood, as Freud might seem to understand them, as *causing* us to be as we are. It is rather that we cannot understand or explain what we are without reference to our childhood" (115). It is necessary for humans to communicate their lives, their experiences, and ultimately, their inner selves. L'Engle's journals provide

readers with the opportunity to view her *self*, and help them to find the road to their own exploration of ontology.

Molly Hite, in the foreword to Gender and Genre in Literature, discusses the notion that female writers of fiction are somehow "'writing themselves', in the sense of transcribing in narrative form their own experiences, emotions, attitudes, and ideas" (xiii). Hite is referring to those critics who view all women's writings as works devoted to the self, who indicate that it is somehow "easy" to write the self. This, of course, she believes to be untrue: "Clearly, 'writing oneself' does not occur by reflex or through inadvertency, nor is it necessarily done by those short on creativity, for lack of an alternative. Self-writing is, in fact, a *kind* of creativity, a peculiarly momentous kind" (xv). L'Engle and other published journal writers utilize their creative writing skills in the formation of the journal. Memory and imagination join together in the creation of the self on the page.

Journal writing implies a sense of self-worth on the part of the author, a conviction that the individual human life is of great importance. L'Engle's journal Two-Part Invention involves the death of her husband, an event that causes a feeling of dislocation as a major part of her life has been altered. Margo Culley realizes that there are many life changes that can affect the diarist: "Marriage, travel, and widowhood are all occasions creating a sense of a discontinuity of self -- I was that, now I am this; I was there, now I am here. Keeping a life record can be an attempt to preserve continuity seemingly broken or lost" (8). L'Engle's experience suggests that the journal can become a survival tool, but also it can become a place of discovery: "Such writings serve as a means by which to create images of 'self' through the writing act, a way by which to find a 'voice' -- whether private or public -- through which to express that which cannot be expressed in other forms" (Benstock 5-6).

L'Engle expresses her self in all of her writing, but she is the first to admit that the development of self is a continuing and life-long process that has no end:

> I haven't defined a self, nor do I want to. A self is not something static, tied up in a pretty parcel and handed to the child, finished and complete. A self is always becoming. *Being* does mean becoming, but we run so fast that it is only when we seem to stop -- as sitting on the rock at the brook -- that we are aware of our own *is*ness, of being. But certainly this is not static, for this awareness of being is always a way of moving from the selfish self -- the self-image -- and towards the real.
>
> Who am I, then? Who are you? (Quiet 32)

And of course the answer to these questions is always evolving, but the essence remains. Readers may not be able to say, "This is L'Engle," but they can comment on what they feel she feels, what they are able to see through her words.

Another irony found in the search for self-awareness is how fleeting the knowledge can be; one moment writers and readers have the words to express who they are, and the next they are speechless. Words can be too confining, hence the continual rewriting to enter into the process of becoming. They must be careful not to believe the self is ever definitively captured in language. Once again, this is an area that L'Engle feels should not be fully explained:

> Half the problem is that an identity is something which must be understood intuitively, rather than in terms of provable fact. An infinite question is often destroyed by finite answers. To define everything is to annihilate much that gives us laughter

> and joy. I found that I could think about this strange thing, the self, only in terms of the characters in the novel I was writing, or in terms of other people, never of myself. If I try self-consciously to become a person, I will never be one. The most real people, those who are able to forget their selfish selves, who have true compassion, are usually the most distinct individuals. (Quiet 30-31)

L'Engle's characters provide metaphors for her own searching. Her characters help to show her aspects of her own self, aspects that are difficult to recognize in her own life. Sometimes adding language to memory and intuition takes people farther away from that which is real. This is the ultimate paradox in any self-examination. If a person stares too long, she loses her focus: "We talk about identities and lose them; it's something like looking the Gorgon in the face and turning to stone" (Quiet 160). This risk, of course, has never stopped people from trying. Writers, naturally, will go on with this process.

Invention, Self-discovery and Life-writing

L'Engle has published four journals in her "Crosswicks" series and three journals in her "Genesis Trilogy," as well as three other individual journals that I am examining in this thesis. In each case she has drawn upon her daily, unpublished diaries to shape her journals. She uses her journals to muse about the things in life which she has learned. She has done what scholars have done in the past by publishing authors' diaries: made them accessible to her reading public, but she has done so without compromising her own privacy. She has taken the parts of her life that she is willing to share, made these episodes available to a publisher, and together they have

edited them -- because a journal is a creative form. In her journals, the reader is able to see the developing and emerging self. They are able to share this development with L'Engle to become a part of her joy and her pain, and to relate to her need to speak:

> It's all been said better before. If I thought I had to say it better than anybody else, I'd never start. Better or worse is immaterial. The thing is that it has to be said; by me, ontologically. We each have to say it, to say it our own way. Not of our own *will*, but as it comes out through us. Good or bad, great or little: that isn't what human creation is about. It is what we have to try; to put it down in pigment, or words, or musical notations, or we die. (Quiet 28)

L'Engle understands that life needs to be expressed, explored and discovered. This discovery leads to the glimmers of self.

In the act of reading, readers enter into the journalling process along with L'Engle. They are able to see the memory world of the journal as Mary Warnock views it:

> If I read a diary successfully written by someone else, the truth I learn from it, the knowledge that is shared in it, is knowledge of another person. It is like the knowledge I get when I fall in love with someone or make a new friend. An individual person is revealed. The diarist herself, re-reading her diary after a lapse of time, will also regain knowledge of her own past, not just a knowledge that this or that occurred, but, often, a reliving, the peculiar knowledge that is memory. (Warnock 111)

Reading a diary or a journal is a personal experience for both writer and reader. For instance, when I read L'Engle's journals, I feel somehow

connected, I find myself saying "Yes" aloud in agreement with her thoughts, I feel a friendship (albeit one way) forming as I continue to read. She is able to share herself with me through her memories. And these memories are most useful to me after they have been sifted through the creative process. I can easily relate to story. L'Engle's journals are taken from her own personal diaries, so it has also been a reading search for her as well. Again Warnock comments on this process: "Unless she [a diarist] refers to her diary merely for information, to find out what she gave the Smiths when they last came to dinner ... she will read it in search of a revelation or intuition of the past that is *her* past" (111). Once the past has been revealed, the diarist may choose to use this knowledge creatively. L'Engle has chosen this creative path -- and it influences not only her published journals, but also her fiction. She is a writer, not only of characters, but also of herself: "... in attempting to find words for our experiences, we are actually creating ourselves and our world" (Charles Taylor paraphrased in Warnock 112).

It is in the genre of autobiographical writings that the reader is most able to see the continuously emerging self of the writer: "If we ask why people keep diaries, or write their autobiographies, the answer is not straightforward, but it is undoubtedly related to that sense of the continuity of the individual self which has emerged as something uniquely valuable to human beings" (Warnock 103). Not only is this true for the reader, but for the writer who, when re-reading diaries and journals, is able to see herself in her own handwriting. There, in ink, is her past, linking her directly with all that has come before. This forms an interesting relationship between the writer and her work, as her own past can influence her present self. By having the opportunity to interact with her past, the writer is able to stand back from her self in print and evaluate:

> Some evidence exists that the persona in the pages of the diary shapes the life lived as well as the reverse ... [M]any diarists reread previous entries before writing a current one, creating a complexly layered present to which a version of the past is immediately available. From entry to entry, the text incorporates its future as it reconstructs its past. (Culley 14 and 20)

L'Engle is able to read her past diaries. In fact, L'Engle uses her unpublished diaries in the creation of her published journals. She is able to read from her own past and make connections to her present and her future.

The phenomenon of self-writing by creating a journal is not successful if writers use memory alone. There must be a close collaboration, on the part of both writer and reader, between memory, imagination and invention:

> If something is known directly, recalled vividly, by an author, then *my* imagination can cause *me* to grasp that very truth, through *her* described memory of it. Her imagination and mine show the universal in the particular .... There is no reason why this truthful narrative should be so moving, except that its whole intention is to tell the truth. It is a story which could not be told by imagination itself, but only by imagination and memory together. (Warnock 123)

And this is what most readers appreciate about L'Engle's fiction -- there are often passages from her journal brought to life in her characters.[7]

L'Engle has shared her personal truth in the most universal way, by calling forth a response in her readers and thus creating others who share her experience. Her memory, without imagination, could not be shared, yet each memory-truth demands to be shared: " ... it is not an 'interesting' or

'eventful' life that is necessary, but the search after truth through memory ... the acknowledgment that an individual, imaginatively and truthfully explored, is more than just an individual. The general is found *in* the particular" (Warnock 124).

Memory is an important factor in life writing. Not only does it open doors to the past, but in conjunction with language and imagination it creates our selves and our world. This is not to say that memory is the only important tool needed; as a writer, L'Engle is able to use all of her literary skills to help create her journals.

Som[illegible] ia
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{ Journal Entry: On Madeleine }

Sometimes I get so personally involved in Madeleine's work that it hurts me. I read and lose myself so easily. I just finished re-reading her novel A Ring of Endless Light for the umpteenth time, and I am rattled. I feel the animals tap-dancing in my stomach and my head is reeling. I care. I care about Madeleine, and the characters, and the world, and I want to run – not from anything but towards life. I want to feel alive, be myself all over. So I turn to studying the search for self in literature, hoping that it will reaffirm my own being.

We are all on a personal quest, the ultimate discovery in life, the struggle to find and retain a sense of self. It is a long and painful journey, yet it brings the ultimate joy. I have been travelling with Madeleine for sixteen years now, and I have grown along with her words. Our relationship has been interactive, and I have changed her words' meaning by what I myself bring to her work.

Madeleine, unbeknownst to her, has been there throughout my life, guiding me, and helping me to grow and mature into the person that I am today. I suppose I've come to rely on her words to give me strength and conviction. I don't know what I'll do when I've finally read the last of her work; read them all again and again, I suppose. I love to get involved in her characters, her memories, her life. The one thing that I know that she has given me is the courage to go on, every day, forever. Life is what she offers, and I heartily accept. So tonight I open up her journals and step inside her world. A world not unlike my own. People, it seems, have many of the same dreams, and certainly the same fears. It's nice to know we're not alone.

Chapter II

Journals as Literature:

L'Engle's Journals, Autobiographical Theory and Transcendentalism

There have been many studies examining autobiography and its many forms, but the last twenty years has seen a renewed interest in the writing of the self. No longer, however, are scholars looking solely to traditional autobiography; the genre has widened to include journals, diaries, autobiographical writings, letters. Moreover, critics[8] have discovered that white, well-to-do men are not the only subjects worthy of examination. More and more studies are focusing on "the other" who have been under-represented in published autobiography: women, non-heterosexuals, racial minorities, and third-world peoples of both sexes. Basically, readers and scholars alike have discovered everyone else. Herein lies the critical conundrum: "everyone else" is a rather large and varied category. It implies that each work is a category in and of itself. L'Engle's writing shows the value of each individual, that each voice needs to be heard. Even though we may all be saying the same thing, we all need to say it from our own place of existence. I am not implying that L'Engle is *not* a woman, nor that she is *not* white, American, nor middle-class, but I am saying that so are many other people, and these categories are not specific enough. The only category that works for me is *"Madeleine L'Engle."*[9] This makes a poetics of life writing a difficult endeavor if every writer is a category in and of him/herself, but writers all do fit into one category: they are all human, and write from a human need for understanding. Writers seek to answer questions about the

self, this life, and what waits after death. Both readers and writers need to know that they are not alone in their thoughts.

Recent Feminist Criticism

Many feminist scholars have taken it upon themselves to carve a niche for the distinct tradition of women's autobiographical writings. Margo Culley, Bella Brodzki, Celeste Schenck, Estelle Jelinek, Janice Morgan, Colette Hall, Shirley Neuman, Liz Stanley and Shari Benstock are among those who have illuminated the study of this genre and brought forward the notion that there is a distinct feminist autobiographical tradition. Each editor of autobiographical collections points to the importance of an emerging self, a self that has been silenced in the past, a self that is also an "other" in society. Morgan and Hall in their collection Gender and Genre in Literature are aware that female autobiography has been grossly overlooked in the past, especially by male critics. Thus the autobiography canon itself has been defined as one, "that effectively excludes and silences all other alternative voices and visions, the establishment of a tradition where those experiences that have been lived and written from a perspective other than white, male, upper-middle class, Western are not fully represented" (4). The collections by recent feminist writers within the women's autobiographical tradition have promoted the study of women's autobiographical writings; the more voices that are heard in support of this genre, the more credibility it develops in the eyes of the world.

Brodzki and Schenck in Life/Lines point out that each anthology on women's autobiography has a different agenda in tackling the "nature of the

female self" (12). They believe that each section of the term auto/bio/graphy is important in the understanding of the genre: "we intend to restore the *bio* Stanton excised from autobiography. We strongly believe that the duplicitous and complicitious relationship of "life" and "art" in autobiographical modes is precisely the point" (12-13).[10] Life writing is, as the term implies, a method of writing the life of an individual self; it is a search for understanding and meaning in a life through art and the creation of a persona: "Personality and writing skill are what shape an autobiography .... [Autobiography is] an amalgam of one's self-image, one's process of thinking and feeling, and one's talent as a formal writer" (Jelinek xi-xii).

All of the theorists mentioned realize the importance of the reader in the autobiographical process. Morgan and Hall ask the questions "'Who is speaking?' 'Who is writing?' ... 'Who is listening?' -- and even beyond that -- 'Who will respond?'" (4). Each reader brings her own meaning to the work and brings the words to life; reading is an active endeavour, perhaps leading to a better understanding of her own self through the process. Writers of autobiographies are reaching out to others, the audience, to find a place in the world:

> ... autobiographical writing -- however private or intimist its concerns may be -- is also a gesture toward others; however self-oriented, it is addressed to a community of readers. This idea is central, for as readers, the writing of the self has much to do with our primary interest in literature, and fictional identifications of various kinds are certainly among the many ways we use (however mysteriously) to construct our own identities. (Morgan and Hall 15)

People write autobiography and read autobiography for many of the same reasons: to find themselves, to heal, and to grow. The process of writing autobiographically helps to create a sense of continuity through time. One use of autobiography is to show writers where they have been, and where they wish to go. To be able to look back in retrospect and see who they are, and connect this to who they have become, creates a sense of oneness, a wholeness of self over time. Their own sense of identity has much to do with this connection to the past and to the future self that is to come. All of these notions are underlying aspects of the autobiographical impulse.

Shirley Neuman grapples with the problems of finding a poetics for a complex genre. Neuman argues that different camps of thinking (most notably, humanists, feminists, and poststructuralists) must take into account the many complexities surrounding the subject of autobiography. Many other feminist scholars have spoken of the problems related to selecting the approach of one camp or another. It is important to realize that the subject of an autobiography is neither a unified whole, nor a fragmented "other" standing apart from society. In fact, often both of these positions shape the persona during the writing process. Humans are unique, but do not exist in isolation.

Simply put, it is not enough to take a humanist approach, or a poststructuralist approach, or a feminist approach, but rather it is the blending of important aspects of all the different poetics that will help to define women's autobiography: or even further, as Neuman suggests, to a poetics of difference. Neuman shows readers that it is not always the commonalties that define a genre, but rather the differences within. There are hundreds of factors that help to define a woman's autobiography and to account for the ensuing persona that emerges on the page:

> Nationality, historical juncture, and governments make a difference to 'self'-realization, as do varying family structures, educational patterns, and psychic, social, and physical traumas suffered collectively or individually. Gender, sexuality, attitudes about our bodies, and socio-economic class all figure crucially in the autobiographer's representation of self, whether that self is conceived of as socially constructed or as forged in determined individualistic resistance to social forces. Not only will any given autobiographer necessarily represent his or her 'self' at the intersection of several such categories, but, as Trinh Minh-ha[11] puts it, 'despite our desperate, eternal attempt to separate, contain and mend, categories always leak'. (222)

It is not enough to call L'Engle a woman without giving her some context in the world as a complex human being. It is imperative to note the factors that affect L'Engle.[12] She is an American, born in 1918, who was affected by both World Wars as well as the threat of nuclear disaster. Her father, his lungs damaged by mustard gas in the First World War, moved the family to Switzerland to aid his failing health. This led to L'Engle's years in boarding school and the eventual death of her father from his war injuries. After college, L'Engle worked on her first novel while working on Broadway. She had her first novel The Small Rain published in 1945 and was already an established writer when she met and married her husband Hugh Franklin. They had forty years together, as well as three children, before Hugh's death in 1984. During all this time, L'Engle continued to write and publish. These are just some of the considerations that need to be made to understand L'Engle and her choices as a writer; not only do these conditions define what makes L'Engle who she is, but also who she is not.

Neuman's poetics of difference conceives of the self, "not as the product of its different identity *from* others but as constituted by multiple differences *within* and *from* itself" (223). It is not enough to say that women are not men; they are also not each other:

> Such a poetics of differences would allow us to heed the ways in which any given autobiographical subject exists at particular and changing intersections of race, nationality, religion, education, profession, class, language, gender, sexuality, a specific historical moment, and a host of material conditions. (224)

Shirley Neuman herself does not believe that her poetics of difference could be systematized by any one scholar, but she does believe that it "can be accumulated from the ongoing writing and reading of many autobiographers, many readers, occupying many simultaneous *and* sequential subject-positions" (226). Each study of autobiography is unique, as each autobiographer is unique. This does not suggest, however, that there are no similarities in the genre. As we will see, the literary approach to autobiography points to many textual similarities in the way that the self is constructed on the page.

Feminist scholars have created a strong argument for women's autobiographical writings, and their collections are tremendously important for the genre. I must turn to other scholars, however, to find a home for L'Engle and her journals.

The Role of the Writing of Autobiography and the Study of Autobiography as a Way of Thinking

How do we teach the study of autobiography? Why do we study it, or even read it for that matter? These are all questions that have the teaching profession in a quandary. The first problem is the absence of any scholarly agreement on autobiographical theory and the frightening possibility of having to teach something that is so wide open in methodology. Robert J. Graham in his book, Reading and Writing the Self: Autobiography in Education and the Curriculum, seeks to calm some of the fears and misconceptions that go hand in hand with a study of autobiography. Graham argues that autobiography is a way of thinking, a specific type of knowledge, the truth of the self: "For if all knowledge begins in self-knowledge, or is a function of self-knowledge, then we cannot be said to truly know something until we have possessed it, made it our own" (3). Autobiography can be used at many different levels in the curriculum, not simply the purely literary. Allowing students the opportunity to 'find' themselves by writing, or to recognize themselves in others by reading autobiographical writings, places knowledge in the hands of the students; they have become a part of the lesson. While writing or reading about the self, the self is also constructed.

Autobiography can also be seen to have a cultural/social dimension. Graham refers to Rockwell Gray's argument that "we are currently living in an age when self-exploration is all but mandatory, and that signs of an autobiographical impulse can be found woven into the very fabric of society" (38). Autobiography is not necessarily narcissistic; it is a way of coping with the world, a road to better understanding and greater meaning in life:

> Life is a process of becoming, one in which the existence of frustrations and problems make the existence of consummatory experience possible. Our feelings of satisfaction from our earthly pilgrimage may lie more in the journey, with its pauses for self-doubt and examination, than in our arrival at any celestial city of complete and total self-knowledge. (65)

Autobiography is a reflection of life itself; it is a process, and it can be undertaken at any time, at any age, in any context, and as often as a person desires. These are principles which L'Engle has proven over her career and throughout her life. It is a method for humans to find a comfortable place in the world. Autobiography is the crossroads between self and experience.

One problem associated with teaching autobiography is that people are afraid of that with which they are unfamiliar and hesitant to share themselves so personally and openly in the classroom. This hesitancy can breed hostility. Moreover, many students question the validity of the genre as literature. It takes a strong teacher to withstand the constant questioning of the very course and material being taught. Autobiography is a volatile subject and heated responses to it should be expected as well as praised. It is precisely this hostility that keeps the dedicated teachers coming to class, to be able to show the students that there is nothing to fear in the search for greater self-awareness. Autobiographical writing allows all who attempt it to be artists.

Life writing as a process of self-discovery for creative writers is a practice L'Engle encourages. She has spent the greater part of her life teaching autobiographical writing: first by example in her books, and also by lecturing for many years and leading workshops all over the world.[13] Her advice has been write from the place you know and keep a journal. In this way writers can deepen their experiences and discovery of their selves.

The Tradition of Transcendental Autobiography in America

Transcendentalism is not an easy term to define. It became prominent as a movement, both philosophical and literary, in America in 1836. Many authors were reacting against formalized religion and growing commercialism and materialism in their country. Ralph Waldo Emerson and Thoreau considered intuition and feeling an important part of all knowledge, and both men believed in self-sufficiency and self-reliance. They believed in a power behind the universe and connected all things in nature to a universal whole. The early Transcendentalists saw the beauty and glory in all life. The Transcendentalists looked to philosophy, religion and society for their principles, but their greatness came out of the literary movement they created, rather than from changes to any establishment. It is this American literary tradition that has affected society and the notions of the American Dream. The Transcendentalists believed in the ability of every self-reliant person, and the notion that all people may personally find God in their everyday life. The Transcendentalists attempted to reach the ideal of democracy in both life and literature:

> If one may attribute, for the sake of definition, a single overriding motive to the Transcendentalist group, it was no less than the creation of a new literature, the literature, in a word, of democracy. Democracy had already taken political shape in America, and the democratic ideals of equality and liberty were already deeply implanted in the American spirit, but the inmost meaning of democracy -- its new conception of the nature of man, his place in the world, and his relation to the divine -- had

> hardly been thought about as yet and never adequately expressed. (Hochfield 35)

Perhaps the ideal of democracy was not achieved by the Transcendentalists, but it was striven for and the principles they stood for remained. These Transcendentalists realized that they could reach people with their ideas and that they could continue, as individuals, to see the world from their unique perspective. Emerson and Thoreau questioned the very nature of humans and the universe, claiming not only that every one has limitless potential, but also that God is present in all things. These men saw beauty everywhere and often related their discoveries to the natural world. These analogies to nature were a means of discovering Truth. They searched themselves and the natural world to find the door to eternity and Truths in life which do not link to fact. They were searching for a deeper knowledge. Thoreau points to some of the greatest principles of Transcendentalism: "I went to the woods because I wanted to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived ... I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life" (Walden 78). These men were explorers of their own souls and the great Soul of all of creation. To live to the fullest is an important exercise for these writers. It is through their writings that readers are able to witness their journeys to eternity. Many Transcendentalists used the journal format to express their experiences and emotions. First the writers shared the wonder of the moment with themselves, and then with their readers.

Some scholars may claim that the movement came to an end with the onset of the Civil War, but others see transcendental values in the works of many other writers. Most specifically in contemporary times, Madeleine L'Engle and Annie Dillard. L'Engle could be considered to be a

transcendental writer, finding sheer joy in her life, the world, and nature in general. L'Engle's journals are not only a place for self-reflection, but also for spiritual awakenings and questions about the nature of the universe. L'Engle, like Thoreau and Dillard, sees patterns in nature, patterns that point to universal themes, to connections between us all, and to an understanding of a higher power at work in all that exists around us. These writers use their journals to record their brushes with eternity, their awe in the face of nature, and their realizations about the workings of the universe. The journal becomes a place for pondering the many questions that affect their lives.

L'Engle and Dillard have a profound love of nature and understanding of the power behind the universe. They both show their awe of nature, the universe and the glory of God in their writings. Like many Transcendentalists before them, they see God in all things, as Dillard demonstrates in her journal Pilgrim at Tinker Creek: "And like Billy Bray I go my way, and my left foot says 'Glory' and my right foot says 'Amen': in and out of Shadow Creek, upstream and down, exultant, in a daze, dancing, to the twin silver trumpets of praise" (271). L'Engle turns to her faith for support, but she, like Dillard sees God at all times, in all places. L'Engle demonstrates that God is a part of science:

> I ask God to set me upon a rock that is higher than I so that I may be able to see more clearly, see the tragedy and the joy and sometimes the dull slogging along of life with an assurance that not only is there rock under my feet, but that God made the rock and you and me, and is concerned with Creation, every galaxy, every atom and sub-atomic particle. Matter *matters*. (The Rock that is Higher 180)

This brings us to the notion that Transcendentalists are able to reconcile science and religion. Each discovery in the scientific world only serves to widen and improve our understanding of God. For L'Engle and Dillard, science points to the glorious diversity of God's creation. In Pilgrim at Tinker Creek, Dillard spends her time in nature observing, learning all that she can about the natural world and how it relates to herself. She does not dismiss science, but instead embraces it in her ongoing philosophy of God and the universe: "But in 1927 Werner Heisenberg[14] pulled out the rug, and our whole understanding of the universe toppled and collapsed. For some reason it has not yet trickled down to the man on the street that some physicists now are a bunch of wild-eyed, raving mystics" (202). L'Engle and Dillard both agree that God knows of all of His creation; all are accounted for, in both the macrocosm and the microcosm. And this very thought does not daunt L'Engle; the expanse of the universe only serves to make her feel more connected to life:

> When I think of the incredible, incomprehensible sweep of creation above me, I have the strange reaction of feeling fully alive. Rather than lost and unimportant and meaningless, set against galaxies which go beyond the reach of the furthest telescopes, I feel that my life has meaning. Perhaps I should feel insignificant, but instead I feel a soaring in my heart that the God who could create all this -- and out of nothing -- can still count the hairs of my head. (The Irrational Season 11)

A Transcendentalist sees divinity in all of creation, including the human soul. All are connected to God and each other and the entire universe. Nothing goes unaccounted for in this view of the world; every one has a place, a place of great importance.

For Dillard the amazement of creation lies in the complexity and diversity of her fellow living creatures:

> Look at an overwintering ball of buzzing bees, or a turtle under ice breathing through its pumping cloaca. Look at the fruit of the Osage orange tree, big as a grapefruit, green, convoluted as any human brain. Or look at a rotifer's translucent gut: something orange and powerful is surging up and down like a piston, and something small and round is spinning in place like a flywheel. Look, in short, at practically anything -- the coot's feet, the mantis's face, a banana, the human ear -- and see that not only did the creator create everything, but that he is apt to create *anything*. He'll stop at nothing. (Pilgrim 135)

There are many questions, but Dillard and L'Engle have learned to accept that there may never be full answers. This does not discourage study or discovery, however, as these women still *ask* the questions and rely on faith to help them when the questions remain.

There are moments, however, that are pure discovery, when even questions are unnecessary. A major component of Transcendentalism is the peak experience that occurs in the life of the author. A peak experience is characterized by a heightened awareness of life and surroundings. It may simply be a moment of clarity, when all seems knowable, possible and wonderful. For Dillard these moments happen most often in nature and certainly when she least expects to find them:

> So I blurred my eyes and gazed towards the brim of my hat and saw a new world. I saw the pale white circles roll up, roll up, like the world's turning, mute and perfect, and I saw the linear flashes, gleaming silver, like stars being born at random down a

> rolling scroll of time. Something broke and something opened. I filled up like a new wineskin. I breathed an air like light; I saw a light like water. I was the lip of a fountain the creek filled forever; I was ether, the leaf in the zephyr; I was flesh-flake, feather, bone. When I see this way I see truly. As Thoreau says, I return to my senses. (Pilgrim 32)

These moments are a true gift to a Transcendentalist. Not only do they strengthen the connection with God, but also with all of creation. For Dillard, these peak experiences bring her closer to nature, to the creek, to the universe, to becoming a part of the whole.

L'Engle also realizes how special these glimpses are in her life. To be able to glance at eternity, even for brief flashes, is especially important for L'Engle. The ability to see beyond the present, or simply the gift of being truly *in* the present, is something that few people experience -- to be alive and know it fully and completely. For L'Engle a transcendental moment of awareness may occur at any random time, not necessary when she is alone contemplating in nature. While driving with her daughter Josephine's family, in the back seat with the children, L'Engle abruptly and without warning moves into a peak experience:

> Then, suddenly, the world unfolded, and I moved into an indescribable place of many dimensions where colors were more brilliant and more varied than those of the everyday world. The unfolding continued; everything deepened and opened, and I glimpsed relationships in which the truth of love was fully revealed. (Summer 151)

These moments do not, and cannot, last indefinitely if a person is to continue in everyday life; these are times of glory, not delusion. L'Engle and Dillard

are not simply Transcendentalists; they are also writers, and as such they are compelled to share these experiences with the world. A peak experience is personal and yet universal at the same time. It may not be taught, but it can be shared. As Dillard notes: "Not only does something come if you wait, but it pours over you like a waterfall, like a tidal wave. You wait in all naturalness without expectation or hope, emptied, translucent, and that which comes rocks and topples you; it will shear, loose, launch, winnow, grind" (Pilgrim 259). L'Engle and Dillard use their journals to record these moments, to attempt to find words for the glory they have experienced. As writers they are able to create metaphors to express their transcendental moments. Such moments are timeless, or outside of time.

{ Journal Entry: On Glory }

There have been many times in my life that I have been able to reach beyond the present and into that wonderful world of eternity. I know it is the most treasured gift I have ever received.

Those are the days that never end
refuse to finish
and I can touch any limits –
I am limitless myself.
There are no pressures of any kind
I feel, I trust. I simply am.
I remember everything that has happened before me
and know everything that is to come.
I feel my pulse
in connection with the ocean
Waves. Blood.
Together we are connected and know no bounds.
Those days
those tastes of heaven
are the reason for living
the insight into being
The beginning and the end of the journey
into life.

Chapter III

Time Alone, Time Beyond and Time to Write: The Journal in the Life of a Writer

The Need for A Circle of Quiet in L'Engle's Life

Janice Morgan in Gender and Genre in Literature points to the key individuals in a woman's life who shaped her sense of self. This is certainly true of L'Engle as a woman and as a writer. She has been fortunate to have many people of value in her life. She has turned to them for guidance and for support, but L'Engle is skeptical: "I don't know what I'm like. I get glimpses of myself in other people's eyes. I try to be careful whom I use as a mirror: my husband; my children; my mother; the friends of my right hand ... But we aren't always careful of our mirrors" (Quiet 30). Many women find it difficult to satisfy the demands placed upon them by society to fill their role as wife and mother at the expense of a career. L'Engle has a split role as writer-wife-mother-friend, and all are important to her. But she, like Annie Dillard, has learned to leave time for herself:

> Every so often I need OUT; something will throw me into total disproportion, and I have to get away from everybody -- away from all these people I love most in the world -- in order to regain a sense of proportion .... My special place is a small brook in a green glade, a circle of quiet from which there is no visible sign of human beings .... I go to the brook because I get out of being, out of the essential. (Quiet 4-6)

L'Engle begins her first journal in the Crosswicks series, A Circle of Quiet, by introducing her home and her family. It is not long, however, before L'Engle

is journeying into nature, to her circle of quiet where she goes to feel alive, to be free, to simply be. Like many Transcendentalists, she wonders about life and faith, and marvels at the splendor and complexity of the natural world; not only is her secret spot a chance to be whole, but it is also a place to feel connected: "The brook, the bush, the sun-warmed rock, ... have seen, felt, touched, healed me" (246).

In the journal Walking on Water: Reflections on Faith and Art, L'Engle again reminds readers of the importance of thinking time. Her time alone at the brook is a necessary ingredient in her development as both a person and a writer: "I sit on my favorite rock, looking over the brook, to take time away from busy-ness, time to *be*. I've long since stopped feeling guilty about taking *be*ing time; it's something we all need for our spiritual health, and often we don't take enough of it" (12). In order for L'Engle to grow as a human, and also to grow as a writer, she must take time to listen not only to her self and her intellect, but also to her intuition and the world around her. The search for wholeness that is undertaken in quiet contemplation is continued in the process of writing: "The discipline of creation, be it to paint, compose, write, is an effort toward wholeness" (70). And the journal is a tool that helps to clarify the questions and reconcile the doubts she discovers in her 'circle of quiet.' L'Engle expresses her need to listen to herself, her work and her heart. It is in her quiet time that she is able to find the questions that are worth asking:

> Sitting, or better, lying on one of my favorite sun-warming rocks, I try to take time to let go, to listen, in much the same way that I listen when I am writing. This is praying time, and the act of listening in prayer is the same act as listening in writing ... And then there is time in which to be, simply to be, that time in

> which God can take away our emptiness and fill it up with what He wants, and drain away the business with which we inevitably get involved in the dailiness of human living. (170)

Becoming a whole person, then, is part of a paradox; we must *know* ourselves, and yet we must also be willing and able to let go of this knowledge to reach an even greater depth of understanding of the world around us. We do not exist in isolation and as such our selves are shaped by other people and life itself. L'Engle the writer needs to have the courage to go beyond her intellect to find the heart of the story that is calling out to be created. Universal concerns are given as much importance in her life as her own inquiries of self. But L'Engle is also a fiction writer, and these universal concerns apply to her characters; what is important to L'Engle is also important to her protagonists. Her novels, especially the Time-fantasy books (A Wrinkle in Time, A Wind in the Door, A Swiftly Tilting Planet, Many Waters and An Acceptable Time) affirm the love of the power behind creation. She writes of hope in times of trouble, and her characters light the way through the darkness. Even the dog in A Swiftly Tilting Planet is part of this interconnectedness of all life: L'Engle names him Ananda, which in Sanskrit means "that joy in existence without which the universe will fall apart and collapse" (38). Those who have read her journals know that her characters have benefitted from her own knowledge of herself and the world. L'Engle firmly believes that we need to know and feel Ananda in our lives. As L'Engle has her character Max say in A House Like a Lotus, "being alive is a marvelous, precarious mystery, and few people appreciate it" (61). L'Engle is very *alive* , and through her own writing she is better able to understand what this means to her as a person. To know life is a great gift.

The journals are a place where L'Engle grapples with issues of self and identity -- but not just her *own* self; L'Engle is also concerned with the universe as a whole. L'Engle questions the darkness in the world and attempts to add light through her deeds and her words. The summer L'Engle wrote A Circle of Quiet, she discovered the word ontology, meaning the word "about the essence of things; the word about being" (Quiet 6). This word brings her to question the self and how she relates to it:

> I go to the brook because I get out of being, out of the essential. So I'm not like the bush, then [which simply *is*]. I put all my prickliness, selfishness, in-turnedness, onto my *is*ness; we all tend to, and when we burn, this part of us is consumed. When I go past the tallest blueberry bush, where my twine is tied to one of the branches, I think that the part of us that has to be burned away is something like the deadwood on the bush; it has to go, to be burned in the terrible fire of reality, until there is nothing left but our ontological selves; what we are meant to be. (6-7)

L'Engle goes to her circle of quiet by the brook to take time out of the day to simply *be*. It is a chance to leave the complications of reality and rediscover the essential, the essence, to become whole. And by recording these experiences in her journal she is better able to understand their importance in her life.

Meditation and prayer are a great part of this being time in L'Engle's life. It is vitally important for L'Engle to be able to move beyond the restrictions of her everyday existence. She learns to let go of self: "Meditation is the practice of death and resurrection ... letting go of that conscious control we hold so dear; we are opening ourselves up to the darkness between the galaxies which is the same as the great darkness in the spaces within our

hearts" (Higher 263). The journal is a forum for L'Engle to continue to investigate the questions and discoveries she finds during her moments of quiet contemplation, meditation and prayer. It is through writing that L'Engle is able to find not only herself, but the whole world.

Transcendental Time in L'Engle's Life

When L'Engle writes, she moves beyond the present and the restrictions of the conscious self and into an unconsciousness that is able to allow the true self to emerge:

> It is all, as usual, paradox. I have to use what intellect I have in order to write books, but I write the kinds of books I do in order that I may try to set down glimpses of things that are on the other side of the intellect. We do not go around, or discard our intellect, but we must go through and beyond it. If we are given minds we are required to use them, but not limit ourselves by them. (Quiet 43)

There is a powerhouse of stored potential in the mind, and often the process of writing allows the author to overcome the present restrictions in her abilities. Once this world has been accessed, there are unlimited truths that can be discovered and, ultimately, shared. As L'Engle notes, "I am awed when I sit down at the typewriter to start a new book and so step out into that wild land where the forgotten language is the tongue. Then, and then only, when I have got my feet wet in a distant brook, as real as the one at Crosswicks, am I free to communicate to others what I have seen" (Quiet 201). Writing brings the subconscious to the surface. It is in this accessed world that the writer is able to find truth and story: "The rational intellect ... doesn't

have a great deal to do with art. I am often, in my writing, great leaps ahead of where I am in my thinking, and my thinking has to work its way slowly up to what the "superconscious" has already shown me in a story or poem" (Quiet 40). L'Engle's journals provide a safe place for expression of ideas before they are ever considered for part of a work of fiction. The process of putting things down and accessing them later allows the writer the freedom to explore her psyche in its rawest form. Once L'Engle is ready to deal with an issue, it will show up in her fiction, but not before: it will move out of her subconscious and demand to be written. In her writing L'Engle lets herself explore the world beyond intellect and rationality; however, this world is more easily entered when she has first let her mind select and wander in her journal entries. Each piece she records in her journals is another step towards understanding and sharing.

Virginia Woolf's diary entry on October 29, 1933 remarks "how tremendously important unconsciousness is when one writes." L'Engle comments that an artist must let go of self to allow inspiration to enter in, stressing the need for the unconsciousness that Woolf believed in:

> The concentration of the child at play is analogous to the concentration of the artist of any discipline. In real play, which is real concentration, the child is not only outside time, he is outside *himself*. He has thrown himself completely into whatever it is that he is doing. A child playing a game, building a sand castle, painting a picture, is completely *in* what he is doing. His *self*-consciousness is gone; his consciousness is wholly focused outside himself .... When we are *self*-conscious, we cannot be wholly aware; we must throw ourselves out first. This throwing ourselves away is the act of creativity. So, when

> we wholly concentrate, like a child in play, or an artist at work, then we share in the act of creating. We not only escape time, we also escape our self-conscious selves. (Quiet 10-11)

Writers and all people need to escape beyond the everyday mundania, to venture into the often uncharted waters of the mind. Woolf saw writing as an unconscious action, and she, like L'Engle, realized that the diary could be used for more than just a secret place:

> I should like to come back, after a year or two, and find that the collection had sorted itself and refined itself and coalesced, as such deposits so mysteriously do, into a mould, transparent enough to reflect the light of our life, and yet steady, tranquil compounds with the aloofness of a work of art. The main requisite, I think, on re-reading my old volumes, is not to play the part of censor, but to write as the mood comes or of anything whatever; since I was curious to find how I went for things put in haphazard, and found the significance to lie where I never saw it at the time. (Woolf 14)

L'Engle knows the importance of writing out of the present experience -- to be true to each feeling as it comes, and know that it will explain itself in the future. If the writing does not seem to have a place or a purpose in the beginning, it will make itself known in the creation of a novel or a poem. As Virginia Woolf has shown, the writing will make its own statement at a later date, and when a writer returns to survey these musings, they will become clear in a work of fiction. In this way, a journal becomes a vital point in the creative process.

In the process of becoming, or feeling complete, L'Engle reminds us that there are two types of time in our lives. The Greeks had two words for

time. *Chronos*, or chronological time is one we are all too familiar with in our daily lives. The second is *kairos*. It is not very often that humans are able to reach out to the other side of *chronos* to experience eternity. L'Engle relates *kairos* to the transcendental moments of life, the times when we are most able to let go and come close to wholeness and connectedness to the rest of the world:

> Kairos is not measurable. Kairos is ontological. In kairos we *are*, we are fully in isness, not negatively, as Sartre saw the isness of the oak tree, but fully, wholly, positively. Kairos can sometimes enter, penetrate, break through chronos: the child at play, the painter at his easel .... I sit in the rocking chair with a baby in my arms, and I am in both kairos and chronos. In chronos I may be nothing more than some cybernetic salad on the bottom left-hand corner of a check; or my social-security number; or my passport number. In kairos I am known by name: Madeleine. (Quiet 245)

It is important to remember that we are all capable of entering *kairos*. For L'Engle and many others it is linked to spirituality; religion is important to L'Engle, and her beliefs colour the rest of her life. Believing in God opens up the universe and creation to endless possibilities. Religion does not answer all the questions, however; it actually forces us to ask more, and to be satisfied that we may never know the answers. That is what faith is all about, and the world of faith can be found in *kairos*: "But when I am lying on the rock in the late afternoon I am not in Jacob's time, or indeed not in any chronological time, but in *kairos*, God's time, which touches on eternity" (A Stone for a Pillow 17). Most important, however, is that the world of *kairos* is open to L'Engle the writer, as well as L'Engle the person. She is able to go

beyond time and enter eternity: "When we are writing, or painting, or composing, we are, during the time of creativity, freed from normal restrictions, and are opened to a wider world, where colours are brighter, sounds clearer, and people more wondrously complex than we normally realize" (Water 101).

It is L'Engle's Time series that deals most closely with this concept. L'Engle uses her interest in science to explore the possibilities of time travel. For L'Engle, time can be moved through like space. Her characters learn about life in different times and spaces. This aesthetic distance helps the young protagonists to solve their own problems in the face of a much greater trial. Losing the restrictions of time opens up a world of possibilities for the characters. They are given the opportunity to make a major contribution to the universe while continuing their own personal quest. The world of *kairos* allows the protagonists to begin to deepen, to discover their strengths and weaknesses, but essentially to find their place in the universe. Time becomes an ally in this quest.

Time does not always seem to be a friend, however, when things are difficult in this life: people feel each and every moment in a time of struggle or crisis. In L'Engle's journal about losing her mother, The Summer of the Great-Grandmother, she realizes that each member of the household is reacting to the situation in a different way. L'Engle knows that time is unraveling for her mother, that time is different for each person it touches:

> What is time like for Léna and Charlotte [her granddaughters]? It is longer than for the rest of the household. It is so long that it comes close to breaking time and becoming part of eternity. But it is not that way for the very old. Time unravels, rather than knits up. It is as erratic as nightmare .... [For the senile] times [sic]

> stretches like old, worn-out elastic. What happens if it is stretched till it breaks? (133)

L'Engle asks all the unanswerable questions during this difficult summer. For L'Engle, however, it is asking the questions that is important, not whether an answer can be found. Difficult times teach her that time has changeable qualities, but her faith helps her to accept this without fear. She understands that death does not have to mean separation:

> We are not meant to be as separated as we have become from those who have gone before us and those who will come after. I learned to know and understand my father far more after his death than during his life. Here we are on the border of the tremendous Christian mystery: time is no longer a barrier. (Water 80).

L'Engle reminds us that we need not be consumed by chronology. *Kairos* allows us to reach beyond time restrictions and see that there is more to life and faith than simple answers. Whether we understand the why or how of it, we are able as humans to reach this level of awareness, when time ceases to exist and *kairos* opens up to us. L'Engle encounters this experience in the process of her writing: "Most artists are aware that during the deepest moments of that creation they are out on the other side of themselves, and so are free from time, with the same joyousness that comes in the greatest moments of prayer" (Water 163).

Time may restrict her, but L'Engle's faith assures her that there is more to people than the ticking of a clock. Essentially she are more than she can know at this point in her development :

> Look! Here I am, caught up in this fragment of chronology, in this bit of bone and flesh and water which makes up my mortal

> body, and yet I am also part of that which is not imprisoned in time or mortality. Partaker simultaneously of the finite and the infinite, I do not find the infinite by repudiating my finiteness, but by being fully in it, in this *me* who is more than I know. This *me*, like all of creation, lives in a glorious dance of communion with all the universe. In isolation we die; in interdependence we live. (Stone 90)

It is L'Engle's faith in the ultimate all rightness that sustains her in her life and leads her to write the type of literature that she has published. For L'Engle there is pattern and meaning in all that life has to offer people. We must simply be willing to accept these gifts. Writing becomes a method for entering *kairos;* it allows L'Engle the freedom to explore beyond the barriers of ordinary space and time.

The Use of the Journal: Importance in L'Engle's Life

As Woolf and L'Engle remind us, diary writing is not simply a place for secrets; it is a forum for self-discovery and also a fertile creative ground for the imagination. The diary is a highly personal place of discovery for the writer, especially when she returns to her past through its pages. The diary and the journal serve the writer well in the future, helping to shape future stories with the aid of the vivid recall of the author's past. L'Engle's journal becomes what Woolf had prophesied, a material, a tool to be used in the writing of fiction: "And it's where I jot down ideas for stories, descriptions of a face seen on a subway, a sunset seen over the Hudson, or our Litchfield Hills. If I need, when writing a story, to recapture a mood, there it is, ready to live again for me" (Quiet 197). In this way, the diary and the journal are

living records of all she has known, felt, and seen. L'Engle has the ability to return to the places, times, and emotions that have shaped her life, and now shape her fiction.

In her journals L'Engle looks beyond herself, moving outward to universal issues and truths. She writes about the importance of keeping a journal: "One of the most helpful tools a writer has is his journals. Whenever someone asks how to become an author, I suggest keeping a journal. A journal is not a diary, where you record the weather and the engagements of the day. A journal is a notebook in which one can, hopefully, be ontological" (197). A journal becomes a place of learning, discovery and recovery from tragedy, a private place where things can be worked out with a feeling of safety and assurance. But, as Warnock, Woolf and Dillard have also shown, for a writer it is much more than this. The pages of a journal become the soil, the planting ground for ideas, and this garden is left to cultivate the moments until the writer needs them for a collaboration. L'Engle's character Vicky in A Ring of Endless Light expresses her own use of a journal: "The older I grew, the more I needed times and places of privacy. Privatecy [sic] to write in my journal, to write and rewrite, and rewrite again, poems and stories. To try to find out not only who I am but who everybody else is, and what it's all about" (22). L'Engle the writer, like her character Vicky the writer, uses her journal to begin to investigate herself and her life and eventually to find the stories that she needs to write. For L'Engle the journal becomes a forum where she can work out her feelings and begin to share her discoveries with the world. Essentially the journals become the first step to awareness, not simply of self but of spiritual and universal concerns that affect others. Once L'Engle is able to work out her own feelings, she moves to a greater forum -- that of sharing and communicating these finds with others

through her writing: "The joyful acceptance that readers create my books along with me and share their creation in their letters, helps me to grow, to be more daring than I would be able to be otherwise. In trying to share what I believe, I am helped to discover what I do, in fact, believe, which is often more than I realize" (Water 187). In this way, writing is a process of discovery for L'Engle, not just of herself but of others. She uses her journals as a step in the journey for awareness and truth and, eventually, she is ready to deal with her issues in a work of fiction. Once her concerns and ideas have been transferred to a novel, they have been accepted in a new way. L'Engle's characters are able to benefit from her own past, which has been captured forever in her journals:

> I am part of every place I have been: the path to the brook; the New York streets and my "short cut" through the Metropolitan Museum. All the places I have ever walked, talked, slept, have changed and formed me. I am part of all the people I have known .... I am still every age that I have been. Because I was once a child, I am always a child. Because I was once a searching adolescent, given to moods and ecstasies, these are still a part of me, and always will be. (Quiet 199-200)

L'Engle not only remembers what it was like in her past; she still lives it: "Memory is one of the most essential of the writer's tools, and a writer finds it easy to have total recall, just as other people find it easy to balance a checkbook .... To be half a century plus is wonderfully exciting, because I haven't lost any of my past, and am free to stand on the rock of all that the past has taught me as I look towards the future" (105-106). L'Engle's past is an integrated part of her present; the past forms a continuous thread, linking the L'Engle of yesterday with the L'Engle of today with the L'Engle of tomorrow.

Her identity is forever strengthened by her past. This past has formed her identity, her ethos, her philosophy of life; she would not be *Madeleine* without all that she has experienced and discovered.

L'Engle is a writer and human being deeply concerned with the world and its peoples. Healing the planet is a primary concern of hers, as witnessed in her writing -- diaries and journals, as well as fiction and poetry.[15] Her personal beliefs shape her writing, just as the world shapes who she is as a person. Her ideas of self, and identity, are linked to the ideas of individuality, but also they encompass the larger issues of universality and interconnectedness. L'Engle's writing shows her deep concern for all life and the importance of understanding that every living thing is directly related to ourselves. L'Engle turns to her diaries when she needs to understand, or simply let go of confusion. The diary becomes a quiet friend who is always ready and willing to listen:

> A help to me in working things out has been to keep an honest -- as honest as the human being can be -- unpublishable journal. Granted, much of my non-fiction work is lifted directly from my journals, but what I use is only a small fraction of these numerous, bulky volumes. If I can write things out I can see them, and they are not trapped within my own subjectivity. (Water 137)

The diary can be as important as paper to a writer. L'Engle uses her diaries and her journals as a breeding ground for fiction, as a place for investigation, questioning and healing, and she uses them to publish her thoughts on life. The journal serves L'Engle in her roles as both a woman and a writer, but most of all it helps her to relate to the world beyond her personal self. It is not enough for L'Engle to *know* herself; she must also come to *know* the

world she lives in and the world to come. It is in her diary that she begins this process of discovery.

L'Engle has many methods of growing personally and professionally, but perhaps none as important as writing her journals. As we have witnessed in this chapter, L'Engle needs quiet, personal moments in her life to word the questions worth pursuing. It is her writing, first in the journals and later in the fiction, that continues the process of discovery by putting the questions out into the world, not necessarily for answers but more importantly to share and attempt to find out what she believes. Writing is a gift that comes in conjunction with L'Engle's faith. L'Engle's circle of quiet, her meditation, her transcendental moments in kairos, and especially her honesty with herself and the readers in her journals, allows her great freedom as a writer. L'Engle opens herself up to story. In her journals and in her fiction she returns to recurring incidents (such as loss, death, truth, joy). She reinterprets herself. Her writing teaches her about life and self and God and the universe because she is open to possibilities and is not frightened by change.

[Journal Entry: On Meeting Madeleine]
Tuesday, December 12, 1995 New York City

How can I even begin?
So much emotion
and excitement
and nervous energy.
Impossible, really, to calm down.
I met her
the single, largest influence
on my whole life
and there she was
speaking to me
in the same loving tone
I always imagined.
And I feel so blessed
and special
and loved
here in this crazy city
where I've found peace
and I want to hold on to it forever
and never forget how possible
everything is.
Tonight, as I close my eyes
on the best day ever
I pray for everyone
to be as lucky.

Chapter IV

The Journal as a Place for Healing, Remembering and Surviving: Religion and the Search for Truth

L'Engle's journals are a place where pain can be safely handled. Writing itself becomes part of the grieving process and a way to look back in her memory to grasp the meaning in a painful situation. It is L'Engle's second journal in the Crosswicks series, The Summer of the Great-Grandmother, that most closely deals with the topic of memory. Not only is L'Engle drawing upon memory in the process of writing the journal, but she is examining the lives of her ancestors, something she can only relate through memory. She must also deal with the realization that her dying mother is losing her memory:

> Her loss of memory is the loss of her self, her uniqueness, and this frightens me, for myself, as well as for her. Memory is probably my most essential tool as a storyteller, and the creative use of memory takes structure, enormous, disciplined structure, in a world where structure is unfashionable. (37)

It is painful for L'Engle to be losing her mother even before her death. L'Engle knows that memory is the key not only to self but also to writing

The most difficult thing for L'Engle during the period discussed in The Summer of the Great-Grandmother is the death of her mother's mind and the loss of self-awareness that her mother experiences before the death of the body. L'Engle cannot turn to her mother for support or for anything else because her mother has already left her. While watching the deterioration of

her mother, L'Engle must rely solely on her own memory and on story to find her mother:

> How do I reconcile this sedentary old woman with the mother I never knew? someone who rode donkeys across dangerous mountain passes? who could control a balky camel? ... This pre-Madeleine Madeleine is also my mother, and one I have slowly come to know as she has told me about herself. Her sharing of herself has helped to make me who I am .... (221)

It is the power of story accompanied by memory that allows us to remain close to those we have lost, to continue to learn and to teach from their words and experiences. L'Engle knew her mother from her heart, but the woman who existed beyond L'Engle's view as child comes alive through the story L'Engle writes. In it, her mother will continue to be known by generations to come, as others learn of her stories and keep her spirit alive. L'Engle's mother's death brings great change: "The pattern has shifted; we have changed places in the dance. I am no longer anybody's child. I have become the Grandmother .... The rhythm of the fugue alters; the themes cross and recross. The melody seems unfamiliar to me, but I will learn it" (243). However unfortunate it may be, humans are destined to lose the people they love most in the world, and they must also address their own mortality. Writing serves as a method for calming these fears, and working out the pain of loss.

L'Engle's journal is written in the present and the reader feels the pain and every day immediacy of her mother's descent (or is it an ascent?) into death, but the journal is also concerned greatly with the past. L'Engle seeks to find meaning in her mother's, as well as in her own, existence. Not only does the act of remembering or retelling the stories of the past help to define

their place in life, and reaffirm their own selves, but it also helps L'Engle to escape the painfulness of the immediate present in an attempt to come to terms with death itself. Writing is a place of safety and healing, a place where identity and purpose is explored and confirmed. L'Engle remembers the things that her mother is unable to share. Writing is a way to be close to her mother, to find the woman she remembers: "I want to open her memory, but I don't have the password" (36). L'Engle uses her own memory to reconstruct her mother's life: "I go searching for her [in my memory]" (39). This takes L'Engle through the years, tracing back to her ancestors, to the people who influenced herself and her mother, if not directly, then through stories passed down to each generation. Her self and her creativity has been influenced by her mother and her ancestors: "My forbears have bequeathed to me the basic structure of my own particular pattern, both in my cells and in the underwater areas of my imagination" (194). L'Engle allows the reader into her past, even the part of her heritage that she has only encountered through story. These stories of the past have helped her to heal and to grow into the L'Engle of today.

L'Engle speaks of the need for remembrance in life but emphasizes how limited a human's memory can be: "To the ancient Hebrew the ultimate hell consisted in being forgotten, erased from the memory of family and tribe, from the memory of God .... Our memories are, at best, so limited, so finite, that it is impossible for us to envisage an unlimited, infinite memory, the memory of God. It is something I want to believe in ... " (234-35). This faith keeps L'Engle alive, sustains her through the toughest trials and allows her to continue to live in hope and love.

L'Engle is able to work her way out of her grief through her writing. In the writing of poems and stories and in the keeping of a journal, she is given

an opportunity to view her painful experiences from many different angles. She can turn to her words for help in her journey back to life, to hope and to peace. The Summer of the Great-Grandmother is an outlet for L'Engle's confusion and grief, but it is also a living testament to her mother. The pages of the journal affirm her mother's life. The process of telling this story not only allows her mother to live on but continues to identify L'Engle's story: "True story calls us to be part of the universe as it heals us. When I am feeling wounded and broken I do not turn to do-it-yourself books or self-help books or ever inspirational books, but to story" (Higher 227).

L'Engle turns to story, to fiction, to find greater acceptance of her mother's death. L'Engle draws upon this summer of pain in her novel A Ring of Endless Light. The young protagonist Vicky is tested by the death of her beloved grandfather. Even though this is a work of fiction, it contains the truth of the loss of L'Engle's mother. Vicky feels that there is darkness all around her and she is frightened by the very thought of death, and yet there is still hope. L'Engle will not let her characters despair in the end. As a journal writer, L'Engle has examined her feelings about that summer, and when she is ready to deal with the pain on a deeper level it comes to her in a story to live again and be accepted. As an observer and the recounter of the story, L'Engle is allowed the objectivity to heal.

L'Engle faces loss once again in the journal Two-Part Invention, and turns to her writing for strength and healing. L'Engle's past with her husband Hugh is juxtaposed with the current fear, the possibility that he may die. The reader is immediately brought into the fold, feeling the pain of patience, having to wait like L'Engle for life to take its course. As Culley observes, " ... the obvious difference in the "plots" of diaries and those of most other narratives is that the novelist, poet, oral storyteller, or writer of an

autobiographical memoir knows what happens next and directs the reader's response at every point. Most diaries, on the other hand, are a series of surprises to writer and reader alike, one source of immediacy of the genre" (19). L'Engle's honesty allows the reader to share the experience and become a part of her life.

Once again, as in The Summer of the Great-Grandmother, L'Engle is faced with the immediate threat of the death of a loved one: her life partner, her other half, her husband Hugh. She turns to writing her journal for comfort and support in the same way she dealt with her feelings in Summer. Another important similarity is the use of the past as not only an escape from the present but also as a way of reviewing their life together, to find meaning over a lifetime: "I have been looking over my old journals (something I seldom do) as I relive the volatile years of our marriage" (Two-Part 161). L'Engle has not only her memory but also her own words to help her recapture her own past. She channels her fears and sorrows into her writing, and her words help to sustain her; in this way the journal can become a savior.

Betty Jane Wylie, in Reading Between the Lines: The Diaries of Women, recounts how her journal, sparsely used before her husband's death, became more to her than simply paper and words after this loss:

> It was to prove my lifeline, my paper shrink, my source book, my closest companion, my confidante, my commonplace book, and my constant renewable resource. Initially, it was the recipient of my grief. Often I didn't wait until the end of the day to pour out my feelings. Something would overwhelm me with pain, with the shock of loss, and I would run to the diary to

> agonize on paper and relieve some of the pressure of my grief, splotching the pages with my tears. (xi-xii)

L'Engle has spent her life turning to paper for comfort, so she is able to turn to her journal like an old friend without hesitation. Words may not work magic, but they can have the power to bring us out of despair. Writing is a means of relieving L'Engle's grief, her fears, her anger and her sorrow:

> But grief still has to be worked through. It is like walking through water. Sometimes there are little waves lapping about my feet. Sometimes there is an enormous breaker that knocks me down. Sometimes there is a sudden and fierce squall. But I know that many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it. (Two-Part 229)

Just as her characters learn to deal with pain and never despair for long, L'Engle is able to find her way through the grief and remember all the love that she has been able to share and all the life and love she has in her future. Crosswicks is still the home where she lived with Hugh and nothing can change this: "None of the fullness of life in this old house is lost. The forty years of Hugh's and my marriage is part of the rhythm" (232).

Death is never uncomplicated or easy for those who must face it, (and of course, that is all of us) but faith is able to calm the fears and allows us to continue with our lives without breaking:

> Our lives are given a certain dignity by their very evanescence. If there were never to be an end to my quiet moments at the brook, if I could sit on the rock forever, I would not treasure these minutes so much. If our associations with the people we love were to have no termination, we would not value them as

> much as we do .... Would we really value anything we could have forever and ever? (Summer 53-54)

Of course this does not make it any easier when the end actually occurs. Knowing that death is inevitable cannot stop the pain or confusion, or even the questions. It is part of the human condition to feel sorrow and anger at death as it steals from us without any explanation. We are powerless to stop it, but we can learn from it. It is possible, as L'Engle suggests, that in practicing dying, she may become more aware of the process of life: "My only weapon against death is to do my dying freely, consciously. This summer is practice in dying for me as well as for my mother. Our lives are a series of births and deaths: we die to one period and must be born to another" (Summer 52). This practice in dying is not a difficult thing for L'Engle the writer. She realizes that she must get her self out of the way when she is writing if she hopes to keep it out of the waste-paper basket:

> Art is an affirmation of life, a rebuttal of death. And here we blunder into paradox again, for during the creation of any form of art, art which affirms the value and the holiness of life, the artist must die. To serve a work of art, great or small, is to die, to die to self. (Water 195-96)

L'Engle's faith in the work, and in life itself, helps make this process less frightening. If she is willing to explore this world in meditation and writing, death is no longer a threat to her concept of self. Her faith assures her that there is much more to life and death than the loss of the physical body.

Writing has provided a place of healing for L'Engle. Even though she has lost her mother and her husband physically, she will always have them in her heart and in her own story:

> When I sit quietly in my room to read Evening Prayer and Compline I can see pictures of my husband, my parents, my grandparents, my great-grandmother, Madeleine L'Engle, after whom I am named. They are now part of the Resurrection life. When I see them again I will know them, though perhaps not by sight, as the risen Christ was not known by sight. Their stories are part of my story, and part of the great story that God started in the beginning when God made our universe and called it good. God's story is true. (Higher 294)

L'Engle's words help to heal her, reminding her of the ultimate all-rightness of life. Her religion sustains her in much the same way as her writing; together they form her belief system. Story helps L'Engle find a way out of the darkness of despair and back into the joys of light and life. Because she is courageous enough to share her words and story with those of us who will listen, we in turn can be a part of this glory.

L'Engle and Religion: What is a Christian Artist?

Writing is a place where L'Engle can question life and identity and the human condition. As readers of her journals, we are able to recognize her repetitions, and find phrases that most describe her beliefs. Certainly I do not recommend reducing L'Engle to a few sentences, but I would like to share words that are important to understanding her belief system: '" ... to live as though you believe that the power behind the universe is a power of love, a personal power of love, a love so great that all of us really *do* matter to him. He loves us so much that every single one of our lives has meaning; he really does know about the fall of the sparrow, and the hairs of our head are

really counted. That's the only way I can live'" (Quiet 64). This is also the only way that most of her characters can live; if one searches her fiction, one will find similar convictions in many of her protagonists. In the novel Dragons in the Water, Aunt Leonis echoes L'Engle's preceding thoughts, reminding the young protagonist Simon that God is concerned with creation and that darkness can be vanquished: "But I do believe that God can come into the evil of this world, and redeem it, and make it an indispensable part of the pattern which includes every star and every speck of hydrogen dust in the universe" (71-72). To L'Engle, every living thing is of equal importance in the universe.

Yet science is a welcome addition to her religion. Her reading of science, especially biology, particle physics and astrophysics helps to strengthen her faith in God. People are all interconnected and cannot afford to live in isolation.[16] Max in A House like a Lotus expresses the same belief to Polly: "We cannot separate ourselves from anything in the universe. Not from other creatures. Not from each other" (40). In reading L'Engle's writing we are able to come to know her, to become part of this interconnected world; as L'Engle is finding her own place in the universe, we experience and share the revelations.

L'Engle does not approve of pigeon-holing, or labelling, so would resist being classified as a children's writer, or a Christian writer, or a journal writer. She is a writer, of many varied genres of literature, and she is also a Christian. She does not have to consciously write with Christian values; as a Christian these values pervade her writing, whether consciously or otherwise. Her writing attests to the fact that she is a woman of great faith, but her works do not exclude non-Christian readers. Her message of hope is

for everyone. It is her writing that gives her the courage to continue to believe in such hope:

> It is not easy for me to be a Christian, to believe twenty-four hours a day all that I want to believe. I stray, and then my stories pull me back if I listen to them carefully. I have often been asked if my Christianity affects my stories, and surely it is the other way around; my stories affect my Christianity, restore me, shake me by the scruff of the neck, and pull this straying sinner into an awed faith. (Water 106)

Being a Christian can be difficult, as is being a writer, but L'Engle continues to work, question and believe. She turns to a James Carroll quotation to express this idea that, as a writer and a human, she must turn to story for redemption: "We tell stories because we can't help it. We tell stories because we love to entertain and hope to edify. We tell stories because they fill the silence death imposes. We tell stories because they save us" (Higher 96). Story and writing are an integral part of L'Engle and her beliefs.

L'Engle does not see science as a threat to religion. In fact, many discoveries in the scientific field have strengthened her belief in God: "Questions allow us to grow and develop and change in our understanding of ourselves and of God, so that nothing that happens, and nothing that science discovers, is frightening, or disturbs our faith in God" (Stone 98). L'Engle is able to take her view of science and link it to her faith in God. These beliefs come through in her fiction, but most especially in the novels A House Like a Lotus and A Ring of Endless Light. Polly and Vicky, respectively, are learning that all of life is connected and that theories in the scientific community often add, rather than detract, from their concept of God and the universe. Max discusses the possibilities with Polly in A House Like a Lotus:

> The theory now is that everything in the universe, all of the galaxies, all of the quanta, everything comes from something as small as the nucleus of an atom. Think of that, of that tiny speck, invisible to the naked eye, opening up like a flower, to become clouds of hydrogen dust, and then stars, and solar systems. That softly opening flower -- I visualize a lotus -- is a more viable image of God for me than anything else. (122)

With each discovery in science L'Engle's concept of God simply becomes clearer; for L'Engle change is not frightening, and like Vicky in A Ring of Endless Light, she realizes that "science is a lot more like poetry than I thought it was" (154). The wonderful language of poetry is the same as the searching wonderment of science. L'Engle and her characters are not alone in their views that science is more than experiments and facts. Albert Einstein felt that there was more to life than just pure science: "The fairest thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion which stands at the cradle of true art and true science. He who knows it not, who can no longer wonder, can no longer feel amazement, is as good as dead, a snuffed-out candle" (Einstein quotation in Quiet 208).

L'Engle discusses one particular scientific principle in both her fiction and her journals. This concept explores the idea that all of life is interconnected, just as L'Engle has always believed: "In a recent article on astrophysics I came across the beautiful and imaginative concept known as 'the butterfly effect.' If a butterfly winging over the fields around Crosswicks should be hurt, the effect would be felt in galaxies thousands of light years away. The interrelationship of all of Creation is sensitive in a way we are just beginning to understand. If a butterfly is hurt, we are hurt. If the bell tolls, it tolls for us" (Stone 42). L'Engle has characters in her fiction explore this idea,

having Vicky remember what her grandfather has told her on the subject in A Ring of Endless Light: "If someone kills a butterfly, it could cause an earthquake in a galaxy a trillion light-years away" (23). This interconnection is obviously an important belief in L'Engle's life, as it recurs in many of her other works. For L'Engle, everyone has the ability to make a difference in the universe:

> The macrocosm. Stars beyond countless stars. Galaxies beyond galaxies. If our universe is finite, as many astrophysicists believe, there may be as many universes as there are galaxies, floating like tiny bubbles in the vastness of space .... I learn more and more on the total interdependence of all creation. If we should be so foolish as to blow this planet to bits, it would have repercussions not only in our own solar system but in distant galaxies. Or even distant universes. And if anyone dies -- a tree, a planet, a human being -- all of creation is shaken ... Never think what you do doesn't matter. No one is too insignificant to make a difference. Whenever you get the chance, choose life. (Max to Polly in Lotus 163-64)

For L'Engle (and consequently for many of her characters, since her beliefs colour her fiction) the microcosm is as important as the macrocosm. Her faith allows her to see the importance of every living thing in the universe. It is her religion that pushes her to continue to grow:

> My faith is not a magic charm, like garlic to chase away vampires. It is, instead, what sustains me in the midst of all the normal joys and tragedies of the ordinary human life. It is faith that helps my grief to be creative, not destructive. It is faith that kept me going through the pain at the very portals of death and

> pulled me, whether I would or no, back into life and whatever work still lies ahead. (Higher 176)

In her journals, L'Engle explains the thinking which informs her fiction. Her journals are a sounding board for her beliefs and how she views her role as a writer. L'Engle realizes that writing carries with it a responsibility to the audience; whether she sees the reader's response or not does not mean that it does not occur: "Those of us who write are responsible for the effect of our books .... 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" (Quiet 99). In L'Engle's fiction there are characters and situations that may belong to the darkness, but the stories never despair. L'Engle is consciously aware that her writing reflects on life itself: "One cannot discuss structure in writing without discussing structure in all life; it is impossible to talk about why anybody writes a book or paints a picture or composes a symphony without talking about the nature of the universe" (Quiet 62-63). L'Engle both creates and responds to life through her writing. In this way she is both an observer and a participant: "We cannot afford, either as writers or as human beings, to be detached from the human predicament we ourselves are in. We are always on stage, actors in the human drama. But we are also and simultaneously members of the audience: it takes both performer and audience to 'create' a drama" (Quiet 52). This is a paradox, but L'Engle suggests that the link between detachment and involvement is compassion (Quiet 50). For a writer it is important to possess all three.

Readers are called upon to breathe life into the writing, to actively engage with the work: "Art is communication, and if there is no communication it is as though the work had been still-born. The reader, viewer, listener, usually grossly underestimates his importance. If a reader

cannot create a book along with the writer, the book will never come to life" (Water 34). This process of engagement allows the reader to wield a share of the power of creativity. Readers are able to form a relationship with the work itself, as well as with the author: "The author and the reader 'know' each other; they meet on the bridge of words" (Water 34).

Readers must be willing to look beyond their noses to the universe, engage with the work, and ask the right questions. Yet, as L'Engle reminds readers, they must not forget what is in front of them:

> When I tend to go cosmic it is often because it is easier to be cosmic than to be particular. The small, overlooked particulars which are symbols of such things as being peacemakers are usually found in our everyday lives. Of course we'd rather have something more dramatic and spectacular, so we tend not to see the peacemakers in our own path, or the opportunities for peacemaking which are presented us each day. When I need to think particularly rather than cosmically, I turn as always to my family.... (Season, 83)

L'Engle and her readers question what has been and what will be for humankind. Belief in the interconnectedness of all life allows people to see the world both cosmically and particularly; the microcosm is once again as important as the macrocosm. As a writer L'Engle blends all parts of her self and her beliefs to communicate meaning to her readers.

The Search for Truth Through Writing

The process of writing itself can be a transcendental experience. L'Engle is able to go beyond the restrictions of everyday life and see more clearly: "We glimpse reality only occasionally, and for me it happens most often when I write, when I start out using all the "real" things which my senses and my mind can know, and then suddenly a world opens up before me" (Quiet 93). Not only is L'Engle closer to her ontological self while writing, but she also explains that the work has a life of its own. Writing is a method of reaching truth, a process that brings life into focus: "Juvenile or adult, *War and Peace* or *Treasure Island, Pride and Prejudice* or *Beauty and the Beast,* a great work of the imagination is one of the highest forms of communication of truth that mankind has reached" (Quiet 201). For L'Engle, fiction and writing are methods to discover truth in life:

> People have always told stories as they searched for truth ... Bards and troubadours throughout the centuries have sung stories in order to give meaning to the events of human life. We read novels, go to the movies, watch television, in order to find out more about the human endeavor. As a child I read avidly and in stories I found truths which were not available in history or geography or social sciences. (Higher 90)

Truth in art has little to do with fact or literalism; art has the ability to show the heart of the matter, the truth of an event or an emotion. Truth does not tell; it shows. This is not an easy process, however, and as a writer L'Engle must pass through many stages before she is ready to receive or communicate these truths. If she is too close to the event or realization, it becomes too real

in the writing. Truth, as opposed to fact, has a heart. L'Engle moves beyond the surface to show the reader the center of the idea.

Story is a vehicle for truth, and as a storyteller L'Engle herself is a messenger of this truth. For L'Engle, the truths that carry the most importance are deeper than herself. Fiction is a medium where truth can be shared. Fiction begins with pieces of life that the author has known, or can be imagined from her personal experience, and in the end it is able to show truth to the reader. L'Engle's novels come from a place of knowing and show readers not only truth but L'Engle herself: "It is from the stories of both Greatie [her mother's great-grandmother, Susan Philippa Fatio] and [the first] Madeleine L'Engle [her mother's maternal grandmother] that I drew the background for my novel *The Other Side of the Sun*. Is the novel true? I believe that it is. Much of it is not factual; indeed, there are many facts I would have no way of knowing. It is indeed a work of fiction. But it is, for me, true" (Higher 92). In her fiction, L'Engle is able to go further into story than in her journals. The medium of fiction allows the writer the freedom to explore beyond the facts of an experience and reach a deeper reality. While writing The Moon By Night L'Engle's children reminded her to search beyond the facts to find truth:

> "No, Mother, you've stuck to close to your journals. It isn't real yet." They were right. I threw it all out, started again, and let it become considerably more real .... The first draft was nothing but an image, a mirror vision, with no reality of its own. Out of the image the writer tries to wrest reality. Perhaps the writer must, like Alice, go through the mirror into the country on the other side. (Quiet 159)

L'Engle realizes that her writing has the ability to show her and teach her more than she is aware of knowing. She talks about Dante's comments that writing should be understood in a fourfold way: "'on the literal level, the moral level, the allegorical level, and the anagogical level.' What is this anagogical level? It is not easy to define, because it is out of the realm of provable fact .... It is that level of a book which breaks the bounds of time and space and gives us a glimpse of the truth ... " (Quiet 61). As a writer L'Engle cannot consciously write in an anagogical way, but when she is willing to listen to the work and follow where the story demands to go, she attains the truth that the story is expressing. Facts are not necessarily part of the plan, and often the truth of a story reaches beyond the initial subject:

> An artist seeking for the truth behind human brutality may express it in the bleeding body of an animal shot for sport rather than need. The truth of an incident may lie artistically far from the facts of that incident. The most difficult part of trying to show truth lies not only in believing in it oneself, but in making it believable to the reader, viewer, listener. (Water 147)

Because L'Engle truly believes what she writes, there is a greater chance that others will believe by the strength of her convictions. The truth that she shows through her writing is universal in its appeal.

L'Engle links truth with faith, an element that is not reliant on facts. The Bible is not simply facts; it is also story, and therefore truth. In The Rock That Is Higher, L'Engle uses one of Jesus' stories to illustrate her point:

> Jesus, the storyteller, told of a man who had a plank of wood in his eye and yet criticized another man for having a speck of dust in his eye. "You hypocrite," he said, "first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see more clearly to remove the

> speck from your brother's eye." This parable, like most of Jesus' stories, is true. Why must it be factual? (94)

Truth is found in story; fiction is part of this truth: "The storyteller is a storyteller because the storyteller cares about truth, searching for truth, expressing truth" (Higher 103). L'Engle's faith sustains her and gives her courage to continue to work, to send her words out into the community, to share her life with others: "Story makes us more alive, more human, more courageous, more loving. Why does anybody tell a story? It does indeed have something to do with faith, faith that the universe has meaning, that our little human lives are not irrelevant, that what we choose or say or do matters, matters cosmically" (Higher 215). L'Engle realizes that what she does is important and that story can help us to see the truth of ourselves more clearly.

L'Engle's truth is at the heart of each work, be it fiction, non-fiction, poetry or journal writing. She writes from her own experience. It is in the world of fiction that L'Engle is able to use her memory, her imagination and her subconscious to create not only story, but truth. When L'Engle learned that her father died, she recorded the event in her journal in a factual, detached way. It is only when the subconscious mind had had time to ponder the truth and meaning of this event that she was ready to deal with the pain through story. While writing her first novel she finally reached the truth of the event in her own life:

> I recorded this death in my journal. Straight. "Father died." Later I wrote it as a story, very much out of my own experience of this death. Still later, after I had graduated from college and began to recognize in myself characteristics of my father, I wrote about it again, in the death of the mother of the protagonist of

> my first novel, *The Small Rain*, far from the facts of this death, but close to the truth of what it meant to me. (Higher 222)

This discovery of truth is not a quick and easy process. L'Engle may spend years reflecting on an event and processing the subsequent emotions before it surfaces in a story. Yet once any writer has turned a piece of her own life into story, it can be viewed more objectively; it has been dealt with on a much deeper level -- it is the final stage of acceptance and healing. Memory is the support beam for this whole process. Unless the writer has somehow known the experience, the passage loses its truth. The facts filter through the journal, leaving truth as the end product in fiction. In the novel Camilla, L'Engle writes about a moment in her childhood when she first realizes that adults can lie. After having Camilla experience this same shock, L'Engle was able to put the event behind her and understand it: " ...writing about it helped: to take it away from the personal and objectify it made it comprehensible ... " (Quiet 144). It becomes real when it has been fictionalized; it has moved from the particular to the universal, from the personal shock to the human experience, and is shared as truth rather than fact.

L'Engle turns to memory, imagination and intellect when writing any piece, but this is especially true of fiction. She allows her intuition about the story to take her wherever it may go. She has learned to listen to the story and follow it wherever it may take her:

> When the storyteller insists on being in control of the story, then the story has no chance to take off and take the writer with it into strange and unexpected places .... Story is seldom true if we try to control it, manipulate it, make it go where we want to go, rather than where the story wants to go .... When I listen to a story, trying to set it down faithfully, the two disparate parts of

> myself, the mind and the heart, the intellect and the intuition, the conscious and the subconscious mind, stop fighting each other and begin to collaborate. (Higher 200, 203, 212).

L'Engle turns to her journal to work out her feelings and beliefs. It is here that she determines that story is indeed truth. Her journals, in a way, justify the kind of writer that she is. She cares enough to question her own motivation. By publishing her journals, L'Engle has allowed readers to see how and why she writes.

L'Engle's writing is a forum for her beliefs and a method of sharing the vision and of passing on hope:

> The language of logical argument, of proofs, is the language of the limited self we know and can manipulate. But the language of parable and poetry, of storytelling, moves from the imprisoned language of the provable into the freed language of what I must, for lack of another word, continue to call faith. (Quiet 194)

This language of story and language of truth is one that has been spoken since the beginning of time. L'Engle, as a writer, relies on her faith for guidance in her life and for the strength to write what needs to be written. Each piece of writing permits L'Engle to share her philosophy of hope:

> ... the language of poetry and story involves faith in the unknown potential in the human being, faith in courage and honor and nobility, faith in love, our love of each other. And it involves for me a constantly renewed awareness of the fact that if I am a human being who writes, and who sends my stories out into the world for people to read, then I must have the courage to make a commitment to the unknown and unknowable (in

> the sense of intellectual proof), the world of love and particularity which gives light to the darkness. (Quiet 194)

L'Engle does indeed have courage in her life. She stands behind her beliefs and she shares these ideas with the world. She writes about the things that move her or concern her in life and, most importantly, she has faith in her work: "A couple of years ago a friend called me from her hospital bed, demanding, 'Madeleine, do you believe everything that you have written in your books?' I said *yes* then. It is *yes* today" (Invention 229). The ideas and beliefs that are implicit in her journals and her fiction are an integral part of her own, everyday life. They sustain her and her readers.

{ Journal Entry: On Me }

Here I am, on the verge of finishing this thesis (which potentially could have no end, although time and other practical reasons make it necessary to stop talking) and I feel sad, I suppose. I've been running from this degree for so long that it seems near impossible that I ever got to this point in my life where I have to move on and make the desperately difficult choices that come with it -- where do I go now, what do I do, who should I be? But I realize that I know more about those answers from reading Madeleine's work and writing this thesis. Together they have given me the strength to go on, to keep writing and to search out the glory waiting for me in this life, no matter what path I choose to take.

So what have I been trying to show? Honestly I've been trying to show what Madeleine has shown me. She opens up her heart and her life through her writing in hopes of finding truth and becoming whole. Writing itself is a part of this journey -- a journey, first inward, and then outward to embrace the universe. Writing becomes part of the process, a way of understanding life. If I want to know life on a personal, spiritual and universal level, or see life like a story, with all its patterns, themes and symbols, I have to learn how to look. My heart, connected to my mouth, has always been my greatest asset. As such I am led around by it all the time. Whereas another may have focused on the form and tradition of autobiography, I choose instead to see the heart of the matter -- the heart of the author. Intuition, faith, religion, hope, truth -- all the big, squishy words -- I turn to them and what they mean to the extraordinary woman I call Madeleine.

There are plenty of reasons why someone writes in a journal, but, as a journal writer myself, I know that the most important one is that I need to. I want feedback from myself, to recount how I feel and to ask myself the questions I am afraid to say aloud. I'm starting a brand new journal after today, which seems appropriate, and it will soon become filled like all the others in my hope chest. Because that's how life is. It moves on and beyond us, but we have memories and a living record to prove that we are alive. And someday maybe they will become stories and be shared with others. Or maybe not. But either way they are a part of me, maybe even the best part.

So I come to the last lines of my journal and close the cover on one part of my life. And move on. Because that is what I need to do.

Conclusion

In journal writing the self is the subject. The paper becomes a mirror as the author turns herself into a metaphor to be examined. Shari Benstock points out that the first awareness of self is just a beginning step, although it is a momentous one. The development of the self is continuous: the self is always becoming, it is always unfinished. The self can never be definitively captured in language. Writers and readers may attempt to find metaphors for self, but sometimes words fail. Memory becomes an essential tool, like words themselves, and, combined with journal writing, L'Engle uses this language to begin her journey into creativity. Her experiences, at the physical, emotional, and spiritual level, deepen through her writing. The truth of these experiences become clearer in her writing, first in her unpublished diaries, then in her journals and often again in her fiction.

> When I start working on a book, which is usually several years and several books before I start to *write* it, I am somewhat like a French peasant cook .... There are several pots on those back burners. An idea for a scene goes into one, a character into another, a description of a tree in the fog into another. When it comes time to write, I bring forward the pot which has the most in it. The dropping in of ideas is sometimes quite conscious; sometimes it happens without my realizing it. I look and something has been added which is just what I need, but I don't remember when it was added. When it is time to start work, I look at everything in the pot, sort, arrange, think about character and story line. Most of this part of the work is done consciously,

> but then there comes a moment of unself-consciousness, of letting go and serving the work. (Water 179)

L'Engle's journals are a natural extention of her self, and her fiction is a creative step from her journals. As Warnock believes, the journal is a place for self-discovery, but also it can be a place for creation when memory combines with imagination and invention.

L'Engle writes for much the same reason that she breathes -- for health -- but also because she is compelled to write. She is a writer: "If I accept the fact that I, ontologically speaking, was born a writer, was named Madeleine, am an inextricable blend of writer, wife, mother, then my virtue, or talent, is quite aside from the point" (Quiet 37). Writing becomes a way to grow, to change, and to heal. Her stories push her and teach her and open doors to a world as real as her own. Readers are permitted access to this world, and it can become their own. By listening to and writing her own story, L'Engle is able to find truth in her writing, and this truth becomes shared experience. Her readers become part of the equation. It is this engagement with her readers, and the engagement between reader and text, that forms the connection she needs as a writer. For L'Engle, it is not enough to simply create. L'Engle reaches out to her readers for a response.

What is she trying to communicate and why is it so very important that it needs to be shared? What is it about humans that requires them to communicate? Why must they reach out for each other, for encouragement and fellowship, even for support? L'Engle believes we are all interconnected. She is attempting to communicate her life through her journals, to share her experience, to share herself. L'Engle's life, her journals, her writing are shaped by who she is, where she has been, what is most important to her:

> We write out of our own experience, and my experience is that which springs from being a wife and a mother and from my struggles to be human under these particular circumstances. Certainly I could not have written about the Murrays or the Austins without my own family experience. And now I write about the point of view of a single woman, a woman whose husband has died.... If I hadn't married and had children and grandchildren I would still have written, though undoubtedly I would have written differently, out of different experience. And my own experience of course goes back to long before I was married, goes back to my solitary childhood. (Higher 43-44)

L'Engle's journals cannot be fully understood without understanding her philosophy, her background and her experience. Readers also must ask themselves what is repeated and emphasized in her writing, and how they respond to her words. Readers see her, again and again, reinterpreting the same questions, events and emotions. By this repetition, readers are able to see what L'Engle is trying to communicate, both in the journals and in her fiction. Her belief system becomes part of her story. The need for a circle of quiet in her life, her life-long journey with faith and religion, the healing power of words to help her through grief and pain, and the ability to use language and story to find truth in this life, these are all important for L'Engle. Her faith in herself, the world, and the ultimate all-rightness in life is implicit in all of her work, but especially in the journals. This is important not only to L'Engle, but to her readers as well, as this knowledge and experience has been shared.

Notes

[1]The Archives at Wheaton College inspired me to look at Madeleine L'Engle's published journals. Her unpublished journals and private diaries are not a part of the extensive collection, therefore this thesis is only concerned with her published journals. For a description of the holdings at the Archives, please refer to Appendix I.

[2]Mary Warnock is the Mistress of Girton College, Cambridge. She is the author of Memory and Imagination.

[3]The journals that I will be examining in this thesis by Madeleine L'Engle are: The Crosswicks Journals: A Circle of Quiet (1972), The Irrational Season (1977), The Summer of the Great-Grandmother (1974), Two-Part Invention: The Story of a Marriage (1988); The Genesis Trilogy: And It Was Good: Reflections on Beginnings (1983), A Stone for a Pillow: Journeys with Jacob (1986), Sold into Egypt: Joseph's Journey into Human Being (1989); Walking on Water: Reflections on Faith and Art (1980); The Rock That Is Higher: Story as Truth (1993); and Penguins and Golden Calves: Icons and Idols (1996).

[4]L'Engle is a writer of various genres, including both adult and children's fiction, non-fiction, journals and poetry. I turn to some of her non-journal books throughout the thesis when the connections between her life, her journal writing and her creative processes influence her fiction.

[5]For this thesis I must distinguish between the words "diary" and "journal." Even though L'Engle uses the term journal instead of diary, I am making a distinction for clarity. When I use the word "diary" it refers to unpublished, private reflections. This thesis will use the term "journal" to refer to L'Engle's published journals.

[6]The autobiographical impulse in English literature begins, according to Domna Stanton in her collection The Female Autograph, with Julian of Norwich (c. 1300) the "first English-woman to 'speak out about herself'" (6). For more detail see the essay in this collection by Domna Stanton entitled "Autogynography: Is the Subject Different?" and also Norine Voss' article "'Saying the Unsayable': An Introduction to Women's Autobiography" in Gender Studies, edited by Judith Spector.

[7]In L'Engle's novel Camilla, there is a passage similar to the one cited on pages 14 and 15 of this thesis, that "fictionally" recounts L'Engle/Camilla's first moment of self-awareness. See Camilla, 123-125.

[8]The main critics in question for this thesis are Margo Culley, Bella Brodzki, Celeste Schenck, Estelle Jelinek, Janice Morgan, Colette Hall, Shari Benstock, Liz Stanley, Shirley Neuman, Diane Freedman, Jane Tompkins, Olivia Frey, Frances Murphy Zauhar and Ellen Brown.

[9]Madeleine L'Engle's need to be named and known invokes a particularly intimate response from her readers. She speaks about the importance of being known by name in her journal A Circle of Quiet: "To be known by name is terribly important, though I tend, as usual, to carry my feeling for the

name to disproportionate lengths. There is nothing more frightening, for instance, than being a patient in a hospital where you are a number and a case first, and a person second, if at all" (13). It seemed a natural extension that I would name her also.

[10]To be fair to Domna Stanton, she is approaching her collection from a different perspective, merely placing the emphasis on the "auto" and the "graphy," although I must agree that all parts of the term "auto/bio/graphy" make the study complete.

[11]Trinh Minh-ha is the author of Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism published in 1989 in Bloomington by Indiana University Press.

[12]My biographical information comes from L'Engle's own journals, the ones I am examining in this thesis, but most especially from A Circle of Quiet.

[13]I attended one of Madeleine L'Engle's writing workshops at New York University on December 12, 1995.

[14]A German physicist, Werner Heisenberg, won the Nobel Prize in 1932. He was one of the first to interpret a theory of quantum mechanics and he proposed the uncertainty principle in 1927.

[15]If L'Engle believes that all of creation is interconnected, healing oneself is the first step in healing the world: "True story calls us to be part of the universe as it heals us" (Higher 227). Also, in her novel A Swiftly Tilting

Planet, L'Engle shows that one child can change the world, essentially heal the planet, by stopping nuclear war.

[16]L'Engle is quoted in the article "A Full Life" by Margaret Carroll in the Chicago Tribune on September 30, 1990: "One of the things I like most about particle physics and also astrophysics is that it reveals a universe of total interdependence. Nothing happens in isolation; everything you do affects the entire universe."

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Appendix I

Wheaton College Archive Collection

(Source Wheaton College Archives, 1993)

The papers of Madeleine L'Engle (nee Madeleine L'Engle Camp), popular writer and lecturer, form a growing collection which presently occupies nearly 200 linear feet. The collection is comprised of personal papers, correspondence, manuscripts and galley proofs, articles, art-work, book reviews and announcements, photographs, and secondary source material. Copies of books by L'Engle are also stored in the Special Collections as part of the collection.

In 1975 Professor Clyde S. Kirby of the English Department approached Madeleine L'Engle concerning the possibility of depositing her papers at Wheaton. She consented and in January, 1976 the Board of Trustees approved the establishment of the collection. Since that time the Special Collections has received regular shipments of material from L'Engle.

Access to the non-published portions of the collection is restricted to those researchers possessing written permission from Madeleine L'Engle. Rights of publication must be secured from Ms. L'Engle, who holds the copyright on her own material, or from the author or agent in the case of secondary works.

Series Description

I. Biographical

- A. Awards
- B. Genealogy/Biographical
- C. Schedules/Speaking Engagements

II. Photographs

III. Correspondence

- A. Adult
- B. Children
- C. Business
- D. Invitations to Speak
- E. Epistles from Madeleine
- F. Family Correspondence

IV. Books

- A. Published Manuscripts
- B. Oversized Published Manuscripts
- C. Unpublished Manuscripts
- D. Book Announcements
- E. Reviews of L'Engle's books

V. Journals

VI. Poems

- A. Published
- B. Manuscripts

VII. Articles by L'Engle

- A. Published Articles and Reviews
- B. Unpublished Articles, Stories, Short Works

VIII. Lectures, Addresses, Sermons

A. Published

B. Manuscripts

XI. Secondary

A. Published

1. Articles
2. Interviews
3. Papers, Teaching Aids, Songs, Announcements of Conferences
4. Articles/Manuscripts by others
5. Quotes and Excerpts

B. Unpublished

1. Papers
2. Papers, Interviews, Poems
3. Teaching Aids, Songs, Sermons, Addresses
4. Plays
5. Articles/Manuscripts by others

X. Media

A. Cassette Tapes

B. Video

C. Filmstrip

D. Microcomputer Courseware