Continuums of Fantasy, Reality, and Kinship: An Ecopsychological Reading of Madeleine L'Engle's Children's and Adolescent Fiction

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In Memoriam

Brandie Renée Siegfried

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Tesser well, my friend, into that new blazing world

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines a selection of Madeleine L'Engle's children's and adolescent literature series, using a theoretical lens derived from ecopsychology and its praxis, ecotherapy. The three series I draw from are the Austin family series, the Time series, and the O'Keefe family series. All are situated in L'Engle's fantastic universe, bringing fantasy and reality together in her work across a continuum ranging from the highly realistic events of her Austin family novels to the highly fantastic events of her Time series. However, very little scholarship addresses the interconnectedness of the three sets of novels. As a result, it seems very important to address some of the possibilities inherent in this neglected overlap between them. In addition to observing that there is movement between the fantastic and the realistic in these novels, L'Engle is adept at building a deep relationship between her human characters and the nonhuman aspects of their world(s), including both the living, organic creatures and the non-living, inorganic features of the landscapes she develops. These relationships bring this range of novels firmly onto ecopsychologist Andy Fisher's human-nonhuman kinship continuum (Fisher, 2013). Combined with the relationships between the fantastic and the realistic in L'Engle's novels, this second continuum allows the audience to anticipate how the experience of reading these novels might lead to reimagining the attachments that can be formed between human and nonhuman outside of the book, and the ways in which those attachments might be mutually beneficial and psychologically, and even physically, healing. In all three series of novels, it is often the case that the nonhuman is important in helping humans resolve problems they face. This thesis will use ecopsychology and ecotherapy to closely examine the relationships L'Engle develops for her characters along the human-nonhuman kinship continuum. This will be accomplished by looking at pairs of novels from the fantastic and the realistic series, as well as at single novels which stand out as slightly different from the most prominent genre in a given series. In this way, the thesis also shows L'Engle's movement back and forth along the fantasy/reality continuum and demonstrates the integration of the three series with each other. Importantly, through examining these relationships and this movement along continuums in these novels, the thesis demonstrates how ecopsychology and ecotherapy provide a strong and important critical lens through which to read children's and adolescent novels.

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"As the cauldron bubbled an eldritch voice shrieked, 'When shall we three meet again?' There was a pause. Finally another voice said, in far more ordinary tones: 'Well, I can do next Tuesday'" (Pratchett, 1980: 1). This was a familiar conversation for over five years, and oddly enough, the answer usually was Tuesday! First, with grateful thanks to my supervisors, Rob Maslen and Maureen Farrell. Humour, patience, and compassion, coupled with excellent and thought-provoking feedback: I couldn't have asked for two better people to assist me on this PhD journey. You were and are outstanding supervisors. Many thanks to Bob Davis as well, for invaluable feedback during my APRs. Then thanks to my fellow students and friends on both sides of the line, children's literature compatriots and fantasy fellowshippers. I gratefully acknowledge the International Research Society for Children's Literature and the Buswell Library Archives of Wheaton College, Illinois. The IRSCL research grant, 2017, made it possible for me to visit the Wheaton College archives and view the Madeleine L'Engle collection. I acknowledge the Harold B. Lee Library at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, for continued access to research resources. As a part-time distance student with the University of Glasgow, my work would not have been possible without regular physical access to the excellent library at BYU. Finally, to the three most important people in my life: my husband, Robert, who never gave up on me and never let me give up on myself (and was an unfailing source of MSWord tech support!). My daughter, Beth, whose earliest shouts of "COME DOWNSTAIRS AND DO YOUR RESEARCH, MAMA!" kept me honest and (mostly) busy, and who astutely remarked one afternoon after listening to the song "Toyland," "That isn't true, Mama. You CAN return again, otherwise you wouldn't be studying Children's Literature!" And my son, William, who grew up with my PhD thesis, from morning sickness through to kindergarten. I love you all three and thank you for your continued loving support, faith in me, and prayers on my behalf.

General Introduction

In recent years, some children's literature scholars have begun to explore their own reading histories. Frequently, this is done in "auto-bibliography" format, in which a reader will write an autobiography that reflects on books, starting with their reading material from a very young age (c.f. Francis Spufford, *The Child that Books Built*; Margaret Mackey, *One Child Reading*; Lucy Mangan, *Bookworm*).[1] Mackey's work looks at the ways in which the space a specific reader occupies as a child affects her acquisition of literacy and her responses to the books she reads. This view can expand scholarly understanding of the effect social, cultural, and natural environments have on readers' interaction with texts (Mackey, 2016: 13). I begin, then, with a brief recollection of my own reading history. As a young girl, pre-teen, and adolescent, I was the reader who had to be shaken or shouted at before I would emerge from the world of the book. For instance, I can remember, at about the age of seven, reading a book about the Okefenokee Swamp (in Georgia, USA). It was illustrated, and while reading I noticed a picture that I found fascinating. When I returned to look at the picture again shortly after reading the book, I couldn't find it. I eventually decided, after many years of confusion, that I had become so immersed in the story that I had vividly imagined an illustration that was never there. It was the same with my reading of most literature. Characters, events, places, stories within stories, in some instances became so real to me through multiple re-readings that I searched library catalogues for books that didn't exist and pored over atlases to look for countries that weren't real.

Looking back, it feels as if I spent years looking for *The Horn of Joy*, by Matthew Maddox, because Madeleine L'Engle made it seem so real in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet* (1978); and hunting for S. Morgenstern's unabridged *The Princess Bride* because William Goldman (1973) had me convinced that his book really was the edited "good parts" version. I searched and searched in my family's world atlas for Vespugia, the small South American country that features in several of L'Engle's novels; and for Florin and Guilder, certain that I would eventually find some mention of these two countries Goldman invented somewhere in Europe, near the Low Countries. In a similar way, I became deeply attached to a real country in which I had roots, because I had become so immersed in the characters and landscapes of that country as described by the authors I read. Nancy and Benedict Freedman's *Mrs. Mike* (1947) and L.M. Montgomery's many novels idealized and mythologized Canada and Canadians for me to a point where I still dream (at the wise

[1] For a very recent study on this process of adult readers remembering and re-reading, see Alison Waller's 2019 study, *Rereading Childhood Books: A Poetics*.

old age of 40-something) of moving permanently to Canada rather than only making yearly pilgrimages. These very personal experiences of reading as deeply transformative have led me to think about and explore the ways in which fantasy and reality, psychology, ecology, and geography, met and merged in my own reading.

This meeting and merging of the fantastic and the real takes place frequently in the children's and adolescent novels of one of the authors I have read and re-read regularly, both as a child and as an adult: Madeleine L'Engle. Critical writing on L'Engle and her life is prolific and varied, ranging from scholarly texts such as book-length author studies by Donald Hettinga (1993) and Carole F. Chase (1995), both of which focus on L'Engle's Christianity, to less formal writing such as Cynthia Zarin's (2004) author profile. Biographical work includes Leonard Marcus's *Listening for Madeleine* (2012), a collection of interviews with many people who knew L'Engle; and a shorter biography, *Becoming Madeleine*, written by L'Engle's granddaughters during the centennial year of her birth (Voiklis and Roy, 2018). Scholarly work about her writing encompasses a variety of themes, most notably the religious and spiritual, with emphasis on her Christianity. For instance, Marek Oziewicz's chapter on L'Engle in *One Earth, One People* (2008) gives a particularly detailed analysis of L'Engle's Time series as it reveals her theology. The nature of time, death, storytelling, the fantastic and the real, and adolescent sexuality comprise other thematic resonances researchers have discussed in L'Engle's work. A few scholars address environmental/ecological themes in her novels (again, Oziewicz's 2008 work provides some detailed discussion of the environment in L'Engle's Time series), as well as L'Engle's own personal concern about humans and the environment (examples occur in Chase, 1995; Marcus, 2012). There are also references to her interest in the idea of interconnectedness amongst humans and between humans and the nonhuman. Roxanne Harde's 2019 article, "'Plus, you children': Growing Ecocitizens in Three American Children's Novels" is a recent example of scholarship on L'Engle that expressly talks about environmentalism and how human beings interact with and relate to the planet. Not surprisingly, the majority of research on L'Engle's writing focuses on her Time series. The O'Keefe family series and the Austin family series receive less attention, and I have yet to find any extensive studies which specifically address these three series in conversation with one another. This seems to be a strange omission given L'Engle's own insistence on interconnectedness in what she calls the created universe, the place in which we humans and Earth exist. It also seems strange because close and repeated readings of the three

series reveal obvious connections between them which establish that all three series of novels take place in the same (fantastical) world or universe.[2]

As a result, it seems very important to address some of the possibilities inherent in this neglected overlap between the three series. In addition to observing that there is movement between the fantastic and the realistic in these novels, I have noted that L'Engle is adept at building a deep relationship between her human characters and the nonhuman aspects of their world(s), including both the living, organic creatures and the non-living, inorganic features of the landscapes she develops. The strong connections are written in such a way that for me as a reader, they have become real in the sense that I feel powerfully engaged, psychologically, emotionally, and even spiritually, with the human and nonhuman in her novels. L'Engle wrote, among her many works of fiction and nonfiction, three intertwined series: the Time series, beginning with her best-known work, *A Wrinkle in Time*; the O'Keefe family series, which follows Polly O'Keefe, Calvin and Meg Murry O'Keefe's oldest daughter; and the Austin family series. The first two series are primarily fantastic, while the third is considered predominantly to be realistic. However, the Austin family series takes place in the same universe L'Engle created for the Time and O'Keefe novels, a universe which contains strong fantasy elements.

Consequently, reading these three series has served as a microcosmic reflection of my own childhood reading experiences, through which the real and the imagined became entangled. Characters, countries, and events between the three series overlap, and the final novel of the O'Keefe series (*An Acceptable Time*) is also considered by some to be the final novel of the Time series. This interplay between the two fantasy series and the one realistic series, and their placement within the same universe, makes them unique in fantasy literature. To date I have not encountered any other sets of parallel series that so explicitly link one or more fantastic series and a realistic series in the way these do. Additionally, very few scholars actually address the overlap between the three series (one example is Smedman, 1993) and I have found none who have carefully investigated the three series in conjunction with each other. Repeated readings suggest that the fantasy experiences from the Time and O'Keefe series of novels emerge as "real life" experiences in the Austin family novels, and vice versa, implying the existence of an unbroken continuum between the fantastic and the real across these three series.

[2] See Appendix A for lists of the novels in each series. See Appendix B for lists of characters and crossover characters.

In addition to the shared themes involving practical problems, events, and experiences in the realistic and the fantasy novels, many of the analogies between them arise from specific psychological and spiritual topics or tropes they have in common. In both her fantasy and her realism, L'Engle joins human characters to nonhuman beings by shared ideas, experiences, feelings, emotions, physical living conditions, and so forth. These exist at various points along what can be thought of as a second continuum between the human and the nonhuman, closely analogous to the continuum between the realistic and the fantastic. This second continuum allows the audience to anticipate how the experience of reading these novels might lead to reimagining the attachments that can be formed between human and nonhuman outside of the book, and the ways in which those attachments might be mutually beneficial and healing. In all three series of novels, it is often the case that the nonhuman is important in helping humans resolve problems they face.

The overlap between L'Engle's Time, O'Keefe family, and Austin family novels means that the books lend themselves well to examination across these two different continuums—human/nonhuman relationships and fantasy/reality—which also overlap in the context of this thesis. A continuum may be defined as "a continuous series of elements passing into each other" (OED), a concept which is described well by Arthur Lovejoy (1964) as "thinking in terms of continuity, of infinitely delicate shadings-off of everything into something else, of the overlapping of essences, so that the whole notion of [distinct] species comes to seem an artifice of thought not truly applicable to the fluency, the, so to say, universal overlappingness of the real world" (57). In other words, for Lovejoy, the categories by which we seek to define and understand things are always already permeable and overlapping. Thus defined, L'Engle's three series move back and forth along a continuum of the realistic/mimetic and fantastic, which corresponds to the one Brian Attebery briefly explores before developing his "fuzzy set" of fantasy. Attebery (1992) places Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* at the very centre of the formal and thematic category or set that constitutes fantasy. From this centre, Attebery argues for a "fuzzy sets" concept, drawing on Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) idea about how humans categorize things into sets based on varieties of shared characteristics. For instance, Lakoff and Johnson provide as an example different characteristics of the concept of "love" (1980: 139-46), pointing out that while we often assume that individuals will see the word "love" and all think of the same attributes of this word, in fact "love" is seen as many different things. "Love" itself may be a set, but one person may say "Love is a collaborative work of art" (139) and lay out ways in which love is built artistically and collaboratively, while another person

may say “Love is madness” (141), basing their position on common tropes such as “I’m crazy about” a person or so-and-so is “driving me wild” (141). In this way, the set of “love” becomes fuzzy – what might be viewed as fixed characteristics become fluid and can bleed into each other. Another, less abstract, example might be to examine what constitutes a chair: we may think immediately of a wooden or plastic structure with four legs, a seat, and a back. We sit upright on a chair. However, if we consider instead a chair as an object to be sat upon, the set changes and could be expanded to include couches, benches, a bean bag, etc. Attebery uses this set theory to define what texts can be included in the fantasy “canon,” offering a variety of characteristics by which texts can be included in the “fuzzy set” of fantasy literature.

This idea is picked up by scholars such as Farah Mendlesohn (2008), who argues for multiple fuzzy sets of fantasy literature, “rather than [just] a single fuzzy set” (xvii). She calls her sets “portal-quest fantasy,” those with a door into a new world (1); “immersive fantasy,” those in which the fantasy world is complete unto itself (59); “intrusion fantasy,” where fantasy elements intrude into the book’s real world (114); and “liminal fantasy,” in which the reader is “[estranged …] from the fantastic as seen and described by the protagonist” (182). She calls her group for outliers “the irregulars,” those texts which she considers fantasy but which don’t easily fall into her other four sets (246). Categorizing Madeleine L’Engle’s three series, however, seems to draw away from the fuzzy sets concept presented by Attebery and Mendlesohn and back toward a theoretical mode Attebery mentions very early in *Strategies of Fantasy*: that there are poles at either end of a line made up of fictional kinds or modes. One pole constitutes extremely realistic or mimetic literature, and the other is made up of the highly fantastic (1992: 2-3). Attebery draws this idea from Northrop Frye’s *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), where Frye describes “fictional modes” as having “two poles.” One is “the mimetic tendency itself, the tendency to verisimilitude and accuracy of description.” The other, he says, is “something that seems to be connected both with Aristotle’s word mythos and with the usual meaning of myth” and which “only gradually becomes attracted toward a tendency to tell a plausible or credible story” (51). Frye further suggests a pattern by which myth passes through stages of legend, tragedy, and comedy, until we finally have realistic fiction (51). Attebery (1992) suggests that Frye’s “myth” might more appropriately be called fantasy (3), and this continuum between the fantastic and the realistic describes the movement within L’Engle’s three series much more effectively than fuzzy sets. The Time series is highly fantastic, with the O’Keefe family series at times overlapping with it and at others moving toward becoming less fantastic. The Austin family series is highly mimetic or realistic, yet it

contains at least two novels which move back along the continuum toward the highly fantastic. L'Engle's work moves between the fantastic and the realistic with remarkable fluency, and so describing the three series in terms of Frye's and Attebery's two poles may fit her novels better than trying to find a central text from which all her other texts in these three series radiate to create a "fuzzy set."

L'Engle herself sees this fantasy/reality continuum in terms of time, calling the more fantastic novels kairotic (by which she means unmeasurable time) and her more realistic novels chronologic (happening in measurable time), while acknowledging that there is frequent movement along this continuum among her different series (L'Engle, 1972: 245). L'Engle's ideas about time have frequently been addressed, in varying degrees and often with a very natural focus on time *travel*, by scholars (see, for instance, Hettinga (1993), who discusses L'Engle's notions of chronos and Kairos and movement through or in and out of these types of time (23-24)). Given the already-existing scholarship on her idea of time in relation to fantasy and reality, my focus remains on the tight relationship between the three series, illustrated by the many overlaps between them in terms of characters and events. This relationship means that in addition to observing L'Engle's movement along the reality/fantasy continuum, these three series afford readers an excellent space to explore what ecopsychologist Andy Fisher calls a "kinship continuum" between humans and the nonhuman world (2013: 95, 139). L'Engle's own emphasis on the interconnectedness of all parts of the world she creates for her three series means that she often writes relationships amongst her characters and the world around them, including human, animal, and mineral. These relationships move easily along Fisher's continuum as well, providing strong and cogent illustrations of the many ways in which humans can imagine their shared experience with the environment. Importantly, the relationships L'Engle presents in the novels under scrutiny in this thesis are both reciprocal – the human characters are not simply taking from each other or from the natural environment, but instead the connections seem mutual in some way – and recuperative. Learning, growth, and healing evolve from these mutually beneficial interconnections. As a result, it may be possible for readers to "recollect," as Fisher calls it (2013), their own experiences and relationships along this human-nature kinship continuum, leading to more care and concern for the world as well as recognition of the many benefits humans receive from nurturing these relationships.

This thesis examines a selection of novels in these three interlocking series with the purpose of exploring how reading fantasy experiences as they emerge from a more realistic

setting, and vice versa, might encourage readers to think more deeply about their own everyday interactions with the Earth and how those interactions might be mentally, emotionally, and physically healthful. In all the novels under examination, the psychological, emotional, and spiritual connections both amongst humans and between the human and the nonhuman seem to be a key factor in how the fantastic and the realistic interface, because they are instrumental in the success of the human characters in overcoming the challenges they face throughout the novels. Because of the prominent place occupied by the organic and inorganic nonhuman in these novels, I employ a wide range of terms for the environment throughout this thesis. L'Engle herself favours terms such as "ecology" and "creation," while the critical and psychological literature I reference utilizes other common terms, such as "the environment," "ecosystem," "biosphere," etc. Many fields also continue to use the word "nature," a term which has been problematized because of its diverse meanings (see Soper, 1995). If necessary, I will clarify how I am using a given term or will try to contextualize the terms used in the specific sources to which I refer.

In addition to specifying my use of words to describe the natural environment throughout these series, I must state my reasoning for using the term "children's and adolescent literature" throughout my thesis to refer to the books in these three series. I will generally avoid referring to L'Engle's work as exclusively adolescent fiction, because the three series describe a wide range of young people at different points in their development, and the majority of the issues and events in the texts of the Austin, O'Keefe, and Time sequences can be addressed to younger children as well as teenagers. Consequently, the texts seem to range in their target readership between children and adolescents, with L'Engle herself arguing that the "most exciting books" she has encountered are those which resist categorization as children's, adolescent, or adult and "can be read […] by a reader of any age" (1972: 159). The exception to the wide-ranging audience age for these texts may be *A House Like a Lotus*. This novel contains specific, mature content on sex and sexuality that aims a novel at teenagers (or adults) rather than children, situating it in the Young Adult literature category (Waller, 2009: 16-17). For my purposes, "children's and adolescent" helps me mentally categorize novels which have child and teen characters and deal with issues that are simultaneously relevant and accessible to readers from both age groups.

Ecopsychology

The powerful psychological, emotional, and spiritual relationships formed between the human and the nonhuman in L'Engle's novels led me in quest of a theoretical approach which would help me to articulate those connections. I found this theoretical approach in the field of ecopsychology and its associated praxis, ecotherapy. Ecopsychology has been defined in many different ways in the 50-60 years since its inception. The American Psychological Association (APA) writes that "Ecopsychology explores humans' psychological interdependence with the rest of nature and the implications for identity, health and well-being" ("Ecopsychology"). Among other things, the APA explains that "Ecopsychology topics include emotional responses to nature" and "the transpersonal dimensions of environmental identity and concern," as well as "Understanding transcendent experiences in nature" ("Ecopsychology"), where nature comprises the organic and inorganic creatures and materials that constitute planet Earth. "Transpersonal" refers to the idea that consciousness and identity can extend beyond the "person or beyond ego" (Smith, 1995: 402-03) and "transcendent" refers to experiences that extend us beyond the limitations of everyday occurrences (Manganyi, 2019: 28), including beyond what we see as limits of our egos to recognize common ground with others (Zinkin, 1989: 262). Philosopher William James (1909) links transpersonal and transcendent experiences through a continuum metaphor. "[O]ur lives," he says,

> are like islands in the sea, or like trees in the forest […] [which] commingle their roots in the darkness underground, and the islands also hang together through the ocean's bottom. Just so there is a continuum of cosmic consciousness, against which our individuality builds but accidental fences, and into which our several minds plunge as into a mother-sea or reservoir. (589)

Experiences of this kind discussed in this thesis include the episode in which Vicky Austin gets caught up in a major earthquake, or when she finds herself swimming with and telepathically communicating with dolphins. The term "transcendent" as used for moments like these should be distinguished from the more familiar term "transcendental," in which the experiences in question are supernatural. Human interdependence with and emotional responses to the transpersonal dimensions of the world may be explored through all kinds of literature, and this is one of the reasons I am excited at the prospect of reading children's and adolescent literature with an eye to ecopsychology. Intriguingly, some of the concepts which inform ecopsychology and ecotherapy have been touched on in L'Engle scholarship, suggesting that the theory and the practice of ecopsychology can be fruitfully employed in reading her work. These include Marek Oziewicz's (2008) reference to Gaia theory in

L'Engle's work, which is the idea posed by British environmentalist James Lovelock and expanded by American biologist Lynn Margulis that Earth is one overarching system (Roszak, 1995: 13-14); and E. O. Wilson's biophilia hypothesis, which suggests that humans have an inborn love of the natural world (Roszak, 1995: 4). A second literary scholar, Millicent Lenz (1994), who briefly mentions L'Engle and the environment in an endnote, references the ideas of ecosophy and deep ecology, as well as citing Theodore Roszak and his book, *The Voice of the Earth*, all significant and influential on ecopsychologists.

Ecopsychology is, in the words of Andy Fisher, "a large, multifaceted undertaking" (Fisher, 2013: 6), both because so many kinds of therapeutic work are embraced by ecopsychology (i.e. nature therapy, garden therapy, animal therapy), and because the discipline has generated new approaches to how and why humans should mentally and emotionally re-engage themselves with the environment (among them wilderness retreats and wilderness therapy). Fisher's landmark text, *Radical Ecopsychology* (2013; 1st edition 2002), argues that in the past much of "mainstream environmentalism tend[ed] to treat 'the environment' dualistically, as a realm external to human life that must be well managed" (205). Recently, however, the frightening acceleration of climate change, species extinction, and the destruction of local ecosystems has become a combination of factors that have led to our lifetime being referred to as the "Anthropocene," the age when human activity is having more impact on the earth's ecology than anything else. Those who study and work in ecological and environmental occupations have turned their attention to the concept that the planetary ecosystem is quite capable of managing itself. In other words, it needs no human-driven "management." Indeed, the "management" we have so far sought to impose is part of the climate change *problem* rather than its solution.

Environmentalism, of course, is much broader than just ecopsychology, and reading novels, poetry, and other forms of both fiction and nonfiction with the environment or/and environmentalism in mind (ecocriticism and the environmental humanities) has been popular for more than forty years. For instance, ecocritic Timothy Morton (2017) has looked carefully at the ways in which issues of ecology intersect with and go beyond earlier political and economic theories such as those of Marx and his successors. According to Morton, the principles of socialist theory may be adapted to help us defy the assumption that the nonhuman is an alien Other which should therefore be, at best, subject to the human and, at worst, eradicated altogether. Such critical insights as those which Morton propounds dovetail with ecopsychological thought and remind us that because

humans are a part of the ecosystem rather than separated from it, we should be keenly aware that our actions in relation to our environment are harming all of us, human and nonhuman. We should be looking for ways to facilitate the earth's systems in healing themselves from the damage we have done to them – if that is even possible anymore.

What ecopsychology brings to the wider ecological movement is the idea that a variety of human psychological health issues might be a result of the environmental devastation going on all around us, and that working toward a personal re-engagement with nonhuman nature could help humans heal mentally and emotionally. Rather than looking at the "study of the relationship between ***literature*** and the physical environment," as Cheryll Glotfelty defines the field of ecocriticism in her landmark essay, "Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis" (1996: xviii, emphasis added), ecopsychology and ecotherapy are all about studying, developing, re-engaging, and "recollecting" the relationship between ***human beings*** and their environment. Additionally and importantly, ecopsychology and ecotherapy operate from a premise that the Earth and its nonhuman inhabitants and elements have a psyche akin to the human psyche, which is significant in connecting the human and nonhuman along a kinship continuum.

Ecocriticism and Ecopsychology

Because I am studying the intersections of ecopsychology and its praxis, ecotherapy, with children's and adolescent literature, and considering the possibilities presented by the gaps between these disciplines, it is necessary to take some time to sharpen the distinction between ecopsychology/ecotherapy as psychological and therapeutic practices designed to help improve human mental health through improving human relationships with the natural environment, and the critical theory of ecocriticism.

While defining ecocriticism in her entry for the Oxford Encyclopedia of Literature, Cheryl Lousley (2020) points out that it is a broad-ranging "political mode" which examines the current climate crisis from "social, cultural, affective, imaginative, and material" perspectives in literary texts ranging across a broad spectrum of time and origin. It focuses on the political, social, and economic causes and impacts of the Anthropocene and its accompanying environmental issues, and how they are represented in many different literatures. Lousley's discussion and other accounts of literary ecocriticism presented by critics such as Cheryll Glotfelty and Greg Garrard suggest that the field of ecocriticism and ecocritics see themselves as part of a literary environmentalist movement.

For instance, Glotfelty (1996) stated – twenty-five years ago – that "we have reached the age of environmental limits, a time when the consequences of human actions are damaging the planet's basic life support systems" and declares, "Either we change our ways or we face global catastrophe, destroying much beauty and exterminating countless fellow species in our headlong race to apocalypse" (xx). Garrard (2012) also connects ecocriticism directly to politics and culture, and ties the overall environmental movement back to Rachel Carson's important text, *Silent Spring* (1962), which sets the tone for the focus of environmentalism and subsequently ecocriticism on pending ecological catastrophe (Garrard, 2012: 2-3). While Garrard also widens the definition of ecocriticism to include connection between the human and the nonhuman (5), the central point for him, as well as for other ecocritics, seems to be the damage caused to the nonhuman by the human. Words and phrases such as environmental apocalypse, doomsday, environmental destruction, crisis, toxic discourse, and pollution seem increasingly to characterize ecocritical scholarship. Perhaps the unfortunate consequence of this focus is the unintentional distancing of many people from the natural environment, either as a result of disbelief or because of feelings of fear and helplessness. While ecocriticism is not drawn on in this thesis, ecopsychology and ecotherapy do acknowledge and certainly address the trauma inherent in the earth's current environmental situation as important to the mental health concerns faced by many people today, demonstrating that ecopsychologists and ecotherapists share the concerns of ecocritics, though differing in their approaches.

From a practical perspective, ecocriticism seems to have no consistently central theoretical basis. It can be connected with almost any other critical theory, resulting in such hybrid terms as eco-Marxism, ecofeminism, ecosophy, and ecotheology, among many others. Gabriel Egan, a Shakespearean ecocritic, suggests this infinite variety of approaches means that ecocriticism as a field can exist only if it can provide provocative, evocative readings of texts (2015: 31). He also pointedly makes ecocriticism as a whole a political and economic venture, as do Glotfelty and Garrard, and goes so far as to affirm that ecocriticism "fails to be a theory unless it offers readers a means of […] thinking with any complex literary-historical work, about our present ecological predicament, in order to address the habits of mind and concomitant structures of economic and political power that have given rise to it" (15). This emphasis laid on economic and political issues by these three critics, whose work in ecocriticism has provided focal points for the discipline, has been picked up by other theorists such as Timothy Morton, whose *Humankind: Solidarity with Nonhuman People* rewrites Marxist theory to show that capitalism marginalizes virtually anything that is not white and male, including land, the female, and the

nonhuman. Communism, he argues, must then truly be about a whole community, one which includes rather than externalizes all aspects of the environment, both human and nonhuman (2017: 6). In this way Morton, using terms such as "solidarity," "relying on," and the "symbiotic real" (2), draws close to the idea of interconnection which characterizes ecopsychology and ecotherapy. However, as do Glotfelty, Garrard, and Egan, Morton focuses on economic structures and *de facto* on the political structures that arise from them.

In contrast to ecocriticism's lack of a central theoretical idea, ecopsychology and ecotherapy can, for the most part, trace their roots to some very specific ideas. These include Jungian psychology and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of shared experience, as conveyed through Theodore Roszak's *The Voice of the Earth* (1st ed. 1992); the edited collection *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind*, by Roszak, Mary Gomes, and Allen Kanner (1995); Howard Clinebell's (1996) *Ecotherapy: Healing Ourselves, Healing the Earth*; and Andy Fisher's *Radical Ecopsychology: Psychology in the Service of Life* (1st ed. 2002, 2nd ed. 2013), all considered important foundational texts of ecopsychology and ecotherapy. Roszak, for instance, expands the Jungian idea of a collective unconscious to include an ecological or planetary unconscious (Roszak, 2001: 320-21), the idea that humans and nonhumans share a set of images, symbols, or experiences that can be drawn on for meaning-making and shared understanding of events and emotions, as is demonstrated in Chapter 3 of this thesis, when Vicky Austin learns to communicate with dolphins telepathically through a series of shared symbolic images Andy Fisher, on the other hand, expands and expounds the role taken by Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology in ecopsychology and ecotherapy. In all these seminal texts, fear and anxiety about climate change and environmental crisis are acknowledged as impacting human mental health, but rather than the constant focus on the apocalyptic which seems to characterize current ecocriticism, ecopsychologists and ecotherapists seek not only to validate those fears, but, importantly, to alleviate them by promoting psychological, emotional, mental, and even physical healing through mutually beneficial interaction between the human and the nonhuman, as is demonstrated in Chapter 4 of this thesis, in which Polly O'Keefe is able to overcome psychological trauma because of her deep embeddedness with oceans and islands.

Theodore Roszak, considered to be one of the leading figures in the development of ecopsychology and its praxis, began to reconsider his own relationship with environmentalism and eventually to rethink how to approach people about environmental

issues precisely because of experiences he had in which he began to listen to the fears and concerns of those who were resisting environmentalist movements and ideas. He explains that he himself was actively involved in the environmentalist movement, and began to notice that while he and others were obviously actively concerned in trying to promote important and life-changing awareness of the damage being done to the environment, the tactics used by those involved in environmentalist movements were backfiring because they were calculated to induce fear, shame, and guilt as motivators for change. "I was once in the habit of scolding people about the stupidly destructive things we do to the planetary ecology," he states (2009: 30). He goes on to say that once he stopped talking at people and began listening to them, he began to hear that many people were completely "overwhelmed by the magnitude of the environmental crisis" being thrown at them, and though they wanted to try to help, they were shutting down because the "situation seems so far gone that many assume there is nothing they can do" – they see no starting point that would be individually manageable (31). Most, he concluded, want to try to do something, but have "the sense of being trapped" between the environmental crisis and the need for survival (31-32). Roszak is not alone in noting this climate-induced fear and stress – Howard Clinebell, who wrote one of the first extensive works on ecotherapy, explains:

> In a 'Despair and Empowerment' workshop I once co-led, a deeply concerned graduate student voiced feelings about the nuclear crisis that are comparable to the feelings many people struggle with today about the earth's crisis. Exploding with frustration, having become acutely aware of the reality-based terror of the nuclear crisis, he cried out, 'I feel so damn helpless! What can I do? What can any one person do about problems so gigantic and overwhelming?' (1996: 72).

As is demonstrated in Chapter 2 of this thesis, in which both novels under scrutiny deal with the major issue of what would happen to the Earth in the event of a nuclear war, overcoming this fear and promoting hope and the mutual benefits of emotional and psychological connection between humans as well as between the human and the nonhuman (both organic and inorganic) is one of the primary purposes of ecopsychology and its praxis, ecotherapy, and seems to be a key factor distinguishing them from ecocriticism. In addition, ecotherapy as a psychotherapeutic practice focuses on improving client mental health, giving people the mental, emotional, and psychological strength to acknowledge and engage with the climate catastrophe instead of being overwhelmed by it. It is something that, like other therapies, deals with problems in the immediate moment.

Thus, while the events discussed in the counselling session may be in the past, much as the children's literature under scrutiny was published in the past, the conversation

about the events, the work to navigate those events and the accompanying mental health challenges, takes place in the present, just as Charles Wallace travels to the past in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet* in order to find ways to address a present crisis, as discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis. In the same way, our reading of children's literature is occurring in the present, and we are presently still trying to understand and navigate how the events of that imagined literary past are still issues we face today which impact our present. Ecotherapy is, therefore, by its very nature as an immediate therapeutic modality, "presentist" in the sense Gabriel Egan (2015) defines as "a kind of historicism that shares […] a rejection of the idea that […] meaning is transhistorical, transcultural, and embedded in writing from the past." Instead, he argues, "presentist" understandings of events are those in which "meaning [is] generated at the point of consumption by modern" users/audiences/clients (21). Egan points out that it is important to note this is a different definition from the traditional idea of presentism, in which scholars impose present values and mores on events from the past with the expectation that those who acted in the past must be held to a modern standard of behaviour and understanding, and their actions must be interpreted in light of present-day belief systems (19-20). Importantly, in working to develop a therapeutic modality that helps people to recognize, understand, and try to overcome the psychological damage they have sustained, ecopsychologists and ecotherapists do not deny the environmental problems surrounding us. They are very aware of these issues, as well as of the more frightening ways in which nature can behave, and acknowledge them. In fact, it's important, Clinebell argues, that "[e]cotherapy and ecoeducation must deal realistically with the darkness as well as the light, the violence as well as the serenity, the death as well as the life, found everywhere in nature" (1996: 69), as is demonstrated in Chapter 3 of this thesis when Vicky Austin must try to overcome existential anxiety as it presents itself through fear of death. However, ecopsychologists and ecotherapists do not focus on the catastrophic environmental problems as the endgame for their clients. They demonstrate a willingness to validate the stress and anxiety people can feel because of the current and past ecocatastrophe as part of the psychological trauma people are struggling to overcome when they enter therapy. This contrasts with what ecocriticism does, which is, more and more, to demonstrate the ecocatastrophe in literature, as well as to examine how we got to this point. Ecopsychology and ecotherapy focus on the psychological consequences humans face, and on re-establishing contact with nature by doing what Andy Fisher (2013) calls recollecting our already-existing embeddedness in the world around us in order to promote mental, emotional, psychological, and even physical healing and recovery from those traumas.

Because of its presentist nature and the focus on healing, using ecopsychology and ecotherapy as a lens through which to view children's and adolescent literature proves a fruitful and focused approach, given the many ways in which this literature portrays young people interacting with the world around them (Heneghan, 2018: 22-23). Ecopsychology and ecotherapy work hard to break down dualism which may exist between how we see the human and the nonhuman and divide them from each other in our minds. While I do not advocate replacing ecotherapy modalities stemming from ecopsychology with children's and adolescent literature, my research suggests that they demonstrate ways in which human interaction with the nonhuman can bring healing. Environmental scientist Liam Heneghan asks similar questions about reading of and engagement with children's literature, stating, "I wonder if there might also be an environmental benefit to be gained by fortifying those intimate indoor moments when parents read to their children. Are there special books that parents should choose for the Great Outdoors? Are there special ways to read them?" (2018: 20). He suggests this as a reinforcing activity coupled with getting people outdoors more often, which aligns with the idea that ecopsychology and ecotherapy could be enhanced through engaging with children's literature.

This potential is particularly apparent when one begins to look for the representations of how embeddedness in the environment impacts the mental, emotional, psychological, and even physical health of characters, especially since it is now commonplace to reflect on the well-established link between mental and physical health, and to use catchphrases such as body-mind-spirit. Madeleine L'Engle's three children's and adolescent series contain clear evidence of the importance of the natural environment to the recovery of human mental health, as may be seen in the careful analyses provided in this thesis. However, the evidence for ecopsychological and ecotherapeutic readings of children's and adolescent literature is not limited to L'Engle's work, nor is it limited to fantasy and highly imaginative literatures. The potential for these readings seems to be particularly prevalent in children's literature of the past, suggesting an untapped resource for ecopsychology and ecotherapy, but I have seen ecopsychological and ecotherapeutic ideas emerge in a variety of contemporary texts. A small sampling follows.

Evidence of the connection between human mental and physical health and close interaction with the natural world is found in the children's and adolescent literature by past authors such as L.M. Montgomery and Johanna Spyri. For instance, the therapeutic importance of a strong relationship between a child and her natural environment and that relationship's impact on the child's mental health and well-being are illustrated clearly in

L.M. Montgomery's 1929 novel *Magic for Marigold*. Specifically, one chapter, "Lost Laughter," demonstrates that Montgomery recognized and promoted the relationship between children and nature as beneficial to mental health. In this chapter, Marigold Lesley loses access to her imaginary friend, Sylvia (a plum tree bough), and goes into a serious depression as a result. Montgomery suggests that this depression will lead to Marigold's death if she is not allowed to access this special relationship with Sylvia. Montgomery further illustrates the impact of nature on mental health in this chapter by introducing a psychologist who insists that Marigold's grandmother allow her to regain access to Sylvia. This rapidly restores Marigold's mental, and consequently her physical, health.

In addition to this example from Montgomery's canon, Johanna Spyri's most famous novel, *Heidi* (1880), contains a well-known episode which demonstrates the close connection between a character's developing connection with the ecosystem and her mental or physical health. The first occurs when Heidi is taken from the Alm and from her grandfather in Switzerland to be a companion to Klara Sesemann in Frankfurt. While she is there, she becomes extremely homesick, continually imagining what the seasons are like on the mountain, while in Frankfurt she is unable to tell "whether it was summer or winter, for the walls and windows, which were the only things to be seen from the Sesemann house, always looked the same, and she went out only when Klara was particularly well and could be taken for a drive in the carriage" (Spyri, 1984: 122). Eventually, Heidi's homesickness becomes akin to depression, and she "would sit down in a corner of her lonely room and put both hands over her eyes, […] and thus she would sit without stirring" (122). Her mental health becomes so poor that she begins to sleepwalk because when she is able to sleep, she dreams constantly that she is on the Alm, seeing the stars at night and hearing the fir trees in the wind (131). This also affects her physical health, until, Klara's doctor says, Heidi "is almost reduced to a little skeleton and will soon be entirely so" (133). The doctor declares that the only remedy for Heidi's mental and physical distress and illness is "to send the child immediately back to her native mountain air" (133-34). As she quickly recovers both mentally and physically when she returns to her grandfather's cabin, this episode clearly demonstrates the emotional and psychological connection Heidi has with the nonhuman. It also shows the efficacy of the mental and physical healing provided through her ability to actively access that relationship again. Many of Spyri's less-well-known children's novels contain similar events, suggesting that a strong relationship between the human and the nonhuman was viewed as essential to mental and physical health.

Changing focus from realistic fiction to fantastic fiction, Robin McKinley's re-told fairy tales also contain powerful portrayals of the deep emotional connection and kinship between humans and nonhumans. Many of her fairy-tale novels demonstrate how a (usually female) protagonist develops a close relationship with the nonhuman, usually animals, and through this connection is able to overcome a major challenge. A notable example is her adolescent fiction *Spindle's End* (2000), a retelling of the Sleeping Beauty tale. Rosie, the princess who is meant to become the sleeping beauty, is fostered by two fairies, Katriona and Aunt Sophronia, in the hopes that the evil fairy, Pernicia, will be unable to find Rosie in time to work the curse by which she is supposed to prick her finger on a spindle and die. By an accident of magic, Katriona unexpectedly gives Rosie an extra gift, along with the real fairy godmothers: she gives Rosie her childhood ability to talk to animals (37-38). Because Rosie is not a fairy or magical at all, this unexpected ability both protects her from discovery by Pernicia until she is old enough to face the evil fairy, and provides her with the help she needs to do so. McKinley not only illustrates the benefits of connection with animals for Rosie's well-being and ability to overcome the emotional challenge she faces when Pernicia comes, but also shows how the kinship Rosie has developed with animals throughout her lifetime is mutually beneficial. Her ability to liaise between the human and the nonhuman allows animals to convey their needs and desires to other human beings, creating respect between the two groups and allowing humans to know specifically how to help their nonhuman companions.

Much more recent examples occur in novels by Jewell Parker Rhodes, including her Louisiana Girls trilogy, which consists of *Ninth Ward* (2010), *Sugar* (2013), and *Bayou Magic* (2013); and in her newly published *Paradise on Fire* (2021). Each of these novels involves the challenges faced by a young woman of colour as she tries to negotiate an event or circumstance which challenges her physically and psychologically. In Rhodes' most recent middle-grade novel, *Paradise on Fire* (2021), Adaugo (Addy) has suffered from PTSD for many years because her parents and sister were killed in a house fire. One of her coping mechanisms has been to draw maps and escape routes of any location in which she finds herself. When her grandmother signs her up to attend a wilderness adventure camp called "Paradise Ranch" one summer, Addy discovers what it's like to map a wilderness landscape and try to find the ways out of different parts of the landscape. She slowly begins to love the area she is staying in, and learns about the landscape and its inhabiting wildlife. In Andy Fisher's terms, she "recollects" her relationship with the natural world and begins to heal from the traumatic deaths of her parents. However, her relationship to the environment is challenged when a wildfire starts while she and most of

the group of young people and counsellors they are with are on an overnight camping trip. When Addy and three of her friends become separated from the rest of the group, it is Addy's constant mapping of the wilderness and her growing love for it that allow her to lead her three friends out of the area of the fire to safety. Addy is finally able to face the deaths of her family members in the house fire through rescuing her friends from the wildfire, and she continues to develop a love of the wilderness areas around Paradise Ranch, as well as to respect that the natural environment is beyond her control. Addy returns to Paradise Ranch the following summer, this time with her grandmother, for the opportunity to continue developing her kinship with this place she has learned to care for through its trauma, and which has healed her of her own trauma.

A few other examples include Kyle Lukoff's (2021) *Too Bright to See* (2022 Stonewall Book Award winner for children's and adolescent literature for LGBTQ+ and 2022 Newbery Honour book); and Holly Goldberg Sloan's (2021) *The Elephant in the Room*. Each of these middle-grade novels follows the experiences of young characters from underrepresented groups and each contains episodes which associate mental health and well-being to interaction with the natural environment. In *Too Bright to See*, the main character, called Bug, comes out as transgender to his family and friends during the summer before entering middle school. When identifying as female, Bug rarely feels comfortable with himself. He can never seem to find interests that align with those of his friends. Until he realizes that he is transgender, Bug is portrayed as only feeling really comfortable when he is outside. For instance, he talks about "spending whole days out of doors. Staring up at clouds, climbing trees, reading. Looking for minnows in the creek" (Lukoff, 2021: 45). This time is soothing for Bug, providing a location in which he feels no psychological pressure to pretend an interest in the activities his female friends enjoy. It is also an important location for his transition, as it is on one of the many days he spends outside during this summer that he hears a voice trying to tell him something he can't understand. Because he feels most himself, the outdoor environment he loves becomes a therapeutic space in which he can slowly begin to understand his relationship to himself and to others as he realizes that he is a boy instead of a girl. In T*he Elephant in the Room*, Sila is a Turkish-American girl whose family is facing trauma because her mother has been illegally refused re-entry to the United States. Sila becomes friends with Mateo, a young man of Latinx cultural and ethnic background who has Autism Spectrum Disorder. Both children begin helping at the property of Gio, a man for whom Sila's father has done automotive repairs, after learning that Gio has unexpectedly purchased several neglected circus animals. Sila and Mateo take a specific interest in Veda, Gio's elephant. Through

learning to care for Veda, Sila begins to heal psychologically from the distress of her mother's absence and Mateo learns that he can rely on Sila as a friend who doesn't judge him for his differences. The healing and trust that both children learn encourages them to try to find more ways to help Veda. They learn that elephants need social groups, families, and ultimately they are able to locate a second elephant, Madhi, and convince Gio to buy her as well. This is a deliberate choice which helps Veda and Madhi's mental and emotional health as well, because Madhi is Veda's mother. In reuniting the two, Sila and Mateo demonstrate the mutually beneficial impacts of a close relationship between the human and the nonhuman.

This is only a small selection of children's and adolescent literature in which I have recognized the potential for ecopsychological and ecotherapeutic readings. While I have been unable as yet to conduct experimental research on readers as subjects, other scholars, both past and present, have suggested and demonstrated the ways in which literature for young people can act as a way for readers to begin engaging with the natural environment, first within and then outside of the book. Stephen Kellert (2002) points out that "The vicarious or symbolic experience of nature," such as that which a reader might have through a book, "is an important aspect of […] cognitive development, although often insufficiently appreciated and recognized." He explains further that "A particularly interesting example is preschool books and stories […], where a content analysis of a random sample of these publications revealed an overwhelming preponderance of representations and images drawn from nature, particularly animals" (123). This aligns with Heneghan's (2018) observation that "a full 100 percent of books recommended for preschoolers are environmentally themed," and that while this percentage drops in books for primary and middle-grade children, roughly half of those books are also engaged with nature in some way (22-23). The high quantity of books for young people that contain references to and engagement with the natural world are an untapped resource for ecopsychological and ecotherapeutic readings. Louise Chawla, nearly twenty years ago, defined the representation of nature "in children's literature, film, and cyberspace and how children reconstruct these accounts in their own stories and art" as "rich areas for research" (2002: 218), and very recently, researchers in ecopsychology have begun to examine the importance of children's literature on children's understanding of and care towards the environment. For instance, in November 2021, Waxman et al. published an article in the recently launched *International Journal of Ecopsychology*. They studied how children in urban environments learned to make connections between humans and nonhumans based on how their picturebooks were representing nonhuman animals. They found that the more

realistically a picturebook portrayed nonhuman animals, the more likely a child from an urban neighbourhood was to be able to identify characteristics that animals in their picturebooks shared with humans. Importantly, these children were also able to make the connections of shared characteristics between humans and nonhuman animals in a range of animals that were not represented in the particular picturebook they were shown (Waxman et al., 2021: Article 5). This research demonstrates the potential children's literature has to connect readers with the environment in meaningful ways that allow them to see the kinship between the human and the nonhuman. It also confirms the rich research potential surrounding the intersections between children's and adolescent literature with ecopsychology and its praxis, ecotherapy.

Ecopsychology in Action

Examples of how ecopsychology is practiced to improve human well-being (often but not always referred to as ecotherapy) are wide-ranging. Methods of recording these examples are also wide-ranging, from casual anecdotes to carefully documented social science reports. Examples include a brief anecdote from marriage and family therapist, Sara Harris, who also trained as an ecotherapist. Harris (2009) records a client's experience of discovering that a tree she loved had been excessively pruned: "she discovered feelings she didn't know she was even capable of. This normally composed woman raged, screamed, wailed, and cried. […] No one knew that for years she had secretly been going to that tree to talk; she thought it was a 'weird' thing about her, best kept hidden" (85). Harris goes on to explain that, as counselling sessions continued, the client "described her connection to the tree, and through the reflecting and listening I was able to give, she began to claim her authority within the family, first on behalf of her beloved tree and land, then for her life" (85). The freedom this woman felt in experiencing and expressing the loss of a tree with which she had a strong psychological bond facilitated her ability to process the emotional struggle she felt while she worked through her husband's extramarital affair (84). The psychological connection between this client and her special tree, to which she could talk and from which she could learn, resembles connections between L'Engle's character Vicky Austin and the pod of dolphins to which she becomes closely attached: communication with the dolphins allows Vicky to face her struggle with accepting death as a part of life (L'Engle, 1980a). Another of Harris's clients "is obese and in pain constantly, yet as she struggles with this embodied reality, I learn that one of her greatest joys is to drive to the nearby ocean with her husband and watch the waves and

listen to the surf. The natural world offers her healing and respite" (Harris, 2009: 90). Another of L'Engle's characters, Polly O'Keefe, also has a very strong emotional and psychological bond to the ocean in *A House Like a Lotus* (1984), something which allows her to overcome the psychological effects of several betrayals.

George W. Burns (2009), an Australian clinical psychologist, uses the principles of ecopsychology to work with couples. He has developed a tool he calls the "Sensory Awareness Inventory," which he uses to help his clients discover sensory experiences they enjoy together (98-99). Burns describes using this tool with a couple who met with him while they were on holiday. The husband and wife had taken the holiday in the hope of reconnecting with each other, but found themselves constantly talking about family problems instead. This resulted in the wife manifesting physical symptoms of stress, such as hypertension, and the husband becoming "irritable and verbally aggressive" (93-94). Burns, with only two opportunities to counsel the couple, suggested they work on overcoming the tendency to rehash negative memories by asking "each other what were the most pleasurable experiences they could recall having had together, particularly in a natural setting" (101). This encouraged focus on each other and on their natural surroundings, rather than on other family members and events that were impeding their enjoyment of their vacation together (100-01). L'Engle develops a similar kind of sharing in another of her novels, *A Wind in the Door* (1973), when Meg Murry and Calvin O'Keefe find strength and unification in their love of sharing experiences outdoors. Calvin is able to send Meg mental images of taking walks together in the woods near Meg's home, which allows her to find a way to communicate understanding of a difficult situation to another person who has not had the same kinds of experiences in the natural environment.

More recent studies conducted by psychology and/or social science researchers, published in the peer-reviewed journal *Ecopsychology*, have addressed the connections between more active engagement with and awareness of Earth's ecosystem as contributing to the improvement of a subject's mental health. Korpela, Stengård, and Jussila (2016) conducted an experiment using "nature walks as a part of treatment for depression" (8). After two months of weekly meetings, every other one of which was a walk in a more rural area, and after a three-month follow-up period, Korpela and his colleagues determined that most participants had made marked gains in positive mental health. In participant feedback, one of the "most frequently mentioned benefits from nature walks were 'experiences of nature or the beauty of nature' and 'energy'" (12-13). A similar study, conducted by Iwata et al. (2016), which tested 13 weeks of group walks in forests, also

showed that participants with depressive symptoms experienced "significant improvements […] after the group forest walks," improvements on a scale that "would usually require one-to-one intensive treatment with a consultant one or two times a week" (24). A third study demonstrated the positive mental health benefits of such activities as gardening on retirees who do not otherwise have much opportunity to be outdoors (Hawkins et al., 2013), while a fourth study found evidence that simply having better access to sunlight through windows can help to improve "psychological well-being" (Swanson et al., 2016: 127). This last study was of such importance to positive mental health for those who spend much of their time indoors that the researchers state: "Our metric is now being evaluated in ongoing building performance studies across the UK and will inform building, urban design, and interior environmental design, providing advice for occupants about benefits of sunlight exposure and encouraging better design of domestic housing to promote well-being" (Swanson et al., 2016: 128-29). In all cases, psychological well-being was improved by discovering ways in which to re-engage with one's outdoor environment. In the same novel in which L'Engle develops the outdoors as a place Meg and Calvin share, she also depicts Meg and Calvin's walks in the woods as moments when Meg feels happy and more content with herself (L'Engle, 1973: 165-66). This is an important point of progress because throughout both the Time and the O'Keefe family series, there is a lingering sense (either implicit or explicit) that Meg continues to feel inadequate and to have lower self-esteem than the rest of the characters in the novels.

In further resonance with L'Engle's use of the nonhuman in her novels to help the human characters develop more confidence and better interaction with others, there are also studies published in *Ecopsychology* that examine ways in which children can be helped to overcome social, behavioural, and/or learning problems through engaging with their outdoor environments more closely. In one of these studies, a nine-year-old boy was encouraged by his therapist to try to find an area in a local park that he particularly enjoyed. As he and his therapist returned to the park throughout counselling, the boy began to explore and play in a creek, and by the end of the sessions, his "self-esteem increased, and his inclusion of others in his play increased" (Reese, 2018: 294). This same therapist found that a teen-age boy who immigrated to the USA from the Middle East was able to overcome a sense of isolation in his new location through going frequently with his counsellor to "a specific area that overlooked a small creek and pine trees." While very different from the landscape of his original home, visits to this location allowed the young man to develop "a sense of spiritual closeness to the space" which "helped fill part of the void that had been present since moving." He was then able to feel like he was once again

part of a community (Reese, 2018: 294). In another study, conducted at a specially developed "Ecotherapy Program" in the Arctic region of Murmansk in Russia, researchers found that younger children who were struggling with speech development showed improvements in three different areas (psychological, physiological, and logopaedic) after participation in an "integrated animal- and plant-assisted Ecotherapy Program." These improvements included:

> better positive emotional background; reduced anxiety; higher blood flow velocity in the general carotid artery, that is, higher intensity of cerebrum blood supply; increased observation keenness, self-reliance, and creativity; improved communication skills; improved skills of collective work; vocabulary enrichment, [and] increased speech structure complexity. (Kalashnikova et al., 2016: 87)[3]

Overall, continued research and therapeutic work in ecopsychology is demonstrating that helping people become aware of their embeddedness in, and encouraging active interaction with, the ecosystem can help improve mental and physical health, emotional well-being, and learning abilities.

Nondualistic Shared Psyche/Body

Keeping these concepts and examples in mind, Andy Fisher (2013) defines ecopsychology as a project through which humans may realize how our own souls or spirits, and the soul or spirit of the world around us, both of which Fisher calls psyche, "internally relate" to nature, and how they are the "interior and the exterior of the same phenomenon." For Fisher, this reunification of mind and environment is about "refusing all dualisms or splittings of reality (nonduality perhaps being ecopsychology's main pivot), seeking integrations instead" (2013: 205). He also emphasizes the idea put forward by phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, that the mind has no existence independent of the body or, by extension, of the ecosystem in which the body participates. Instead, ecopsychologists elucidate their emphasis on nonduality: psyche (or soul), the mind, and the body are not only bound together in each individual entity, but are shared across entities and throughout the ecosystem. The idea of a shared psyche (or soul) between humans and nonhumans, between the organic and inorganic, and between the occupants of Earth and the occupants of other planets and stars across the universe is present in many

[3] Ecopsychology/ecotherapy is an emerging, and in some cases reasonably well-established, movement around the world. So far I have read research from ecotherapists and ecopsychologists in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Europe, and Australia.

children's and adolescent fantasy and highly imaginative novels. It can be identified in L'Engle's novels (and in many places in her nonfiction as well), and in fact this is something which she highlights very often throughout the three series, making ecopsychology an important critical lens.

Ecopsychology's emphasis on the idea of shared soul or psyche may provide a new and fascinating way of reading children's and adolescent fiction, particularly that which is fantastic or highly imaginative. This is exciting because many agree that whatever else it may do or be, fantasy and highly imaginative literatures draw readers into thinking differently about the world around them. This may happen through upending perceptions of what is real, true, or possible (Jackson, 1981), allowing new or changed perspectives on difficult real-life situations (Tolkien, 1966), or causing readers to pause in temporary uncertainty between what happens every day and what happens in a book (Todorov, 1973). Tzvetan Todorov calls this temporary uncertainty "hesitation" (26) and argues that it is a "condition of the fantastic" (31) which ends once "the reader emerges from the world of the characters and returns to his own" (32). This seems simple enough when considering what Maria Nikolajeva (2014) calls expert readers (often conflated with adults). Novice readers, however (who might include children and adolescents), may stay in this space of hesitation longer than adults or expert readers. This could be because, as Nikolajeva (2014) theorizes, developmentally they are still gaining the experience, both of living and of reading, that helps mature readers distinguish between the fantastic and the realistic and emerge from that space of hesitation. However, Marah Gubar (2016) emphasizes that children's experience, while it is different to and may be at a different developmental stage than adult experience, is in kinship with adult experience because equally human, thus equally valid. Therefore, rather than lacking the ability to distinguish between the fantastic and the realistic, it might simply be that children have not yet developed the scepticism or lost the sense of wonder which Clark (1995) and Hunt and Lenz (2001) argue is the reason adults are sometimes dismissive of fantasy. Instead, Tamora Pierce suggests, young people are still responsive "to the idealism and imagination they find in everything they read" (1996: 179). This hints that they may be purposefully choosing to stay in Todorov's space of hesitation in order to continue to actively experience the imaginative world. Perhaps this also lends itself to the idea that reading fantasy literature can help readers to re-imagine their relationship with the world around them, to see personhood of and kinship with the nonhuman as represented in the text and transfer that concept of interconnection to their relationships with the nonhuman in the world outside the book.

Children's and Adolescent Literature and Ecopsychology

Ecopsychologists would accept this and expand the concept of this responsiveness in children beyond the world of the book and into the everyday world of the reader. It demonstrates what the human mind is capable of when integrated fully with the human body and with the experiences and psyches of the nonhuman world. This "empathic rapport with the natural world […] is reborn in every child," Theodore Roszak argues (1995: 16), and Anita Barrows further suggests that children have "instinctually based feelings of continuity with the natural world" (1995: 107). Ironically, however, children's and adolescent literature scholarship rarely refers to ecopsychology or ecotherapy when examining the environment in children's fiction. Bob Henderson et al. (2004) briefly refer to it in "Playing Seriously with Dr. Seuss: A Pedagogical Response to *The Lorax*," their chapter in a collection by Sidney Dobrin and Kenneth Kidd, which is in all other respects dedicated to ecocriticism in children's literature. Additionally, preliminary keyword searches in children's literature journals rarely produce hits for ecopsychology or ecotherapy, though sometimes an author will cite a key ecopsychology text. Examples include Kathryn Graham's article, 'The Devil's Own Art: Topiary in Children's Fiction' (2005) or Monika Elbert's 2014 chapter on *Heidi* and *Pollyanna* in Harde and Kokkola's collection on Eleanor H. Porter. Similarly, researchers into children's and adolescent education and development emphasize that children both have and need a deep-seated relationship with the environment (Louv, 2008) and there is emerging evidence that children's and adolescent literature may promote this relationship (Harju and Rouse, 2018). If children's and adolescent literature can move readers toward a deeper relationship with the natural world, ecopsychological and ecotherapeutic readings may open avenues to the improved mental, emotional, and physical health results promoted by practitioners. This may happen because reading about the relationship of the human with the nonhuman could allow readers to explore the depth of that emotional attachment and ways in which that relationship is portrayed as beneficial and healing. Such a reading might encourage an active engagement or re-engagement with the natural environment both as promotive of mental health, and as stimulating care and concern for the environment.

Despite this, ecopsychologists and ecotherapists rarely address children's and adolescent literature in their research and scholarship, either. At the same time, poetry, story, and literature in general are mentioned in ecopsychology scholarship as important ways of reconnecting with the outside world (Robinson, 2009), and Jungian analyst Rinda

West published a monograph addressing the role of story in ecopsychology (2007). Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods* (2008), mentions the importance of books for outdoor educators, and even provides an example of a parent, who read Tolkien – quintessential fantasy – as a child, reading Tolkien to her own child in order to engage him with the outdoor world (167). The paucity of research into how children's and adolescent literature might be explored using ecopsychology as a critical lens is a significant and interesting gap in both literary and psychological studies. The implications of such an ecopsychological study of literature include seeing how readers might reimagine how they can develop a deeper and more specific understanding of the concept of a soul or sentience in nature than many Western cultures are willing to accept. With that as a foundation, such research could even lead to exploring how reading children's and adolescent literature might be instrumental in helping practicing ecopsychologists and ecotherapists illustrate the variety of relationships humans could develop with the world around them.

Characters from children's literature which could be considered to exemplify this idea of mind, psyche, or soul as present in the inorganic nonhuman include Emily Starr's Wind Woman in *Emily of New Moon* (1923), by L. M. Montgomery (1983); Sylvia, the little plum bough girl in *Magic for Marigold* (1929), also by L. M. Montgomery (1989); and North Wind, in *At the Back of the North Wind*, by George MacDonald (1871). North Wind is perhaps the most well-developed of these three nonhuman characters. This could be because she is developed as a character independent of a child's imagination, while both Emily's Wind Woman and Marigold's Sylvia are characters derived from a child's imaginative outdoor play. North Wind is given a gender – she/her – and specific personality traits such as being very exacting. When Diamond first encounters her, she is described as "blowing in upon him in a cold and rather imperious fashion" (MacDonald, 1871: 9). Used together in this way, "cold" and "imperious" give the impression of a dominant personality who expects to have things happen the way she has ordered them. Diamond's experience of North Wind throughout the book bears this out, but she is also tender and gentle toward him (41-42) as well as kind to both him and other children (44). She is given emotion: she feels anger (10, 61), sadness (13), joy and happiness (14, 36, 38), regret (16, 37), love (39), and frustration (41). North Wind, regardless of the shape she takes, is always wiser than Diamond. She teaches him throughout the story and helps him develop the ability to empathize with others through allowing him to share her experiences of doing things that the wind does. This demonstrates the concept that an emotional or psychological relationship between a human and something nonhuman that he or she finds nurturing may allow the human to better develop those same nurturing connections with

others. Diamond also learns to listen to and trust North Wind because, being an element, she can do no wrong – she always does the thing she is intended to do and teaches him to recognize what his own responsibilities are. He learns courage through doing that which he fears when North Wind leaves him to walk alone along the upper galleries of a cathedral (79-81). He learns compassion by protecting those who suffer when North Wind lets him walk with a streetsweeper to help her find her way home (44-53). He learns to show love by obedience even when he cannot understand North Wind's commands or see her demonstrate love in return (104-06). Thus, through being enabled to share the experience of a nonhuman character who is given a mind, a psyche, a spirit, Diamond finds his own mind and soul enriched and enabled. Readers are given ways in which to explore how humans could better relate to their environment.

Shared Experience and Empathy

The notion of embodiment – understood in ecopsychology as the concept that a mind cannot have or express experience without a body and that a body already and always includes a mind – is a significant part of building the relationships along the human/nonhuman kinship continuum. In ecopsychological thought, which builds on phenomenology, all types of experience are seen as embodied (that is, as expressible only because the one having the experience has some form of body). This leads to the notion that bodies are the experiential interface between "persons" (both human and non-human) and between those "persons" and all other elements of the ecosphere which they encounter. Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of bodily experience includes the belief that humans are inserted into their surroundings in ways that engage them, through all aspects of the body, senses, mind, and emotions, in continual experience with the ecosystem (1964a: 5; 1968: 9). Fisher (2013) agrees and reminds us that one of the keys for ecopsychology which emerges from phenomenology is "that no so-called inner experience can ever really be had." He points out that "If we were to take the metaphor of 'inside' literally and cut into our bodies, perhaps our brains, we would of course not find there any thoughts, images, emotions, percepts, or behavior, for all these things arise only in relation to or contact with a world" (11). Instead, all experience is somehow linked to the way the body and mind respond to a given set of stimuli. For this study, the obvious and immediate stimuli are the relationships being built through characters' experiences. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological discussions provide solid support for the importance of experiential relationships because he also emphasizes that speech and language are directly connected

to bodily experience and understanding of the Other (1962: 177-79, 180, 184). In this way, the associations between ecopsychology and literature are made more explicit.

Certain books have the potential to emphasize the ways a reader's mind creates shared experience from the reading process. Examples include E. Nesbit's *The Complete Book of Dragons* (1973 [1899]) – specifically the chapter "The Book of Beasts"; Michael Ende's *The Neverending Story* (1979); and Cornelia Funke's *Inkheart* sequence (2003, 2005, 2007). In "The Book of Beasts," King Lionel discovers that simply opening his grandfather's magic book of beasts is enough to allow the beasts in the pictures to come off the page and come alive. In *The Neverending Story*, Bastian suddenly finds himself one of the main characters in the book he is reading. In *Inkheart*, Mortimer Folchart has a gift for bringing things out of books into the "real world" of the novel when he reads aloud. Initially, he could only read non-living objects out of narratives: a dead cat, a snozzcumber, a feather, a shoe (Funke, 2003: 150). But one evening while reading aloud to his wife, he brought three living characters out of the book he was reading: Dustfinger, Capricorn, and Basta (138-39) and, readers discover later, accidentally sent his wife into the book. Something about Mo's voice gives it magic properties, and the reading experience turns into lived experience in the form of Capricorn and Basta, who bring with them the villainous personalities they have in the book and recreate their notorious gang in the "real" world. From that moment Mo lives in fear of the day Capricorn and his men will find him again, and is constantly on the run, trying to protect his daughter, Meggie. He refuses to read aloud anymore. Mo's magical reading, in literally embodying fictional characters, complicates our own reading experience of *Inkheart* as our brains negotiate Mo and Meggie's life experiences and work to build an understanding of how their reading actually came alive in the book we are reading. We find our imaginations building a reality out of *Inkheart*, just as the characters have discovered a reality emerging from the book they are trying to avoid reading (which is also called *Inkheart*).

In the act of reading how the fantasy characters in *Inkheart* become real we are reminded again of Fisher's assessment that no isolated inner experience can ever be had because our understanding of inner experience is tied up with our ability to experience events through our bodies. Fisher, following Merleau-Ponty, acknowledges that language itself is embodied experience (Fisher, 2013: 62-63), a point which theorist Peter Stockwell takes much further, while also introducing it into the specific process of reading. Stockwell (2002) points out that "all forms of expression and forms of conscious perception are bound, more closely than was previously realised, in our biological circumstances" (4). He

is specifically arguing that any activity we do which uses language, including reading, is tied to the body – we cannot speak or understand language in any of its forms without taking into account how that language activity is bound up with our physicality. Stockwell signposts Merleau-Ponty's ideas of embodiment in speech and language when he writes:

> The notion of embodiment affects every part of language. It means that all of our experiences, knowledge, beliefs, and wishes are involved in and expressible only through patterns of language that have their roots in our material existence. The fact that we share most of the factors of existence (requiring food, having a heat-regulation system, seeing in the visible spectrum, living in three dimensions under a sun that transits in a day, and so on) accounts for many of the similarities in language across humanity. (Stockwell, 2002: 5)

It is important to note that many of the things Stockwell lists as being shared physically among humans are also experiences that are common to the nonhuman, pointing, again, toward the kinship continuum previously discussed. This is most true of other mammals, but there are commonalities with all living creatures, such as a need for nourishment.

There are also some things that the living have in common with the non-living, such as existence "in three dimensions under a sun that transits in a day" (Stockwell, 2002: 5). For instance, consider the Wart's experience in the dream of the Stones (from T. H. White's *The Sword in the Stone* (1939), discussed more fully below). The mountains, cliffs, stones, and pebbles he relates to all exist under the same sun and are three-dimensional. Stockwell's alignment with the phenomenological ideas of shared experience underscores not only the embeddedness of humans in Earth's systems, but also highlights grounds from which humans may begin to build relationships with the nonhuman. Children's and adolescent literature especially fantasy and the highly imaginative, becomes crucial at this juncture. Authors and readers feel great freedom within this literature to enable fully cognizant awareness, being, and identity in elements of the environment which are not usually considered sentient. Speech and language are often enabled in these entities, and as a result, both characters and readers connect with them through, again, that shared knowledge of the experiences which language is used to describe.

"Knowledge, beliefs, and wishes," and other such concepts, are also only expressible because of shared experience, as Stockwell asserts – and fantastic and imaginative literature could be read from the perspective that these non-physical aspects of experience can be shared, too. Merleau-Ponty's view of the ways in which forms of art (such as the literature under scrutiny here) provide a means of interaction between human beings and the experiences conveyed by the artwork in question captures the unique ability

of such work to unite many minds. “It is not enough […] to create and express an idea; they must also awaken the experiences which will make their idea take root in the consciousness of others,” he explains. He elucidates that once such a work has “come to life for other people,” it will “have united these separate lives; it will no longer exist in only one of them like a stubborn dream or a persistent delirium, nor will it exist only in space as a colored piece of canvas. It will dwell undivided in several minds, with a claim on every possible mind like a perennial acquisition” (1964b: 19-20). Simply put, each person reads or sees the exact same artwork. The same words, the same brush strokes – these aspects of the piece are physically unaltered from participant to participant. Therefore, like other kinds of art, a book has the ability to unite the minds of readers in a shared experience of reading a single text, although individual interpretations will necessarily be unique. But it has the uncommon ability to unite the mind(s) of the reader(s) with the minds and experiences of the characters inside that text, opening avenues for learning knowledge of the Other which might not otherwise be possible. The read (past tense) experience, translated into a kind of lived experience, opens the reader’s mind to relationships with characters and elements of the book that are not even human or living in the traditional organic sense. Fantasy literature and literature that is highly imaginative have a unique role in this type of phenomenological experience because of the ways in which they explore and play with reality. As long as the fantasy world or the world of imagination created in the book is consistent within itself, it is acceptable to have the non-organic speak, for instance, and for an organic character to develop a deep and lasting relationship with a non-organic character.

A brief example of such a relationship between a human and the inorganic can be found in T. H. White’s *The Sword in the Stone*. Among the many dreams and travels the Wart undertakes in learning about his world, is “the Dream of the Stones” (White, 1939: 249). In this dream, Wart watches the Earth’s creation. At one point, he finds himself “facing an enormous cliff. At two million years a second, the cliff’s mountain moved. It was alive as the trees had been and roared most dreadfully” (250). The dream progresses so rapidly that readers glimpse a moving, living mountain which has a voice and thoughts. As Wart watches the cliffs erode, he continues to hear their voices, the “slower howling of the mineral world” (250-51). He is finally able to distinguish words: “‘Hold fast,’ was what the rocks thundered. ‘Hold, cohere’” (251). Toward the end of the novel, this relationship with the stones is one of the many nonhuman relationships which the Wart has developed that allow him to draw the sword from the stone in the London churchyard and take up his rightful place as King Arthur. Amongst the many creatures attending him as he draws the

sword are "volcanoes" and "patient stones," and they speak again: "'Cohere,' said a Stone in the church wall" (White, 1939: 304-06). That the stones speak demonstrates that they have a mind, and think and give counsel to Wart. Both Wart and the stones share in some small way the experience of having a mind, and Wart's success at the end of *The Sword in the Stone* is based on this and other similar alliances between himself and nonhuman Others.

The fact that language is understandable only through meaning generated from our bodies' experience of the things we try to describe with words (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) establishes a link between fantastic and highly imaginative novels and "real life." No matter how fantastic, imaginative, or supernatural reading worlds are—or how realistic!—we create and understand those worlds based on our lived and felt experience in the world outside the book. Like all other forms and genres, fantastic and highly imaginative literatures have to be embedded in the author's and reader's reality. The relationship moves two ways: readers not only understand the imagined world because it partakes of the real, they may extract experience from fantasy and imaginative literature that could benefit them in engaging with the real world.

For instance, Madeleine L'Engle's novel, *The Young Unicorns* (1968), contains an episode that might be read as demonstrating this concept of how reading fantasy informs the real world. At the end of the book, the youngest Austin child, Rob, is kidnapped. As he is being led into the crypt of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine by the villainous Henry Grandcourt (masquerading as his own brother, Bishop Fall), Rob uses past reading experience of fantasy to gain understanding of what Grandcourt is really like.

> Then Rob remembered how, in *The Princess and Curdie*, Curdie was given the great gift of being able to tell, when holding someone's hand, what he was really like inside. The paw of an animal might be the trusting hand of a child; the hand of a man might turn to the slithering cold of a snake. What was the Bishop's hand? It was thin, delicate, bones and veins marked in an intricate pattern, and it held Rob's warm fingers in a cold, hawklike talon. (L'Engle, 1968: 247).

This feeling of being caught by a hawk reinforces Rob's growing sense that Grandcourt is evil rather than good. As Rob's understanding of Grandcourt is enhanced because of his past reading, he is able to fully realize that he is being kidnapped. Past fantasy reading experience also helps Rob recognize how to manage his situation later on in the episode. When Grandcourt, "holding Rob's hand in his steel talon, rubbed the little boy's fingers over the lamp," a "genie" appears. Rob remembers from the Arabian Nights that a genie is bound by the master of the lamp. When the "genie" asks Rob about his wishes, he

"suddenly sat up straight on the Bishop's throne" and said, "Yes. I have no need of you. Go away" (L'Engle, 1968: 264). Both the genie and Grandcourt try to convince him that the genie should stay, but he is adamant. He declares, "Canon Tallis said we were beyond that kind of wishing. Genie. Go away" and repeats "Go!" (265). L'Engle concedes, "A genie has to play by the rules. He bowed and disappeared into the shadows" (265). Rob's recognition that the "genie" will have to follow the conventions of story, garnered from his reading experience of fantasy, allows his friends just enough time to figure out how to rescue him. With this kind of reading, *The Young Unicorns* demonstrates how fantasy allows the reader to reconstruct his or her understanding of and interaction with reality.

Why It All Matters…

One important aim of ecopsychology is to allow, promote, and even embrace the idea of shared experiences and interconnection along the continuum of the human and the nonhuman. A second, equally significant, aim is to encourage humans to learn to interact with and care for both those human and nonhuman Others, including receiving benefit themselves emotionally, psychologically, and physically. Ultimately, overcoming the mind/body split proposed in older Western philosophies means overcoming both the idea that there is a human/ecosystem split and the idea that nonhuman Others, organic and inorganic, have no mind or psyche at all. When humans finally understand the concept that "we too are Earth," it is a much easier step to caring about what happens to this thing of which we are part. It is a process, Fisher says, "of learning 'how to behave appropriately toward persons, not all of whom are human,' wherein one becomes 'increasingly animist' over a lifetime, carefully developing the skill and cultural knowhow to increase the world's personhood: to make persons of others, revealing them as such, thereby making more of a person of oneself" (2013: 232). Fisher takes his definition of the term "animism" from Graham Harvey (2006), who argues that animism is best described as a way of thinking that recognizes personhood in the nonhuman as well as the human. Implicit in Harvey's definition is the concept that humans engage in the ideas of animism when they are willing to relate to and communicate with others, both human and nonhuman, and recognize them as subjects with agency and the ability to relate (xi-xviii). From this perspective, "intelligence, rationality, consciousness, volition, agency, intentionality, language, and desire are not human characteristics that might be mistakenly projected on to 'non-humans,' but are shared by humans with all other kinds of persons" (xviii). Thus, Fisher's own use of "personhood" and "person/persons" in reference to the nonhuman is a careful

choice intended to focus attention this idea of animism. Nonhuman entities are individual beings with identity and personality; with the ability to feel or emote; or with the ability to think and communicate in some way. But how best to reveal these similarities of the nonhuman to the human? A variety of children's and adolescent fantasy and imaginative novels utilize this concept that the human and the nonhuman (and even the non-living) share experience and a kind of universal psyche which ecopsychology and ecotherapy call an ecological unconscious (Roszak, 2001: 320-21), expanded from Carl Jung's concept of the collective unconscious.

For instance, examining George MacDonald's *The Princess and Curdie* while thinking about "personhood" in the nonhuman Other provides an engaging reading of one of the skills Curdie receives from the elder Princess Irene. This is the skill of identifying people by feeling their hands, which Rob Austin is portrayed as using (see above). As Princess Irene prepares Curdie to travel to the castle and rescue the king and his daughter, she builds a fire out of roses and instructs him to put his hands into it (MacDonald, 1994: 69-70). When he has done so, Irene informs him that, as long as he doesn't use the gift for selfish ends, he will now be able to tell by touching the hand of a person or the paw/claw of an animal, whether that person or animal is good or evil (73-74). The princess allows him to test the skill on a beast called Lina, who is described as being "a horrible mass of incongruities."

> She had a very short body, and very long legs made like an elephant's, so that in lying down she kneeled with both pairs. Her tail, which dragged on the floor behind her, was twice as long and quite as thick as her body. Her head was something between that of a polar bear and a snake. Her eyes were dark green, with a yellow light in them. Her under teeth came up like a fringe of icicles, only very white, outside of her upper lip. Her throat looked as if the hair had been plucked off. It showed a skin white and smooth. (75-76)

Yet when Curdie feels Lina's paw, he discovers that he is holding "the soft, neat little hand of a child!" (76). Curdie is given a way to identify Lina's personhood, her mind and thought and emotion, which leads to his developing trust in her. The relationship that is built on this trust induces Curdie to accept Lina as his traveling companion. She leads him through uninhabited parts of the country and protects him from perceived dangers.

The connection built between the human and nonhuman because of Curdie's ability to perceive true identity also makes him comfortable enough to accept Lina's decisions to bring other strange and possibly frightening or dangerous beasts into their company as they travel. Curdie recognizes that Lina will not choose companions who are not "good." In

turn, his trust and relationship with Lina allow the reader to see that Lina likewise has the ability to perceive goodness and evil in other creatures. The mutual understanding of identity and shared experience between Curdie and Lina, and eventually between Curdie and Lina's fellow beasts, produces strong relationships which allow Curdie to succeed in saving the king and his daughter. Through a reading that employs ecopsychology, then, Curdie, Lina, and the other beasts can be seen as not so very different from each other. Curdie shares a special ability to perceive true identity with the other beasts, which helps to diminish the dualism of "human" and "nonhuman" and shows how the nonhuman can be assigned "personhood," or individual being.

Carl Jung once said that,

> As scientific understanding has grown, so our world has become dehumanized. Man feels himself isolated in the cosmos, because he is no longer involved in nature and has lost his emotional 'unconscious identity' with natural phenomena. These have slowly lost their symbolic implications. Thunder is no longer the voice of an angry god, nor is lightning his avenging missile. No river contains a spirit, no tree is the life principle of a man, no snake the embodiment of wisdom, no mountain cave the home of a great demon. No voices now speak to man from stones, plants, and animals, nor does he speak to them believing they can hear. His contact with nature has gone, and with it has gone the profound emotional energy that this symbolic connection supplied. (Jung, 1964: 85)

But in much children's and adolescent literature, especially the fantastic and highly imaginative, these things still happen. The non-human speaks to the human. Thus such literature could be a space for re-learning how to experience these things in "real" life – how to bring fantasy out of our reality, how to let reading shape our reality and let reality shape our reading. Or perhaps more specifically—how to let fantasy shape our reality and reality inform our reading of fantasy. A theoretical lens formed from ecopsychology is a unique and interesting way to investigate this literature because the strong links between the human and the non-human in our reading worlds create a resonance with ecopsychology. If we want to hear the world begin to speak again, literature of the fantastic and imaginative is one way to make that happen.

New perspectives on both human and nonhuman reality gained through reading this literature may also allow us to read these novels in a way that contributes to the ecopsychological process of recollection that Fisher talks about (2013: 13). In the past, ecopsychology has relied almost exclusively on activities such as wilderness experiences, vision quests, and more localized practices that involve taking people outside, in order to help them engage more enthusiastically with nonhuman nature. The use of the term "vision

quests" can raise questions about cultural appropriation in ecopsychology and ecotherapy practices. Recently, however, ecopsychology focuses much more on practices and modalities that do *not* encroach on practices which are associated with indigenous traditions. For instance, in Megan Delaney's recently published *Nature is Nurture: Counselling and the Natural World* (2020), she invites various ecotherapists to contribute discussions of the variety of ways in which they have implemented nature-based practices. A few of the modalities discussed throughout Delaney's volume include adventure therapy, animal-assisted therapy, horticulture or gardening therapy, and walking in green spaces, nearly all of which are touched on to greater or lesser extent in this thesis. The majority of practitioners are choosing such modalities because they are easily adaptable and accessible to many more clients. They are also commonly practiced among both indigenous and non-indigenous peoples, and so are less likely to pose problems of potential cultural appropriation. For instance, gardening is an almost-universal practice which has continued in most countries around the world for many centuries, and gardens and similar green spaces play a role in my Chapter 1 discussion of *A Wrinkle in Time* and *The Young Unicorns*. Non-indigenous counseling professionals Jason Duffy and Miranda Brumber contribute a brief discussion to Delaney's work about how indoor gardening (such as potted plants) in a school setting can help children and teachers alike feel less stress and anxiety (2020: 104-05). Jonathan Yellowhair contributes a very similar discussion to Delaney's text. Yellowhair, a member of the Navajo nation, examines his experience teaching gardening with a group of at-risk school children to help them become more comfortable with cycles of change, loss, and growth, and how he tied the learning experience to his own cultural background and the Navajo ways of gardening (2020: 195-200). These contributions provide examples of universal practices and the different approaches ecopsychologists and ecotherapists take based on their individual backgrounds, thus avoiding cultural appropriation.

Additionally, from the beginning of its development as a field, ecopsychology has maintained an awareness of the need to take care in negotiating the relationship it has with indigenous cultures. This is important because ecopsychologists and ecotherapists acknowledge the similarities between some of the therapeutic modalities they employ and the healing or spiritual traditions found in many indigenous cultures. In *The Voice of the Earth*, recognized as one of the first full-length publications exploring ecopsychology and its praxis (originally published in 1992), Theodore Roszak addresses this issue, pointing out that ecopsychologists need to take great care when trying to understand the healing practices of the many indigenous nations around the world, especially those nations which

are still living and active. He points out that Western practitioners need to be careful about the "liberty we take with the living lore of another people" (2001:76) when learning about stories or practices from those nations. Roszak's acknowledgements and caution establish that ecopsychologists began with an immediate awareness of the potential for cultural appropriation in their work and the need for caution when employing practices that may resemble indigenous practices. This has remained an issue about which ecopsychologists maintain awareness.

We also have indigenous voices in some of the earliest ecopsychology texts, such as the "reader" produced in 1995, *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind*. These indigenous contributors speak about the ways in which human relationships are enriched when we recollect our integral place in the natural world and acknowledge our indebtedness to each other. For example, Jeanette Armstrong, a member of the Okanagan nation, shares her language and its characteristics, providing non-indigenous ecopsychologists and ecotherapists with an example of one of the many ways in which indigenous peoples actively engage with the world around them and demonstrating why it's so important for non-indigenous ecopsychologists to recognize and support the indigenous resurgence of land-based traditions. Armstrong (1995) points out that Okanagan is an exclusively spoken language, significantly different from the languages of most non-indigenous cultures around the world, which are spoken and written. She offers the knowledge that the Okanagan language is deeply embedded in relationality, connecting human beings to the natural world through our physical dependence on the environment, our connections to other humans, our relationship to place, and the ancient origins of human beings as a life form (1995: 320-24). She offers these meanings and connections as alternatives to the ways in which dominant cultures see human existence. At the same time, they serve as an example of similarities that have emerged between ecopsychology and the life-ways of indigenous cultures, illustrating why ecopsychologists and ecotherapists must remain alert to any potential for what could be construed as cultural appropriation.

Leslie Gray, a member of the Oneida/Seminole nation and a practicing ecopsychologist, addresses this issue from a different perspective. She points out that shamanism, which is her chosen ecotherapeutic modality, "is estimated by archaeologists to be at least forty thousand years old" and has been "practiced perennially—or continuously—by virtually all indigenous peoples up to today." She reminds us that it was even practiced in Western cultures until Enlightenment philosophies swept Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries (1995: 173). Gray boldly states that shamanism "provides a great

inheritance for ecopsychology in terms of practical application. Emerging ecotherapists can look to shamanism for techniques to use clinically with individuals and with groups" (174). She adds that the "worldview of shamanism—that health is defined as a balanced relationship with your habitat, your ecosystem" (181)—is a philosophy shared by ecopsychology and its praxis. But while she firmly links modern ecopsychology and ecotherapy modalities to the millennia-old practices of shamanism from around the world, she also insists that modern non-indigenous ecopsychologists can take active steps to learn from contemporary indigenous nations. She recommends honoring the learning possibilities through respecting indigenous life-ways and paying close attention to what indigenous healers and spiritual leaders have to say (1995: 181). As a result of that listening, she argues, "Those who would seek to learn might first roll up their sleeves and ask how they can help" through actively supporting "the struggles for native survival and native sovereignty" (181). Working together in this way ensures the survival of both indigenous and non-indigenous relationships (182). Gray's emphasis on the need for people to work together for understanding also demonstrates that kinship continuum which encompasses the relationship humans have with their environment, supporting the perspective that the human-human relationship on one side of the continuum is just as important as the human relationship to the non-built, nonhuman inorganic environment at the other end of the continuum, as is examined in this thesis.

Gray's insistence that ecopsychologists and ecotherapists must resist cultural appropriation by actively trying to help indigenous nations reclaim their land-rights and their ability to practice their own land-based traditions on their traditional lands has carried through to current thinking in ecopsychology as well. For instance, Alysha Jones and David Segal, two non-indigenous Canadian ecopsychologists, have recently suggested some ways in which other non-indigenous practitioners can try to "unsettle" ecopsychology, which they define as "working alongside Indigenous struggles for self-determination and land-based cultural resurgence—with the understanding that settlers also have a stake in challenging the trauma and violence waged by settler colonialism and against people and the Earth" (2018: 127). In other words, aligning with Gray's early suggestions, they hope to create a space where ecopsychologists are able to see ways that they can not only help individuals from a generalized population re-engage with the natural environment, but can also engage in practices which give back the space and place which indigenous peoples use for their own traditional, often land-based, healing and spiritual activities. For instance, they suggest that in North America, ecopsychologists can take several steps to ensure that indigenous peoples and practitioners can use their own land

again. These include recommendations to gain a perspective on colonialism from the indigenous people themselves; working to learn about the indigenous nations that reside in the area where they practice; making formal land-acknowledgements part of that practice; and working to "promote the protection and return of land" so that indigenous peoples can continue to practice their traditional land-based activities (130-31, 133). Another unusual and interesting suggestion aligns with Leslie Gray's discussion of how shamanistic practices are found worldwide, and were part of European traditions in the pre-Enlightenment period. Segal and Jones suggest non-indigenous ecopsychologists need to be willing to remember and mourn the loss of their own ancestral nature-based traditions. They suggest asking questions such as, "What has uprooted settler people from their ancestral home […]? What have been the cultural losses in our own families? What are the stories of our ancestors and ancestral places?" They argue that "Doing this autobiographical research, while potentially [fraught] with pain and confusion as well as feelings of awakening and belonging, is a foundational step for developing ethical and respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples," because it provides us with a "more detailed and contextual account of how an individual came to be in relation to the particular lands they live and work on" (2018: 132). It is hoped that raising such awareness in ourselves will make us more ready to actively help indigenous peoples reclaim their rights to relate to their places and spaces and to practice their ancient traditional activities. Andy Fisher, one of the leading contemporary thinkers on ecopsychology, has also emphasized the need for ecopsychology to be a "decolonial praxis" (2019), reiterating Jones and Segal's suggestions that ecopsychologists must work toward the return of land use which will allow indigenous nations to practice their traditional activities (Fisher, 2019: 151). While these attempts are imperfect and in-progress, they nevertheless help to keep ecopsychologists and ecotherapists alert to the complex web of relationships which must be maintained and navigated in order to work toward keeping their practices as ethical as possible.

With knowledge of the way reading produces the equivalent of real embodied experiences for the reader, the implications of reading fiction with ecopsychology principles in mind become clear. Reading is an important way to learn empathy because through inviting people to begin consciously interacting with the world around them, authors use the functions of fiction writing to allow very direct exploration of a character's mind. The author posits actions, feelings, emotions, thoughts, etc., of the Other, both human and nonhuman. As a result, reading fiction could be seen as one of what Andy Fisher calls "recollective practices." Recollective practices in ecopsychology are activities

or experiences people undertake in an endeavour to engage personally and actively with some aspect of nonhuman nature. Fisher uses "recollective" in a way that suggests a specific memory phenomenon, "recollective experience," described by Martin Conway (2001) as "the sense or experience of the self in the past" which is "induced by images, feelings, and other memory details that come to mind during remembering" (1375). In other words, we seem able to re-experience, in memory, past events. Similarly, J.T. Bedu-Addo (1991) summarizes Plato's "Phaedo" on a "process of learning rightly called recollection," say that "by suing our sense […], we recover the knowledge which we previously possessed" (28). Fisher defines a "recollective" experience in ecopsychological practice as a conscious effort to "[recall] how our human psyches are embedded in and nurtured by the larger psyche of nature" (Fisher, 2013: 13), extending both the memory experience and the knowledge-recovery experience to the human-nonhuman relationship. Fisher's notion of "recollective" experiences may recall for readers Tolkien's idea of "recovery," which he defines in "On Fairy Stories" as "seeing things as we are meant to see them," both as something we recognize and as something wholly unique. Tolkien also asserts that "recovery" is "a re-gaining" of both "a clear view" of the things around us and of "return and renewal of health" (1966: 77) – an idea L'Engle must surely have been well-acquainted with, as she discusses "knowing and loving" Tolkien's "On Fairy Stories" in a letter to a friend dated 6 April 1978 (Madeleine L'Engle Papers, 1978C-1979B).
According to Andy Fisher, one increasingly popular type of recollective—and therapeutic!—practice is the "'vision quest,' in which a solo quester typically spends a number of days fasting in the wilderness in order to seek guidance and spiritual renewal through openly encountering the forces of nature" (13-14).[4] But as a well-respected Hobbit once said, "It's a dangerous business, Frodo, going out of your door. […] You step into the Road, and if you don't keep your feet, there is no knowing where you might be swept off to" (Tolkien, 1982: 102). But people are more fearful now than they used to be of walking

[4] While his use of the term "vision quest" to describe seeking enlightenment in nature highlights that ecopsychology still struggles to find the right language to describe some of its practices in ways that avoid the appearance of cultural appropriation, Fisher is acutely aware of the need for caution even in this monograph, which represents some of his earliest thinking on the subject of ecopsychology, and which is viewed as a leading work of ecopsychology scholarship. In a statement which was included in the first edition of Radical Ecopsychology, published in 2002, Fisher declares, "[E]copsychologists must guard against becoming part of the process of colonizing and appropriating indigenous cultures that today includes the plundering of traditional spiritualities by Euroamerican seekers or new age 'wannabes.' […] Given their obvious relevance, it is inevitable that ecopsychologists be familiar with some indigenous beliefs and practices—and this may remain a source of tension for some time. I believe, however, that most nonindigenous ecopsychologists are committed to keeping themselves based primarily in the contexts of their own traditions, with which they are familiar" (2013: 5-6). Fisher's awareness remains important to his later writing and thinking (2019), and reminds us that we still need to find more effective terminology to describe practices which may not be exclusive to indigenous cultures and spiritualities, but for which language is still used that creates that specific link in people's minds.

out of their front door, in the footsteps of the much-loved Hobbit. The fear has increased so much over the last few decades that many adults will restrict or completely prohibit their children's spontaneous outdoor play (Louv, 2008). If people are so afraid to go outside, to interact with elements which they perceive as too different from themselves, it is necessary to find a simpler starting point. Fisher (2013) argues that recollective practices have the power to "invite us into zones of reality that may be quite unfamiliar, where a bird or a stone just might have something important to say to us" (13). In fantastic and highly imaginative literatures, the non-human is often literally given a voice, or else given the ability to interact with humans in a way that is mutually intelligible. Fantasy and imaginative literature which engages its human characters extensively with the nonhuman is a stimulating space in which to explore what recollective practices are intended to do. It has the potential to help us explore the relational, reciprocal nature of human participation in the ecosystem and to help us become more conscious and aware of our embeddedness in the world around us. Thus, ecopsychology and its praxis, ecotherapy, form a provocative lens for reading children's and adolescent literature to provide varieties of experience through reading that help readers see their own real world differently.

With this in mind, my thesis will use ecopsychology and ecotherapy to closely examine the relationships L'Engle develops for her characters along the human-nonhuman kinship continuum. This will be accomplished by looking at pairs of novels from the fantastic and the realistic series, as well as at single novels which stand out as slightly different from the most prominent genre in a given series. In this way, the thesis also shows L'Engle's movement back and forth along the fantasy/reality continuum and demonstrates the integration of the three series with each other. Importantly, through examining these relationships and this movement along continuums in these novels, the thesis demonstrates how ecopsychology and ecotherapy provide a strong and important critical lens through which to read children's and adolescent novels.

Chapter 1 examines the first of L'Engle's Time series, *A Wrinkle in Time* (1962) and the third of the Austin family series, *The Young Unicorns* (1968). These novels contain very similar plot elements and thus make an ideal pair to begin this analysis. *Wrinkle* is the fantastic novel in the pair, and events from *A Wrinkle in Time* are mirrored in the more realistic *The Young Unicorns*, illustrating movement along the fantasy/reality continuum. I explore these two novels in light of the ecopsychological ideas of differentiation and integration, determining the importance of recognizing individuality in order to effectively form relationships between dissimilar beings. This chapter also demonstrates, generally,

the different kinds of relationships that constitute the ecopsychological human-nonhuman kinship continuum, and their psychological impact. These patterns of kinship emerge in more detail in the novels I examine in later chapters.

Chapter 2 moves into the kinship continuum that stretches between the human and the nonhuman, specifically exploring the development of human interpersonal relationships in *The Moon by Night* (1963) and *A Swiftly Tilting Planet* (1978). I demonstrate that in these two novels, humans developing empathy with other humans seems most effective in the context of the natural world. In these novels, mountains and other similar geological formations frequently occupy prominent positions in the narrative, as do geological events related to rock and mountain landscapes (earthquakes and landslides). In terms of the fantasy/reality nodes and modes explored throughout the thesis, fluidity moves from the realistic to the fantastic in this chapter, the opposite direction from what we saw in Chapter One. Events from *The Moon by Night*, in the more realistic Austin family series, provide a sort of forecast for events and themes in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*. Additionally, empathy for one's own species – the human/human interpersonal relationship – opens the way for readings of other novels in which characters show willingness to try to connect with another species, as in Chapter 3, or with the inorganic nonhuman, as in Chapter 4.

Chapters 3 and 4 serve as case studies of reading the praxis of ecopsychology – ecotherapy – in two different novels. Chapter 3 moves readers along the human-nonhuman kinship continuum to the human-animal relationship in *A Ring of Endless Light* (1980a), fourth in L'Engle's Austin family series. This novel illustrates how Vicky Austin develops a strong relationship with dolphins through shared experiences and learning to communicate with the dolphins telepathically. She is thus able to overcome severe existential anxiety in the form of a fear of death, illustrating the ecotherapeutic potential of human connections with animals. Importantly, this novel is also unique because it is the only specifically fantasy novel in the realistic Austin series. As a result, readers are able to see how the fantasy/reality spectrum has been crossed entirely in one direction in a series which readers have come to anticipate as realistic. This movement into a novel which practices fantasy but is embedded in the realistic series brings reader attention to the relationship of the fantastic and the realistic in L'Engle's three series, powerfully illustrating the connections L'Engle sees between fantasy and reality in her novels and highlighting the relationship of these three series to each other.

Moving from the human-animal connection in Chapter 3, Chapter 4 takes us to the furthest end of the human-nonhuman kinship continuum in the YA novel *A House Like a Lotus* (1984) through exploring a strongly developed, lifelong relationship between Polly O'Keefe and the non-living oceans and islands on which she has grown up. This lifelong relationship allows Polly to overcome a series of traumatic breaches of her trust and to forgive and reconcile herself with those she feels have betrayed her. This novel portrays active participation in a relationship on the part of subjects—oceans and islands—that are not only nonhuman but inorganic. The oceans, islands, and their accompanying characteristic weather anticipate, foreshadow, heal, and somehow share Polly's experiences, without the intervention of magic, without fantasy or fantastic events, while at the same time remaining embedded in L'Engle's fantastic universe. On the fantasy/reality range, this book is third in the O'Keefe family series, which is one of the two fantastic series. However, in contrast to *A Ring of Endless Light* as fantasy in the realistic series, *A House Like a Lotus* is the most realistic novel in the two fantasy series, the Time novels and the O'Keefe family novels. Because of its realistic nature in the otherwise more fantastic sets of novels under investigation in this thesis, *A House Like a Lotus*, like *A Ring of Endless Light*, shows how carefully L'Engle integrates fantasy and reality throughout her three series. It firms up the argument that the universe she created for her fantasy novels is the same universe in which her realistic novels are embedded.

Finally, in the general conclusion, I reflect on how children's and adolescent literature, when read through a critical lens of ecopsychology and ecotherapy, become spaces in which readers of all ages can be led toward the beauty around them. I also ponder how further dialogue could be opened between the disciplines of children's and adolescent literature, and ecopsychology and ecotherapy. Further, I consider whether such readings are or should be exclusive to fantasy and highly imaginative literature for children and adolescents. Examining L'Engle's novels suggests that realistic novels also have much to contribute to evaluations of how ecopsychology and ecotherapy can be fruitfully engaged as a theoretical means of reading children's and adolescent literature. Eventually, the hope is that a conversation between the disciplines of ecopsychology and ecotherapy, and children's and adolescent literature, might lead to practical and real-life cooperation that contributes to both human mental and emotional health through "recollecting" our relationship to the environment, and to improvement of human treatment of that environment: a mutually beneficial endeavour.

Chapter 1: Differentiation and Integration in L'Engle's Work: *A Wrinkle in Time* and *The Young Unicorns*

1.0 Opening Thoughts

A Wrinkle in Time (1962), as the first novel in L'Engle's Time series and a winner of the prestigious Newbery medal, remains her best-known work. It is also the obvious text to use in introducing the ecopsychological themes examined in the rest of my thesis because L'Engle emphasizes the importance of strong, mutually beneficial relationships amongst humans and between humans and the natural world, as explored through her three overlapping series of fantastic and realistic fiction. In this chapter, I contrast the fantasy events L'Engle creates for *A Wrinkle in Time* with similar events in a more realistic setting through *The Young Unicorns* (1968), the third novel in the Austin family series. This advances the evidence that she creates a deliberate relationship between her fantasy and her realistic novels, and provides an ideal starting place for exploring the two fantasy series side-by-side with the realistic series. I argue that in both *A Wrinkle in Time* and *The Young Unicorns*, differentiation (being able to distinguish oneself from others as well as to recognize and acknowledge that others are unique) is an important part of integration (developing relationships with each other). Seeing difference shows us uniqueness in the other, and generates appreciation, which can lead to understanding. I couch this in the fact that ecopsychologists join other psychology disciplines in arguing for the importance of both differentiation from and integration with both the human and nonhuman environment.

"Differentiation" is defined in ecopsychology as "a process in which conditions are sufficiently good that we can open up some distance between ourselves and others, while not losing a sense of shared being or interconnection" (Fisher, 2013: 123). This draws on psychologist Murray Bowen's theory of differentiation of self, which Peter Titelman (2014) describes as the process of psychological separation from one's family unit that results in healthy, stable individuality. As a result of such separation, the Bowen theory argues, an individual is better able to form stable relationships with others. This results from creating healthy distance and boundaries which permit one to see and understand the individuality of others and to handle interaction with those others without undo or excessive emotional response (Bowen, 1978: 529). Such an effective distance is one at which individuals can see each other clearly and think about others in ways that promote both understanding of difference and recognition of shared experience. This shared experience and understanding through differentiation leads to integration with our human

community and our world, where integration may be defined as the ability to "heal broken, alienated relationships" and is seen as central to ecopsychology (Soule, 2002: 230). Healthy interdependence, these interconnections or interrelationships — expressions favoured both by L'Engle (1997) and by ecopsychologists (Clinebell, 1996) as appropriate descriptions of integration — can be clearly seen in *A Wrinkle in Time* and *The Young Unicorns*. Consequently, they are also an ideal pair of novels for introducing the kinds of relationships I explore throughout the thesis.

In order to best argue for the importance of the different aspects of differentiation and integration in these novels, I begin with plot summaries which establish the main characters and events under scrutiny in this chapter. I then explore the new perspectives on individuality in *A Wrinkle in Time* by examining Charles Wallace Murry's differences from others, particularly the important new and complex psychological abilities that help him to connect with his world. To further demonstrate the importance of such integrative abilities, I examine counterexamples of ways in which people's relationship abilities are diminished, both amongst humans and between humans and the nonhuman environment. I then demonstrate how L'Engle resolves those counterexamples in *A Wrinkle in Time* to reemphasize the importance of integration. In *The Young Unicorns*, L'Engle continues to explore these themes in her realistic fiction, but focuses more on establishing the counterexamples of how differentiation and integration may be diminished. She provides some resolution for the issues of diminished connection between humans, but in contrast to *A Wrinkle in Time*, her examples of deteriorating relationships with the nonhuman world are not resolved. After exploring these more general trends of differentiation and integration amongst humans and between humans and the environment, I examine specific characters in both novels who, being secure in their own uniqueness, demonstrate how the human, the nonhuman, and the inorganic can be integrated into one individual. Finally, I examine the way differentiation and uniqueness can lead characters to develop a specific sensory relationship with the outside world. In both novels, the characters L'Engle uses to illustrate this developed relationship lack the sense of sight. Thus, their integration with the world around them must be based in emotional and psychological senses as well as the other physical senses.

Throughout this examination of these many different ways of looking at differentiation and integration, L'Engle handles the similarities between the novels in ways which are reflective of the genres she is working within. An event in *A Wrinkle in Time* may have a similar or parallel event in *The Young Unicorns*, but the fantastic nature of

Wrinkle allows for a different method of approaching the event, while *The Young Unicorns* must handle the event in a way that could feasibly happen in a realistic setting. The many complementary thematic, plot, and character elements in these two novels provide a rich source of material to begin exploring the ways in which L'Engle weaves the Time, O'Keefe family, and Austin family series together. Additionally, they highlight different areas which will be explored in more depth throughout the thesis, such as the importance of deepening human interpersonal relationships in Chapter 2; exploring the impact of human relationships with another animal species in Chapter 3; and examining the psychological healing possible through a strong human relationship with non-living elements of the environment in Chapter 4.

1.0.1 Novel Summaries

Among the many themes in *A Wrinkle in Time*, understanding differentiation and its importance to healthy interconnection seems prominent. As a result, although the implied purpose of the novel is for three children, Meg and Charles Wallace Murry and Calvin O'Keefe, to travel across the universe to find the missing Mr Murry, the real core of the novel is Charles Wallace and Meg Murry's learning the importance of uniqueness and how it leads to healthy integration with a community/communities. Meg comes to this understanding because of her relationship with her little brother, Charles Wallace. The Murry family sees him as special because of his unique, almost supernatural abilities to communicate with and understand others through a form of telepathy. The novel opens on Meg Murry alone in her attic bedroom, pondering not only her own life and her astrophysicist father's long absence, but the question of why her little brother, Charles Wallace, is able to read her mind and know her experiences without being present with her when things happen. This unusual characteristic demonstrates his differences and allows him to develop much more advanced relationships with others. These relationships are foregrounded through his close connection with Meg. His uniqueness is emphasized when, on that same night, Meg, Charles Wallace, and their mother receive a strange and unlikely visitor, Mrs Whatsit, who remarks on Charles' special abilities. Importantly, readers learn that Mrs Whatsit is a former (real, night-sky) star. She relates well to Charles Wallace because she has unusual abilities as well, such as transforming from a star into other shapes – she uses a human shape for most of the novel, but also at one point changes into something resembling a centaur.

Mrs Whatsit's ability to change demonstrates her integration with the nonhuman environment, another important facet of developing relationships that emerges throughout L'Engle's novels. Eventually Meg, Charles Wallace, and Meg's friend from school, Calvin O'Keefe, learn that Mrs Whatsit and her two eccentric companions, Mrs Who and Mrs Which (viewed by many L'Engle scholars as angelic), are now tasked with helping the three children find and rescue Charles and Meg's father. This unusual group travels across the universe by "tessering," a way of folding space in on itself to shorten distances and allow for swift travel (Marcus, 2012: 145).[5] The group eventually arrives on a planet called Camazotz, where Mr Murry has been imprisoned for about two years. Camazotz is a dystopia ruled by a disembodied brain called "IT" and IT's henchman, the Prime Coordinator. They use extreme mind control to govern Camazotz, turning the planet's inhabitants into nearly-mindless, robot-like characters, who don't have individuality or uniqueness, and who aren't integrated with other citizens or their planet, a problem noted by L'Engle scholars such as Roxanne Harde (2019). This illustrates by counterexample the importance of relationships between unique individuals, as well as of integration with the natural world. While Meg and Calvin are able to rescue Mr Murry, Charles Wallace chooses to use his advanced ability for engaging with the world around him to allow himself to be taken over by IT. He hopes, in this way, to somehow get to know his father, to form a relationship that he has never had (Mr Murry left on his secret scientific mission before Charles Wallace was old enough to remember him properly). However, IT does not in fact help Charles Wallace to relate to Mr Murry. Instead, IT turns the little boy into someone who doesn't care about anyone else, thereby attempting to destroy Charles Wallace's special ability to integrate with others. Meg, Calvin, and Mr Murry have to escape from Camazotz in order to avoid a similar fate, and travel to a world called Ixchel, where they meet the inhabitants, whom Meg calls "beasts." From them, the three humans learn a little more about the advanced abilities of other beings to relate to the world around them, as Charles Wallace is able to do, because the inhabitants of Ixchel have no eyes and must therefore use a combination of physical, emotional, and psychological senses to interact with others. The humans learn that the beasts can communicate far beyond their planet's confines, with other stars and planets across the universe, enhancing the notion of

[5] The name derives from the geometrical concept of the "tesseract," which is "the four-dimensional analogue of the cube" ("Tesseract"). Illustrations show a cube embedded within a larger cube, joined together by lines connecting the vertices. Geometer and mathematics professor Thomas Banchoff, who knew L'Engle, says that the word was used by C. Howard Hinton, "a late-nineteenth-century British scientist, science fiction writer, and follower of Theosophy who devised methods of visualizing higher dimensions" (Marcus, 2012: 148n). Banchoff implies, however, that L'Engle just used the word to describe a form of space travel similar to the wormholes used in science fiction, rather than really trying to suggest that such a form of travel is possible through a geometrical tesseract (Marcus, 2012: 145-49).

interconnection espoused by L'Engle and studied by ecopsychologists. With this ever-increasing knowledge of the importance of relationships, Meg returns to Camazotz with the three Mrs W's and uses the power of Mrs Whatsit's love, her own familial ties to Charles Wallace, and her knowledge of his special connective abilities to rescue him from IT.

The Young Unicorns shares, with *A Wrinkle in Time*, the theme of differentiation leading to integration, demonstrated through similar plot elements. This novel opens in the middle of New York City. The Austin family, who lived in the countryside before, has moved to New York so Dr Austin can spend a year conducting research on a laser surgical device called the Micro-Ray. The Austin children have made friends with Emily Gregory, their landlord's daughter. Emily lost her sight in an accident when one of the novel's villains, Dr Hyde, directed an uncontrolled Micro-Ray at her. She is an accomplished pianist, and with the help of her piano teacher, Mr Theotocopoulos ("Mr Theo"), she has quickly adapted to losing her sight. Indeed, she has developed her other sensory abilities to such a high degree that she more or less matches the powers of Charles Wallace. Her developed senses demonstrate that, like the beasts on Ixchel, she is cultivating a highly refined relationship with and perception of the world around her. The Austin children also get to know Josiah "Dave" Davidson, who helps Emily with her homework. A former member of a gang called the "Alphabats," Dave resembles Meg Murry in some ways. He, too, struggles to accept his own individuality and use it to connect with others, such as Emily and the Austins, rather than to keep himself separate from them. Dave's former involvement with the Alphabats is exploited by the two archvillains of the novel, Dr Hyde and "Bishop Norbert Fall," presumably of New York's Cathedral of St. John the Divine. Readers eventually learn that the bishop is not in fact the bishop, but the bishop's brother and a failed actor, whose stage name is Henry Grandcourt. Grandcourt and Hyde try to take over use of the Micro-Ray laser device and misappropriate it to control the minds of Dave's old gang. This attempted misuse of the Micro-Ray places Hyde and Grandcourt in the same positions as the Prime Coordinator and IT. They ultimately want to take over all of New York City, just as IT has taken over Camazotz. They therefore scheme about the best ways to access the research materials on the Micro-Ray from Dr Austin. They kidnap Rob Austin, who, like Charles Wallace, is the youngest in his family. This corresponds to IT's takeover of Charles Wallace (although fortunately Hyde and Grandcourt never have a chance to use the Micro-Ray on Rob). Emily and Dave rescue Rob with the help of Emily's honed ability to relate to her world, a parallel to Meg's ability to rescue Charles Wallace because she understands his unique capacity to connect with others.

By recognizing the uniqueness in parallel characters such as Charles Wallace, Mrs Whatsit, Emily, and Mr Theo in *A Wrinkle in Time* and *The Young Unicorns*, and through exploring the ways in which they bond with other characters and with their environments, readers are enabled to see the ecopsychological/ecotherapeutic ideas of healthy differentiation from and integration with others emerging in these texts. Consequently, the hope is that readers will be able to re-imagine their own relationships with both the human and the nonhuman others in their ecosystems.

1.1 The Unique Other: Recognizing Difference

To open the discussion of differentiation and its importance to interconnection in *A Wrinkle in Time*, we can look at how L'Engle establishes Charles Wallace Murry as a unique little boy, someone "new" and "different" from other members of the human race (L'Engle, 1962: 41-42). His difference lies predominantly in an unusual psychological ability to know people's thoughts and experiences without being told about them, and without being physically present when the events in question happen. His family recognizes and accepts his difference, although they don't necessarily "understand him" (1962: 16). In the words of the unusual Mrs Whatsit, the Murrys are "letting him be himself" (16). Their recognition and acceptance of his difference from themselves makes the Murry family a safe space for him, in which he can comfortably differentiate from them, as per psychologist Bowen's (1978) definition in his family systems theory, as described above. Differentiation, as previously noted, is a process of healthy separation, emotionally and psychologically, from a tight-knit group, such as one's family unit. When healthy levels of separation are reached, such as Charles Wallace achieves in his family, a person is better positioned to perceive unique individuality in self and others. As a result, the differentiated individual is better able to form balanced, emotionally stable relationships with others. For Charles Wallace, because his family accepts and encourages his differentiation from them, this safety in being able to be different brings comfort and allows him to be and to feel integrated with at least one specific, localized environment, which starts with his home. L'Engle focuses on Charles Wallace's relationship with his sister, Meg, as this kind of family bonding is of core importance in the process of acquiring a sense of integration with one's immediate surroundings. Specifically, this draws the reader immediately into concepts associated with ecopsychology, articulated by one of the early practitioners in the field, ecotherapist Howard Clinebell (1996), who argues that familial integration, or bonding with each other, is bound up with the human bond with the

environment in which a group, such as a family, resides. It is Charles' relationship with Meg, in the context of his environment, which allows us to closely examine both wherein his difference lies, and how that difference allows him to build such unique relationships with others.

While the Murrys don't necessarily understand everything about Charles' different abilities, they do recognize that these abilities are something that cannot be guessed at simply by looking at him. To help Meg understand him better, Mrs Murry describes Charles' difference as existing "in [his] essence" (L'Engle, 1962: 42). John Locke, in his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), defines "[r]eal" essence as "the very being of anything, whereby it is what it is." He develops this explanation by saying that it is "the real internal […] unknown constitution of things, whereon their discoverable qualities depend" based on the original meaning of the Latin "essential," which is "being" (1690/2000: 247). This indicates both that "essence" is an important part of how we recognize and understand a thing, and that the word and idea of "essence" defy precise explanation. "Essence" taps into phenomenological philosophy as described by Martin Heidegger (1977), where "essence" is that within something, such as a tree, which makes it identifiable as a tree but which is also distinct from the individual trees themselves. The essence itself is not a tree, but represents the quality of "tree-ness." In this way, "essence" may be understood as both differentiating an object from other objects by helping us identify it as itself, and as integrating those objects with similar others because they share a common "essence." Understanding this idea that "essence" helps us to identify an individual object or person as belonging to a particular *type* helps clarify why Charles Wallace's uniqueness matters so much, because in her description of him, Mrs Murry incorporates a phrase that invokes these definitions of essence. "Charles Wallace is what he is," his mother states. "Different. New" (42). Charles Wallace opens up a new category of "essence" for humans, and has thus extended the ways in which humans can relate to each other and to the world. Particularly, Charles Wallace's simultaneous difference and integration result in a greater degree of recognition of the essence of others. This connection and understanding occur at such a high level that he is capable of experiencing what others experience without being physically present with them.

To better understand what L'Engle may have meant by "essence" and its importance in identifying and relating to others, we can look at how she continued to conceptualize her thinking and her personal definitions of the word. In one of her nonfiction works, *The Summer of the Great-Grandmother* (1974), L'Engle thinks about

essence through using the Greek term "ousia," which she claims refers to "the essence of being, […] that which is really real" (49). To clarify what she means by "essence" and "real," L'Engle uses an example of a frog she saw while on a walk one afternoon. She muses about how, no matter what a single frog looks like to a human, a bird, or a snake, that frog is still itself, still an individual (1974: 48). She says, "He *is*: frog" (49). "Ousia" —"essence"— she implies, is the something that makes an individual unique, that differentiates him or her from other individuals while at the same time making that individual identifiable as a type or species to others. L'Engle also demonstrates her belief that "essence" or "ousia" is present in both living and non-living things: "the essence of a frog, of the stone bridge I am sitting on, of my mother" (L'Engle, 1974: 49). This reminds readers that differentiation must have healthy boundaries: an individual should be distinguishable from others, but not so far removed from others that it cannot be identified as itself.

The loving familiarity between Meg and Charles emphasizes that these kinds of relationships are intended to be nurturing, an important aspect of ecotherapy which Howard Clinebell (1996) returns to frequently in trying to encourage and establish similar connections in which humans nurture each other and through which humans may learn to nurture their environment while at the same time being nurtured by it. Charles Wallace uses his enhanced integrative faculties and new essence particularly to attune himself with his sister, who needs the nurturing Clinebell suggests from other humans in the context of the immediate family environment. When, at the beginning of the novel, Meg is sitting in her bedroom struggling with anxiety over a hurricane-like storm blowing outside, she thinks about how Charles Wallace "had an uncanny way of knowing when she was awake and unhappy, and [he] would come, so many nights, tiptoeing up the attic stairs to her" (L'Engle, 1962: 3). In this example, L'Engle illustrates Meg's sense of Charles Wallace's difference: it is something mysterious ("uncanny") about him which nevertheless allows him to understand other people and their needs. Readers understand that this is a difference Meg does not feel she shares with her brother, yet she accepts that the unusual nature of his ability helps Charles to harmonize with her psychologically. The line indicates that his efforts to connect with her are quiet and unassuming ("tiptoeing"), thus highlighting that integration with others in the environment is personal. It should be sensitive, not domineering.

However, on this night, Charles Wallace doesn't come to Meg as he usually does, seeming to Meg to break the pattern of caring and nurturing integration. In her loneliness

and her stress over the wildness of the storm, she decides to go down to the kitchen and have hot chocolate. When she arrives in the kitchen, Charles Wallace is already there, and readers discover with Meg that he has chosen a different way of illustrating his almost-supernatural ability to connect with her needs. Meg asks why he didn't come up to her and he replies, "I knew you'd be down. I put some milk on the stove for you. It ought to be hot by now" (1962: 6). Without speaking to Meg, Charles already knew, from somewhere else in the house, that she would come down to the kitchen and that she would want to make herself a hot drink. He not only knows this, he has timed heating the milk to coincide precisely with Meg's entrance. L'Engle establishes that Charles Wallace's ability to sense what people need and what they are going to do is out of the ordinary. It does not seem to hinge, for example, on a family routine of late-night snacks and drinks. Additionally, Charles' preparation for Meg's hot drink supports the idea that his new and different abilities are intended not just to show that he knows and understands people's experiences and emotions without being constantly present with those people, but to illustrate how his abilities link him to others in ways that show his caring and consideration.

As Meg tries to understand Charles Wallace's ability to deeply and caringly connect with her, she asks him if he actually reads minds. Charles Wallace can't really explain what happens that allows him to access Meg's daily experiences and her consequent emotions. He responds, "I don't think it's that. It's being able to understand a sort of language, like sometimes if I concentrate very hard I can understand the wind talking with the trees. You tell me, you see, sort of inad—inadvertently" (L'Engle, 1962: 26). As Charles tries to explain what happens inside him when he gains knowledge of Meg's emotions and experiences, he indicates clearly that the link he has with Meg is to some part of her that is similar to other parts of the natural environment. His references to hearing other things "talking" to each other or to him implies that Meg shares in this language and speech without realizing it. This suggests that the caring and nurturing association Clinebell describes as essential to human-nonhuman relationality (31) exists between humans and their surroundings even when humans cannot yet recognize it. It implies that an important part of Charles Wallace's differentiation from his family and from other humans is that his growing uniqueness allows him to readily access and make use of the shared "language" he describes in order to integrate more deeply with his community. Bringing this together with the understanding that Charles Wallace's newness and difference are in his "essence," a strong link emerges between Charles Wallace's abilities and the idea that all parts of Earth's environment share some kind of universal source of essence, which phenomenologists call "Being." While the bulk of *A Wrinkle in*

*Tim*e centres on Charles Wallace's ability to link into the psyche of other people, L'Engle's description of his ability as a "sort of language" which means that he can "understand the wind talking with the trees" (26) demonstrates that L'Engle considers Charles Wallace's new and unique abilities to establish an important network between the human and the other-than-human in the universe she has created for her novels. That network is built, as we have seen, around Charles Wallace's localized environment, which includes his family. Ecopsychologists, particularly practicing ecotherapists, emphasize that the strength of such a network lies in the freedom an individual has to differentiate from others, or in other words, to be both uniquely separate from and bonded to the world around one (Conn, 1995: 163). Because Charles is allowed to express his difference within the context of his family environment, he can connect closely with his sister through nonverbal, psychological communication methods, and he has been able to begin extending that ability to the nonhuman parts of his ecosystem as well.

1.1.1 Counterexample: Dis-integration on Camazotz

Charles Wallace's ability to connect to Meg and to the environment illustrates the importance of differentiation and integration in *A Wrinkle in Time*. In order to underscore the seriousness of accepting others' differences and drawing on their uniqueness to form healthy interconnections, L'Engle jeopardizes Charles Wallace's abilities by creating a stark contrast to differentiation and integration on the planet Camazotz. This is the planet on which Mr Murry has become trapped while trying to *tesser* to Mars (L'Engle, 1962: 155). Meg and Charles Wallace travel to this planet with their friend Calvin O'Keefe to try to rescue Mr Murry, aided by Mrs Whatsit and her two friends, Mrs Who and Mrs Which. When the children arrive on Camazotz, they learn that IT, a disembodied brain, with the help of the Prime Coordinator, governs Camazotz by controlling the minds of all its inhabitants, both homogenizing them so that they all seem to act similarly and isolating them from each other psychologically. L'Engle sets up two examples to demonstrate that difference is rejected on Camazotz, at the expense of integration with others. First, she uses the example of a little boy who actively resists IT. Second, she shows how Charles Wallace's own uniqueness is rejected by IT and what happens to Charles Wallace's desire for connection with others as a result.

After Meg, Calvin, and Charles Wallace arrive on Camazotz, they walk into the city to which the Mrs W's direct them. In a neighbourhood on the outskirts of the city, they

see several children playing outside. These children are all playing in rhythm with each other – they bounce their balls in precisely the same way at precisely the same time, suggesting that something is controlling the children's actions – but at the same time they are not playing together. While they act in the same way, there is no community amongst the children, as might be expected under normal circumstances; they do not interact. This should serve readers as a warning that the idea of integration with others is significantly lacking on this planet. However, one little boy plays differently from the rest, suggesting, to the reader, an attempt at differentiation. He, too, has a ball, but "he bounced it rather badly and with no particular rhythm, sometimes dropping it and running after it with awkward, furtive leaps, sometimes throwing it up into the air and trying to catch it." He stays outside playing even after the other children have gone in (L'Engle, 1962: 96-97). He tries to assert his difference, his uniqueness, as someone with an individual personality. He makes his own response to the world around him, rather than being subsumed into the monotonous behaviour of the other children and becoming isolated from his environment. His actions suggest that he might think differently about Camazotz and his existence on this planet. While there is no textual evidence that the little boy is differently abled from those around him, perhaps his differences in thought temporarily protect him from IT's mind invasion and brainwashing. He certainly appears to actively resist IT through trying to assert his uniqueness, but he does so at great risk to himself.

Actively trying to differentiate is not only ineffectual on Camazotz, it is downright dangerous for the person who tries it. This is illustrated shortly after Meg, Calvin, and Charles have met the Prime Coordinator. Charles has given in to IT's control, and as he leads Meg and Calvin to where IT has imprisoned Mr Murry, he suddenly stops and shows Meg and Calvin a room in which they see the little boy again. "Every once in a while there's a little trouble with cooperation, but it's easily taken care of," Charles Wallace says. "After today he'll never desire to deviate again." (L'Engle, 1962: 134). This is IT's assessment, given through Charles Wallace's mouth, as Meg and Calvin watch the little boy bouncing a ball and screaming every time the ball hits the ground. While most readers would see the little boy's attempt to be different from the other children and to try to interact with his world as evidence of healthy development, IT shows that the concepts of differentiation and integration have been twisted on Camazotz. Trying to be different and unique is redefined as deviation, closely related to the idea of deviance, which has negative connotations of moving away from acceptable social norms rather than forming a strong community of distinct individuals. Similarly, while IT promotes the idea of "cooperation," which implies working together to combine the strengths of different people or objects,

cooperation brought about by torture would be weak and meaningless. Despite his best efforts at wresting his life back from IT, the little boy is once again engulfed by the nameless, faceless throng of unidentifiable people on Camazotz. He cannot be an individual who is free to develop connections with the world around him.

Analogous to the way this nameless little boy's attempt to be different is destroyed by IT and the Prime Coordinator, Charles Wallace's own differentiation and integration are jeopardized. Just before the episode in which the little boy is tortured into conformity, Meg, Charles, and Calvin are taken to meet the Prime Coordinator, who is a mouthpiece for IT (L'Engle 1962: 106, 127-28). Charles is misled into using his special ability for reading Meg's thoughts and experiences to figure out who the Prime Coordinator is. The Prime Coordinator tells Charles that if he will allow his mind to be taken over, the Prime Coordinator will tell the children where Mr Murry is imprisoned. Charles Wallace cannot remember his father – Mr Murry left on his government assignment when Charles was a toddler. When Meg tries to stop Charles Wallace from allowing his mind to be taken, he replies, "For Father, Meg. Please. I want—I want to know my father—" (122). The Prime Coordinator does allow the children to go to Mr Murry once Charles has submitted to the mind control. However, Charles' submission does not result, as he had hoped, in knowing his father (143-45). Instead, his new differences and abilities have been overpowered and he is now exactly like the rest of the inhabitants on Camazotz, who are under IT's control. He has become psychologically isolated from those he sought to integrate with. He cannot connect with his father, as he hoped to do, which highlights that IT and the Prime Coordinator are not interested in helping the people they control develop relationships with others around them.

Charles Wallace is also cut off from Meg. This is more problematic than being unable to relate to his father, because Meg has been so intricately connected to Charles' life, while Mr Murry has been absent. Charles no longer seems to have (or be able to use?) many of the characteristics that have allowed him to relate to Meg in the past. This focuses reader attention, again, on the way IT and the Prime Coordinator try to separate individuals from each other to such an extent that they can no longer relate to each other at all. The separation becomes, instead of appropriate, healthy differentiation, complete isolation with apparently no possibility of recovering relationships. Increased evidence of the way IT and the Prime Coordinator want to damage the connections between people emerges from the way Charles Wallace acts after his mind is taken over. His tone of voice changes, he becomes more aggressive and violent, and he no longer cares about others' pain. Primarily,

IT exploits Charles' abilities and memories of his sister's experiences to say and do cruel things to Meg, including harassing her because she feels like an oddball, laughing at her when she runs full speed into an invisible wall, and punching her when she tries to find a way to release him from IT's control (L'Engle, 1962). Such violent and aggressive behaviours are perceived by many people as both leading to, and evidence of, human disconnection from each other.

1.1.2 Disconnection from the Natural World

Ecopsychologists have also given careful thought to the question of whether antisocial behaviours directed against others, such as the violence, aggression, and abusive control Charles displays while under the control of IT, stem from or are symptoms of human disconnection from the wider natural environment (Robinson, 2009: 25). Dean Fido and Miles Richardson, both in human sciences research, published a 2019 study in which they demonstrated that there may be an inverse relationship between individuals who demonstrate such antisocial behaviours and nature connectedness, indicating that the answer may be "both" – antisocial behaviour can stem from disconnection from one's surroundings, or it can be symptomatic of this dissociation. Charles Wallace's violent and aggressive behaviour toward Meg might be seen as symptoms of the attempt made by IT and the Prime Coordinator to destroy Charles Wallace's differentiation and thus to eradicate his special capabilities for relating to other people. Bearing in mind Fido and Richardson's results, it may also be possible to identify this type of behaviour as evidence that IT and the Prime Coordinator try to dissociate individuals under their control from the natural environment. This would mean, for instance, that IT might want Charles to lose his ability to hear the wind and the trees talking, thus isolating him from nature as well as from other humans. To illustrate this, L'Engle first describes the gardens Meg, Calvin, and Charles see on Camazotz, which give the impression not only of being fake, but of being deliberately designed to look undesirable. L'Engle uses descriptive language to help readers see the strangeness of what otherwise appears as a "normal," comfortable, Earth-like environment, describing a town entered by the children as "laid out in harsh angular patterns. The houses in the outskirts were all exactly alike, small square boxes painted gray" (L'Engle, 1962: 95). Using the word "harsh" to describe the patterns of the town suggests that those who designed it were hoping specifically to drive inhabitants apart from each other and from their environment. While buildings are next to each other as in any town or city, they are at the same time disconnected, each occupying only the small space

of its plot of land. The image created by thinking about patterns as “harsh” and “angular” suggests a lack of fluidity in the scene.

This sense of a lack of fluidity is extended by the descriptions of the gardens: “Each had a small, rectangular plot of lawn in front, with a straight line of dull-looking flowers edging the path to the door. Meg had a feeling that if she could count the flowers there would be exactly the same number for each house” (L’Engle, 1962: 95). This description implies a lack of the usual connections made between homes when vines, bushes, or other garden plants grow over both sides of a fence and join the plots together. While in a reasonably-cared for front garden, there are still elements of wildness and escape as plants grow out of one location and spread over into another, the gardens in Camazotz lack this kind of over- and undergrowth. The square lawn in front of each house in Camazotz sounds colourless and boring, leading readers to imagine that inhabitants of Camazotz might not spend much time outside, connecting to their localized environments. This is helped by L’Engle describing the rows of flowers along each lawn as “dull.” These flowers seem to absorb light rather than reflecting it; they have no distinguishing characteristics, unlike Earth’s flowers. In addition to focusing on the way the flowers look, the word “dull” makes one think of lifelessness and monotony. Although the flowers along these lawns probably are organic, readers wonder if they might be artificial instead. It’s easy to imagine that they never change at all, or that they are infertile and if they die, must be replaced by hand rather than by the biological processes of pollination and reseeding. As readers make these observations about Camazotz, they may anticipate the idea that IT and the Prime Coordinator have designed these homes on Camazotz to separate the humans from the gardens. If this is the case, then it is likely that Charles Wallace, too, could be expected to lose his special connection to his ecosystem once his mind has been subsumed by IT. This potential disconnection from the natural environment is of particular concern to ecopsychologists, both theoretical and practical. Because the main purpose of ecopsychology and ecotherapy is to help people recognize and repair these disconnections with their world, researchers wrestle with topics such as disconnection and isolation, and overcoming them, in much of the scholarship on ecopsychology and ecotherapy.

1.1.3 Reintegration in *A Wrinkle in Time*

The question that arises, then, is how does L’Engle demonstrate methods for reintegrating her characters with each other and with their natural environment? It is important to recognize the uniqueness of others in building relationships between humans

and the world around them. To illustrate this, L'Engle does two things. First, she uses Meg's voice and thoughts to establish the importance of differentiation in healthy relationships with others by exploring what L'Engle sees as a crucial distinction between the terms "like" and "equal." Second, L'Engle briefly shows Charles and Meg, together, reconnecting with the nonhuman environment back on Earth.

As might be expected, when Charles Wallace, still under the control of IT, takes Meg, Calvin, and the newly rescued Mr Murry to IT, IT tries to take over their minds. IT wishes to control them and divide them from each other, just as IT has absorbed the minds of the rest of the inhabitants of Camazotz and destroyed both their connections with each other and their connections with their planet. As Meg struggles against physical, mental, and spiritual absorption, she recalls a line from the beginning of the United States' Declaration of Independence: "all men are created equal" (L'Engle, 1962: 150). When she shouts it out, Charles Wallace, still under IT's control, responds, "But that's exactly what we have on Camazotz. Complete equality. Everybody exactly alike." Meg replies, "*Like* and *equal* are not the same thing at all!" (150). This is a rather unusual linguistic claim, as "like" and "equal" appear as synonyms in a basic thesaurus, and it is difficult to make any real denotative distinction between them in the dictionary. However, Meg repeats to herself, "*Like and equal are two entirely different things*" (L'Engle, 1962: 150). "Like," as L'Engle uses the word here, connotes a lack of uniqueness and dismissal of others' individuality. She implies that "like" describes the distorted, broken reality created by IT, which has been illustrated by the way citizens of Camazotz are being controlled. L'Engle's use of "equal," on the other hand, connotes the concept of equal worth shared by differentiated individuals.

L'Engle reiterated this idea of a distinction between equal and like over the years, developing her thinking and reemphasizing her insistence that "equal" is about interconnection with others. Ten years after publishing *A Wrinkle in Time,* in *A Circle of Quiet* (1972), she asks how people can be taught "to allow people to be different; to understand that like is not equal" (44). She here equates equal with difference and like with sameness, and is implying, as she did in *A Wrinkle in Time,* that differentiation is essential to human understanding and acceptance of others and of the world around them. In the same text, L'Engle connects her idea of equal not being the same as like directly to the concept of integration with our world. She talks about finding the concept defined by looking around the family dinner table: "This was the time the community […] gathered together," she writes, "when I saw most clearly illustrated the beautiful principle of unity

in diversity; we were one, but we were certainly diverse, a living example of the fact that like and equal are not the same thing" (L'Engle, 1972: 132). Approximately 30 years after *A Circle of Quiet* and 40 years after the publication of *A Wrinkle in Time*, L'Engle was still adamant that Meg's line, "like and equal are not the same thing at all" (1962: 150), is a key to the novel. Catherine Hand, who was involved in a 2004 film production of *Wrinkle*, told children's literature historian Leonard Marcus that "Madeleine said to me that she understood the book was going to have to change for the screen, but she made me promise that one line would always be in it: 'Like and equal are not the same thing'" (Marcus, 2012: 122). L'Engle's own ideas about "equality" could therefore be seen as an aspect of the idea of kinship and bonding between humans and their environments promoted by ecopsychologists, such as Fisher (2013) in his references to the human-nature kinship continuum (95, 139) or Theodore Roszak's theory that humans and nature share a kind of ecological unconscious (2001: 320-21); as well as by children's literature scholars, such as Erin Spring's (2017) reports on the ways in which she has observed young people become more attached to their environments through "reading culturally-relevant place-based texts" (121). Once Meg concludes that (in this novel and in her specific context) being "like" everyone else means being forced by IT to be exactly the same, allowed to have no individuality, no personality, and no freedom to make choices or to become, she is able to start breaking away from IT. She is able to rescue Charles Wallace by focusing on his unique differences and the deep sibling relationship which has developed because she accepts and loves him as a whole, new, unique person. Through Meg's experiences, readers can see that equality represents recognition of the other as a unique individual.

L'Engle hints that the successful rescue of Charles Wallace from IT must include more than helping him re-join his human community. The reconnection is not complete until Meg, Charles Wallace, Calvin, and Mr Murry are enfolded in their own natural environment, back on Earth. L'Engle playfully uses the notion of "grounding" ourselves to reinforce the importance of reconnecting with the ecosystem. Significantly, as soon as Meg is able to rescue Charles, all four travellers are immediately tessered back to Earth and land *in the Murry garden* (L'Engle, 1962: 196) – they are literally grounded in their own environment. In contrast to the gardens on Camazotz, which seemed unnatural, L'Engle draws on such sensory impressions as she can to enhance the comfort of this garden at home. Because the travellers return after dark, they cannot really see the colours of the world around them. Instead, Meg mentions "the feel of earth beneath her" (196), engaging the sense of touch and reminding us that one of the most common and obvious ways we connect with our planet is through our skin and the recognition that it is not a boundary but

a point of contact. “Feel” might also evoke senses of the mind and suggest that Meg is responding not just physically but emotionally to the earth she has landed on. The need to integrate with one’s community and environment involves the whole person. In addition to talking about feeling the earth, L’Engle describes how the sense of touch and the sense of smell are experienced jointly in this moment, saying that Meg “was rolling over on the sweet-smelling autumnal earth” (L’Engle, 1962: 196). In contrast to the gardens of Camazotz, which push people away from each other and from the land, the Murry family’s own garden invites humans into playfulness and engagement with the earth and with each other. Instead of appearing “dull” and lifeless, readers may recall the colour and scent of ripened plants. Even though Meg, Charles, Calvin, and Mr Murry have landed in the garden at night, under a moon, they feel the life in the garden, and it rejuvenates Meg and Charles specifically. This allows readers to envision that Charles Wallace has recovered his ability to engage in a strong relationship with the world, becoming metaphorically grounded as a result of being physically grounded, thus providing the evidence necessary to prove that Meg truly has rescued him. When he realizes where Meg and he have landed as Meg struggles upright after rolling across the earth, L’Engle writes that he “laughed, his own, sweet, contagious laugh” and tells Meg they are in “the twins’ vegetable garden! And we landed in the broccoli!” (196). Choosing to have Meg and Charles Wallace arrive back on Earth in the middle of their siblings’ vegetable garden suggests that L’Engle was aware of the importance of a really localized, personalized natural space in helping people connect or reconnect with each other and with the environment. Her nonfiction makes periodic mention of her own vegetable garden, ranging from simply stating what she was able to pick (L’Engle, 1988) to expressing a belief that watching and helping a garden grow helps humans to resist what she calls evil (L’Engle, 1977). She sometimes mentions the need to care for a garden which is almost ready to harvest, to protect it from frost (L’Engle, 1977; L’Engle, 1988). The important integration humans need to be able to develop with things that are so different from them is epitomized in the image of the vegetable garden.

The Murrys’ vegetable garden and its use as a “landing platform” for Meg, Charles Wallace, Calvin, and Mr Murry brings attention back to the sterile gardens on Camazotz. L’Engle playfully hints that the contrast between the Murrys’ Earth garden and the Camazotz gardens is so great that no one could be expected to land in or play in the Camazotzian plots. Residents of Camazotz couldn’t be expected to engage with such an environment. On the other hand, the Murry garden’s comfort and peace draws attention to the experience of gardening as a way of connecting people locally to the natural world.

This is frequently mentioned in ecopsychological literature and practice. For example, Steven Harper, an ecopsychology practitioner who primarily leads wilderness retreats, has said that gardening is one of the best ways he has found to help people maintain connections they make with the natural world, after they return from the retreats with him (Harper, 1995: 198). He explains that this is primarily because spending time working in the garden is mutually beneficial for both the human gardener and the nonhuman garden because it represents "symbiosis and coevolution" (198). Elizabeth Diehl, a lecturer and practitioner of horticulture as therapy at the University of Florida, argues that gardens enliven the senses, just as we saw with the Murrys' garden; that gardens help "our relationship with nature [gain] experiential complexity" (Diehl, 2009: 169); and that they "can help us recover from mental fatigue" (170). Strikingly, Diehl points out that some studies indicate that the scent of flowers (such as lavender) and other plants can actually cause chemical responses in the brain that can "help eliminate pain, induce sleep, and create a sense of well-being" (170). This observation is supported in other ecotherapeutic literature as well (Talpady, 2020). Thus, L'Engle's specific reference to the "sweet-smelling autumnal earth" connects directly into the many functions a garden can have in helping humans integrate (or in the case of Charles Wallace, reintegrate) with the natural world. Additional research shows that gardens can promote social, interpersonal integration as well, as seen in work done by counselling therapists Nicole Sanders and Kellie Forziat-Pytel (2020), who have used horticulture therapy with military veterans. Their results demonstrate that those participating in group gardening felt that they were better able to interact with other people. One specific case study shared by Sanders and Forziat-Pytel demonstrated how gardening helped a family reconnect with each other (128-36). The results of this case study reinforce the idea that gardens can help humans integrate or reintegrate with each other psychologically and emotionally. This supports the interpretation of L'Engle's decision to have Meg, Charles Wallace, Calvin, and Mr Murry land in the Murry family garden as an ideal strategy since it implies that Charles has fully reconnected with his human community as well as the natural environment.

1.2 Parallels in *The Young Unicorns*

We have seen that *A Wrinkle in Time* contains a series of examples showing the importance of accepting the many differences of others and allowing them to be unique. At the same time, the novel illustrates how important this differentiation is to strong integration with both the human and the nonhuman in an ecosystem. L'Engle's

demonstration of this includes counterexamples which show what can happen when difference is rejected and individuals are separated from each other, destroying the relationships they have in or with a human or nonhuman environment. *The Young Unicorns* (1968), published six years later, shows L'Engle continuing to work with some of the ideas and techniques which she explored in *A Wrinkle in Time*. Specifically, IT and the Prime Coordinator's use of mind control on Camazotz to try to eradicate differentiation and isolate individuals from each other (at least psychologically) has corresponding examples in the later novel. *The Young Unicorns* also contains an example of ways in which mind control as a means of coercing individuals into doing or believing things demonstrates how interconnection can be destroyed. However, in contrast to the way in which Charles Wallace is taken over by IT, the attempts to overrule the human mind in *The Young Unicorns* do not involve specially advanced neurological systems, and they are not aimed at one special individual, such as Charles Wallace. Instead, L'Engle's more realistic Austin family novel depicts co-villains Dr Hyde and Henry Grandcourt[6] using technology to impose control in a more generalized way on a street gang called the "Alphabats." They use the Micro-Ray laser surgical device on the gang members' brains to stimulate addiction, which in turn enables Hyde and Grandcourt to exert power over addicted individuals. Their aim is to manipulate the Alphabats into taking over New York City, thus putting Hyde and Grandcourt in control of one of the most powerful cities in the world.

What emerges from the story is that Dr Hyde (a neurosurgeon), has, in the course of his work, been using the Micro-Ray to perform laser neurosurgery.. However, Hyde has been experimenting with using the laser to alter the function of the human brain, a technological method that illustrates what L'Engle may have considered a more realistic way of accomplishing what IT and the Prime Coordinator do through their own minds. L'Engle actively read science and biology journals while researching her novels, and probably would have been aware of contemporary laser research. There has been ongoing effort since at least the early 1960s to explore the uses of the laser in a wide variety of medical procedures and to examine its impact on various biological structures, processes, and disorders in animals (Fine et al., 1964), plants (Rounds, 1968), and arachnids (Witt, 1969). Additionally, medical use of lasers is reported as early as 1962 (Choy, 1988), with the first instance of a laser being used on a human brain tumour in 1966 (Ryan et al, 2009).

[6] N.B.: Grandcourt is masquerading as his deceased brother, Bishop Norbert Fall, of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City.

L'Engle speculates that lasers could even be used to alter human brain patterns in this novel, demonstrating a plausible means of technological mind control.[7]

Specifically, Hyde uses the laser to generate addiction (which can lead to isolation of an individual from others) in members of the Alphabats gang by probing the "pleasure center" (L'Engle, 1968: 248), "brain center," or "pleasure dome" (273) of the brain. It appears that he is doing this at first to try to control individuals' behaviour. Later, however, readers learn that Hyde and Grandcourt are trying to steal Dr Austin's research materials on the Micro-Ray, so that Hyde can build the Micro-Ray himself, without having to rely on Dr Austin or anyone else as a source of his tools. With unrestricted access to the necessary technology, Hyde and Grandcourt plan to try to use the Micro-Ray and the Alphabats gang to take over New York City. Grandcourt styles himself as using the laser, with Hyde's help, to eliminate poverty, drugs, homelessness, and other social ills in the city (L'Engle, 1968: 194, 201-03), actions that might be expected of a (supposed) clergyman. However, when the two men are finally caught, Grandcourt admits that all he was interested in was the power he would have had over the entire city through pretending to be a bishop (282), power that would have come from causing others to assume that his behaviour was intended to be salvific (201-03). To help readers understand what Hyde and Grandcourt are doing to the Alphabats, L'Engle has one of the gang members, known as "Q," explain the use of the laser to the Dean of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine and a visiting canon. "What you do, see, […] is you rub the lamp," Q explains to Dean de Henares and Canon Tallis. He continues, "And then this guy in green robes comes out. He's called a genie, see, and you have to go along with all this zug if you want to fly" (248). In the guise of a genie, Dr Hyde directs the laser beam at the person he wants to affect. Q says that when the laser is pointed at you, "you feel good. All over, everywhere, see? All you do is feel […] It's so good you'll do anything to rub the lamp again" (248). This is suggestive of addiction and motivating people through the desire for the neurological reward achieved by satisfying the addiction. Throughout the novel, "anything" includes trying to kidnap Rob Austin, and eventually succeeding in doing so; harassing a former gang member, Dave Davidson, constantly; stalking Dr Austin; and shadowing and shooting at the Dean and the visiting canon. It appears as if Hyde and Grandcourt are trying to remove the Bats' humanity and turn them into objects to be controlled, which takes away any uniqueness or individuality

[7] I deliberately use the term "technological" to specify that Hyde and Grandcourt are making use of built machinery in their attempts at mind control. The United States government was actively involved in testing chemical mind control on subjects in the 1950s and 1960s ("Project MKUltra," 2020), but L'Engle does not have Hyde and Grandcourt use chemicals in their plans.

they might have. The behaviours which Hyde and Grandcourt induce in the Bats are obviously anti-social, and illustrate how Hyde and Grandcourt may be trying to use this tool and the stimulated addiction to divide gang members from other people. This correlates to an argument made by Stephen Aizenstat (1995) that when human beings behave in ways that upset what can be seen as the "rhythms of nature" in their interactions with the world around them, "entire species are threatened" (93). Hyde and Grandcourt's mistreatment of the Alphabats is directed toward overtaking an entire city and a whole species – humans – within it. If all the gang members care about is experiencing the laser treatment again, they will have no concern for the well-being of others who get between them and the sensory gratification they need. Both the addiction and the anti-social behaviours show splitting from other human beings through focus on the self and gratifying one's own desires without consideration for others.

Intriguingly, human use of and potential addiction to technology is an ongoing discussion in ecopsychology, with scholars such as Chellis Glendinning arguing as early as 1995 that the way humans use technology has all the earmarks of addictive behaviour. Additionally, it is compelling to note that addiction is one of the things that ecopsychologists, like other psychologists, worry about in terms of its effect on human relationships and psychological well-being. Specifically, ecopsychologists are concerned with the place of addictions and addictive behaviour in humans' engagement with the world around them. They suggest that addiction may sometimes be a response to fear of experiences which illuminate the essential nature of the human relationship to the environment (Barrows, 1995: 110). They argue that addictions of many types, including to substances such as alcohol or drugs, or to consumerism, are attempts to compensate for a lack of recognition and nurturing of the inherent connection to the ecosystem (Roberts, 1998: 7). L'Engle's realistic novel invokes a different perspective on the problem of technology and addiction. In her novel, instead of the human personally using technology until addicted, an outside force (in this case Hyde and Grandcourt) uses the technology on others in a way that facilitates addiction. This misuse of technology splits people from the world around them because of the addiction that has been developed, and, of course, puts the addicts (in this case the Alphabats) in positions to be exploited by those misusing the technology – Hyde and Grandcourt.

Grandcourt and Hyde manipulate the Alphabats in a similar way to IT and the Prime Coordinator in their subjugation of Charles Wallace Murry. As a result, Dave Davidson, who has similar characteristics to Meg Murry, must, like Meg, come to realize

that differences can bring individuals together in healthy connection. He has to learn that the manipulation of the Alphabats through the Micro-Ray in *The Young Unicorns* diminishes equality and destroys individuality. It has been demonstrated that, like IT on Camazotz, Grandcourt and Dr Hyde seek to force everyone into the same mould through addicting them by technological means. As a former Alphabat, Dave is vulnerable because he is trying to build his own identity after nearly being absorbed into the Alphabats gang. Hyde and Grandcourt have never had the opportunity to use the Micro-Ray on him, so he has not become addicted in that way, but he bears a physical resemblance to his old gang – walking like they do, standing like they do, and dressing similarly – as Vicky Austin points out (L'Engle, 1968: 62). Yet, at the same time that Dave is defining himself in relation to the Alphabats, he recognizes that they have become an indistinguishable mass, dominated by technological mind control. This recognition is akin to Meg's realization that being like someone else is not the same (in L'Engle's terms) as being equal.

When Dave, along with Emily Gregory, is kidnapped by the Bats and taken to the subway station where Grandcourt and Hyde have taken Rob Austin, he spends the time he is following the Bats internally examining the issue of sameness. He thinks about the tradition of Alphabat gang members relinquishing their names for letters of the alphabet while in the gang. Dave was "E" (L'Engle, 1968: 73), and during the journey to Hyde and Grandcourt, he looks at the gang member who is leading them and thinks, "—Who does he think he is? […] —*N*? He might as well be *A*, or *F*, or *R*. They're all faceless. They're letters without names. Did I ever want that?" (226). A name serves as an identifier and highlights that the person/animal/item named has value, according to L'Engle. In fact, in her nonfiction, she ties the importance of the name to the concept of "being," or essence, which she emphasized so strongly in regard to Charles Wallace in *A Wrinkle in Time*. Her conceptions of the importance of uniqueness and individuality are encapsulated in her continued discussion of the importance of a name, epitomized throughout her nonfiction work *A Circle of Quiet* (1972). Notably, L'Engle's emphasis on the importance of a name in giving something uniqueness – essence, being – and value emerges in some of the ecopsychology research as well. David Kidner (2001) and Richard Louv (2008), for instance, both address the fact that humans are more likely to dismiss the importance of things for which they have no name, particularly objects in nature. Thus, such objects (or individuals) tend to get pushed out of their communities.

Conversely, others who have implemented the principles of ecopsychology in their work, including practitioners in such diverse fields as wilderness quests (Harper, 1995) and

child development (Barrows, 1995), suggest that a name can be an important part of an individual's ability to integrate with her or his ecosystem. Consequently, names can be linked to L'Engle's distinction between the terms "equal" and "like," as examined in *Wrinkle*, because they are part of what helps to distinguish people and objects from each other. Names help us see others as individuals who have similar experiences to our own, but who are simultaneously unique. Removing identity by taking away names in *The Young Unicorns* is similar to the ways in which inhabitants of Camazotz were de-identified, and is a step along the way to being caught in a situation in which individuality doesn't matter and/or may not exist, conceptually speaking. Taking away a name pulls one away from interconnection with one's environment, rather than encouraging integration. Ultimately, then, recognizing the importance of names over namelessness helps Dave recognize that being unique means connecting with others as individuals, rather than rejecting them or thinking that he must be exactly the same as they are. He learns that integration involves responding to life (L'Engle, 1968: 285) and admitting that we need connections with others (286), rather than relinquishing our kinship with others.

Dave's reintegration with his environment is focused on how he connects to other human beings, and does not contain any details which link his integration to the other-than-human world, as does Charles Wallace's return to Earth and his human family, when Charles and Meg land in the Murry family vegetable garden. However, L'Engle does include, in *The Young Unicorns*, a few examples of the ways in which Hyde and Grandcourt's use of the Micro-Ray on the Alphabats may result in some characters feeling a disconnect from the natural environment. It should be noted that there is no real resolution offered to this particular problem in *The Young Unicorns*. This problem bears some resemblance to the issue of the disconnecting gardens on Camazotz in *A Wrinkle in Time*, it is worth reviewing, especially because it serves as an acknowledgement that some people find it difficult to feel a significant connection to the nonhuman environment at all as a result of fear of nature (Delaney, 2020: 53). In *The Young Unicorns*, the characters' urban green space is called Riverside Park. L'Engle creates in the reader and in her characters an unusual fear of this park through referencing it three times in connection with the problems arising from Hyde and Grandcourt's use of the Micro-Ray on the Alphabats.

L'Engle first establishes the park as, if not exactly safe, at least a place where characters can detach themselves from the city and feel more connected to nonhuman ecology for a little while. In the first example, Vicky Austin is out walking the family dog, and L'Engle describes Vicky's enjoyment of and engagement in the park's environment.

She describes Vicky as being "isolated in a small world of swirling fog and soft drops of moisture blowing against her face" (1968: 54). The fog reaches out to encompass the things Vicky encounters, such as the trees, the river, a squirrel she sees, and other dog walkers. Just as L'Engle invokes physical senses in *A Wrinkle in Time* when describing the gardens on Camazotz and the garden on Earth, she draws on sight, touch, and sound to connect readers to Vicky's "sense of magic in the park when it was foggy or rainy and not many people were out" in *The Young Unicorns* (L'Engle, 1968: 55). The second example also centres on Vicky walking the dog, and iterates that usually when she walks in Riverside Park, she is "happy" and "aware," enjoying her surroundings (164-65), lost in her imagination. In the third example, it is Mrs Austin who is depicted as usually feeling that the park is a place of natural beauty (176). Since the Austins have lived in the country for most of the family's life, it is understandable that they want to feel that Riverside Park is, overall, a safe place where they can still connect with nature in the city. Similarly to how the garden is viewed by ecopsychologists and ecotherapists, urban parks are often studied and used as locations in which people can experience positive interaction with the nonhuman environment (Korpela et al., 2016). However, in *The Young Unicorns*, L'Engle connects Riverside Park to the Alphabats and their dealings with Hyde and Grandcourt, turning it into a frightening place of disconnection for individuals, just as she made the gardens of Camazotz seem to separate people rather than connect them.

All three examples depicting Riverside Park in *The Young Unicorns* end by illustrating a fear of natural spaces caused by the Alphabats' continued presence in the park, and the gang's association with Hyde and Grandcourt. Vicky's first dog walk ends rather abruptly, for instance, when she meets the visiting canon who is trying to help stop Hyde and Grandcourt. While she is chatting with the canon, he suddenly stops and tells her to go straight home, because he can see, coming toward them, a small group of Alphabats (L'Engle, 1968: 59). The gang members pass by Vicky as she turns to walk home, and she is left with "the unpleasant feeling that they were staring after her" (59). Rather than walking home, she begins to run, "her heart thumping from fear" (60). The second walk she takes in the park also ends abruptly when she unwittingly walks "into the midst of a group of leather-jacketed boys" (165). Contrary to her usual comfort in the park, Vicky was already feeling uneasy during this walk, and encountering these boys reminds her of the other group she passed on the first walk. This time she is not so frightened, but she describes the group as "sinister" (166). Both the fear Vicky feels and the sense of something sinister make the park seem unsafe. Mrs Austin, too, feels the changed atmosphere of the park as she walks through it, describing it as now feeling "dark and

comfortless and full of unknown terrors" (176). This fear she feels, in a place that usually brings her peace, is derived from warnings she has received to watch her children closely because they are in danger. This danger is a direct result of Hyde and Grandcourt's use of the Micro-Ray to cause addiction in the Alphabats, because one of the purposes for which Hyde and Grandcourt are using the Alphabats is to kidnap the Austin children in order to blackmail Dr Austin into giving up his Micro-Ray research. In all three instances, fear turns a usually beautiful and tranquil natural space into a place of disconnection. Vicky and Mrs Austin find themselves rejecting Riverside Park as dangerous.[8] This is similar to the sense of oddness that Meg, Calvin, and Charles Wallace feel while looking at the gardens on Camazotz, in which perfectly manicured space represents disconnection from the environment and between human beings, and is one of the many different ways that IT and the Prime Coordinator exercise control over Camazotz.

In contrast to *A Wrinkle in Time*, however, L'Engle never really resolves the emerging discomfort and disconnection Vicky and Mrs Austin begin to feel about Riverside Park in *The Young Unicorns*. Perhaps L'Engle didn't feel such a resolution to be important. On the other hand, she may have left this issue open-ended to highlight for her readers that during this novel, the threat of the Micro-Ray as wielded by Hyde and Grandcourt is only partially diminished by capturing the two men. The Alphabat gang is not dissolved, and L'Engle provides no closure for the gang's addiction to the Micro-Ray. The gang members are likely to still try to find a way to satisfy their addiction, even without access to the laser technology. They may revert back to drug use, for instance (L'Engle, 1968: 133). There is no evidence that the Alphabats will resume use of their own given names rather than letters to identify themselves, leaving them disconnected from each other and from other people. This continued isolation from others might be symbolized in L'Engle's failure to address and resolve the way the presence of the Alphabats in Riverside Park has made this natural space a place of disconnection for others.

1.3 Internal, Psychological Integration with the Environment

Thus, by example and by counterexample L'Engle establishes the importance, in both *A Wrinkle in Time* and *The Young Unicorns*, of differentiating from others in order to

[8] This fear coincides with research evidence that New York City in the 1960s, at the time L'Engle was writing *The Young Unicorns*, was seen by residents as increasingly dangerous. Not only were people afraid to go out after dark, they were also afraid of public spaces, including urban parks, citing the risk of becoming a victim of violence (Rotella, 1998: 214-37).

establish healthy relationships with them. In her novels, acknowledging our own and others' individuality is an important part of building and maintaining the relationships between humans and the nonhuman. It provides us with enough psychological distance from each other to recognize both the unique nature of others' experiences and the connections between others and ourselves, as has been discussed throughout this chapter in the context of differentiation and integration. Considering those relationships allows us to see the ways in which we are integrated into our world, both physically and psychologically. L'Engle illustrates what differentiation and integration look like first in her fantasy novel, *A Wrinkle in Time*, and then explores how similar scenarios might play out in her realistic *The Young Unicorns*. She lays out examples and counterexamples demonstrating the importance of the human integration with the wider, nonhuman environment and what could be represented by a disintegration of that relationship, as explored in the connection between humans and localized green spaces such as the garden or the park. L'Engle further establishes the importance of this aspect of human and nonhuman interconnectedness in both novels by depicting the relationships between the human and the nonhuman within specific individuals. In other words, she illustrates how a single character might epitomize that connection within him- or herself. In *A Wrinkle in Time*, L'Engle illustrates this through Mrs Whatsit, and in *The Young Unicorns*, through Mr Theo.

1.3.1 Mrs Whatsit

As was mentioned above, *A Wrinkle in Time* contains three unusual characters, Mrs Whatsit, Mrs Who, and Mrs Which, at least one of whom readers eventually learn is a retired celestial star. L'Engle scholars have described them as angelic messengers (Patterson, 1983). Their role in the novel is primarily to help Meg, Calvin, and Charles Wallace travel throughout the universe to rescue Mr Murry and, eventually, Charles Wallace himself. Of the three, L'Engle uses Mrs Whatsit, who is the character specifically described as a former star (L'Engle, 1962: 85), to illustrate ways in which L'Engle views the internal (human, psychological) and external (nonhuman, natural) environments as intricately linked. This is accomplished through exploring how L'Engle's movement between the human, organic nonhuman, and inorganic nonhuman is encapsulated in one entity – Mrs Whatsit herself. Throughout the novel, she variously presents as a human being, a star, and a centaur, something in between human and animal.

Mrs Whatsit as a star falls onto the inorganic-nonhuman pole of the human-nonhuman relationship continuum. She is an example of what might be associated with "emphasiz[ing] the interconnection between organic and inorganic matter and encourag[ing] readers to rethink the nature of being" (Jaques, 2015: 146) because, as a star, she is something completely other than the children, in spite of her apparent resemblance to a person. At the same time, knowing that as a star she was able to make choices and distinguish between what L'Engle calls good and evil (1962: 81) implies that in L'Engle's universe the inorganic can be sentient and have a mind, an essence, or what L'Engle might call a soul. This attaches Mrs Whatsit firmly to the ecopsychological idea that psyche (soul or spirit) is embedded in the nonhuman as well as the human and resonates well with the concept that the world, the planet itself, has a soul (spirit, psyche, consciousness), which is embraced in ecopsychology (Hillman, 1982). Further evidence of the presence of "psyche," mind or soul, in the inorganic as represented by Mrs Whatsit's "star-hood" is her ability to reembody herself as organic, living things. Materially, Mrs Whatsit is able to take on multiple forms. This ability could be read as connected to the links between all organic and inorganic forms. Indeed, L'Engle acknowledges the chemical, elemental connection between humans and stars in one of her many nonfiction works. She explains that, as she watched her husband become weaker and weaker before he died, she recognized that he was "made of the same stuff as galaxies and stars" (L'Engle, 1988: 219). This harmonizes with the ecopsychological view that humans share much with the natural world. This sharing is a significant reason that ecopsychology and ecotherapy emphasize the human need and ability to create meaningful physical, emotional, and psychological connections with the environment. L'Engle's approach to addressing the human similarity with stars reminds readers that these connections could expand beyond Earth. The elements which compose a star, hydrogen and helium, are found or used naturally on Earth as well. Organic matter contains a significant portion of hydrogen, while helium is present in trace amounts in Earth's atmosphere. That humans share hydrogen as a significant element with stars suggests that Mrs Whatsit's ability to transform into organic forms is in part a result of the links between humans and their surroundings.

Thus, despite being a star, Mrs Whatsit spends most of her time in the novel embodied as a human being, demonstrating how the inorganic star is able to embrace the experience of the organic human, and suggests that humans must acknowledge that the only real separation we experience from other nonhuman objects is in our minds, and that separation should exist only for the purpose of recognition and valuing of connection through individuality (Fisher, 2013). Mrs Whatsit spans the range of relationships between

human and nonhuman and illustrates the interrelation between the human and the inorganic nonhuman in one being. That humans share a significant element with stars, hydrogen, reminds us that how we are each "embodied" may look different but draws from the same material sources of existence.

Finally, Mrs Whatsit takes on a beast-like shape during part of the novel, which brings together the human and the animal in one. L'Engle takes Mrs Whatsit through virtually the whole kinship sequence from human to inorganic nonhuman in this way. While Meg, Calvin, and Charles are resting with the Mrs W's on a planet called Uriel, before they continue their journey toward Camazotz, Mrs Whatsit changes from a human into "a marble-white body with powerful flanks, something like a horse but at the same time completely unlike a horse, for from the magnificently modeled back sprang a nobly formed torso, arms, and a head resembling a man's" (L'Engle, 1962: 57-58). While she maintains some aspects of a human form – head, torso, arms – the rest of her body takes on animal characteristics. Once again, Mrs Whatsit—she asks that the children continue to call her this, even though she "[o]utwardly […] was surely no longer a Mrs. Whatsit" (58)—illustrates the strength of the relationship between the human and the animal in her universe. Her transformation demonstrates that the animal is just as "noble" and "magnificent" as the human, and the two in communion seem to represent "a perfection of dignity and virtue, an exaltation of joy" (58). One of the less-used meanings of the word perfect comes from translations of the Greek word "teleios," which can mean variously "complete in all its parts," "finished," or "mature" (Strong's Greek, 2004-21: §5046). This suggests that L'Engle's description of Mrs Whatsit can be read as an example of the need for human awareness of and integration with his/her natural surroundings. Only this completely rounded individual can move toward L'Engle's idea of "perfection." This idea of wholeness as needing to encompass both the human and the animal nonhuman is representative of the efforts ecopsychologists are making to reconcile alienation between human and nature, between body and mind (Greenway, 2009). Mrs Whatsit, in all her manifestations, embodies the resolution of these splits.

Mrs Whatsit's ability to integrate all aspects of the natural world in herself permits her to serve as an example of another important facet of the bonding between humans and the environment, which is the prospect of finding nurturing or healing in our relationship with the other-than-human. Megan Delaney, ecotherapist and professor of professional counselling, describes watching adolescents relax and experience emotional release and healing while on outdoor excursions. She herself was barely into what is culturally

considered adulthood at the time, but affirms, “Even at my age and with my lack of training, it was impossible not to notice. I knew the natural world had some mystical power and influence over me, but I began to realize it also did for the teens as well” (2020: 7). Mrs Whatsit epitomizes this “mystical power and influence” on the young people in *A Wrinkle in Time*. She is, for example, constantly encouraging of Charles Wallace’s newness and difference. When she first appears in the story, visiting the Murrys’ house in the middle of the night, she mentions Charles Wallace’s extraordinary abilities in a roundabout way, exclaiming, “It’s lucky he has someone to understand him.” Mrs Murry responds, “But I’m afraid he doesn’t. […] None of us is quite up to Charles” (L’Engle, 1962: 16). All the human family members are really able to do is care for him and recognize that he’s something special. Apparently trying to understand what he is able to do and how he does it is beyond their capacity. However, the star/human/animal that is Mrs Whatsit, blended, in L’Engle’s words, into perfection, replies, “But at least you aren’t trying to squash him down. […] You’re letting him be himself” (16). As was discussed above, the Murrys recognize that Charles Wallace is new and different and that, like Mrs Whatsit, the essence of his being is in some respects different and more complex. Perhaps part of why Mrs Whatsit is able to see and understand Charles Wallace more clearly than his family can is that his difference in essence, his more sophisticated abilities, bring him closer to what she is. She might be able to encourage and help him because he may be closer to a wholly integrated relationship with the world around him than are his family members currently.

However, Mrs Whatsit understanding Charles Wallace better than his family doesn’t prevent her from nurturing and caring for Meg as well. Of the three children whom the Mrs W’s shuttle around the universe, Meg is the least self-confident and comes across as most disconnected from the world around her. “Just be glad you’re a kitten and not a monster like me,” she tells one of the family pets near the beginning of *A Wrinkle in Time* (1962: 3), illustrating her poor opinion of herself. This is generated in part by Meg’s sense that she does everything wrong and that she is physically unattractive, especially when she compares herself to her mother (L’Engle, 1962: 1-3, 10). Mrs Whatsit senses Meg’s inner turmoil, her doubts and fears and discouragement, and so her appearance as a raggedy, dumpy old woman in scraps and tatters could be a way for Mrs Whatsit to give Meg some solace. Mrs Whatsit’s own sense of self-confidence helps Meg become a little more easy in her mind, a little more reconciled to the body she inhabits, helps her feel a little less monstrous and a little more “Meg.” When the children find out that Mrs Whatsit was formerly a star, Meg comes to the realization that “The complete, the true Mrs. Whatsit,

[…] was beyond human understanding." She admits that even without understanding, the variety of things "Mrs. Whatsit *could* be" provides Meg with "both laughter and comfort" (L'Engle, 1962: 85-86). As has been suggested, the "complete, the true" Mrs Whatsit is a unified blend of different aspects of the environment, and the comfort Meg senses from Mrs Whatsit may be a result of the unusual woman's internal wholeness.

Importantly, the comfort Meg feels emanating from Mrs Whatsit plays a key part in resolving the mind control that IT exerts on Charles Wallace after the three children arrive on Camazotz. Meg is sent back to Camazotz alone to rescue Charles after Mr Murry tessers her and Calvin off the planet to help them avoid being sucked into IT. The Mrs W's accompany Meg to Camazotz this second time, just as they did the first. As she is preparing to walk back down into the city to Charles, the three women give her gifts. Significantly, Mrs Whatsit's gift is internal and intangible, and one of the few intangible things humans feel that they can give to others, including the nonhuman: "I give you my love, Meg. Never forget that. My love always" (L'Engle, 1962: 189). Amidst all her confusion and self-doubt, Meg is nurtured by Mrs Whatsit's love – the love of a star, the love of not-really-a centaur, the love of a strange old woman. She recognizes that it's "quite something, to be loved by someone like Mrs. Whatsit" (192). L'Engle takes an emotion that humans can accept and understand and implants it in the essence of a being who represents a synthesis of the human, the inorganic nonhuman, and the organic nonhuman. This directs reader attention to the importance L'Engle places on shared relationships between her human characters and their environment, and encourages awareness of those relationships throughout her novels. These relationships emerge in both her realistic and her fantasy novels in all three series explored in this thesis. Taken together, Mrs Whatsit's role in embodying so many different aspects of the environment in one character, and her function in caring for Meg and Charles Wallace, form a base for exploring the role of human-nature relationships as an important theme linking L'Engle's fantasy and her realistic writing.

1.3.2 Mr Theo

A corresponding figure to Mrs Whatsit may be found in Mr Theotocopoulos, retired organist of the Cathedral of St John the Divine in *The Young Unicorns*, affectionately known to his friends as "Mr Theo." Like Mrs Whatsit, Mr Theo is a somewhat quirky elderly person. He takes on the role of nurturer for Emily Gregory, as her piano teacher. While he is not a star or any other kind of celestial body, nor does he ever

transform into any animal form, there is still evidence that he embodies some of the relationship between the human and the nonhuman, just as Mrs Whatsit does. First, his name suggests a connection to the heavenly bodies of the stars, and he demonstrates the same caring qualities that Mrs Whatsit does, connecting him to the divine as well. Second, he is periodically described with animal-like characteristics which suggest a close relationship to the natural environment.

Mr Theo's name is particularly relevant in thinking about these connections. With no knowledge of his full given and surnames, a reader familiar with Greek will know that "theo" is one of the words used for "god." Immediately, this connects Mr Theo to the nonhuman, this time to the divine. L'Engle almost overemphasizes this through his whole name, Emmanuele Theotocopoulos. Emmanuele means "God with us" (Matthew 1:23, KJV) and Theotocopoulos means "god-bearer."[9] L'Engle's own Christian theology accepts the idea of a God in charge of the universe, and this should be acknowledged as an aspect of Mr Theo's name. However, from an ecopsychology point of view, Mr Theo's name may suggest to readers the concept of the divine within the human being, bringing the nature of divinity or the concept of spirit or spirituality into the realm of the physical environment. "God-with-us-God-bearer" suggests that an element of the nonhuman resides within each human being, and that this element represents capacities beyond what human beings might expect of themselves. From the perspective of ecopsychologists, this divine element within the human being might of course be called the "psyche," or "soul." It is representative of the importance of the connection between body and mind which encourages and enhances a recognition of shared experience with the outside world.

Mr Theo represents within himself a reversal of what prominent Harvard psychologist John Mack (1995) calls a "cutting off of consciousness from a connection with nature, and the spirit that most peoples throughout human history have experienced as inherent in it (and in us, of course, as part of nature)" (283). Mr Theo instead embodies the need ecopsychology sees for humans to experience, "in the deepest parts of our being, our connection with the Earth as sacred" (Mack, 1995: 283). This is important, Mack argues, because it appears that, especially in the so-called Western world, humans "have rejected the language and experience of the sacred, the divine, and the animation of nature" (1995: 284). If readers are able to see that everyday manifestation of a godlike presence in the character of Mr Theo, simply through his name, it might be possible to extend that view

[9] This derives from the medieval Greek title for the Virgin Mary, "theotokos" (Livingstone, 2014). It is also the surname of artist El Greco, whom L'Engle refers to periodically in her other novels (1965; 1976; 1980a), and whom she mentions in her later nonfiction as an artist she admired (1972).

point to other people and to the nonhuman around us as well. He might even be read as representative of what Mack describes as a need for humans to actively seek "experiences that profoundly alter our view of nature and reconnect us with the divinity in ourselves and in the environment" if we want to make a lasting positive impact on our ecosystem (Mack, 1995: 284). Mr Theo's name – the language that is used to identify him – represents the idea that the divine is both with us and within us, that we carry it constantly.

Mr Theo is also correlative to Mrs Whatsit in his ties to the animal world. L'Engle (1968) describes Mr Theo as "a small old man with a shaggy mane of yellowing hair. If he had been larger he would have looked startlingly like an aging lion. He let out a roar" (11). She refers to his hair as a mane at least three more times (13, 126, 137), in addition to calling it a "lion's mop of yellowed locks" (263); and describes him as roaring several more times (13, 14, 20, 126, 128). She twice describes the sound of the cathedral organ as Mr Theo plays it as a roar (273, 277). The lion is frequently called the king of beasts, and symbolizes majesty and power for many cultures. Mr Theo's animal-like characteristics link back to the idea of embodiment of the divine, and they consequently connect him both to the nobility Meg Murry sees in Mrs Whatsit when she transforms into a centaur-like creature and to Mrs Whatsit's star-ness, discussed above. Lion sculptures from India, including those found on pillars and thrones, have been linked to symbols of the sun (Seckel and Leisinger, 2004: 13), thus connecting Mr Theo's beast-like characteristics to the stars. In this way, Mr Theo encompasses all the same traits that Mrs Whatsit represents: human, organic nonhuman, and inorganic nonhuman. Describing Mr Theo as a lion enhances the concept of the divine within, as L'Engle was surely aware of the religious connotations of the king of beasts. In her tradition, for instance, Christ is called the "Lion of the tribe of Juda" (Revelation 5:5, KJV), while other religious traditions similarly describe holy characters as lions. For instance, Vishnu, in his incarnation as "Narasimha," is called a "man-lion" (Williams, 2008: 223); Buddha is called the Lion of the Shakyas (Ramble, 2013: 211); and both Mohammed's cousin and his uncle are called "the Lion of Allah" (Abbott, 1941: 268; Godbey, 1925: 261). Regarding Mr Theo in this light, as illustrative of L'Engle's ability to extract the evidence of a strong bond between the human and the nonhuman, intensifies the importance of considering how this kind of integration allows a character to nurture others.

In *The Young Unicorns*, Mr Theo is especially caring toward Emily Gregory. Like Mrs Whatsit, who recognizes and encourages the more complex abilities Charles Wallace has, Mr Theo reinforces Emily's highly developed abilities of having adjusted quickly to

her world after losing her sight, especially as a musical genius. Both are illustrated at the beginning of the novel during the piano lesson Mr Theo gives Emily in her home. When Emily arrives home late after school, both she and Mr Theo are in a towering ill humour, which leads them to shout at each other, and makes Emily less mindful than usual. When she leaves the practice room to hang up her coat, she runs "headlong into the doorjamb" and gives "a furious yell, echoed by her music-master" (L'Engle, 1968: 11-12). She is usually acutely aware of her surroundings and moves with the care and familiarity one might expect of a young woman who has adjusted to her environment without being able to see it (12). This misstep gives Mr Theo the opportunity to remind her of the need to take care: "And do not move without thinking where you are going," he shouts at her (12). Readers can see that his care for Emily leads him to have high expectations of her and to insist that she meet those expectations because he knows that she is capable of doing many things independently and well.

In connection with this, he reveals that he has high expectations for her music. As Dave tries to remonstrate with him for shouting at Emily, Mr Theo responds, "You are talking about a twelve-year-old girl, and I am talking about an artist. I will not let her do anything that will hurt her music" (L'Engle, 1968: 12). Mr Theo's recognition of Emily's genius makes him all the more forceful in encouraging her to improve her skills and really develop her artistry. She meets and exceeds these expectations because she knows that Mr Theo cares for her. Both find humour in this nurturing relationship as well as development of genius. As Emily begins to play her assigned piece, a Bach G minor fugue, Mr Theo explodes, "And what in the name of all I treasure is *that*?" Emily impertinently replies, "You told me last week that I was to learn that fugue backwards and forwards. That's backwards" (L'Engle, 1968: 13). Mr Theo rejoices in her gift and her unexpected choice to rethink how she can use that gift, hugging her and encouraging her. Emily thrives on the discipline Mr Theo offers her through his teaching. This discipline reflects the divinity within, as it symbolizes the strict regulatory systems that keep body, mind, and psyche functioning in the best order. It might represent what John Mack (1995) means when he argues that in order to act as a result of recognizing the divine within, humans must engage in practices that are "powerful enough to shift the ground of our being" (284). Mr Theo's strict musical discipline and forceful expectation that Emily maintain both her musical and her everyday abilities at the highest levels illustrate ways that this movement into a different understanding of ourselves and our relationship to the world can happen.

Importantly, Mr Theo's care for Emily can be tender and, like Mrs Whatsit, deeply perceptive, where perception goes beyond sight and involves "the concerted activity of *all* the body's senses as they function and flourish together" (Abram, 1996: 59). Just before Emily begins to practice her music during her lesson, Mr Theo begins rubbing her hands and as he does so, asks her what is wrong. She refuses to tell him and he says, "I can feel it in your hands" (L'Engle, 1968: 13), reminiscent of Curdie's unique gift in George MacDonald's *The Princess and Curdie* (see general introduction for a more specific discussion of L'Engle's use of this in *The Young Unicorns*). It is unclear whether he simply feels tension in her hands, or whether he can truly sense through touch her anxieties and fears, though he never predicts what it is that is bothering her. This nurturing ability to sense Emily's distress through touch provides further evidence of Mr Theo's role as an example of divinity inhering in what L'Engle constantly calls "creation" in her nonfiction and more philosophical writing. It helps readers recognize that L'Engle wants characters like Mr Theo and Mrs Whatsit to demonstrate that divinity is personal, rather than a far-off, distant power that is inaccessible to mere mortals.

This interpretation of Mr Theo's gentler aspects evidences the importance of the physical, bodily experience of another's world as combined with the psychological. Ecopsychologists emphasize repeatedly that physical touch is vital to human engagement with their surroundings and to building transformative relationships with others. For instance, Joanna Macy (1995) argues that humans feel the pain of others, both human and nonhuman, because of "*interconnectedness with life and all other beings*," a "living web out of which our individual, separate existences have risen, and in which we are interwoven." She explains that, "Our lives extend beyond our skins, in radical interdependence with the rest of the world." Skin is the means whereby most living organisms actively participate in the experiences of others (253). Mr Theo's nurturing aspects, both the tender and the forceful, are only possible because his sense of touch takes him beyond the skin of his fingertips and to the world Emily inhabits both physically and in her mind. It suggests that this immanence of divinity in the world, in human beings, in the other-than-human – inorganic as well as organic – must involve a bridging of the mind-body split in order to function in a way that brings aspects of an ecosystem, or in L'Engle's case, a universe, into relationship with each other. Mr Theo not only represents "God within us," but also represents, through his ability to feel Emily's psychological being by physical touch, that L'Engle may be suggesting divinity must be a whole, a "perfect," integration of both the physical and the psychological.

1.4 Perception and Relationships with the Other[10]

Through Mrs Whatsit and Mr Theo, L'Engle illustrates the individual embodiment of an integrated relationship with the natural environment, encompassing the entire continuum ranging from human to nonhuman inorganic. She appears to go beyond Marek Oziewicz's proposition that she is showing how "any being's consciousness can expand to embrace holistically […] more 'bands' and thus become able to communicate with more life forms, even those forms of consciousness which represent the radical other" (2006: 228). She suggests not merely communication between "life forms" across planetary and cosmological boundaries, but that the significant differences a character has from others of their own species allow that character to respond more deeply to the non-living environment. This enables active engagement with what ecopsychologists call the *anima mundi*, or psyche of the planet (Roszak, 1995: 16). L'Engle uses loss or lack of sight in characters of both novels to explore the possibilities for developing deep and synergistic relationships with both their immediate and more extended surroundings. Her emphasis on loss of sight as instrumental in deepening interconnection shifts attention to the inhabitants of a planet called Ixchel in *A Wrinkle in Time*. L'Engle is able to explore the relationships between the "beasts" of Ixchel and the rest of the universe in new ways because she is not constrained by the human limitation of sight. She is then able to turn to her realistic novel and examine what relationships between a human and her environment might look like after losing sight, focusing on Emily Gregory. In both novels, L'Engle implies that the shared experience of blindness between the beasts and Emily Gregory is a strength whereby these characters are empowered with understanding and knowledge of their ecosystems that other characters lack. As part of what differentiates them from others, it is a source of their union with their ecosystems.

[10] L'Engle's approach to writing about blind individuals in *A Wrinkle in Time* (1962) and *The Young Unicorns* (1968) is considered problematic representation of disability in 21st-century scholarship. Specifically, L'Engle falls into stereotyping which claims that the lack or loss of one sense, such as sight in these novels, is compensated for by an enhancement of other senses, such as the Ixchelians' ability to kythe with other creatures throughout the universe in *A Wrinkle in Time*, or Emily Gregory being portrayed as having an increased sense of hearing, spatial memory, and direction in *The Young Unicorns*. Jessica Holmes (2017) points to this stereotyping as problematic particularly because scientific evaluation has indicated that cases of sensory compensation are usually limited to cases where a sense was not present in infancy, rather than later in a person's life (180-81). Such a narrative, Deleasa Randall-Griffiths and Daniel O'Rourke (2019) explain, in which something unusual occurs which allows an individual to "overcome" their disability "can also create unrealistic expectations for anyone […] with disabilities" (177). As a result, attention remains focused on these unrealistic expectations placed on disabled individuals rather than on the need for a society to actively make changes and accommodations.

1.4.1 Perception on Ixchel

Ixchel is the planet Meg, Calvin, and Mr Murry temporarily go to after Charles Wallace has been absorbed by IT on Camazotz. Mr Murry is simply trying to get Meg and Calvin off Camazotz before IT psychologically absorbs all of them, and takes them to Ixchel accidentally, just as he arrived on Camazotz completely by accident. On Ixchel, the dominant life forms have no eyes. L'Engle constructs this part of the novel so that Meg's perception is limited by her ability to see. She cannot imagine being able to perceive other objects or beings without the specific sense of sight. As a result, she is portrayed as limited in her ability to relate to the world around her. Contrastingly, while the "beasts" on Ixchel cannot see, they know about and can communicate with other planets and creatures outside of their own planet. By organizing Ixchel in this manner, L'Engle suggests the importance of maintaining and understanding a place in the world. She intimates that the specific set of skills necessary to create or develop a relationship with one's home environment is not contingent on any one physical sense. L'Engle's choice of sight as the missing sense on Ixchel encourages both her human characters and her readers to explore how being part of one's ecology may instead be experienced, not only through other physical senses but through highly evolved emotional, psychological, and possibly spiritual senses and capabilities (Oziewicz, 2006). With the development of these other kinds of senses, it becomes easier to see how L'Engle could envision a universe in which inhabitants could communicate across boundaries of time and space. Thus, she hints at a belief that the environment is not limited to an immediate location, but spreads out beyond the boundaries of a single planet. It may even encompass a universe, entailing cosmology rather than the bounds of one planet's ecology.

This is demonstrated in part when Meg asks the beasts on Ixchel, "Why is it so dark in here?" (L'Engle, 1962: 169). The Ixchelian Meg calls "Aunt Beast" is confused and unable to understand what light and dark are, or what it means to see (169). L'Engle implies here that the ideas of light and dark are irrelevant to a person's perception of her surroundings. Certainly it is obvious that light and dark can have no function for a person who cannot see, and the words themselves are meaningless if that person has never been able to see. Perception instead connotes attention to a thing, or understanding or awareness and insight. None of these things require physical sight, but rather can be gained through other physical senses as well as through psychological and emotional experiences (Sewall, 1999: 58). Ixchel's inhabitants appear to draw on a blend of these experiences, highlighting the need for body and mind to function well together, rather than emphasizing either over

the other. For example, Ixchelians can feel when it is time to sleep and wake because they are extremely sensitive to the temperature variations on the planet (L'Engle, 1962: 172). Embodied experience is therefore still important to perception on Ixchel, although the human visitors have difficulty recognizing this without being able to describe "sight."

Aunt Beast explains to Meg that the beasts "know stars, that we know their music and the movements of their dance far better than beings like you […] We do not understand what this means, *to see*" (169-70). In addition to using other senses as well as emotional and psychological abilities to understand their own environment on Ixchel, the beasts can perceive other beings in their universe. The inhabitants of Ixchel could be read as sharing in the common psyche, the "ecological unconscious," which ecopsychologists attribute to whole ecosystems (Roszak, 2001: 320-21). Sharing this allows the beasts to connect with other entities that clearly participate in some kind of mental or psychological communication with them. This means that the beasts not only know that the stars exist, but that the stars have a way of expressing their identity and being that can be shared across time and space.

Consequently, Meg's inability to explain sight is challenged as something that affects her ability to understand that non-humans have identity and being. "'We do not know what things *look* like, as you say,' the beast said. 'We know what things *are* like. It must be a very limiting thing, this seeing'" (L'Engle, 1962: 170). Thinking about "are" and "being" together, as forms of the word "to be," emphasizes the way in which phenomenological "Being" is shared between the beasts on Ixchel and other entities in that universe. Aunt Beast could just as easily have said "We know what things *are*," echoing phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty's observation that our efforts to name and describe things are really efforts to understand the very nature of the things themselves (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 4). This draws attention to the point that, because each thing emerges from the same source of "Being," it shares characteristics and understanding with every other thing that stems from "Being."[11] Understanding happens at a level which engages body, mind, and spirit in such a way that the ability to "see" becomes unimportant. As this example demonstrates, for L'Engle the capacity for lived and felt experience is shared by nonhuman entities. This therefore demonstrates the idea that mind exists in the nonhuman, linking the human and nonhuman psyches and experiences to each other, as well as to the ecosystem as a whole, as Fisher would say (2013: 12). It demonstrates how a

[11] This idea of "Being" as a source of identity and understanding others draws attention back to Charles Wallace's new "essence," suggesting that Charles Wallace is able to consciously tap into the source of "Being" implied by the unique communicative abilities of the Beasts on Ixchel.

mind could be seen to exist in inorganic parts of the universe, if the beasts on Ixchel demonstrate how Being is shared with the stars. This reminds readers of Mrs Whatsit as a star who is capable of thinking, making choices, and demonstrating emotion for others.

1.4.2 Perception on Earth

Correspondingly, Emily Gregory's enhanced sensory capacities demonstrate how L'Engle might see the beasts of Ixchel's abilities as emerging in more realistic settings. L'Engle illustrates this with many different examples. Some of these include Emily's ability to sense emotion from other characters (L'Engle, 1968: 61) or to respond to silent actions, such as a shrug or a shiver, as if she has seen them (50). Moreover, she has tuned her senses of hearing and touch carefully, as might be expected. She can gauge distances (227), hear voices more clearly (229), and has learned to read people by feeling their hands (62, 146-47), a skill which yet again echoes George MacDonald's Curdie.[12] What is most important about Emily's highly developed abilities is that she has drawn her strengthened physical senses together to help her develop an incredibly good memory. Like the beasts' innate psychological gifts, Emily mentions that this memory was available to her in part before she lost her vision: "I hated to have to look something up in the music after I'd memorized it. I used to make my fingers remember for me, when my mind had forgotten," she tells Vicky. "I think it's called kinesthetic memory or something. Anyhow, I always had it, you see" (51). Emily has learned some routes very well already (243), but what is most important with regard to the events in *The Young Unicorns* is that she has honed her relationship with the world around her. This parallels how the inhabitants of Ixchel reach out through the psyche and communicate with other parts of the universe. Within the limits of what is possible on Earth in a more realistic setting, Emily has developed her other senses and her kinaesthetic memory to a point where she can teach her memory a specific route after just one journey. This is crucial in the novel because it allows Emily to rescue herself, Dave, and Rob at the end of the story.

The final events of the novel surround Grandcourt and Dr Hyde having Rob Austin kidnapped. Dave is taken shortly afterward, and Emily becomes collateral damage when she and Vicky are trying to find Rob and Dave. While the Alphabats lead Dave and Emily toward Grandcourt and Hyde's underground meeting place, Emily remains, "despite her fear, aware enough during the trip through the tunnel both to listen and to smell, and to

[12] Again, see thesis introduction

command every muscle in her body to remember the circuitous route" (L'Engle, 1968: 259). As would be expected of a young woman who has been adjusting to loss of sight, this demonstrates how Emily has honed her other physical senses and trained her awareness of alternate sensory input. This demonstrates a more advanced way of engaging with her environment, and suggests that she is in tune with it in ways that correlate to Charles Wallace's ability to read minds and sense experiences others have had without actually being told or being present.

Emily's concentrated abilities in these areas seem to move her along the continuum from human-human relationships toward developing more meaningful human-nonhuman relationships. One difference for Emily is that she has not been blind from birth, but still can imagine things she used to see – L'Engle is punning a little on the idea of the mind's eye. As a result of this remaining ability, part of the sensory memory she creates is to be able to extract "Dave's words out of her subconscious" (Dave was describing the tunnels to her as they walked, but she let her mind absorb the words and focused instead on smell and hearing). Thus, L'Engle says, "into her mind's eye flashed a reasonably accurate picture of the unused subway station" (259). This illustrates that L'Engle extrapolates from the concept that the mind has sensory abilities which are deeply embedded and which expand the human capacity to relate to the world around them. This parallels Charles Wallace's enhanced mental and psychological abilities in *A Wrinkle in Time* and shows how L'Engle illustrates what such capacities might look like in a realistic setting. Theoretically, any human might be able to train the other senses and the mind to focus on how to develop deeper relationships to their environment, just as Emily has done. In fact, developing the ability to focus and pay attention in the way Emily does is seen by ecopsychologists as essential to learning to understand and experience one's ecosystem (Sewall, 1999: 97-99). In this case, Emily's attuned ability to utilize her whole body and all her senses, both physical and emotional, gives the importance of embodied experience new and powerful meaning. It becomes a matter of safety not only for herself, but for Rob and Dave as well. Hyde and Grandcourt are desperate enough to steal Dr Austin's research on the Micro-Ray (L'Engle, 1968: 259) that they plan to use the device on the kidnapped Rob to try to force him into an addiction. With this threat and action, they intend to blackmail Dr Austin into giving up the Micro-Ray research (265-66). However, just as Hyde is about to direct the Micro-Ray into Rob's brain, Dave is able to unplug the floodlight being used in the subway station. The Bats, Hyde, and Grandcourt can't follow Emily, Dave, and Rob in the dark, leaving Emily free to use her kinaesthetic memory and her acute sensory ability to lead Dave and Rob back to the cathedral and to safety (275-78). Thus, L'Engle signals to

readers that working to consciously recognize and enhance not only their physical but their psychological relationships with their surroundings is essential to human well-being – which we have seen is a key tenet of ecopsychology.

1.5 Closing Thoughts

Throughout this chapter, we have seen examples and counterexamples illustrating the importance of recognizing and accepting others' differences as a crucial element of being able to form deep and lasting relationships with them. These others include the human and the nonhuman, the living as well as the non-living. Through these examples, we have seen how L'Engle's work can be read through a lens of some of the basic principles of ecopsychology, and how these principles of ecopsychology are present in both her fantastic fiction and her more realistic fiction. The kinship between humans and their environment becomes clearer and the relationship between L'Engle's fantasy and reality becomes easier to see through the corollaries between *A Wrinkle in Time* and *The Young Unicorns*. *A Wrinkle in Time* can be examined through interesting tropes relating to ecopsychology, specifically healthy differentiation from and consequent integration with one's human and nonhuman environment. The same ideas joining the human and the nonhuman emerge in *The Young Unicorns*, illustrating how L'Engle's fantastic ideas emerge in her realistic fiction. This demonstrates, for the reader, how the more realistic books are placed in the fantasy universe created in the Time and O'Keefe family novels. In this way, L'Engle invites readers to share experiences and develop relationships with characters and to imagine what these experiences and a kinship with the other might look like in the reader's own world. It is as if we are invited to explore our own differentiation and integration through these novels.

The advantage to this is that readers feel free to be more speculative about their own involvement with the world around them. By engaging themselves in L'Engle's universe with the Murry, O'Keefe, and Austin families, readers' own experiences are expanded and developed. Learning to immerse the self in the new experiences of imagined human characters opens the reader to a stronger and better awareness of the experiences of both the human and the other-than-human characters in the novels. By extension, engaging, through reading, with these new and often fantastic experiences prepares readers to recognize – and reimagine – their own shared experiences with both human and non-human others outside of the novels. Recognizing and acknowledging the kinship constructed through shared experience promotes an attitude of respect and encourages the

development of empathy, compassion, and understanding in humans for other humans as well as the nonhuman.

The recognition and development of human-human kinship and empathy is at one side of the human/nonhuman continuum L'Engle moves along in her fiction. This relationship, partially explored in this chapter by examining the close sibling bond between Meg and Charles Wallace Murry, will be examined in Chapter 2 by exploring *The Moon by Night* (1963) through Vicky Austin's understanding of people she learns about while on a family trip; and in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet* (1978), in which Charles Wallace Murry's new and complex ability to integrate with others is developed to such an extent that he can be sent into other people's minds and bodies – people who lived before he was born – and communicate with them. These two novels show an inverse relationship to *A Wrinkle in Time* and *The Young Unicorns*: the more realistic novel, *The Moon by Night*, was published first, and the ideas of empathy and kinship which are explored in it were further developed by L'Engle in the later fantasy novel, *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*. In addition to continuing the conversation about the importance of shared experience and interconnection, then, Chapter 2 carries forward the idea that L'Engle moves easily back and forth along the continuum between realistic and fantasy fiction.

Chapter 2: Human Interpersonal Relationships in *The Moon by Night* and *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*

2.0 Opening Thoughts

There is some discussion amongst ecopsychologists about the value of examining human interpersonal relationships in the context of a movement primarily focused on enhancing human well-being through recollecting our relationship with the natural world. On one hand, some have addressed the challenge that if ecopsychologists and ecotherapists spend time considering human-human relationships, there is a risk of becoming too anthropocentric, of valuing only the human at the expense of the nonhuman. On the other hand, Martin Jordan (2009) argues that not only are human social relationships important, they are basic to a sense of interconnection with other parts of one's environment. Additionally, research by ecotherapy professor and counsellor, Megan Delaney (2020), has demonstrated that human-human social connections are improved through interaction with the nonhuman environment. This promotes the concept that mutual benefit derives for the human and the nonhuman from people working to cultivate their interpersonal relationships and incorporating the natural environment in that effort. Madeleine L'Engle certainly felt that a proper understanding of interconnection, which she sometimes refers to as harmony across the universe, should include all things, or as she puts it in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*, "everything and everyone everywhere interreacting" (1978: 21). In this chapter, I argue that *The Moon by Night* (1963) and *A Swiftly Tilting Planet* (1978) can be read with a focus on how interpersonal relationships are developed and strengthened at the human-human end of ecopsychology's human-nature kinship continuum. I specifically focus on the family relationships of L'Engle's human characters and how this literal kinship must be strengthened and deepened, as well as called upon for support or comfort during difficult or unusual circumstances.

In both novels, L'Engle suggests that environmental features and events augment, correlate with, and/or symbolize the characters' developing understanding of their family members and other humans. Thus, L'Engle explores ways in which humans are infinitely capable of feeling, knowing, and experiencing each other's lives – developing deep empathy. I also note how she moves fluidly from a realistic setting in *The Moon by Night* to a fantastic setting in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*, in contrast to moving from the fantastic to the more mimetic, as was observed in Chapter 1 above. Readers can see how L'Engle

might be drawing from more realistic experiences of developing empathy and using the more fantastic novel to dramatically expand how humans might be imagined to relate to each other. Furthermore, I suggest that L'Engle is clearly pointing toward the concept that individuals can make significant changes in their immediate spheres by small, caring actions toward others, and these relationships impact on and are impacted by the planet itself.

I begin the chapter with brief plot summaries of both novels. I then discuss how L'Engle carries forward the idea of differentiating self from others in *The Moon by Night* and *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*. Following that, I examine how L'Engle impresses on both her characters and her readers that they will face opposition in trying to form or strengthen interpersonal bonds. Nevertheless, the opposition itself supports and strengthens the growth of these connections and attending empathy. Fourth, I explore how, while recognizing a need for people to be distinct individuals, L'Engle establishes the building of human-human relations as being impactful personally in Vicky Austin's experiences. This illustrates how one individual can become more compassionate to other humans. L'Engle then demonstrates the power that interpersonal relationships can have cosmically, through Charles Wallace Murry's experiences, in which his interactions with other humans prevent a nuclear war. Finally, I examine how L'Engle demonstrates the influence of close family ties on Vicky and Charles Wallace, and how these family relationships impact their ability to cultivate connections with more distant strangers in different times. Throughout, L'Engle draws reader attention to geological features and the elements as supporting and enabling Vicky and Charles Wallace's interpersonal relationships, as well as illustrating/symbolizing them. In *The Moon by Night*, L'Engle brings in several places, such as the ocean, mountains, and a canyon, as well as weather, in tandem with Vicky's growing interpersonal relationships. In comparison, L'Engle focuses on just one location in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*, called the star-watching rock. Nevertheless, she pulls in other environmental elements as Charles Wallace deepens the family-centric relationships that help him stop the nuclear war.

2.0.1 Novel Summaries

The Moon by Night, second in the Austin family series, bridges the gap between the Austin family's life in rural Connecticut and the year they spend in New York City by following the Austin family on a summer camping trip across North America. This trip is

based on a long camping trip L'Engle took with her own family just before they moved back to New York City after a decade living in rural Connecticut (Marcus, 2012: 166). For adolescents in both the real-life and the fictional families, the cross-continent journeys serve as a way to ease the transition between the familiar rural home and the unfamiliar or forgotten (in the case of L'Engle's own children) New York City. L'Engle makes this especially true for Vicky in the fictional trip, suggesting that this long journey is a growing space for her. L'Engle also makes this journey a framework for the events in *The Moon by Night*, and the vast scope of space and landscape—stretching across the North American continent—dovetails beautifully with the vast scope of time covered in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*. The real journey of L'Engle's own family also provided the seed for the Time series, as it was here that L'Engle first thought of the names Mrs Whatsit, Mrs Who, and Mrs Which, and decided that she eventually wanted to write a story about them (L'Engle, 1972: 217). Once again, we see not only the movement along the fantasy/reality continuum in L'Engle's work, we also see the deep-seated place that L'Engle's realistic Austin family series has in the fantastic universe she creates for the Time series and the O'Keefe family series.

In brief, this journey takes the Austins from Connecticut to Maine to Tennessee. They then visit family members in Oklahoma. They go to Palo Duro State Park in Texas, then to Mesa Verde, Colorado. From there, they travel to Laguna Beach, California, via several other national parks or sites of interest, including Zion National Park, the Grand Canyon, and Death Valley. After visiting their Uncle Douglas and his new family in California, including a quick trip into Mexico, the Austins travel to Victoria, B.C., Canada, and Banff National Park, Alberta, Canada. They visit Frank Slide in Frank, Alberta, and then return to the USA, having thus visited the three largest countries of the North American continent. They visit Glacier National Park and Yellowstone National Park, then visit a location L'Engle calls the Black Ram Mountains (fictional). They finally return to New England via Quebec, ending the trip at their Grandfather Eaton's home.

The novel opens with Vicky sitting on the beach at her Grandfather's house,[13] thinking about herself and the way her life is about to change as her family transitions to New York City. At 14, she seems at a stage in adolescence where she is both unsure of herself and focused primarily on herself, resisting relationships with her immediate family, the closest human others. At the same time she dreads forthcoming changes in her

[13] L'Engle never says, here or in any other Austin family novel, where exactly Grandfather Eaton lives, aside from "Seven Bay Island," which is fictional. From descriptions and the amount of time it takes the family to travel to his home from Connecticut, however, it is possible the island is located off the coast of Maine.

relationships. These include her own family's move and the changes in extended family, such as with her Uncle Douglas, who is getting married and moving from New England to California. In addition to these inner worries over self and others, the novel, published the year after the Cuban Missile Crisis, is permeated by the fear of nuclear destruction, a fear which is emphasized by Zachary Grey, a young man Vicky meets toward the beginning of her family's trip across North America. Zachary serves to illustrate antagonism towards the ideas of empathy and connection, encouraging Vicky to act and think as if other people, and her relationships with them, don't matter. Zach constantly tries to make Vicky feel that nuclear destruction is imminent and that it doesn't matter because life is meaningless and death is just an end, attitudes which may be a result of his nihilism and narcissism, as well as his rejection of the idea of life after death.

However, despite Zachary's efforts in the course of the novel, and the many other anxieties Vicky faces, she starts to learn how to build deeper empathy with other people. This leads her to a stronger sense of self-confidence and a growing recognition of how interpersonal relationships can help her resolve, at the very least, her own turmoil. She is placed in several situations in which she finds herself emotionally sharing the experiences of people from the past and acquiring more understanding of them as she sees that others have undergone difficult, often life-threatening, transitions in their lives. Each of these moments in the text also seems to be associated with a specific aspect of the environment (such as the ocean, mountains, or weather events) which appears to enhance Vicky's ability to develop empathy and stronger human relationships. Vicky also feels alternately distanced from and closer to her family. Two extreme geological events (a flood and an earthquake) become moments in which she realizes that moving into a more selfless relationship with her family enhances her understanding of others outside her family and helps her feel emotionally secure and grounded in her world. This realization is a function of Vicky's recognition that even the planet, which appears stable, can be unpredictable. The changing shape of the world around her is therefore psychologically maturing for Vicky as she comes to terms with the idea that a stable relationship does not preclude change. The novel ends where it began – Vicky is once again at the beach at her Grandfather's home. However, she has changed. She now has a better sense of self and her ability to feel for and with others has contributed toward her growing maturity.

In *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*, the third novel in the Time series, L'Engle moves the scope of the narrative from vastness in terms of space to vastness in terms of time. Charles Wallace Murry travels into times stretching from the formation of the planet all the way to

its potential post-apocalyptic destruction. In addition, L'Engle shifts the perspective in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet* from constant fear of a possible nuclear war, as was present in *The Moon by Night*, to a 24-hour time period in which Charles Wallace Murry must somehow *avert* nuclear war. Thus, even more intensely than in *The Moon by Night*, nuclear threat permeates this novel. As a result, the novel emphasizes human-human relationships as crucial to overcoming the existential threat posed to the natural environment.

The opening scenes occur during the Murry family's American Thanksgiving feast and the remainder of the events take place on the night of American Thanksgiving, a holiday which implies that family ties will be essential to the story. Mr Murry receives word that Mad Dog Branzillo, leader of a small (fictional) South American country called Vespugia, is planning to start a nuclear war. Meg's mother-in-law, Mrs O'Keefe, has joined the Murry family for Thanksgiving because she feels an unusual and inexplicable compulsion to be with them. As she listens to the Murry family discussing the nuclear threat, she looks into Charles Wallace's eyes and says, "I saw you with them big ancient eyes and the rune started to come back to me" (1978: 27). The verse known as "Patrick's Rune," taught to Mrs O'Keefe by her Irish grandmother, allegedly gives great power to the person who uses it.[14] Her grandmother foretold that she would be instrumental in passing it on to another user during a time of dire need (191-92). Despite its representation to the reader in the form of a poem, Mrs O'Keefe insists adamantly that it is "[n]ot a song," but a "rune. Patrick's Rune. To hold up against danger" (L'Engle, 1978: 24), invoking the definition of a rune as a "magic song" or a "charm," which may be derived, Terence H. Wilbur suggests, from the Finnish word "runo" (1957: 15).[15] Eleanor Hull (1910) points out, in her article on hymn-charms of Ireland, that some of the earliest spiritual hymns and songs found in the medieval Irish church are actually "composed as charms to ward off disease or plague, to protect the author or those who used the hymn from the perils of a journey, or in various ways to bring him good luck and freedom from danger" (418). Mrs O'Keefe seems to see Patrick's Rune in this light, and she gives it to Charles Wallace as if it were a magic object, laying a charge on him to use it to stop the nuclear war. Like the cross-continental journey in *The Moon by Night*, L'Engle uses Patrick's Rune as an organizing principle for *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*. It catalyses events and she structures the novel around the elements and environmental features listed in the verse. L'Engle states, in a letter written 21 September 1980, that Patrick's Rune is a "real rune and it precedes the

[14] See Appendix C for the full text of the rune as used by L'Engle throughout the novel.
[15] I will refer to it as the rune or Patrick's Rune throughout the chapter, and refer readers to L'Engle's usage in the novel.

beautiful hymn, Patrick's Breastplate, which you can find in the Episcopal Hymnal." She says that she received it from a friend in the Iona Community (an ecumenical community located in the West of Scotland) when she was considering how to structure the novel (Madeleine L'Engle papers, 1979U-1980E). The rune is in fact a single stanza from a much longer medieval Irish poem translated by James Clarence Mangan in the first half of the 19th century and called (by Mangan) "St. Patrick's Hymn Before Tara" (Mangan, 1897). The specific stanza in question is also included in the book *Lyra Celtica* (Sharp, 1896) as "The Rune of St. Patrick." It seems likely that what L'Engle received from her friend was a copy of the stanza as Sharp included it in the *Lyra Celtica*, since L'Engle never mentions knowledge of the longer poem from which the stanza comes.

Charles accepts the burden of the rune and Mrs O'Keefe's charge to use it against the nuclear threat. After consulting with Meg, with whom he has always had a special connection, Charles goes alone to a special family location called the star-watching rock to try to think through what he should do. While at the star-watching rock, Charles uses the rune to call for help and a unicorn, Gaudior, comes to him. Gaudior's specific talent as a unicorn is time travelling, and so he helps Charles Wallace time travel to try to find and change different "Might-Have-Beens." [16] The most important of these Might-Have-Beens is ensuring that the fiancée of a man called Bran Maddox travels to South America to marry him. As a result, Mad Dog Branzillo is never born and so never threatens to start a nuclear war. Instead, El Zarco, a different, peace-loving leader, takes power in Vespugia. He is able to put down the faction in his government which wishes to start a nuclear war, changing the immediate historical events with which Charles Wallace and his family are facing as the novel unfolds.

In order to do this, L'Engle dramatically expands the concept of interpersonal relationships that she explores for Vicky by having Charles Wallace go "Within" [17] five different characters from different time periods. Through a magical process which Gaudior says is made possible by the wind, Charles' psyche leaves his body and is sent inside another person's body for a time. It is assumed that Charles Wallace tacitly agreed to undergo this process when he accepted Mrs O'Keefe's charge to stop the nuclear war and

[16] This is L'Engle's term for multiple, parallel streams of events that could happen. Causing a different Might-Have-Been to happen alters the course of history. She always capitalizes and hyphenates the phrase throughout the novel, and she does not use quotation marks around it. I follow her usage throughout the chapter.

[17] L'Engle always capitalizes "Within" throughout this novel when referring specifically to Charles Wallace's entering other people. She does not put it in quotation marks or italicize it or draw attention to it in any way except through capitalizing it. I follow her usage throughout this chapter.

used Patrick's Rune to call for assistance. In addition to the vagueness about how going Within takes place, readers never know exactly what happens to Charles' own body while he is Within his hosts. The unicorn, Gaudior, simply says that "It will be taken care of" and that Charles will finally re-enter his body "If all goes well" (L'Engle, 1978: 54). At the very end of the novel, Meg, Mrs O'Keefe, and the twins find Charles lying on the star-watching rock, "eyes closed, white as death" (247). This hints that his body may have stayed at the rock while his psyche was Within.

The star-watching rock plays an important role in this "Within-ing" process. Like the different environmental features that help strengthen Vicky's empathy development, the star-watching rock is a central geological feature which Charles Wallace shares with the characters with whom he works to stop the war. Importantly to the function of interpersonal relationships in this chapter, almost all of Charles Wallace's hosts are, in some way, related to Mrs O'Keefe. This means that Charles received Patrick's rune from someone with whom he has an interpersonal relationship and that as he uses it with each of his "hosts" in order to change history, he and they share this link with each other. The star-watching rock is central to Charles and his hosts' ability to relate to each other because it is the location at which Charles Wallace is able to travel back in time to work with each of his hosts. Thus, the star-watching rock is a physical point of connection, as a place which Charles and each of his hosts love, and at which they have all spent time. It is also a metaphorical entity, symbolic of the mystical connections the young men share with each other. Charles Wallace's capacity to relate to these hosts is prepared for by his already-established relationship with his sister, Meg, and the strength of their ability to "kythe" with each other. Kything is an intense and deep form of telepathy L'Engle hints at, but doesn't name or define, in *A Wrinkle in Time*. It is most obvious to readers in his ability to read his sister's mind and experiences, as discussed in Chapter One.

Going Within greatly expands the concept of developing human-human empathy which L'Engle explores through Vicky in *The Moon by Night*, by making Charles' connection to these other people so deep that even readers sometimes forget they are not one individual. We only remember because Meg kythes with Charles and his hosts throughout the journey. L'Engle narrates Charles Wallace's experiences through the medium of Meg's presence in his mind via kything, so that his sister's relationship with him helps readers experience his relationship with others. Likewise, a connection to the environment is essential to ensuring that Charles Wallace and his hosts are strong enough together to find the most important Might-Have-Been and stop the war. In addition to the

star-watching rock as an important locus for connection, using Patrick's Rune emphasizes the importance of the natural environment. The rune invokes the power of the elements to help Charles and his hosts alter the past and change the future. Through the rune, Charles Wallace and each character with whom he works are enabled to bring about small changes in different Might-Have-Beens, but they also face great opposition. Just as Vicky must try to overcome Zachary's negativism in *The Moon by Night*, Charles faces creatures L'Engle calls the Ecthroi, Greek for "*the enemy*" (L'Engle, 1978: 48), who constantly try to stop him from making connections with his hosts. However, just as Vicky resists Zachary, so Charles, with the help of Gaudior, successfully defies the efforts of the Ecthroi. Through the close psychological relationships he has with Meg and which he forms with his hosts, combined with the power of the natural environment as invoked by the rune, Charles Wallace helps to bring about a change at the right moment in history and nuclear war is averted. In this way Charles Wallace ensures that the personal changes Vicky experiences, as she learns to develop deeper connections with and empathy for other humans, operate on a much wider scale in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*.

2.1 Othering the Self and Interconnection

Embedded in the range of human relationships in these two novels is the important concept of learning to share others' experiences through the shared environment. This idea, which L'Engle calls "interdependence" and defines in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet* as "everything and everyone everywhere interreacting" (1978: 21), is a key tenet of ecopsychology (Fisher, 2013). It is also an important tool for considering the different ways in which L'Engle's work can be illuminated through ecopsychological theory and practice. Given this emphasis on interconnection, it is particularly intriguing that, as in *A Wrinkle in Time* and *The Young Unicorns*, L'Engle further establishes the importance of differentiation as a necessary aspect of humans developing relationships with other humans in *The Moon by Night* and *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*. As was discussed in chapter 1 above, "differentiation" can be defined as "coming to perceive a demarcation between the self and the object world, coming to perceive the subject/self as distinct, or separate from, the object/other" (Chodorow, 1997:10). Further, Chodorow, an ecofeminist upon whose work ecopsychologists have drawn, says differentiation is "a particular way of being connected to others" (14, italics removed). As humans learn to identify the individuality of others in the world around them, they also come to understand how shared experiences create

connection. This is similar to how Meg Murry learned the importance of the concept of "equal" in *A Wrinkle in Time*.

These ideas derive from psychologist Murray Bowen's family systems theory on differentiation (as discussed on p. 48 above), which focuses on the separation of individuals from each other in a family setting while at the same time pointing to a "balance between the togetherness and individuality forces" (Titelman, 2014: 24). This balance, L'Engle believes, is best illustrated by the family unit representing togetherness, with individual family members being distinct from each other (see Chapter 1 above). This is echoed by ecopsychologists, who see the planet itself as a vast family system, in which humans and nonhumans alike make up the individuals who contribute to the whole. Thus, ecopsychologists extrapolate from these theories and definitions of differentiation that people are better able to form attachments to each other when they learn to comfortably develop their individuality – i.e. to differentiate from others – and that this is facilitated especially by connecting to the nonhuman ecosystem (Fisher, 2013: 95, 123). The function of this healthy differentiation from other humans, when deliberately chosen by a person, is also demonstrated by Corsano et al. (2006) to be increasingly recognized as positive for maturing adolescents. Specifically, these researchers noted that throughout adolescence, people begin to take more pleasure in differentiating and to "[recognize] the need for time on their own independent of the quality of their interpersonal relations" (350). It can, in fact, "contribute to the promotion and sustenance of adolescents' psychological well-being" (341). This hearkens back to the ways in which characters in *A Wrinkle in Time* and *The Young Unicorns* learned the importance of being both unique and united. In learning to enhance their connection to others both Vicky and Charles Wallace must differentiate themselves from others in some way. Each finds her/himself in a kind of marginal space before she/he begins the journey of entering others' lives and experiences. This space seems to transcend both space and time and provides a moment to pause and gather strength for the coming journey. For Charles Wallace, this space is the star-watching rock. And for Vicky, it is a beach on the Atlantic Ocean.

2.1.1 Vicky: Grandfather's Cove

At the beginning and end of *The Moon by Night*, Vicky Austin goes to the beach at a place her family calls Grandfather's Cove (it is attached to the land on which their Grandfather Eaton's home is located). Vicky sees the cove as calm and peaceful. It is here

that she is best able to retreat from the turmoil around her as well as the turmoil within her. She finds a place in her mind where she can evaluate how she relates to her family, other people, and the situation in which she finds herself as her family prepares for relocation. She justifies her trip down to the beach when she should have been helping with her Uncle Douglas's wedding preparations by saying, "I wanted to be alone and I wanted to think. […] I wanted to leave all the chatter and babble and be alone to sort things out" (L'Engle, 1963: 7-8). Much like L'Engle's own frequent journeys to her special spot by a brook near her family's summer home as described in her nonfiction *A Circle of Quiet* (1972: 4), Grandfather's Cove gives Vicky a place to rest her mind in the rhythm provided by waves and sky. Vicky finds the cove soothing because to her, it contains curves and softness. She describes the gentleness of the ocean as she "sat in the shallow water and let the cool waves ripple over me. The water flowed comfortingly about my body, the sun beat warmly down upon my head, and the sea stretched out and out until it seemed that sea and sky would never meet" (1963: 11). The words L'Engle uses here suggest peace. Specifically, one might imagine the sea rippling as very small, gently curving waves that leave the water largely undisturbed. Rippling waves may also be associated with a gentle rocking motion, almost like a cradle. Such motion calms both the body and the mind. Vicky's extreme psychological agitation, produced by the combination of Uncle Douglas getting married and the Austin family's upcoming move to New York, is soothed by the gentle movement of the water around her as she sits in the ocean.

She pinpoints the soothing nature of the circular motion of rippling by focusing on the curves around her at the beach in a way which suggests timelessness to readers. She explains,

> It was hard to tell where the horizon lay, because sea and sky seemed to blend together in one great curve. In Grandfather's cove the beach repeated the curve, the sea gulls circled overhead, the small waves that broke against my body were lacily scalloped, and there weren't any straight hard lines anywhere to be the shortest distance between two points. (1963: 11-12)

Here L'Engle uses words relating to circular shapes four times: "Curve" is used twice, along with "circled" and "scalloped." Circles are symbols "of unity, wholeness, and perfection" (Salgó, 2017: 83) in many cultures across time and space. The Jewish tradition, for instance, of ten "sefirot," or "divine principles which bring the world into being" and which "form a unity," can be represented, among other symbols, by "concentric circles" (Dein, 2002, 50). In many cultures, mandalas (circles with lines radiating outward from the centre) are symbols of "profound unity" as well as "the manifestation of the wholeness and

unity of the self" (Mansfield et al., 1981: 270). Mandalas are also seen as "symbol[s] of the cosmos" (Albert, 1995: 176). Circular shapes may additionally symbolize perfection (174). The unending shape also draws attention to a sense of being outside time. Thus, although Vicky feels fragmented inside herself and will continue to feel so for much of the novel, her interaction with the Atlantic Ocean at the very beginning of her journey brings the reader's attention to the concept that, whether she fully recognizes it or not, Vicky is already part of a whole. She may have been temporarily distanced from her family, but her interaction with the ocean underscores the importance of relationships and relating.

The unification already present in this curving image of sky, ocean, rock, and Vicky suggests that the girl's journey across the continent and back will help her to become more aware of her kinship with others both in human and environmental terms. Thus, she will become more fulfilled and psychologically rounded. In addition to the softness suggested by the constant curves around her, the circular shapes Vicky observes at the beach all seem to fit into and overlap with each other in smooth, unified ways. Grandfather's Cove initiates the process of teaching Vicky to move from seeing only herself in the mirror of others' experiences to understanding the experiences as a means through which she can gain a much deeper compassion for and insight into those others (Bishop, 1990). This foreshadows how, as she develops a less-divided self through her interactions with others, she is able to develop an ability to empathize deeply with others' experiences.

The cove's curves and the sense of unity they convey also suggest a fluidity about time that correlates to Charles Wallace's experience of moving through time in multiple directions in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*. This hints at a conception that L'Engle probes in some of her other writings. Outside of everyday, linear time, which L'Engle often calls "Chronos," there is a kind of time she likes to call "Kairos." Kairos, according to L'Engle, is a sort of unbounded realm in which many experiences from different times can overlap and be shared by those who are far apart in linear time because in Kairos individuals are focused on their connection to others rather than on themselves (L'Engle, 1972). Despite Vicky's confusion and frustration at the rapid changes going on in her life, the time on her rock in Grandfather's Cove begins to help shift her out of confusion and into harmony with her surroundings, into that time L'Engle calls Kairos. This helps her feel stability in the midst of uncertainty. When she has to leave the cove, she explains "I'd forgotten that there was any such thing as time, and almost why I'd come sliding down the steep path to the cove and climbed up on the sun-baked rock" (L'Engle, 1963: 7). The depth of her

immersion in her surroundings puts her in a place where she is aware only of the non-human environment, distancing her temporarily – and temporally – from her family. Eventually this differentiation allows her to gain more compassion for other humans and to recognize the necessity of her own relationships.

2.1.2 Othering at the Star-Watching Rock

L'Engle amplifies the need for a person to differentiate from other humans in order to develop stronger empathy in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*. Just as Vicky detached herself temporarily from her family at Grandfather's Cove, so does Charles Wallace by going alone to his family's star-watching rock. The need for timelessness and a liminal space is emphasized as Charles travels in time from the star-watching rock and is therefore removed temporally from his family in order to go Within others. This makes the rock an ideal landscape for the poignant experiences which expand Charles Wallace's empathy and create a new reality for the world. In this way, the star-watching rock forms a parallel with the geological features and events Vicky encounters in *The Moon by Night*, which are spaces where she finds herself learning greater empathy and building stronger connections with others.

After Thanksgiving dinner is over, Meg retreats to her attic bedroom to sleep, but Charles Wallace follows her there to talk for a few minutes (L'Engle, 1978: 32-37). Together, they try to decide how Charles might best be able to fulfil Mrs O'Keefe's charge to stop the nuclear attack (34). He suddenly asks, "Is it very cold out?" Meg tentatively responds, "I don't think so. Why?" Charles Wallace replies that he "[needs] to listen" and Meg says, "The best listening place is the star-watching rock" (36). It is a place far enough away from "civilization" that they can hear things one wouldn't normally think to listen for.

> But mostly it was quiet enough so that all they heard was the natural music of the seasons. Sometimes in the spring Meg thought she could hear the grass grow. In the autumn the tree toads sang back and forth as though they couldn't bear to let the joys of summer pass. In the winter when the temperature dropped swiftly she was sometimes startled by the sound of ice freezing with a sharp cracking noise like a rifle retort. (37)

It is significant that this place of listening for answers to world problems like nuclear disaster isn't a quiet place. It has many sounds, but they are not sounds created by humans. Instead, they are the sounds of the ecosystem. They provide a way for Charles Wallace and Meg to connect with each other and with others, a way that might not be available to

people who don't know how to hear the variety of sounds in the non-human-made environment. It is also an interesting and important paradox that Meg seems to be reminiscing about going out to this place alone. This parallels Vicky's sense that she needs to be alone at Grandfather's Cove and underscores the need for both Charles and Vicky to enter a liminal space in which boundaries of time and space blur. This need for temporary solitude and liminality highlights that there are multiple layers of reconnection. One of the layers seems to involve the need, or opportunity, to see oneself clearly. If Charles were to go out to the star-watching rock with another person or other people, perhaps it would be harder to hear the plants, the animals, or the water in their various moods, and we know from *A Wrinkle in Time* that Charles Wallace has the unique ability to hear the languages of the nonhuman. At the star-watching rock, maybe being integrated with one's surroundings means first learning how to be silent alone. Once Charles can relax into this kind of silence and differentiation, L'Engle hints, it becomes easier for him to take a step outward from the self to connect with the elements of creation composing a particular landscape, and then a further step outward to connect with other people and the things and ideas people have created. This passage therefore highlights some of the layers of interconnection that may be important to Charles Wallace's later ability to go Within his hosts and work with them to change history.

On this particular night, Meg anticipates that the star-watching rock would be even more quiet than usual because, L'Engle writes, it "was too late in the year for tree toads and locusts and crickets. They might hear a few tired leaves sighing wearily from their branches, or the swoosh of the tall grasses parting as a small nocturnal animal made its way through the night" (1978: 37), but otherwise, silence reigns. When Charles Wallace asks for his parents' permission to go out to the rock, his father says, "Can't you listen here?" Charles Wallace explains, "Too many distractions, too many people's thoughts in the way" (42), another reminder of Charles' special ability for nonverbal communication with other minds, as hinted at in *A Wrinkle in Time*. L'Engle suggests that with other people occupying the mental space Charles Wallace needs, he may not be able to get into a state of receptiveness. As a result he struggles to fulfil whatever task he needs to do in order to change reality.

This brings us back to the essential paradox of some aspects of ecopsychology that L'Engle anticipates: one must go alone into the "wilderness" in order to connect more easily with the environment and with other people when one returns. When Charles Wallace is allowed to walk out to the star-watching rock, Meg, through kything, follows

him in her mind's eye, seeing, hearing, and experiencing everything Charles Wallace sees, hears, and experiences. In this way, she shares both the solitude Charles is experiencing and remains connected to him at one of their mutual favourite outdoor spaces. L'Engle therefore demonstrates how the natural environment can give people a way to connect with each other across time and space through shared experience at and understanding of a specific place. Meg sees the star-watching rock both in her memory as she talks about it with her brother, and through Charles Wallace's eyes while she kythes with him.

Thus, Meg sees that when Charles arrives at the star-watching rock, "There was no moon, but starlight touched the winter grasses with silver" (L'Engle, 1978: 45). There is an interesting contrast of light and dark here. Readers are deliberately told that there is no moon, perhaps because the moon's light would overshadow the ability to see the stars that Charles Wallace needs to call to. Perhaps it is also because the moon, which is a brighter light than the stars, has a very different light from theirs. It can only give light through reflection, while the stars, like the sun, generate their own light from within. This generation of power from within might represent the need for characters to find ways to develop a strong and integrated identity by making a connection to self and others. This idea of the individuality of the stars and their power of connection links readers back to Mrs Whatsit in *A Wrinkle in Time,* and her unique role as a former star. It reminds us that stars have continually been important to Charles Wallace's new and different abilities to connect with others.

In addition to the contrast of light and dark illustrated by the stars' presence and the lack of a moon on this Thanksgiving night, L'Engle tells us that "The woods behind the rock were a dark shadow" (45). The "shadow wood" contrasts with the starlight. It provides a kind of barrier between the star-watching rock and the rest of the surroundings, highlighting the rock's liminality as well as emphasizing it as a focus of the novel. At one point, Gaudior (the unicorn who helps Charles Wallace time travel) bluntly states how important the star-watching rock and its surroundings are: "All I know is that there is something important to the future right here in this place where you watch stars" (57). The rock is a place of power, a place of connection not just between the rest of the universe and the Earth, but also between times.[18] As such, the star-watching rock is the feature of the landscape at which Charles Wallace will take on the identities of other characters and learn how shared experience can make enough difference to stop a nuclear war. He is enabled to

[18] L'Engle develops this idea concerning the star-watching rock in her final novel about the Murrys and O'Keefes, *An Acceptable Time* (1989). Again, the rock is a focal point of power and time travel, and L'Engle is very explicit about "lines of power" throughout that novel, suggesting a connection to the idea of ley lines.

call for help using Patrick's Rune, and Gaudior seems to appear from the stars – much like the three Mrs W's in *A Wrinkle in Time* – to help Charles Wallace go Within at the star-watching rock.

2.2 Human-Human Relationships

Through having these spaces in which they can remove themselves from others for a time, Vicky and Charles Wallace are both given opportunities to view their relationships with others from a different perspective. They are placed in a position which seems ideal for what some studies call "restoration," which focuses on the need to recover one's own reserves of "psychological, social, and physical resources" (Holloway et al., 2014: 143). Just as the ecopsychological kinship continuum starts with human interpersonal relations and moves toward relationships between humans and the nonhuman environment, human-to-human social relationships form the logical starting point on L'Engle's continuum of relationships. They provide a strong, familiar foundation for the relationships she shows in later novels, such as human to animal (Chapter 3 below) and human to geological element (Chapter 4 below). This invites potential ecopsychology readings of L'Engle's work as it embraces the importance of relating with all aspects of one's environment. For both Vicky and Charles, empathy is essential to how they learn to strengthen their interactions with others. The way L'Engle has drawn a connection between these young people and their surroundings is characteristic of the places in which restorative experiences most often occur, according to Holloway et al. (2014). They summarize restorative experiences as requiring a new or different setting; a large spatial and temporal canvas; something which intrigues participants; and a place that evokes a "sense of belonging" (144). Such a temporary removal from normal experience may bring greater understanding of and insight into others (152). L'Engle's own observation is, "Detachment and involvement: the artist must have both. The link between them is compassion" (1972: 50). Her phrasing mirrors the psychology of differentiation which ecopsychologists draw on: a human being must separate from others in order to connect most effectively with them. This is done by developing empathy and understanding through the medium of the natural environment.

2.2.1 Opposition to Interpersonal Relationships and Developing Empathy

L'Engle accentuates the importance of these interhuman social bonds by presenting both Vicky and Charles Wallace with opposition to the development of deep empathy for

other people. The opposition comes in the form of characters whose attitudes and/or actions epitomize the disconnections between humans and their ecosystems, between body and mind, and between reason and emotion. Ecopsychologists stress overcoming these splits in order for humans to revitalize their relationships with others and the world around them (Fisher, 2013). Recognizing the disconnection presented through this opposition allows both characters and readers to accept that relationships with others, both human and nonhuman, can positively impact human – and nonhuman – well-being. Vicky faces this opposition in the person of Zachary Grey, the young man she meets early in her family's camping trip. He isolates her emotionally from her family more than she already feels from the changes she is experiencing both within her family and within herself as an adolescent. He also belittles her when she tries to understand how she relates to others. Charles Wallace, on the other hand, must face the supernatural creatures L'Engle calls ecthroi. These creatures, which L'Engle describes as "darkness which was like an anti-unicorn, a flailing of negative wings and iron hoofs" (L'Engle 1978: 103), try to stop the magic that sends Charles Wallace Within his hosts. Experiencing this opposition understandably brings fear and distress to both Vicky and Charles, particularly because both Zachary and the ecthroi keep the threats of war and separation from others prominently in the view of Vicky and Charles. Yet, ironically, this constant reminder of danger draws both Vicky and Charles closer to other humans in these novels, helping them to develop deeper ways of relating to others.

2.2.2. Zachary as Opposition to Empathy and Interpersonal Relationships

Early in *The Moon by Night*, Vicky and her family camp in a state park in the mountains of Tennessee. It is here that she meets Zachary Grey. His entrance into the novel is foreshadowed by changes in weather and emotional atmosphere that leave Vicky feeling frightened. For instance, Vicky states, "As we drove into the park the wind began to whip at the trees, and dark clouds scudded across the sky" (L'Engle, 1963: 44). She repeats this sentiment a second time, almost verbatim, explaining, "The sky was full of low, black clouds, making it dark for this time of day. The wind was rising, whipping the trees so that the younger ones bent against its lash and the small branches tossed wildly" (44). This is reminiscent of the wild, stormy night which Meg is so afraid of at the beginning of *A Wrinkle in Time*. Just as that storm foreshadows the unusual events of that novel, so here, the turmoil in the weather foreshadows the emotional turmoil that Zachary will try to evoke in Vicky. It would be easy to assume that this is simply either a reference

to John Ruskin's concept of the pathetic fallacy (1856), in which human sensations are attributed to the nonhuman, or an example of Vicky emotionally responding to the weather. However, because L'Engle insists so much on the idea that all things everywhere are intimately connected with each other, she may be hinting to the reader that this is far more than foreshadowing Zachary's arrival. She might also be illustrating that the weather responds to Vicky's negative emotion and mirrors her psychological state, that it even feels her fear. Specifically, when Vicky talks about her emotion, she states that "for some reason I felt edgy and almost scared. I didn't quite know why" (L'Engle, 1963: 44). She says this after she first mentions the weather becoming a little stormy, but before she talks about the sky and clouds becoming much darker and describing the wind as "whipping" and being a "lash" against which tree limbs "tossed wildly." Vicky's description of her emotional state precedes the rising violence of the weather, suggesting that the weather is responding to her. Because L'Engle's realistic Austin family series is set in the same fantastic universe that she creates for her Time and O'Keefe family series, it is reasonable to consider that some of the fantasy is bleeding into the realism. This implies a strong connection between Vicky and the environment as well, illustrating the ecopsychological viewpoint that a person's relationships with others grow and deepen by recognizing connections to all aspects of the outside world, including the weather (Abram, 1996: 6-7). If the weather is responding to Vicky rather than vice versa, this also sets a precedent for events in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet* in which, as has been mentioned in the novel summaries above, use of Patrick's Rune has an effect on the weather and elements.

In either case, Vicky's sense of foreboding is heightened. After she and her family have a bottle thrown at them by a gang of boys who drive through the campgrounds, she is much more wary of Zach when he and his parents speed into the campsite next to the Austins. Because Vicky describes Zach's voice as "quite normal and friendly" (1963: 56), her earlier sense of anxiety at Zach's arrival and similarities to the gang seems misplaced. Nevertheless, she quickly begins to feel uneasy around him, and her fright and worry return when he teaches her a song that trivializes war and plays particularly on her fears about nuclear war. The song has a light, rollicking tune, and, though she laughs, she's deeply disturbed. She states "that it scared me stiff" (61), and the more she talks to Zachary, the more distressed she becomes. She describes him as both fascinating and frightening, conveying the image of a snake-like figure. In addition to treating war frivolously, Zach extols selfishness and self-centredness, setting in motion his attempts to drive Vicky into isolation from others just at a time when she will begin to try to understand those not like herself. "I suppose you're taught the golden rule," he mocks.

"Can't get along that way anymore, Vicky-O. That's outmoded" (1963: 63). Instead, he says, humans should focus on consumerism because the inevitability of nuclear war (in his mind) makes interpersonal relationships meaningless. According to ecopsychologists Allen Kanner and Mary Gomes (1995), this drive toward consumerism espoused by Zachary is one major factor contributing to the deterioration of both interpersonal and human-nonhuman connections. In combining the consumerism and focus on war with rejection of the biblical mandate to treat others as you would be treated – i.e. to be aware and alert to the needs and experiences of others and to give them compassionate understanding – L'Engle makes Zachary's position as antagonistic to empathy and connection clear from the beginning.

Zachary continues to intrude on Vicky's narrative throughout the novel, usually at moments when she is learning how to develop empathy with other characters. When she first meets him, it is at a moment when she feels vulnerable and afraid in the Tennessee campground. His later intrusions occur at other moments when she feels equally vulnerable. Intriguingly, it does not matter whether he is physically present or merely present in her memory, however. Some intrusions are of Zach's physical presence: he arrives at Mesa Verde, Colorado, at approximately the same time as the Austins. Then, when the Austins finally arrive in California and stop for an extended visit with Uncle Douglas and Aunt Elena, whose marriage occurred at the beginning of the novel, Zachary comes to visit and takes Vicky on a date. In both locations, he seems intent on keeping Vicky away from her family as much as possible. She continually has dark and frightening responses to him, which echo the interaction between her psyche and the weather just before she met him in Tennessee.

In one instance, while at Mesa Verde, where Vicky and her family are visiting the ruins of the Pueblo cliff dwellings, Zachary invites Vicky into a café for soft drinks. He begins to question her about why she thinks anyone should go on living, invoking a sort of nihilistic image of life as useless and pointless. The more she listens to him, the more depressed she feels, describing it as "being drawn down into a dark, deep hole" (1963: 121). In contrast to the dark and eerie-feeling weather at the campground in Tennessee, however, this hole seems to be human-made. It centres on Zachary and is exacerbated by ceiling fans, which Vicky says "seemed to suck me deeper and deeper into the hole" (121). Their spinning combines with the darkness of the room and with Zachary's negative attitudes to act as a hypnotic force which numbs Vicky psychologically. The image of a hole also parallels the potential for falling represented by the cliffs around Mesa Verde.

This numbing effect prefigures the paralyzing effect that the ecthroi ("enemies") have on Charles Wallace in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*. Vicky's sense of being pulled into something that numbs her emotionally emphasizes Zach's role as in opposition to her ability to build relationships and empathy with other humans in *The Moon by Night*. Zach's attitudes not only give the feeling of trying to pull Vicky away from her family and from other people, but even of distancing her from the nonhuman world, as his presence in the café appears to separate her from the outside world. Ecotherapist Megan Delaney has described this type of isolation as "a major contributor to suffering of people at both the personal and the cultural level" (2020: 54). Consequently, Vicky reacts to her feeling that Zachary is trying to close her off from the rest of the world precisely as ecopsychologists would recommend: she runs away from Zachary and towards other people (Delaney, 2020). Vicky perceives how Zachary's attitudes split her from others and she describes a desire to escape him. She wants to reconnect with any part of the world outside his divisiveness, to "run out into the blazing sunlight, run pelting down the dusty path to our campsite, to get hot and sweaty from the bright heat of the day, to be part of light and joy again" (L'Engle, 1963: 121). She wants to get away from the psychological "cliff" Zach seems intent on showing her. Instead of going near this "cliff," she wants to run into the centre of the mesa, where her family's campsite is, and feel safe, on firm ground, far away from the edge. She wants to be part of the interpersonal connections she is slowly learning to develop.

Furthermore, Zachary's presence makes it difficult for Vicky to express her growing feelings of compassion for others. While in California, Zachary takes Vicky to see a theatrical production of *Anne Frank*. When they go to sit beside the ocean after the play, Vicky tries to articulate the shock and hurt she felt while watching *Anne Frank*, but Zachary becomes verbally aggressive toward her. Instead of allowing her to process her feelings of compassion toward the Frank family, he pours out an abusive diatribe, focusing on the horrific things that happened in concentration camps. He calls Vicky a "little dope," swears at her, and shouts that cheating people and hurting people "makes about the best kind of sense there is" (L'Engle, 1963: 169-70). While it may be true that Vicky has not had similar experiences to Anne Frank, Zachary's attitude suggests that Vicky's lack of experience means she cannot learn empathy for someone so different from herself. Zachary's focus on the differences between Vicky and Anne seems intended to drive Vicky toward "hyperdifferentiation," or extreme splitting/separation from other people (Fisher, 2013: 139). In contrast to differentiation, which, as we have seen, allows people to strengthen their connections with others, the extreme split of hyperdifferentiation leaves people unable to connect at all. Zachary's attempt to drive Vicky away from her enlarging

sense of relationship to Anne Frank also illustrates how something like the Holocaust might happen in the first place—the stress Zach places on differences as divisive leads to such differences providing an excuse to cheat and hurt and abuse, and ultimately destroy, others. Thus, while Vicky and Zach seem to agree fundamentally in opposing the Nazi regime, the Holocaust, and the massive loss of life, the abusive behaviour Zach both demonstrates and advocates directly contradicts the importance of interpersonal relationships. Readers clearly see the depth and type of opposition Vicky faces throughout the novel as she tries to find that ideal distance between herself and others which will allow her to most fully develop empathy for them and, from that empathy, to develop a deeper connection to the world around her.

However, Zachary's physical presence is not the only form in which readers glimpse him as existing in opposition to Vicky's interpersonal relationships. Even when he is physically absent, he maintains a kind of mental or emotional presence for Vicky, which impacts her connection to others. As an illustration, when Vicky and her family are approaching Mesa Verde National Park, Vicky describes Zachary as "lurking in the corners of [her] mind" (L'Engle, 1963: 108). The landscape on the drive heightens the sense of fear and emphasizes the concepts of "lurking" and "corners," once again drawing attention to the ways in which L'Engle links emotional impact and the ecosystem. Vicky describes the road up to Mesa Verde as "a hairpin job" that has "sheer drops at the side going down into forever" (109). The word "lurking" implies that Vicky feels Zach is hiding around every corner, ready to jump out at her and frighten her with his talk about war and greed and the meaninglessness of life. Because the actual road she and her family are driving on has hairpin curves, the idea of Zachary possibly hiding around any corner is strengthened. The fear of falling over a cliff edge might also be representative of the emotional presence Zachary has for Vicky, as it gives a physical sense of what his attitudes do to her psychologically. His opposition pushes her away from her relationships with others and toward an emotional void and an overall sense of foreboding.

In addition to Vicky feeling as if Zachary may jump out at her at any moment, his psychological impact results in her feeling belittled and degraded by him even when he is not physically present. An example of this occurs much later in the story, not only adding to the opposition Zachary creates for Vicky, but making clear that this opposition runs throughout the novel. When the Austins are nearing the end of their camping trip, they pass through the town of Frank, Alberta, Canada. It was the site of a massive landslide in the early twentieth century, which buried about half the town and killed seventy inhabitants

(L'Engle, 1963: 208-09). Research indicates that "the primary cause of the Frank Slide was the unstable geological structure," a result of a fault and of freeze-thaw cycles during which already-existing cracks in the mountain widened. Coal-mining may have contributed, but was secondary to the already-existing geological changes in the mountain ("Learn," 2020). As her family learns about the disaster, Vicky immediately connects this event to the Frank family in *Anne Frank,* thus foretelling for the reader that the Frank Slide will lead Vicky to think about Zachary again. As a result, his past treatment of her will once again impede her ability to feel that she can relate to others. Vicky says that "it was as though Zachary were there standing by me and grinning because I was so dumb and so ignorant and I'd never even heard before of what had happened to the town called Frank and everybody in it" (L'Engle, 1963: 208). In her imagination, Zachary once again calls her names and abuses her for her lack of knowledge. That she could imagine Zachary mocking her for something he likely doesn't even know about himself illustrates the strength of his psychological hold on her. This makes her feel withdrawn and apart from others, and she is uncommunicative for some time after her family leaves the town of Frank. While she says that her family mostly ignores her silences as evidence of adolescent moodiness, it's also important to recognize the pattern of splitting from other people which both Zachary's presence and absence have created for Vicky throughout the novel.

Although Vicky is certainly demonstrating emotional and psychological vulnerability throughout the novel, due to the many changes she is experiencing – such as her uncle's marriage and her family's upcoming move to New York City – L'Engle uses Zachary to impact Vicky. He purposefully pursues her after he meets her, and whenever they are together after the initial encounter in Tennessee, he brings up frightening and overwhelming subjects, such as nuclear war or the Holocaust. He certainly tries to pull her away from her family and likes to advocate selfishness. Some of Zach's emotional hold over Vicky may be a product of her own susceptibility because of her age, her vulnerability, and her as-yet-underdeveloped knowledge about many things. However, L'Engle implies throughout the novel that much of Zach's negative influence is used intentionally to create discomfort for Vicky. This discomfort causes Vicky to re-examine her attitudes about "togetherness." Thus, L'Engle uses Zach as a tool to highlight, for her readers, the significance of interpersonal connections, which is accentuated through L'Engle's attention to the different ways in which those connections can be diminished. She implies that the human-human side of the kinship continuum, across which her novels move, is meaningful because these interpersonal connections also prepare humans to learn how to connect with their nonhuman ecosystems. L'Engle is particularly adept at setting

this up for her readers because she actively works to show how the human-human connections are built, strengthened, and understood in connection with the environment. Additionally, she creates the opposition to these relationships in a way that demonstrates the negative impact of pulling people away from the natural world as they try to grow closer to other humans.

2.2.3. Ecthroi

In *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*, L'Engle amplifies the opposition to interpersonal relationships which she illustrated through Zachary by having the creatures she calls "Ecthroi" constantly try to attack Charles Wallace as he is being sent Within. Ecthroi is Greek for enemies (L'Engle, 1978: 48), and Gaudior, the unicorn who comes to help Charles, immediately describes these creatures as splitting things from each other. He explains that ecthroi are the creatures "who distorted the harmony" of the universe (48), a reference to the concepts of Satan, devils, and/or fallen angels in many spiritual traditions. L'Engle seems to have taken Zachary, described by L'Engle scholar Donald Hettinga (1993) as "a kind of demonic figure" (59), and expanded his dark, hypnotic characteristics into something supernatural, illustrating how opposition to relationships might be manifested when converted from her realistic novels into her fantastic novels.[19] Just as Vicky faced hostility from Zach, Charles and his hosts face severe opposition from the ecthroi, whose main purpose is to keep him and his hosts from changing any Might-Have-Beens which might stop the nuclear war that threatens Earth.

L'Engle provides several examples of how the Ecthroi attempt to stop Charles Wallace. As with Zachary Grey, their opposition has both physical and psychological aspects. However, in all cases where the ecthroi oppose Charles Wallace, the physical and psychological impacts are combined, while contrastingly, we saw that some of the challenges Vicky faced from Zach occurred when he was not physically present. Despite this difference, the resistance of the Ecthroi also resembles Zachary's opposition to Vicky in that it is connected in some way to the environment, although it is most often mediated through representations of environmental destruction. In this way, the ecthroi epitomize people like Zachary Grey, who reject emotion and connection in favour of that which can

[19] The ecthroi were introduced in an earlier Time novel, *A Wind in the Door* (1973), which was published five years before *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*. However, *A Wind in the Door* was written ten years after *The Moon by Night* (1963). Zach's character was developed and established in the realistic Austin family series significantly before ecthroi were ever introduced into L'Engle's fantastic Time series.

be objectively proven or materially/tangibly bought and sold. David Kidner describes such hyper-rationality and consumerism as "agents of […] destruction" which seek to eradicate "the fabric of the world" and to separate "mind and nature, human and animal" by way of "the occlusion of what unites them" (2001: 56). Such an occlusion between the human mind and the natural world not only destroys the harmony L'Engle extols but, extrapolating from ecocritic Susan Rowland (2012), such a barrier makes it so that humans don't even notice that there has been any destruction of their relationships with each other or with the world around them (139). The Ecthroi seek to keep the novel's characters from recognizing or acknowledging that anything is wrong, thereby preventing positive change.

L'Engle represents the presence and the actions of the ecthroi in different ways throughout *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*. The most frequent and consistent means is describing a smell which characters notice at odd times. This smell alerts the reader that the Ecthroi have been doing something to cause damage, although it's hard to determine if many of the characters (aside from Gaudior, Charles Wallace, and Meg) recognize it as a specific sign of the ecthroi. L'Engle (1978) describes it in multiple ways, first establishing it as "abominable" (66); a "horrible stench" (103); a "stench of death and decay" (66) which is carried on the wind that accompanies the ecthroi; and then calling it a "nauseous odor" (67). She also coins the phrase "stenching wind" (144). These descriptions of the smell accompanying the ecthroi are signals for Charles Wallace and Gaudior, which Meg also picks up through her kythe with Charles. They are associated with aspects of human experience that are perceived as toxic, such as the smell of rotting flesh or raw sewage. These smells strongly contrast with the sweet smell of earth and garden that represent reconnection at the end of *A Wrinkle in Time*. While certainly decay and waste matter result from natural processes, they connote the possibility of disease and so provide L'Engle with a symbol for something that is potentially dangerous. The smell serves as a warning that something is wrong, just as the smell of rotting food warns humans not to eat for fear of bacterial infection and potentially deadly illness. L'Engle continues to use smell as a signifier of the ecthroi while Charles Wallace is Within some of his hosts. For instance, his host Chuck Maddox, who is also Mrs O'Keefe's little brother, is very sensitive to smell. Whenever the ecthroi are present, Chuck smells something that is variously "completely unfamiliar" (168), something that scares him (168, 170). It particularly seems to cling to Chuck's father, to be "in his father but […] not of his father" (170). The fear associated with the smell alerts readers to the presence of the ecthroi. When Chuck's father dies, for instance, Chuck is alerted to the accident because "the frightening

smell […] exploded over" him (172). This signals that the father's death was associated with the ecthroi.

Another of Charles Wallace's hosts also notices a strange smell associated with accidents and illnesses that he experiences. Matthew Maddox, a young author who is living and writing during and after the American Civil War, in the 1860s, had a riding accident as an adolescent. As he talks about it and remembers it he tells his brother that right before his horse fell, "there was a horrible, putrid stink" (214). L'Engle is once again flagging for readers that the ecthroi were behind the accident. This also suggests that the ecthroi have predictive powers because the accident happened over a century before Charles Wallace started travelling through time and going Within Matthew to try to stop the nuclear war. Thus, the ecthroi were trying to destroy Matthew's ability to help Charles Wallace make a difference long before Charles Wallace knew there was any difference to be made. Finally, the ecthroi are associated with Matthew's death from an unspecified respiratory illness. Just after he is able to help his brother Bran's fiancée travel to Vespugia, Matthew suffers a severe spasm of coughing and pain, and it results in his death. Matthew's last thoughts are that "a rank stink like spoiling flowers [is choking] him" (244). Again, the smell associated with the ecthroi reminds readers that they destroy the world around them, seeking to corrupt and damage the environment in whatever way possible.

Importantly, L'Engle's descriptions of a horrible smell associated with the ecthroi are in stark contrast to the fresh, clean smells she describes in *A Wrinkle in Time* after Charles Wallace, Meg, Calvin O'Keefe, and Mr Murry return from Camazotz (see Chapter 1 above). Those pleasant odours were evidence of the humans reconnecting with each other and with their ecosystem. It seems appropriate, therefore, that L'Engle would associate putrid, sickening odours with creatures who are attempting to destroy Earth and humans and the connections between the two. Flowers and plants will deteriorate and die in what we often call the natural process of things, but the ecthroi's purpose is to destroy without the possibility of rejuvenation. At the time of L'Engle's writing, nuclear war would have seemed the most efficient way to destroy the earth without hope of renewal. This is further illustrated, not just by evidence that the ecthroi are present and working against Charles Wallace and his hosts, but by examples L'Engle provides of what the ecthroi want Earth to look like if Charles and his hosts fail to find and change the relevant Might-Have-Been.

L'Engle names these examples of possible futures Projections (L'Engle, 1978: 67).[20] Gaudior and Charles Wallace are detoured by the ecthroi into two of these Projections, both of which illustrate the violence and environmental destruction that could happen if nuclear war occurs. Both Projections are still located at the star-watching rock, and so the vision of devastation at a place which Charles Wallace has always associated with peace and beauty and enjoyment of the natural world is doubly horrifying for him. The first Projection might be an image of a nuclear holocaust. The area around the star-watching rock is described as being covered in what looks like "solidified lava" that glows, while the atmosphere looks like a "flickering pink cloud" (1978: 67). It is hot and the air is hard to breathe. This sounds similar to images of nuclear catastrophe depicted by Chesley Bonestell, an artist L'Engle mentions in an earlier novel (1963: 132, 215). Bonestell painted apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic scenes of nuclear destruction in the United States, as well as other science-fiction artwork. The glow L'Engle describes on the lava invokes radioactivity, while the sulphurous air suggests pollutants generated through a nuclear event catastrophic enough to melt the surrounding landscape. In addition to describing the scenery in this way, L'Engle gives a frightening illustration of what humans might turn into after excessive exposure to radioactive fallout. She describes a "monstrous creature with a great blotched body, short stumps for legs, and long arms, with the hands brushing the ground." L'Engle also says that the creature's "face was scabrous and suppurating" (1978: 68), descriptions evocative of H.G. Wells' blotchy, crablike creatures populating Earth at the end of time in *The Time Machine* (Wells, 2004/1895: 66). L'Engle was certainly familiar with these images, as she read Wells from childhood (L'Engle, 1998: 32). As the boy and the unicorn try to comprehend the devastation around them, Gaudior warns Charles Wallace not to do anything at all while they are caught in the Projection, because anything the two of them do in that context could be the action that the ecthroi might use to make the Projection become the actual future. The star-watching rock's landscape has changed from the peaceful, autumnal scenery readers were introduced to at the beginning of the novel into something grim and horrible. The devastated environment illustrates the opposition Charles Wallace faces from the ecthroi in his efforts to go Within different hosts and become closely unified with them in order to stop the potential nuclear war, providing physical evidence of the ecthroi's desire to tear people and things apart.

[20] Again, as with Within and Might-Have-Been, L'Engle always capitalizes Projection when she uses it in this way, and never puts it in quotation marks. I follow her usage throughout.

In contrast, the second Projection Charles and Gaudior become temporarily trapped in might be described as nuclear winter. As they are thrown into the Projection, L'Engle describes a feeling of "deep, penetrating cold" (L'Engle, 1978: 211), similar to Vicky's sense of being pulled into a dark hole with Zachary, which she can only escape by being in light and heat again (L'Engle, 1963: 121). The cold only eases slightly as Charles and Gaudior land at the star-watching rock in the new Projection. This time, instead of radioactive lava and a horribly malformed humanoid creature, Charles and Gaudior see "an open square in a frozen city of tall, windowless buildings" (L'Engle, 1978: 211). In place of a melted and burned-out natural landscape, this Projection shows the star-watching rock location as part of a city with "no sign of tree, of grass" (211). L'Engle says that the "blind cement was cracked, and there were great chunks of fallen masonry on the street" (211). Instead of mutant humanoid creatures, there are soldiers wearing gas masks and carrying weapons. Once again, one of the things the ecthroi hope to destroy is the human connection to each other and to the ecosystem, symbolized by the gas masks, which suggest the soldiers are separated from the earth's atmosphere and which make them indistinguishable from each other. This Projection, like the other, discloses the opposition of the ecthroi to interconnection and caring for the environment. It solidifies Charles' determination to overcome that opposition and rescue the planet. And while Charles Wallace and Gaudior are able to escape the Projection very quickly, L'Engle never discloses whether dying in a Projection would mean that a person is dead in their own present. Instead, she hints that the soldiers in the Projection could have killed both, thus immediately ending their attempt to stop the nuclear war.

What emerges is that in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*, Charles Wallace faces fierce resistance from the ecthroi to developing relationships with his hosts whenever he goes Within. The signs of their interference, the smells and sights associated with the ecthroi's desire to destroy the planet, are consistently referenced throughout the novel. Through representing the concept of opposition so starkly, L'Engle reiterates and intensifies the critical importance of recognizing and understanding interconnection amongst humans as one of the many categories of relationship which must be well developed along Fisher's (2013) ecopsychological kinship continuum. Recognizing the opposition that both Vicky and Charles Wallace face as they learn to empathize with other human beings underscores the significance of those interpersonal relationships for both because it demonstrates the negative impacts of disconnection (both from each other and from the ecosystem) on human beings. By acknowledging the negative psychological, emotional, and even physical effects of disconnection, humans are better prepared to affirm connection. One of

the types of human-human connections that L'Engle highly values for both Vicky and Charles is their relationship(s) with family members, a relationship which is often analyzed and evaluated by psychology, including ecopsychology.

2.3. Family relationships

Evidence from ecopsychology and ecotherapy research conducted by Nicole Sanders and Kellie Forziat-Pytel (2020) suggests that shared experiences in the natural environment can help people to both assess and strengthen their family relationships. Sanders and Forziat-Pytel noted the changes and healing one family experienced while working together to plant and tend a garden, which contributed to their ability to communicate with each other. Similar associations between familial relationships and experiences in nature emerge in both *The Moon by Night* and *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*. As might be expected, these family relationships are different in each novel, yet both are important in unique ways. Vicky finds herself conflicted about her family relationships, both pushing away from – differentiating – and wanting to draw closer to her nuclear family members. Over time, she finds that two potentially tragic natural events she encounters during her family camping trip ultimately draw her closer to her family. In comparison, Charles Wallace recognizes that while he must be away from his family in order to go Within his hosts and change the right Might-Have-Been, he must kythe with his sister Meg in order to successfully stop the threatened nuclear war. The importance of family connections to Charles Wallace's task extends through Meg to her mother-in-law, who gave Charles Patrick's Rune. This indicates that L'Engle felt that family relationships can extend very widely and need not be limited to blood-relation.

2.3.1 Vicky's Family Relationships

From very early in *The Moon by Night*, L'Engle addresses Vicky's relationship with her nuclear family, revealing the stress of changes and growing up that Vicky (like most adolescents) experiences. As was demonstrated in my discussion of othering the self and differentiation, in order to effectively build her interpersonal connections with her family, Vicky must sometimes distance herself from them emotionally, physically, and psychologically.

L'Engle creates a clear example of this distancing when the Austin family camps at a place called Palo Duro State Park, Texas, USA. This is a canyon which, Vicky says, is "a complete shock, appearing abruptly in the middle of the flat lands" (1963: 87). While her family is setting up camp and preparing supper, Vicky decides she's had enough for the moment and walks a little distance away from the campsite. She craves alone time and physical distance from her family, but she acknowledges, "I felt so lonely I could have put my head down on my knees and bawled. It wasn't the kind of loneliness that would have got any better if I'd gone back to the family; it would have just been worse. It was that kind" (L'Engle, 1963: 91). This illustrates that while she wants to be emotionally distanced from her family, the distance creates a loneliness she doesn't understand. This loneliness and distance are metaphorically represented by the physical environment in which her family is camping. A canyon is a gap between things. In many cases, it is the space between two mountains, but in this case, it is more like a chasm in the Earth. The physical gap correlates with the emotional gaps Vicky keeps experiencing. Additionally, canyons have cliffs, which could parallel Vicky's psychological state as well. She is on edge with her family, a little off-balance as a result of the many changes she is dealing with, including the upcoming move to New York City and presumably the many changes inherent in adolescence. "I'm not so hot on all this togetherness stuff any more," she declares (1963: 92), a statement which hurts her mother and puts the rest of her family on edge as well.

This tension between Vicky and her family leaves Vicky feeling frustrated and misunderstood. The gaps between herself and her family members are symbolized by the canyon, yet at the same time, the Palo Duro canyon doesn't appear threatening. From where Vicky has walked to, she feels she can still easily reach her family should she choose. She can see them and could hear if someone calls. This suggests that she doesn't feel threatened by the distance from her family, even though she experiences the unexpected loneliness. The canyon doesn't provoke the same ominous feelings as the campground in Tennessee just before Vicky met Zachary. However, the weather in Palo Duro suddenly changes in the middle of the night, and the canyon becomes potentially dangerous. Just after the family has retired, a thunderstorm begins, and part way through the night they are wakened by a park ranger instructing them to break camp and get to high ground as quickly as possible, as there is a danger of flash flooding. Now, instead of signifying a gap between Vicky and her family, the change in the canyon brings Vicky suddenly closer to her family again. As she sits in the family car, watching the floodwater rise, she acknowledges that she "sat a little closer to Suzy than usual" (1963: 99-100). As

the flooding turns the bottom of the canyon into what seems like a body of water, Vicky's family becomes an island-like refuge for her, a unit that she realizes she can rely on to feel safe.

The need to be with her family is intensified as her father and older brother volunteer to go back down into the canyon to help a group of girl scouts who were also camping there. She admits, after her dad and brother drive away, "I forgot all about not thinking so much of togetherness. All I wanted in the world was for the family to be together again" (1963: 103). The potential wildness of the elements reminds Vicky that she does want to be connected to her family and reminds her of the importance of those connections for her psychological well-being. This reveals that the forcefulness and wildness of the elements inspire awe – "a feeling of reverential respect, mixed with wonder *or fear*" (OED, emphasis added) – for the world around us, and that awe can instil closeness as well. This definition of awe, as that which includes wonder, respect, and fear, seems to derive from Edmund Burke's idea of the "sublime," which he defines as anything that evokes the "strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling," arguing that these emotions include terror, pain, and danger (1759: 58-59). Later in his treatise, Burke clarifies that the most powerful emotion experienced when viewing the "sublime in nature" is "astonishment" and that the lesser emotions felt "are admiration, reverence, and respect" (95-56). Drawing on Vicky's experience of this encounter with the natural world, this kind of awe can instil closeness to others as well. Significantly, recent research done by ecotherapists Linda Hogan and Megan Delaney (2020) is suggesting that such awe at the vastness of natural events and elements not only fuels "social connection," but that "Full submersion into the natural world offers the possibility to inspire and reawaken the potential of a person who is feeling lost and alone" (188), just as Vicky seems to feel at intervals throughout *The Moon by Night*.

2.3.2 "Veering Wildly out of Course"

Toward the end of *The Moon by Night*. Vicky and her family experience another massive natural event which has the potential to be life-threatening: a landslide induced by an earthquake. Because of the landslide, Vicky is trapped on the opposite side of a mountain, away from her family. This physical separation from her family inspires Vicky to think more about her connection with them. The vast scope of this environmental event helps Vicky reassess her need for interpersonal connection and helps her turn to her family

to overcome loneliness. Additionally, the landslide is probably the single most important event of the entire novel in Vicky's continued journey of developing empathic relationships with other humans. It puts her into a situation where she personally experiences something traumatic, similar to the trauma of people she learns about throughout the novel, such as Anne Frank and the residents of Frank, Alberta. It also jolts her into a realization that she needs the people who already existed in her life – her family and friends. More than any other experience she has with the natural world, this landslide impacts Vicky physically and psychologically.

The Austins have travelled to a campground in the (fictional) Black Ram Mountains following a visit to Yellowstone National Park. While there, they meet an older couple they first encountered in Glacier National Park, and then, unexpectedly, Zachary Grey and his parents arrive. An impromptu game of hide-and-seek inspires Zach to hide far away from the campsite, on the other side of the mountain, and to refuse to come out of hiding until Vicky goes to look for him. He uses a tone of voice to answer her calls that makes it sound like he is injured. As he has done all along in the novel, he consciously manipulates her, playing on her vulnerability and drawing her away from other people. Even if there had been no earthquake and landslide, Vicky's separation from her family and others in an unfamiliar wilderness location would still have been potentially dangerous. Thus, while L'Engle sets the scene to illustrate to her readers how important human interpersonal relations are, she continues to use Zachary to demonstrate continued opposition to those connections. It is no surprise, therefore, that after Vicky has climbed down to a field, she finds Zachary unhurt and unapologetic about his actions in luring Vicky over the mountain.

At this point, Zachary's hold on Vicky starts to unravel and she begins to assert herself more aggressively against him. She recounts, "I was *furious*. I didn't know I *could* be so furious at Zachary" (L'Engle, 1963: 242). She tells him off for scaring everyone so badly and then declares, "Well, I'm going back to camp. You can come along if you feel like it" (242). She recognizes that she will be safest with other people, and is more conscious of the importance of connecting to them. Zachary tries to stop her by ordering her to stay and talk to him, further illustrating his continued hostility toward Vicky developing stronger interpersonal relationships. Vicky avoids him and begins walking back to the mountainside (243). Her new self-confidence is immediately challenged, however. She says, "Then the ground wiggled under my feet" (243). Suddenly, the foundation of rock and earth that she is standing on is no longer stable. She has assumed she can rely on

some things to stay where they are, such as her family structure, even in the midst of change. While she acknowledges that things are changing in her life and for her family, these changes do not become concrete for her until she experiences this earthquake and landslide.

Perhaps the most intriguing image of the earthquake which Vicky gives is that "It was as though the whole earth, the whole planet, were jerking out in space, veering wildly out of course, and I was on its back, clinging to its mane" (L'Engle, 1963: 243). The image of the whole world suddenly being moved with Vicky on it parallels the way her life has been moved completely out of place as her family prepares to move to New York City. Her reality is shifting in such radical ways that she feels as if she's being thrown from a wild horse. This feeling of being thrown off the earth is an especially disturbing moment because Zachary, with his usual attitude of expecting the very worst, broaches the idea of global catastrophe and brings to the forefront of Vicky's mind her fears for her family's safety. He says, "Suppose it wasn't just an earthquake? Suppose we're the only people left on earth?" Vicky responds impatiently, "At this point your sense of humor doesn't amuse me." Zachary replies,"I wasn't trying to be amusing. It's barely possible, you know" (L'Engle, 1963: 250-51). One of the few things that could make the earth shake like that, and which would mean there was any chance of Vicky and Zachary being the last people on earth, is a nuclear war. His statement pulls her back to the fear and anxiety she felt when she first met him in Tennessee and he first started to try to pull her away from other people, including her family. She does momentarily examine the idea that it's a nuclear disaster but then rejects it as "Zachary making up trouble" (252). The earthquake and landslide have made Vicky start to think more clearly, and while she isn't able to articulate it well yet, she is becoming more confident about the validity of her own ideas. While she has to face the fact that her environment is not stable, that even elements of her ecology that she would have expected to remain stable, such as a mountain, are unreliable, the experience has helped complete the process of breaking her out of a mindset that can see only herself. It also helps her become more aware that she can't rely solely on herself but must learn to connect with others.

Breaking out of this mindset means that she quite naturally has a great fear for her family as she tries to cope with the earthquake. She realizes that the landside may have partly fallen into the campsite, a terrifying image which is fresh in her mind after seeing Frank Slide. Vicky realizes that the geological event might have permanently separated her from her family. She is unable to find out because the landslide has left the side of the

mountain a sheer cliff, with no pathway back to the top of the mountain or to the campsite, so she suddenly finds herself physically separated from her family's location. The feelings of psychological separation from her family which she had at earlier points in the novel are concentrated into a physical form in the cliff that separates her from them. Instead of a symbolic gap, such as was illustrated by the canyon in Palo Duro, this newly-formed cliff is a decisive edge, distorting the landscape and forming a physical gap which Vicky cannot cross. In contrast to the light flooding in Texas, the landslide truly threatens her and her relatives. This brings her to a fuller realization that her relationship with her family matters deeply to her.

While the physical barrier between Vicky and her family appears insurmountable, it nevertheless provides a space in which, *psychologically*, Vicky can recognize what ecopsychologist Andy Fisher calls a demarcation at which human and nonhuman "worlds meet and exchanges take place" (Fisher, 2013: 96). In Vicky's circumstance, the cliff is a physical edge of the nonhuman environment at which Vicky's gradually diminishing world of a selfish self is exchanged for a growing sense of the importance of interpersonal relationships and a psychologically healthy self. This physical separation from her family emphasizes that there is an ideal distance she needs to find, both physically and psychologically, which will allow her to understand herself in relation to her closest relatives and other people. It symbolizes psychological differentiation. It also illustrates the toxicity of Zachary's influences in her life and helps her move away from him emotionally. She can see him clearly now, and resisting his propensity to invent trouble helps her realize that it is acceptable to have questions, concerns, and a lack of knowledge, because this highlights her potential to grow and change. Once again, Zachary's opposition actually enables Vicky to develop resilience and a willingness to trust her own judgement, as well as to strengthen interpersonal relationships, particularly within her own familial context.

Ecopsychologists recognize and address the varying impacts of natural disasters, such as this landslide which Vicky experiences, on human well-being. They expressly acknowledge the fear and trauma that accompany disasters. They remind us that there may be "limits to the psychological benefits of encounters with nature" (Bell et al., 2012: 151) and that they often leave people feeling "inadequate, like outside forces are taking control of their lives" (Buzzell, 2011: 71). While ecopsychologists and ecothearpists continue to emphasize the positive, mutually beneficial results of human relationships with the nonhuman world, they also insist that humans need "a balanced view of nature's potential to both heal and destroy, as evidenced by […] natural disasters" (Jordan, 2009: 30). This

landslide does for Vicky what Roger Duncan (who explores the roles ecopsychology might play in systemic family therapy) describes as being "[e]xposed to the ancient ecological patterning of nature." A person's "own constructed reality peel[s] away" and as a result, he or she "[comes] back from the edge of the world with a deeper narrative and a delicate new sense of self" (2013: 15). Vicky is eventually rescued by her father and a ranger, who rappel down the new cliff several hours after the earthquake. When they return to the campsite together, it is by climbing up the cliff and returning over the edge to the opposite side of the mountain – a literal return from Duncan's "edge of the world." When Vicky safely arrives at the campsite with her father, she feels surrounded by love and safety emanating from her family (L'Engle, 1963: 260). Her experience of the earthquake and landslide has brought her psychologically to a place where she has gained a new perspective on herself and her family, discovering that a narrative of interpersonal connection must include—in fact, it must begin with—her familial bonds. L'Engle suggests that Vicky must experience a radical physical shift in the earth in order to really begin to consider the personal and psychological implications of developing empathy for others. Specifically, the earthquake and landslide permanently shake her out of her previous feelings about her family's "Togetherness" (95) as problematic and uninviting. While she will continue to struggle with normal issues of adolescence, she no longer resents her family, but instead embraces their presence as indicative of stability and interpersonal connection.

2.3.3 Charles Wallace's Family Relationships

In *The Moon by Night*, Vicky experiences some extreme ecological events which make her more aware of the importance of her family connections within the larger scope of interpersonal connections. Charles Wallace, by contrast, acknowledges the importance of working with family members to stop extreme events from the beginning of *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*. Most notably, his sister Meg's mother-in-law, Mrs O'Keefe, gives him Patrick's Rune, and Meg herself kythes with him while he's Within his hosts. His ability to go Within is, in fact, predicated on this ability to kythe with Meg. It is a more developed form of his ability to read her mind and her experiences which was discussed in Chapter 1 above.

2.3.4 Patrick's Rune

As was established in the novel synopsis at the beginning of this chapter, Patrick's Rune has a key role to play in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*. The Celtic rune invokes the power of the elements in helping Charles Wallace and his hosts overcome the potential disasters throughout the novel which continually arise through the agency of the ecthroi. L'Engle implies that the rune has been passed down through families beginning with a Welsh prince, Madoc, who is Charles Wallace's second host. According to legend, Madoc travelled to the Americas sometime between Leif Erikson and Columbus. He recites the rune to help him resist and overcome his brother, Gwydyr, who is trying to take Madoc's wife and thus make himself ruler of two indigenous American tribes.[21] Madoc's wife is Zyll, an indigenous princess who once lived near the star-watching rock. Mrs O'Keefe is supposedly a descendant of Madoc and Zyll, and as a young girl, she was told by her grandmother that she would someday use the rune to get help in a time of great danger (L'Engle, 1978). This means that the child Meg is pregnant with is Mrs O'Keefe's grandchild, and is therefore a part of the same lineage. Since Charles Wallace is Meg's brother and the baby's uncle, it appears that Mrs O'Keefe can pass the rune laterally to him because he is related to her by Meg's marriage. Significantly, as Mrs O'Keefe struggles to remember the rune from her childhood so that she can teach it to Charles and Meg, she gets confused about who Charles Wallace is and repeatedly calls him "Chuck." As mentioned above, Chuck was Mrs O'Keefe's little brother, and he becomes one of Charles Wallace's hosts.

In addition to connecting Charles Wallace to her brother, both Meg and Charles Wallace call Mrs O'Keefe "Mom." This is something that Meg has never tried to do before her mother-in-law's visit to the Murry home, as described in the novel. Despite Meg's

[21] L'Engle's portrayals of indigenous peoples and their spirituality in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet* may be considered offensive to readers who identify with these cultural and religious traditions. For instance, she employs what Weronika Łaskiewicz (2018) calls the "the stereotype of the 'vanishing Indian'" (233) by portraying the modern home of Meg and Charles Wallace Murry as having no more indigenous peoples present because they have been killed or driven away by white settlers. Emily Nagin (2016) states that this stereotype describes "Indians who float free from history and vanish before they become inconvenient to colonial expansion" (11). L'Engle also uses a trope Sam Pack (2001) describes as the "white hero" who "falls in love with an Indian woman [who] is socially upgraded by being a princess or at least the chief's daughter" (98) when she portrays Madoc marrying Zyll. In connection with this marriage, L'Engle also stereotypes indigenous spirituality by trying to convey a "representation of cultural practices or experiences" as a "cultural '[outsider]'" (Matthes, 2016: 343) through illustrating dances and chants which she has invented as part of the marriage ceremony of Zyll's culture. Finally, L'Engle stereotypes two older indigenous men as what Pack (2001) calls "the familiar wise elder character who disseminates knowledge" and who "is privy to sacred knowledge and holds the answers to the universe in his medicine pouch" (99). This "wise old man" archetype is a common feature of many fantasy quest novels and thus stereotypes these characters as "Indigenous magicians" (Łaskiewicz, 2018: 233).

marriage to Calvin O'Keefe, her mother-in-law has always resented her and the Murry family. As a result, Meg feels deeply awkward about trying to achieve a better relationship with Calvin's mother (L'Engle, 1978: 11). However, Meg's gesture of caring in referring to Mrs O'Keefe as "mom" while Mrs O'Keefe tries to remember Patrick's rune early in the novel is an important step in helping the older woman refresh her memory of the ancestral Celtic verse. She is better able to recall the words after Meg has confirmed her willingness to acknowledge the interpersonal bond between them. Charles Wallace reinforces the bond between the O'Keefes and the Murrys by accepting Mrs O'Keefe's name for him, Chuck. Additionally, though not a son or son-in-law of Mrs O'Keefe, he too takes the step of referring to her as "mom" when she is repeating the rune to him a second time. This situates her psychologically and emotionally during a very unstable time in her personal history, as well as in the fortune of her country and the world. The rune in its turn ties Charles, Meg, Mrs O'Keefe, and Charles Wallace's hosts (presumably many of whom are Mrs O'Keefe's ancestors) both to each other and to the natural world. It references the sun, snow, fire, lightning, the sea, rocks, and earth as different kinds of protection against what the rune calls "the powers of darkness." (L'Engle, 1978: 23-26). L'Engle illustrates this powerfully when Mrs O'Keefe recites the rune to help Charles and Meg learn it, and the elements seem to respond directly to each line in turn. This might be seen as an expansion into the terms of her fantasy of a process that takes place in her realistic novel, *The Moon by Night*, whereby the weather seems to respond to Vicky's feelings and emotions. The apparent response of the elements to the rune gets enhanced as the number of people reciting the verse together increases. When Mrs O'Keefe recites it alone for the first time in the novel, the fire in the fireplace nearly goes out (23), the wind begins to blow harder (23), the electricity in the house shuts down (24-25), and lightning strikes twice (25). However, when she begins to repeat it a second time, and the elements respond still further, Charles Wallace urges her, "Say it, Mom! […] Say it all! […] I'll say it with you" (25). As they repeat the rune together, the fire re-strengthens without help (23), the electricity comes back on (24), and it begins to snow gently (26). The helping power of the rune, its capacity to ward off danger as described by Mrs O'Keefe, seems to be strongest when at least two individuals, bonded in some way, join together to invoke its forces.

In addition to Mrs O'Keefe sharing the rune with a family group, and the rune responding best to interpersonal bonds, the importance to Charles Wallace's success of a family relationship between Meg, Charles, and Mrs O'Keefe is further demonstrated at the very end of the novel, when Mrs O'Keefe's intuition saves Charles Wallace's life. Charles has been at the star-watching rock for much of the evening, and Mrs O'Keefe, in the

middle of a conversation with Meg and her family, suddenly demands to be taken to "Chuck" immediately (L'Engle, 1978: 246). Meg, Mrs O'Keefe, and Meg's twin brothers, Sandy and Dennys, all run together to the star-watching rock. They find Charles Wallace "lying there, eyes closed, white as death" (247); and together, Meg and Mrs O'Keefe say the rune over Charles's body. This final invocation of the power of the rune brings the importance of family connections full circle. Mrs O'Keefe gave the rune to Charles and Meg to help Charles defeat the ecthroi and stop a nuclear war. Now the joint use of the rune once again demonstrates the power of the natural environment, in this fantasy setting, to restore life, and reiterates the key function of family connections in Charles Wallace's mission to avert catastrophe. Charles acknowledges the strength and courage of Mrs O'Keefe in giving the rune to him and Meg when, at the end of the novel, he urges Meg to remember that "In this fateful hour, it was herself she placed between us and the powers of darkness" (1978: 256). Meg and Charles fully realize how significant family has been to Charles Wallace's success in preserving peace. Mrs O'Keefe gives him the means to fight the ecthroi, connecting him to her family through Patrick's Rune; and her actions emphasize to both Charles and Meg, and to readers, the importance of interpersonal relationships in overcoming threats to those very relationships.

2.3.5 Kything With Meg

Alongside the importance of family connections in Charles Wallace's use of Patrick's Rune to stop the nuclear war, he must also draw on the power of his sibling relationship with Meg, through kything, to accomplish his task. As was mentioned above, kything is a form of telepathy. It seems to go much deeper than simply reading another person's thoughts or exchanging simple communications. Several years after publishing *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*, L'Engle described kything as a form of communication that expresses "deepest messages of love" when one is trying to convey thoughts or ideas that "neither speech nor language" can express. She ties kything to interpersonal relationships by explaining that to "kythe is to open yourself to someone," and relates it to the human interconnection with the nonhuman environment by saying that "it takes a deep faith in the goodness of creation" to be able to kythe (L'Engle, 1997: 11). Charles Wallace seems to

have been born knowing how to use this form of communication, and has been particularly adept at developing it with Meg. Over time, Meg has developed the skill as well.[22]

As Charles and Meg try to figure out how Charles can best use the rune he has been given, he makes the decision that he needs to be alone. Meg worries for him and wants to go with him to the star-watching rock but he insists that he has to go alone. He tells Meg, "I'm going to need you, but I'm going to need you *here*, to kythe with me, all the way" (1978: 38). Their close relationship permits Meg to send Charles Wallace information which he can't remember himself, presumably because the ecthroi are trying to block his memory. For instance, for much of the first part of the novel, Charles Wallace repeatedly tries to remember a novel he has read which talks about a legend of Welsh travellers coming to North America and then relocating to South America. Just after Charles comes out of being Within his second host, Madoc, he anxiously discusses his inability to remember what is in the novel, declaring that it must be important (93). Meg picks up this forgetfulness through their kythe, and asks her brothers, Sandy and Dennys, about what was happening around the year 1865. Through an encyclopaedia reference, the twins are able to tell her that Matthew Maddox published a strangely fantastical time travel novel in 1865, called *The Horn of Joy*. Additionally, she learns that a group of people from Wales emigrated to South America that same year. They go to what later becomes Vespugia, the fictional country L'Engle locates somewhere in the Patagonia region of South America and which is the centre of the nuclear threat (L'Engle, 1978: 96-102). Meg kythes this information back to Charles Wallace and consequently, Charles is eventually able to identify the Might-Have-Been that needs to be changed.

L'Engle further designs the story with a significant and compelling aspect of ecopsychology which is tied to Charles Wallace only succeeding if Meg kythes with him. Meg's ability to kythe could be considered "animal-assisted" in this novel, as a new family dog helps her kythe more deeply with her brother. Gail Melson (2020), who specializes in children's psychological development, explains that research has shown "animals [to be] significant for human functioning" (1222), while ecotherapists such as Linda Hogan and Megan Delaney (2020) emphasize the importance of human ties to animals in promoting psychological well-being and performance. The capacity of Meg's kythe, which, as we have seen, is a highly psyche-centred ability, is substantially enhanced by the sudden appearance of a stray dog at the Murry home.

[22] L'Engle goes into great depth on Meg's learning to kythe in the second novel in the Times series, *A Wind in the Door* (1973).

In earlier novels, including *A Wrinkle in Time*, while the environment does have a place in the kinds of images Meg and Charles learn to kythe to others, Charles Wallace's innate ability to kythe *is not* contingent on his connection with the natural world, nor does L'Engle make Meg's learning to kythe dependent on her relationship to the environment. However, in Chapter One, I briefly mention that Charles Wallace's communication ability allows him to understand the wind and the trees talking to each other. I also pointed out that the beasts on Ixchel can somehow communicate with other parts of the universe, such as the stars. This implies that L'Engle intends kything to be something that crosses species and other boundaries that might normally be considered barriers to communication, relationship, and shared experience. In this case, the dog, which Charles Wallace names "Ananda" (L'Engle, 1978: 39), becomes enmeshed in the sibling relationship between Meg and Charles, and enhances Meg's connections to the natural environment. Charles explains to his family that "Ananda" is Sanskrit for "That joy in existence without which the universe will fall apart and collapse" (40), thus explicitly linking the dog with the issue at hand, which is the efforts of Charles Wallace to rescue the world from nuclear disaster. Meg's ability to better kythe when she is touching Ananda – the canine embodiment of joy in existence – both helps to tie her to Charles Wallace and provides a means for Charles Wallace to be tethered to the star-watching rock, his family, and the natural environment.

Specifically, Meg describes a kind of energy that flows from the dog to her when she kythes while she pets Ananda. She says that she "rubbed her hand over Ananda's coat, which smelled of ferns and moss and autumn berries, and felt a warm and gentle tingling, which vibrated through her hand and up her arm" (1978: 44). Usually it might be expected that a dog would smell like dog, or wet dog, as Ananda arrives at the Murry home after both rain and snow. Wet dog is not a particularly refreshing scent. However, the smells L'Engle associates with Ananda are fresh and woodsy, as if the dog embodies the forest in herself. This contrasts with the putrid stink associated with the ecthroi, but correlates to the pleasant smells of the Murry vegetable garden, discussed in Chapter One above as important to Charles and Meg's reintegration with their environment after they return from Camazotz. The energy Meg feels flowing between Ananda and herself seems to represent what ecotherapist Howard Clinebell (1996) calls "the awesome aliveness of nature," which he sees as an energy that is nurturing (8). Certainly it helps Meg immerse herself in the kythe, because as she rests her hand on Ananda's fur, she says, "[W]hen I touch you I can kythe even more deeply than I've ever done before" (L'Engle, 1978: 49-50). L'Engle implies that the dog connects Meg and Charles Wallace to each other more tightly than they would have been without bringing a living, nonhuman creature for Meg to work with.

In this way, Meg is joined into the ecosystem just as securely as Charles is by having gone out to the star-watching rock. This may be because the Murrys usually have a dog, so Charles and Meg both feel connected to animals already (L'Engle, 1978: 13). L'Engle also mentions at one point in this novel that Meg takes "comfort in reverting to her child's habit of talking out loud to the family animals" (44), which makes explicit that the Murrys consider their pets to be part of their family. This illustrates the emotional bond many humans have with their pets and reiterates the idea that Charles needs his "family" to kythe with him during his journey. The family members who help him now consist of both the human and the nonhuman.

Finally, L'Engle implies that Ananda's presence helps Meg stretch her mind and soul back into childhood plasticity and belief in kything. Meg says, "I told Charles Wallace I'm out of practice in kything. Maybe I've been settling for the grownup world. How did you know we needed you, Ananda?" (49). With Ananda's assistance, Meg is able to convey the information Charles needs, as discussed above, and she is instrumental in saving his life at one point as well. During one of the ecthroi attacks which Charles sustains, he and Gaudior (the unicorn) are thrown into a saltwater sea which covered the star-watching rock in pre-history (L'Engle, 1978: 144). Charles and Gaudior begin to drown, and it is Ananda who brings Meg out of the kythe, with "frantic whining" and "a sharp bark" (147). This suggests that Ananda is aware of what is happening to Charles Wallace through the kything, and that she has a rational sense which allows her to recognize danger through the kythe. She is not merely a tool Meg is using, but an active participant in the process. Meg responds to Ananda's urgency and calls on Patrick's Rune for help. Significantly, when Meg uses the rune, she invokes it, not with Charles and Gaudior, but says, "With Ananda in this fateful hour / I place all Heaven with its power" (1978: 148, italics removed). Together, then, Meg and Ananda provide the boy with information he needs during his task to stop the nuclear war, and save his life. This solidifies the idea that family relationships are a significant and important aspect of developing interpersonal connections—and crucially includes pets as part of the family circle. Dogs as well as humans, it is implied, can help young people develop empathic relationships with others well beyond the domestic environment.

2.4 Closing Thoughts

As both Vicky and Charles learn to immerse themselves in the experiences of others, each moves toward a point where they must reintegrate themselves with their present time and people. In this process, geological features continue to play a significant role. While L'Engle has demonstrated that for Vicky, Grandfather's Cove is a place of contemplation and peace, readers observe how she is shaken out of her old complacency at the different locations she visits during her family's cross-continent camping trip, where she connects dramatic changes in the landscape to dramatic experiences in other people's lives. For Charles Wallace, since he never physically leaves the star-watching rock, this remains the place from which he must learn valuable lessons about empathy and experience. L'Engle shows both Charles Wallace and Vicky learning about developing empathy, strong interpersonal relationships, and depth of shared experience through encountering literal changes in the Earth itself.

Examining the intensity of the human-human relationships in both novels discussed in this chapter, and the empathy such relationships promote in both Vicky and Charles Wallace, clears the way for a careful analysis of the human-animal relationship in Chapter 3. *A Ring of Endless Light* (1980a), the third in the Austin family series, greatly expands the concept of human relationships with the nonhuman world which L'Engle first introduced through Charles Wallace's ability to hear the wind talking with the trees in *A Wrinkle in Time*, and through Meg's need to work with the Murry family's new dog, Ananda, to kythe with her brother more effectively in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*. While L'Engle had not yet developed the idea of kything in the more realistic Austin family series up to this point, understanding how it functions for the Murry family in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet* is important to understanding the way in which Vicky Austin develops along the kinship continuum from the human-human connections she makes in *The Moon by Night* to a powerful human-animal connection in *A Ring of Endless Light*. L'Engle uses the concept of kything to move this novel, one of the more realistic Austin family series, from reality into the borders of fantasy. She also uses *A Ring of Endless Light* to show how the empathy Vicky has learned to feel can be developed beyond the state it achieved in *The Moon by Night*. In *A Ring of Endless Light*, Vicky learns how she shares experiences, emotions, and even Theodore Roszak's "ecological unconscious" (which, according to ecopsychological theory and praxis, humans share with the rest of the planet) with another species: dolphins. In doing so, L'Engle expands her concepts of interconnection well beyond what she has done in the rest of the Austin family novels, bringing that series into

an even closer connection with the Time novels and the O'Keefe family series, in which her human characters demonstrate deep relationships with each other and with the world around them.

Chapter 3: Overcoming Fear of Death through Interspecies Relationships in *A Ring of Endless Light*

3.0 Opening Thoughts

In Chapter 2, I explored how Vicky Austin and Charles Wallace Murry developed deeper empathy with other humans, and how those relationships were enhanced, enabled, and augmented by their connections with the natural environment. In conjunction with examining the human-human end of the continuum of relationships between humans and nonhumans, I also examined how L'Engle may be exploring how she is able to expand her readers' and characters' ability to relate to others. These relationships include the nonhuman, when she transplants ideas from her more realistic Austin family books into her more fantastic Time and O'Keefe family books. In Chapter 3, I consider L'Engle's view of a human-animal relationship in a single Austin family novel, the Newbery-Honour-winning *A Ring of Endless Light* (1980). In doing so, I further strengthen my argument that L'Engle's children's and adolescent novels can be read in a way that shows progression through ecopsychology's human-nonhuman kinship continuum (Fisher, 2013). This chapter closely examines human-animal interspecies relationships, thereby introducing readers to one of the significant relationships on which ecopsychology and ecotherapy (ecopsychological praxis) focus. The specific challenge addressed in L'Engle's novel is how the interspecies relationship can be efficacious in helping humans overcome fear of and face instances of death. *A Ring of Endless Light* also has a unique role on the reality/fantasy spectrum in L'Engle's canon. It is the fourth novel in the predominantly realistic Austin family series, but in it the author steps beyond the bounds of realism and takes this novel from simply occurring in the same fantasy universe as the Time and O'Keefe family series to being itself a fantasy.

Throughout this novel, Vicky Austin learns that she can telepathically communicate – called "kything"[23] in L'Engle's fantasy series – with dolphins and with other people. This is an ability that L'Engle almost exclusively uses in her Time series and doesn't develop or discuss at all in her more realistic fiction, with the exception of this novel. Her inclusion of this ability in *A Ring of Endless Light* indicates for readers how strongly L'Engle has woven the connections between the two fantastic series and the Austin family series. As a result, this is the novel that most solidly anchors the Austin

[23] Kything has been discussed and defined earlier, in Chapter 2.

family series in L'Engle's fantastic universe. In Chapters 1 and 2, correlations can be seen between themes, events, and characters in the pairs of novels I set side by side. *A Ring of Endless Light* strongly brings L'Engle's fantasy ideas to life in her realistic series. Just as we saw L'Engle deepening and developing Charles Wallace Murry's new "essence" (established in *A Wrinkle in Time*) through his learning to go Within in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*, so here we see L'Engle expanding the empathic abilities Vicky begins to develop in *The Moon by Night* by giving her the ability to kythe.

While as readers we may not be able to go Within or kythe in the everyday world, as we consider how L'Engle's characters are given the ability to experience the minds, emotions, and even lives of both human and nonhuman others, we may be able to reimagine our own relationships with the world around us. If, as ecopsychologists and ecotherapists emphasize, the nonhuman members of our world have a psyche, or partake in a larger, even planetary, unconscious with us (Roszak, 2001), then the Western world's tendency to constrain "modern psychology to a strictly human bubble seem[s] odd in the extreme" (Fisher, 2013: 5). The developing human-animal relationship in *A Ring of Endless Light*, extended from Vicky's human-interpersonal relationships in *The Moon by Night*, brings us right into imagining animals' feelings, experiences, and emotions. Consequently, L'Engle shows us at least one important universal experience – death – which humans may be able to accept more easily through recognizing it as a shared experience and trying to think about how other species respond emotionally to the fact of their mortality.

In this chapter, I argue that the relationships Vicky forms with dolphins in *A Ring of Endless Light* are instrumental in her psychological healing after she faces a series of traumatic experiences over the summer covered in the novel, all of which involve death. Thus, the dolphins' role in Vicky's emotional recovery illustrates a form of ecotherapy – ecopsychology at work – for readers. Readers are enabled to see or imagine how working toward a closer relationship with the animals in our environment can improve mental and emotional health. It may even be possible for readers to imagine how they can benefit the "soul" of the world, as ecopsychologists call it; that is, that the Earth itself may be receptive to a therapeutic psychological bond with humans.

3.0.1 Death and the Ecosystem

Over and over again, L'Engle emphasizes that managing emotions in response to death is Vicky's principal challenge throughout this novel. She has to deal with many types of death and with others' attitudes to death and dying. Everything about this novel serves as a reminder that death is a constant part of life and that without it, the ecosystem itself could not function. Regrowth would be impossible without the return of organic material to the Earth through decay and mortality.

So how do humans learn to transcend that fear of death, to live with this daily reality? Psychologist and professor Jean-Louis Drolet (1990) has argued that humans can develop what he calls a "middle knowledge" of death. Drolet says this concept is manifest through the understanding of psychiatrist Robert J. Lifton's argument that "even though our consciousness tends to deny and repress the reality of death," humans "throughout the life process […] know deep down inside that we will die" (Drolet, 1990: 149). As a result, humans have "a fundamental and universal need to preserve and develop a personal sense of continuity and lastingness." The ability to embrace this need and develop the idea of extending beyond death is also called "symbolic immortality," a concept which Drolet borrows from Lifton. It is a key to transcending existential anxiety (149). Drolet lists five methods for envisioning the continuation of life which Lifton presented in his work. Four of these five methods are very important in reading *A Ring of Endless Light.* The four relevant modes are engaging in contemplative activities, such as meditative practices; leaving a creative legacy of some kind; seeking evidence of an afterlife; and remembering that humans are part of an ecosystem that keeps on existing and regenerating (Drolet, 1990: 150). Ultimately, reading *A Ring of Endless Light* through these psychological lenses reveals that these four modes of death transcendence are clearly present for Vicky Austin and her readers. Ecopsychologists and ecotherapists embrace embeddedness in the environment, hypothesizing that "when people connect with the life-death-rebirth cycles of nature, they often discover that they are viewing death from a different perspective. Though still profoundly saddened, they are no longer devastated or immobilized" (Clinebell, 1996: 112). Over the course of *A Ring of Endless Light*, readers observe as Vicky, through developing a strong relationship with the dolphins, progresses from the devastation and immobility she experiences through encountering so much death, toward envisioning what may happen to people after their passing.

In order to accomplish such a reading, I first briefly summarize the novel itself. Then I articulate the kinds of death Vicky Austin encounters. Subsequently, I examine

Vicky's experiences of other characters' attitudes toward death and how those attitudes shape her own growing understanding of death and an afterlife. Having laid that foundation, I explore how two of the modes of imagining immortality, the contemplative mode and the creative mode, help Vicky recognize her embeddedness in the ecosystem through learning to kythe with dolphins. It is then possible to study how Vicky experiences psychological healing from the distress of all the death she has encountered, by learning, through her relationship with dolphins, what happens to the souls of those who die, which is one of the modes Drolet cites for understanding symbolic immortality. Through reading the novel in the light of these three selected modes (contemplative activities, a creative legacy, and seeking evidence of an afterlife), readers may gain perspective on how it could be possible to accept death as an ever-present part of the biological cycles found in the natural environment, and to find healing even in the midst of the trauma of constant exposure to death (Clinebell, 1996) by recognizing and developing a kinship bond with the nonhuman.

3.0.2 Novel Summary

A Ring of Endless Light covers the events of the summer after the Austin family has spent a year in New York City, as depicted in *The Young Unicorns* (see Chapter 1 above). The Austins have learned that Grandfather Eaton, Mrs Austin's father, is dying of leukaemia. While they usually visit Grandfather Eaton for only a few weeks each summer, this year they choose to spend the whole summer with him on Seven Bay Island. The Austins wish to be with Grandfather Eaton for the remainder of his life and at the time of his death. This is one of the most immediate and personal experiences of death Vicky faces during the novel and the Austin family anticipates it will be the *only* major death event they must cope with during the summer. However, shortly after their arrival on the island, an old friend of the family, U.S. Coast Guard Commander Rodney, unexpectedly dies of a heart attack as a result of rescuing an inexperienced sailor whose boat capsized during a storm. Consequently, the novel opens with a funeral, and before readers are given any information about Grandfather Eaton's illness, the reader is plunged into Vicky's summer of trauma resulting from exposure to so much death. The young man rescued by Commander Rodney at the expense of his own life turns out to be Zachary Grey, the troubled and troubling young man Vicky met on her family's pre-New York camping trip (see Chapter 2 above).

Zach has come to find Vicky and pursue her again after a year without contact. He is still selfish and nihilistic, displaying similar destructive attitudes to those revealed in *The Moon by Night*. In addition, he now seems to want to commit suicide because he thinks life is pointless and death is a complete end. This places an added burden of potential death on Vicky, as well as pushing her to think about the mode of death transcendence which Drolet and Lifton define as trying to find evidence of an afterlife. In contrast to Zachary, Adam Eddington, a young marine biology intern whom Vicky meets at Commander Rodney's funeral, seems full of desire for a satisfying life. Adam has a project in dolphin-human communication for the summer, and invites Vicky to help him. Vicky first meets five female dolphins who are being temporarily observed in pens at the marine biology station. Adam and his boss, Jeb Nutteley, have named three of these dolphins Una, Nini, and Ynid. The other two dolphins Vicky meets at the station remain nameless but seem to be acting as "midwives" for Ynid, who is due to calve very soon. Eventually, Adam takes Vicky out into the Atlantic Ocean to meet a male dolphin, whom Adam has been getting to know and trying to communicate with. Adam has named him Basil. As Basil gets acquainted with Vicky, he brings his mate and his calf to meet her. Vicky names the mate Norberta, and the calf, a male, Njord. Through this experience, she discovers a gift for mentally and emotionally communicating with the dolphins Adam is working with. The kind of communication she learns with the dolphins sounds almost exactly like "kything," the deep and intense form of telepathy L'Engle invents for the Murrys and O'Keefes in her Time novels. For the sake of ease of transition among the different novels addressed in the thesis, I will refer to Vicky's communication with the dolphins as a form of kything in this chapter, although L'Engle never names it as such in *A Ring of Endless Light*.

Vicky eventually learns that she can even kythe with Adam himself. Adam states that Vicky's ability to communicate so quickly with another species is a result of her creative writing gift, pointing toward another mode of death transcendence referred to by Drolet – leaving a creative legacy. Both types of kything for Vicky – with Adam and with the dolphins – form a link to Meg Murry's ability to kythe with Charles Wallace in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*, which was enhanced by Meg's connection with Ananda, the new Murry family dog. Vicky also learns about meditation from her grandfather. This is something we first saw her doing in *The Moon by Night*, and is the third of Drolet and Lifton's modes of death transcendence – contemplative activities. In this novel, contemplation is again associated with creative abilities. Grandfather Eaton claims that Vicky instinctively knows how to meditate because she is a poet. These three methods of transcending death and understanding immortality lead Vicky to the fourth of the modes

Drolet cites from Lifton: developing a deep relationship with the natural world, as she becomes close to the dolphins. Vicky becomes close to Adam, too, as their friendship slowly develops toward a more romantic attachment.

3.1 Death and Attitudes Toward Death

Throughout this summer, Vicky is exposed to death in many ways beyond those listed in the summary above. Some are very close to her in emotional and physical degree, such as Grandfather Eaton's and Commander Rodney's. Others become emotionally important to her as she gets closer to new friends. For instance, she learns of Adam's own involvement in someone else's death when he tells her of a mistake he made, which resulted in someone murdering one of his friends.[24] Vicky also becomes acquainted with Adam's boss, Jeb Nutteley, whose wife and child died a few years earlier. Toward the end of the novel, Jeb himself is hit by a motorcycle and hovers for a while between life and death. At another point in the novel, Vicky watches the two "midwife" dolphins trying to comfort Ynid when her calf dies. Vicky also learns about other, more distant deaths: a major plane crash that kills all passengers, and a news report of a group of fishermen killing thousands of porpoises in a bid to save their livelihood. Eventually, Vicky meets a little girl called Binnie, who has a chronic (unspecified) illness. She only speaks to Binnie once, in a hospital emergency room. However, she sees Binnie again at the end of the novel, when Vicky is rushing to the hospital to try to find her grandfather, who has been brought in because of a haemorrhage. This time, Vicky holds her, and during a seizure, Binnie dies. Binnie's death in Vicky's arms is the novel's climax, and severely traumatizes her. Ultimately, however, her newfound ability to communicate with and relate to dolphins – which corresponds to Drolet's fourth mode of coping with death, recognizing one's connection to the natural world – leads her to psychological and emotional healing, and helps her face death as a part of the life cycle rather than as something to be feared and shunned.

Some of the characters Vicky is closest to in the novel demonstrate radically different attitudes towards mortality and the afterlife. She has conversations about death with Zach, Adam, and Grandfather Eaton as she tries to sort through her own anxieties about it. In the process, she learns how Zach, Adam, and her Grandfather Eaton view death, and has to sift through which of those attitudes to death she can accept and which

[24] This is fully developed in L'Engle's first O'Keefe family novel, *The Arm of the Starfish* (1965).

she must reject as she tries to solidify her own thinking on the subject. Zach's views are largely negative, and L'Engle portrays him as unconcerned about his own and others' deaths because he doesn't believe in any kind of afterlife. He claims that death is preferable to life because it's utter annihilation, marking the end of all stress and pain. Adam's view is more one of questioning what might come after death – not knowing, or agnosticism, leads him to search for answers rather than to reject the possibility of there being any. Grandfather Eaton is a devout Christian clergyman, and he believes both in life after death and a resurrection. He also believes that death must be accepted during life, and that such acceptance can lead people to enjoy more satisfaction in life than if they were to reject death or fear it.

3.1.1 Zachary

In this novel, Zachary remains the nihilist, pessimist, and constant believer that everything is descending toward chaos whom we met in the earlier Austin novel *The Moon by Night* (L'Engle, 1963). Combine all this with a self-centredness that is characteristic of narcissism, and it is little wonder he finds life completely meaningless (1980a: 54) or that he "flirt[s] with death" (64). Zach lacks any real concern for – or social, emotional and psychological connection with – most of the people he meets (63), and nothing in the novel demonstrates that he has any deep emotional relationship with his ecosystem. Such a lack would certainly enhance his sense of being cut off and without purpose. Additionally, he has a death wish which he alternately attributes to his mother's death and to a congenital heart problem (64). He doesn't seem to care whether this attitude ends up destroying himself or anyone else (L'Engle, 1980a: 76). Instead of leading Zachary to try to make the most of the positive experiences in life, his lack of connection leads him to devalue his own life and those of others, and to negate their experiences (54-55). Unfortunately, it has been demonstrated in psychological studies that those who show such characteristics can indeed have a higher risk of suicidal or death-related tendencies. In fact, according to Elsa Ronningstam and John Maltsberger, Harvard-based researchers, narcissism is the personality disorder with the third highest retrospective diagnosis in cases of suicide, after depression and schizophrenia (1998: 261). They also point out that while depression may be part of the problem in narcissistic suicide cases, it doesn't have to be. Instead, it might be the result of a "specific type of self-directed aggression, the ego-syntonic sadism of malignant narcissism and the narcissistic rage arising from injuries to the self" (1998: 262). L'Engle hints that Zachary is depressive, but makes no specific statement about this in the

novel (L'Engle, 1980a: 302). His attempt to commit suicide seems both flashy and excessive (8, 56), and it's hard to tell from his actions and words if he sincerely wants to die or if he is simply trying to control other people through his histrionics (56). Ronningstam and Maltsberger (1998) examine non-depressive suicide attempts in clinically diagnosed narcissists, and one of the observations they make is that their patients "appear to have had no conscious intention to die, or at least their awareness of the deadly nature of their behavior was much diminished" (263). Sometimes Zachary speaks and acts as though he wants to die, but even more problematically, he seems to be trying to control those around him with his threats of suicide (L'Engle, 1980a: 61-62). If he keeps people around him constantly worried and confused about what he plans to do, he thinks he will have their undivided attention. This sounds very much like a patient Ronningstam and Maltsberger studied who tried to hang himself, expecting that his ex-girlfriend would dash to his rescue and then change her life plans to include him (1998: 264-65). Similarly, Zachary shows very little concern for how his actions might affect others and he certainly doesn't believe in life after death (L'Engle, 1980a: 55). Ultimately, it is highly likely that his attitudes are reflections of a belief that neither life nor death have any inherent meaning or purpose.

With no belief in ultra-long-term consequences (the kind that extend past death into another life, or that extend past one's death into the lives of those remaining behind), and no real sense of purpose, Zachary thinks he can control his dallying with death. He behaves as if death is a toy or a game that he can wrap up and put away whenever he feels like it. He will not acknowledge that his actions have an impact on others (L'Engle, 1980a: 55). This is demonstrated most clearly after a flying excursion Vicky takes with him. Zachary has been taking flying lessons and has convinced Vicky to go with him periodically. During this particular flight, he deliberately flies too close to a passenger plane and nearly causes an accident (305). As Zach tries to persuade Vicky that he really didn't mean anything by attempting to crash the plane, he says something very disturbing: "I'd never hurt anybody. Not on purpose. You know that." Vicky responds, "As Art said, if you keep on going this way, you're going to hurt somebody whether it's on purpose or not" (307). What is so strange about this exchange is that neither Vicky nor Zachary acknowledges that Zachary has already hurt someone by playing with death. The entire book starts out by exposing the consequences of Zachary's actions. His attempt to commit suicide led to Commander Rodney's death, so that Zach's actions have already impacted not only Commander Rodney, but Commander Rodney's family and friends, who now have to live with the fact that he is dead. No matter what Zachary believes about death or what comes

after death, his actions and beliefs have had adverse effects on others, and he completely ignores those consequences. This particular example also links Zachary's behaviour to the behaviours Ronningstam and Maltsberger (1998) observed in their non-depressive narcissistic patients who attempted suicide. These men seemed to be trying to control other people with their attempts at self-destruction or were constantly trying to "scare [them] or shake [them] up" (262, 264). Like these patients, Zach sees death merely as a manipulative tool rather than anything serious or lasting.

3.1.2 Adam

In contrast to Zachary, Adam Eddington, while also confused by the concept of death, demonstrates willingness to consider the possibility of life extending beyond it. This makes him more aware of and curious about the effects of dying. As his forename – Adam – suggests, he's a kind of "Everyman" in terms of his emerging understanding of and curiosity about mortality. He does not flirt with death or try to make other people believe that it might be a game. Instead, he views death as a necessary "letting go." He explains to Vicky, as he tries to assess how she feels about watching her grandfather die, "It's hard to let go anything we love. We live in a world which teaches us to clutch. But when we clutch we're left with a fistful of ashes" (L'Engle, 1980a: 117). "Clutch" can, in some circumstances, have connotations of selfishly grabbing and holding onto something without regard for how anyone else feels about the thing being taken away. It also suggests desperation in the person who refuses to let go. Adam views letting go, whether of an idea, a behaviour, a physical object, or in the case of death, a person's life, as a sign of maturity. It demonstrates recognition that our inherent connections with our ecosystem do not mean we have ownership. Instead, "letting go" shows an understanding of how all members of an ecosystem have their own perspectives on reality, their own life cycles and patterns that they need to follow. While an individual's perspective may be interwoven with those of others, the patterns of each perspective are never exactly the same. Death is somewhere in the cycle for all living things. Trying to alter the life cycle of another through clutching at them to try to stop them from dying shows selfishness and immaturity.

Adam's attitude toward death is further illustrated when he reveals that he has, like Zachary, inadvertently been the cause of someone else's death. His reaction, however, is very different from Zachary's, demonstrating both a greater maturity and a stronger realization of his embeddedness in the world around him. He is willing to entertain the

thought of *something* after death. This means that rather than flirting with death and refusing to accept its impact on anyone else, as Zachary does, Adam tries to understand what happens at death and after death (L'Engle, 1980a: 271). During Commander Rodney's funeral, he says to Vicky, "You know when you cut yourself really badly, it doesn't hurt at all for a while. You don't feel anything. Death—our reaction to death—is sort of like that. You don't feel anything at all. And then later on you begin to hurt" (L'Engle, 1980a: 13). Vicky comments, "He was speaking with a quiet conviction, as though experience had taught him what he was talking about" (13). Ecotherapist Howard Clinebell (1996) asserts that traumatic experiences such as Adam is hinting at can intensify existential anxiety. Any event that brings death into sharp focus for a person can trigger questions about death and an afterlife and bring into the forefront the constant "awareness that we are all mortal creatures" (110-11). Adam has been brought to this point psychologically and has learned that it's important to get through the numbness brought on by death, and into the pain that follows it.

This is illustrative of the importance many ecotherapists place on healing from losses such as death (Robinson, 2009: 26). Being allowed to grieve, uncontrollably if necessary, is an important part of resolving that emotion through fully experiencing the pain associated with the grief and loss so that a person can function in healthy ways again (Talpady, 2020: 69). Adam has learned that without experiencing the pain, you cannot move toward emotional healing. Through his grief over death, he has also been brought to question his own beliefs about what happens after death, a healthy questioning if it is allowed to proceed and is not ignored by those to whom a person may try to express the existential anxiety and questions about death.

When Adam feels he has become well-enough acquainted with Vicky, he opens up to her about his own experience with death. As a result, she better understands both his maturity and his intense desire to question what might follow death. Adam explains to Vicky that because he trusted someone he barely knew, his friend Joshua was killed trying to protect Adam and some information from Calvin O'Keefe which Adam was carrying (L'Engle, 1980a: 270). This is a reference to L'Engle's first O'Keefe family novel, *The Arm of the Starfish* (1965), in which Calvin O'Keefe, now a world-famous marine biologist, has completed highly sensitive research on human limb regeneration. Nefarious characters try to steal this information, which Adam is charged with delivering to Calvin's contacts in Lisbon, Portugal. In *A Ring of Endless Light,* Adam admits to Vicky that before Joshua was killed, he had never really thought about death or an afterlife, since he had no

reference point for either (L'Engle, 1980a: 271). Then he says, "If anybody'd asked me, I'd have said that death is death and that's that. But when Joshua died, I simply could not imagine him not being. It wasn't that I got religion, I just couldn't imagine all that was Joshua being lost forever" (271). In contrast to Zachary, then, Adam is willing to consider whether living creatures really might continue to exist in some way after they die. For Adam, too, "being" has the potential to include something other than the physical body. He is open to the idea that "all that was Joshua" includes a non-physical part of the body that doesn't die when the rest of the body ceases to exist. He is willing to entertain the thought that this non-physical part of his friend continues to exist somewhere, though he doesn't say anything about where he thinks this non-physical entity might have gone. He has refused, too, to think about what that part of a person might be, though he tells Vicky that "now I'm wondering again. Because of your grandfather. And because of the dolphins. And you" (271). Other beings in Adam's ecosystem have brought the issue of life after death back to the front of his mind. Consequently, he is considering the possibility that death is a movement from one state of being to another, rather than an end to all being. He no longer wishes to believe that death just suspends consciousness in a void, but as yet he has no context within which to accommodate this desire for post-mortem continuity.

3.1.3 Grandfather Eaton

Vicky's own questions and understanding about death grow and change over the summer, and Grandfather Eaton is a principal factor in how she starts to rethink death. As Vicky does for Adam, Grandfather Eaton demonstrates that necessary willingness to allow Vicky to question life, dying, death, and what comes after. The primary purpose of the Austin family's visit to Grandfather Eaton during this particular summer is to be with him when he dies. As a result, Vicky participates in the embodied experience of his death empathically, being with him constantly, observing the changes in him, and most of all, observing that Grandfather accepts death as a part of life. He does not fear death, as he is convinced that much of his joy in the everyday details of life stems from knowledge about and acceptance of death (L'Engle, 1980a: 64-65). Thus Vicky is able to witness healthy ways of transcending existential anxiety – such as meditation (162-63) – and of living life without fear. This highlights child psychologist Erik Erikson's observation that "healthy children will not fear life if their elders have integrity enough not to fear death" (1993: 269). Grandfather Eaton teaches Vicky many of his own attitudes toward death, thereby helping her transcend her fear of death and become psychologically healthy.

Specifically, Grandfather makes a very strong point of death being real as opposed to some kind of game (L'Engle, 1980a: 10-11). He emphasizes that death is a part of life not just in its place as an end of the mortal body, but also as a movement from one state of being into another. From his perspective, physical embodiment gives way to spiritual embodiment through resurrection (49). Additionally, Grandfather seems to embrace the idea of the importance of acknowledging and accepting death as an integral part of being able to assert the reality of life. Life is, it exists, it has meaning, Grandfather Eaton asserts, because of death. The living only know they are alive, only appreciate the concept of living, because they know that this physical, earthy part of existence ends (64-65). This implies that one way to accept the fact of death is to make the most of every experience available during life. Yes, death brings great grief, but ecotherapist Howard Clinebell suggests that "only those who can grieve effectively can enjoy such beauty fully because they know that it will soon pass" (1996: 110). The beauty experienced every day is enhanced by the knowledge of death. Death makes people more aware of the world around them because in it, the cycles of death after life are very clear.

Grandfather Eaton makes this same point, articulating the idea that humans would become very careless if they did not know that death was imminent. He tells Vicky,

> To live forever in this body would take away much of the joy of living, even if one didn't age but stayed young and vigorous. […] If we knew each morning that there was going to be another morning, and on and on and on, we'd tend not to notice the sunrise, or hear the birds, or the waves rolling into shore. We'd tend not to treasure our time with the people we love. Simply the awareness that our mortal lives had a beginning and will have an end enhances the quality of our living. Perhaps it's even more intense when we know that the termination of the body is near, but it shouldn't be. (L'Engle, 1980a: 64-65)

Grandfather Eaton's assessment of the importance of death forces hard thinking about the role of death. It is especially intriguing that he focuses so much on how awareness or lack of awareness of death impacts how humans interact with their ecosystems. He emphasizes that if people ignore death, if they try to think of death as never arriving, they have the potential to act in ways that show disregard for the world around them. Readers may extrapolate from this a confirmation of the fact that we share death with other species. Its constant presence in our lives forces us to be present in our lives, to hear and see with more attention because we recognize what is around us may be fleeting. Death is one of the life events that allows us to develop the deepest empathy with the rest of the living, organic world, because it is the one experience we know for certain we share with every living thing.

3.2 Outside the Normal Bounds of Communication

Grandfather Eaton, Zachary, and Adam's attitudes and thoughts about death provide a space and context for Vicky to consider her own pressing questions and anxieties. One of those questions, which seems to underlie her anxieties, is whether the living can communicate in some way with the dead. The imagery L'Engle uses in *A Ring of Endless Light* strongly suggests that kything is a way to cross the normal barriers of communication and form bridges not just between multiple species, but between the living and the dead. Vicky, Adam, and the dolphins enter into this form of communication. Since the focus of the novel is on Vicky's ability to learn this particular skill with dolphins, I will first try to articulate what makes Vicky's learning curve so much quicker and simpler than those of other characters. What emerges is that there are things she does, either consciously or unconsciously, that have prepared her to learn kything, including meditation and her lifelong engagement with reading and writing literature. These elements of Vicky's life open her mind to the possibilities of the unusual or unexpected. Combined, they help her build a compassionate relationship with the dolphins that allows her to overcome the trauma of death that she has continually experienced throughout this novel, as I will demonstrate in the next part of this chapter.

3.2.1 Meditation and Kything

What is it about Vicky that allows her to begin communicating with the dolphins so quickly through kything? What makes her a "dolphiny person" (L'Engle, 1980a: 14)? Drawing from symbolism linking dolphins and the dead (Douglas, 1929: 163), readers could infer that, in calling Vicky a "dolphiny person," L'Engle is suggesting that Vicky, too, will be able to learn some kind of access to the dead, presumably in the same way that dolphins do. L'Engle suggests that part of the answer to how Vicky has become a "dolphiny person" is that she has *unconsciously,* for most of her life, meditated. The practice of meditation has helped her think about life in ways that produce new understanding of the way reality can function. We saw this briefly demonstrated in *The Moon by Night*, when Vicky sits in Grandfather's Cove and loses herself in her surroundings. Significantly, L'Engle links being an artist to being able to meditate intuitively and to communicating beyond human boundaries. L'Engle implies that meditation can be viewed as important for helping a person overcome existential anxiety, presented in this novel as fear of death.

3.2.2 Meditation, Death, and the Natural World

Thinking about big life questions; becoming, in some inexplicable way, much more aware of one's unification with the world – these are reasons meditation is viewed as an important practice in areas such as ecopsychology and in overcoming psychological distress brought about by such events as death or other health crises. For instance, ecopsychologist Andy Fisher and ecotherapist Howard Clinebell both point toward meditation as a tool that people have found "to personally acquaint themselves with the psyche of nature" (Fisher, 2013: 41-42) and as "Another way to deepen earth bonding" and to be "nurtured by the aliveness of nature" (Clinebell, 1996: 181-82). Throughout this thesis, I have discussed the concept that ecopsychologists and ecotherapists operate from a premise that the Earth itself has a psyche or soul. I have also discussed various aspects of ecopsychology's premise that humans have a need to recollect their relationship with the world around them in order to maintain psychological and emotional health. Stewart and Haaga (2018), in ecopsychological research on mindfulness and human health (where mindfulness is being aware and observant of the things occurring in the present moment), emphasize that mindful behaviours such as meditation have "been shown to improve mood, well-being, health, and recovery times, while also decreasing pain and negative health symptoms," particularly when these practices include "[e]xposure to natural stimuli" (53). The importance of connection with the ecosystem and psychological healing can also be read as keys in L'Engle's description of how Vicky meditates. Perhaps one of the most telling aspects of the descriptions is a moment in which Grandfather Eaton explains his understanding of meditation to Vicky. He says, "You don't meditate *about*. […] You just meditate" (L'Engle, 1980a: 162-63). Meditation is a way of simply being and allowing events to occur around one without panicking. Fisher explains that it is important not to reject the ideas, feelings, emotions, desires, etc., that pass through one's mind while meditating, but instead to look at them and just let them be. He says, "By meditatively going into one's suffering one is supported by nature in going *through* that suffering, in widening out a ground of inner peacefulness and strength, or opening up a clear and loving space within which a continual stream of new phenomena may then enter, arise, or show themselves" (Fisher, 2013: 112-13). If people view dying not as a cessation, but rather as a step in a cycle during which the soul or mind is released from the physical body and goes somewhere else to continue existence, then meditation as "practice in dying" (L'Engle, 1980a: 163) has to refer to the kinds of meditation in which the mind and thoughts are no longer bound by the physical.

The idea of death, the experience of death, are faced as new phenomena that can be examined while in this state of non-judgment. This type of meditation seems common in many world traditions, such as Buddhism, Taoism, and Sufism (Islamic mysticism) (Mirdal, 2012: 1205); Jainism, in which asceticism combines meditation and yoga (Cort, 2002: 720); Christianity (Chaiwutikornwanich, 2015); Hinduism (Ball, 2015: 401); and Judaism (Stordalen, 2013). Meditation can be defined as "an attention-based technique for inner transformation" which can include "certain forms of ritual, prayer, and contemplation" (Eifring, 2016: 1). It may also be "unmediated," which defines practices of meditation that do not "[employ] tools such as recitation or visualization" (Eifring, 2013: 7) The idea of letting go of conscious thinking and allowing attention to centre beyond the immediate self is illustrated clearly when Grandfather Eaton asks Vicky what she does when she goes down to the beach to think (L'Engle, 1980a: 208), as we saw her do in *The Moon by Night*. She replies that she doesn't do anything but sit, and that the best times are not the times when she thinks, but when she moves into a space where she is immersed in her surroundings (209). But sometimes, she says, "it seems to go beyond that. […] It's hard to explain because it's beyond words. It's as though I'm out on the other side of myself […] And it's being part of everything, part of the rock and the sky and the sea and the wind and the rain and the sun and the stars" (209). Robert Greenway, considered a founder of ecopsychology, explains, "Practices such as meditation, when seriously undertaken, are explicitly designed to facilitate the arousal of nonegoic awareness" (1995: 133). One can read Vicky's descriptions of what meditation does for her in this way. She is drawn outside herself, her Ego, and the boundary between the self and the world she lives in dissolves. As she learns to immerse herself in this world, it prepares her to overcome death anxiety because she learns to face and embrace fear instead of rejecting it. As she moves through those emotions she is able to open up space for joy and hope.

This idea that meditation makes Vicky a part of her ecosystem helps the reader accept that she can learn about death and dying through meditating. Death is so much about a process of returning the body to its elements and thus reembodying it in a most intimate way with the environment. In this way, meditation becomes, Grandfather Eaton says, "practice in dying, […] a practice to be begun as early in life as possible" (L'Engle, 1980a: 163). If L'Engle thinks that meditation is practice in dying, then it implies that she thinks dying is something that moves the psyche out beyond immediate awareness. Perhaps that broader, unconscious sense of being attuned with so much of the environment is really what helps human beings, in particular, finally recognize how intrinsic the non-human world is to their ontological self. Certainly this is proposed in ecopsychology

literature. An interdisciplinary study published in the journal *Ecopsychology* and conducted by psychologist Christopher Wolsko and tourism/recreation professor Kreg Lindberg argued that "feeling connection with nature not only fulfills a sense of identity and community within a larger system of meaning but is also associated with direct positive affect derived from enjoyment of the natural world" (Wolsko and Lindberg, 2013: 82). Their research demonstrated repeatedly that "individuals who experience stronger feelings of connection with nature are particularly likely to enjoy greater psychological well-being" (88). One of their essential observations was that the feelings of connection with the ecosystem were strongest in those people who practiced what Wolsko and Lindberg called "appreciative outdoor recreational activities" (88), or activities which allow participants time "to enjoy and observe nature without substantial technological mediation" (82), which seemed to help participants increase mindfulness.

As we have seen, these traits of mindfulness and appreciative activities which connect a person to the ecosystem can be identified in Vicky's meditative techniques. Ultimately, these practices make her very aware of her place in the world and lead her to feel comfort and peace, to enjoy her experiences with her surroundings, and to overcome her fear of death. The discussion of meditation and dying implies that death, like meditation, is an expansion of our awareness. In this state of expanded awareness, humans are able to use their whole brain and comprehend even more than when their understanding seems limited by fear. It is important that L'Engle has Vicky say twice that she feels part of everything around her when she is sitting on the rock on her grandfather's beach (L'Engle, 1980a: 209). Later, Vicky is able to develop this same kind of connection with the dolphins, but at the moment it's important to note that her integration with the ecosystem includes the non-living. It is not just a sense of unity with other creatures who can think and feel. It is a link to all parts of the world. It even extends beyond Earth, to the stars. By breaking the bounds of earth, so to speak, meditation has the potential to stretch human consciousness into the realms of the dead, and is thus established, as Grandfather Eaton emphasizes, as "practice in dying."

In helping humans move their thinking into realms where the dead still exist, practices which can link people to their ecosystems, such as meditation, can provide ways for humans to move beyond the pain and suffering caused by events such as death (Clinebell, 1996: 262). The conversation about meditation between Vicky and Grandfather Eaton ends when her grandfather asks a specific question: "And you, Vicky? Are you still there?" Vicky thinks to herself, "No. Yes. How do you explain no and yes at the same

time?" She responds slowly, "I'm there—but it's as though I'm out on the other side of myself—I'm not in the way" (L'Engle, 1980a: 209). Her grandfather explains, "There's your answer […] That's meditation […] People like me spend years learning the techniques of meditation. But you're a poet, and poets are born knowing the language of angels" (210). He makes a careful and direct link between art and the ability to meditate. In calling it "the language of angels," Grandfather Eaton also implies that meditation and creativity come together to allow a person to better communicate outside the human spheres, with other living creatures, such as Vicky with the dolphins or Meg and Ananda in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*; with the non-living parts of the world, such as the Beasts of Ixchel communicating with the stars in *A Wrinkle in Time*; and with those who have died. Psychologists Richardson and Sheffield conducted an ecopsychological study in which they concluded "that those who value artistic experience and who are disposed to curiosity, imagination, reflection, and deep thinking have a stronger subjective connection to nature" (2015: 170-72). The ability to reflect, to think deeply, can be read clearly in Vicky's meditative practices. It is also easy to see in those meditative practices the bonding Vicky is creating with her surroundings. Meditation and creativity come together to help Vicky learn kything. Through the link Vicky creates with the dolphins by kything, she is able to overcome the terrible trauma associated with death.

3.2.3 Kything

As we saw earlier in relation to L'Engle's time novels, she calls non-verbal communication between people and others "kything." In *A Ring of Endless Light,* Vicky learns to kythe with dolphins, helping her progress from developing empathy with humans, as we saw in Chapter 2 above, to building a profound relationship with another species. As she learns this form of communication, she learns about how dolphins comprehend their world and how that interaction allows them to cope with difficult experiences. This developing understanding of another species allows Vicky to acknowledge and come to terms with the negative emotions she naturally feels as she tries to understand death. L'Engle tries to establish that Vicky is well-suited to make these connections with others in her world in the beginning scenes of the novel. As Vicky helps serve guests following Commander Rodney's funeral, she becomes acquainted with Adam Eddington. He explains that he has "an independent project going, on dolphins," during his summer at the Marine Biology Station on Seven Bay Island. Vicky excitedly declares, "I love dolphins! Though I've never met one personally, only at Sea World." Consequently, Adam asks if

she would "like to meet one." When she responds affirmatively, he says, "I think maybe I can arrange that. You strike me as being a dolphiny person" (L'Engle, 1980a: 14). That she "love[s] dolphins" and is viewed by Adam as "a dolphiny person" supports the idea that Vicky will be profoundly impacted by the dolphins she learns to communicate with. It introduces the probability that dolphins will play a significant role in how Vicky ultimately responds to the difficult experiences she encounters as a result of being surrounded by so much death throughout the novel.

But why dolphins? Why is it that L'Engle chooses to use dolphins as the species which helps Vicky learn about dying, death, and an afterlife? Research into dolphins symbolism provides insight. For instance, in Classical mythology, dolphins were viewed as "psychopomps," or as carriers of "the souls of the dead to the Blessed Isles" and have been found carved into funeral stones (Pilipović, 2004: 360). Connected with this imagery is the representation of dolphins carrying the Nereids, believed to accompany the dead "to the nether world" (Ridgway, 1970: 90). The sea mammals were also viewed as "symbols of salvation" (Pavlou, 2012: 517) and consequently of resurrection or regeneration (Creaser, 1985: 242). The Greek writer and historian Herodotus tells a story in which the poet Arion leaps into the sea and is rescued – saved – by dolphins, who bring him to shore for love of his singing (Redondo, 2015:70). Chevalier and Gheerbrant (1996) take this to mean that "Arion passes from this violent and anxious world to immortal salvation thanks to the mediation of the dolphins" (304). *The American Ecclesiastical Review* informs us that this myth of Arion was known in medieval Catholicism through the works of Ovid (Steinback, 1890: 116), illuminating one potential use of the reference to salvation, since dolphins may have been symbolic, in the medieval Church, of Christ crucified (Steinback, 1890: 119). Christ is thought to have overcome death through resurrection following his crucifixion. If L'Engle was aware of this symbolism in both Greek and Christian mythology, then it is appropriate that she should choose the dolphin to represent a way for Vicky to learn about how the dead fare and if there is an afterlife. The mythological link between the character of Arion and the dolphins may also have a bearing on L'Engle's choice.[25] Vicky is also a budding poet/author, like Arion, and this talent is presented by L'Engle as very important to Vicky's ability to kythe with the dolphins and overcome her anxieties about death. In an earlier Austin family novel, Vicky's Uncle Douglas tells her that she is able to "get right

[25] There is a strong likelihood that L'Engle was familiar with these myths, and possibly the symbolism associated with dolphins, as she not only mentions reading Greek and Roman mythology (Chase, 2001) but brings myth, mythology and the mythic into discussion in many of her nonfiction works (L'Engle, 1972; 1974; 1977; 1980b; 1985; 1988; 1997). Consequently, L'Engle scholars also reference myth in relation to their discussions of both her work and her life (Hettinga, 1993; Chase, 1995; Paterson, 1998; Marcus, 2012).

inside [others'] suffering, and it becomes your suffering too" because of her artistic personality (L'Engle, 1960: 30). This implies that an artist is more empathic than other people and therefore better able to communicate with them on an experiential rather than a surface level.

3.2.4 Learning to Kythe with Dolphins

As we have seen, dolphins are traditionally viewed as mythological transporters of souls from this life to the next, and meditation is, according to Grandfather Eaton, practice in dying. Art, such as literature, can open the mind to understanding a reality that extends beyond the physical, tangible world. And Vicky is a "dolphiny person"; she has apparently instinctively meditated for much of her life; and she has been actively engaged in reading and writing literature, particularly fantasy and fairy tales (L'Engle, 1980a: 238-39). She therefore has the tools for connecting with and understanding a unique part of her ecosystem/ecosphere: death and the afterlife, and she will do so through her relationship with the dolphins.

Like her practices of meditation (mental) and reading and writing (mental, visual, tactile), there is a blend of sensory and psychological progression as Vicky learns to kythe with the dolphins. For Vicky it involves touch, sound, and the psyche. Her first encounter with the dolphins in the open sea mixes physical touch and intuition, or "knowing," as communication with learning to kythe (L'Engle, 1980a: 106). At first, Vicky's ability to communicate with the dolphins (Basil and eventually his mate, Norberta, and child Njord) is a combination of this "knowing" and Basil's body language. She can almost "hear" in her mind what Basil wants her to do, but Basil helps her learn this partly by bumping into her gently and rolling over (106-07). However, the communication skills progress rapidly, and very soon Vicky is able to use mental images to reach the dolphins.

This method of communication continues to become more sophisticated as Vicky gets further acquainted with the dolphins, bringing it more and more into the realm of the mind. Vicky says, "I closed my eyes, not so much against the radiant blue as against distractions, and imaged Basil. In my mind's eye I saw him clearly, butting against me and asking me to scratch his chest." She goes on, "Then I imaged Basil and Norberta leaping together, coming to swim one on each side of Adam" (182). At this point, she communicates with the dolphins entirely in mental pictures, rather than articulating words in her mind. And they come (182). The level at which the dolphins are able to

communicate mentally is equated with how Vicky responds to literature, suggesting a connection between the levels of the psyche at which deep communication with the ecosystem and deep involvement with reading or writing literature take place.

These tools which she employs in order to learn kything have mostly been developed as she spends time outdoors. They are what Wolsko and Lindberg (2013) call "appreciative outdoor recreational activities," or activities during which the participant spends time observing his or her surroundings while participating in something like outdoor hiking, meditation, swimming, etc (87-88). Vicky has engaged directly with nature through the activities which have helped her learn to kythe, and she has gone more slowly and has been able to internalize more of what's in her ecosystem. As a result, Vicky's ability to kythe with the dolphins can also be read as one of Wolsko and Lindberg's "appreciative" activities. It becomes clear that it could fit into the idea of a "bi-directional relationship between mindfulness and nature exposure" (mindfulness contributes to more interest in nature exposure and nature exposure increases mindfulness). Wolsko and Lindberg argue that this relationship can illustrate "a deep fascination with one's present experience, relief from egocentric preoccupations, and connection with phenomena outside of one's independent self" (2013: 89). The ability to kythe is developed in part by Vicky's practices of meditation, and the actual process of kything demonstrates how she develops very unique connections and communication skills that take her outside of her own ego. These skills eventually lead her to overcome her fear of death and learn to see it as a healthy part of life instead of an abrupt end to being. This is demonstrated further when she is not only able to call the dolphins mentally, but to ask them questions about concepts such as death and time.

Vicky's kything with the dolphins becomes increasingly complex as the novel progresses. Eventually, she is able to silently ask them to tell her about death and the afterlife, including how human perception of time as linear may interfere with human ability to comprehend death and the afterlife. After working on simple requests, such as cartwheels, swimming a certain way, and playing particular games during their meetings with the dolphins, Adam finally asks Vicky to "try something a little more subtle." She asks an existential question: "*Is Ynid's baby all right? (Is Commander Rodney all right? Is my grandfather all right? Am I? Is it all right?)*." This time, Basil responds to her in sound: he "pulled himself up out of the water and a series of sounds came from him, singing sounds. And what it reminded me of was Grandfather standing by Commander Rodney's open grave and saying those terrible words ["You are dust, and to dust you shall return"

(10)] and then crying out, full of joy, *Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!*" (L"Engle, 1980a: 243). All three of the beings Vicky asks Basil about either have died or are going to die very soon. In asking this question, Vicky is both demonstrating her sense of existential anxiety about death and assumes that the dolphins have some way of resolving that anxiety for her because they know what happens after death. This leads readers back to the earlier discussion about the role of dolphins in the mythological traditions of many areas of the world: that they conduct souls between this life and the next. Basil's answer, interpreted as an "Alleluia" song, refers readers to the concept that the souls of the dead go from this life into a life in the realm of deity. "Alleluia" means "praise the Lord" (OED) and "has always been connected with song and praise" (Werner, 1945-46: 323), and when used at "the end of a doxology," can "[signify] a confirmation of faith in the deity" (324). Through having Basil demonstrate a vocal that is reminiscent of an alleluia, the text suggests that Basil knows that the souls of the dead have been carried into a place where they are cared for by a divine being. It is not directly stated whether Basil or any of his pod have in fact acted as couriers for the souls of the dead, but there is of course the fact that dolphins live between two elements, water and air, and this in-between status may be a hint that they can move, spiritually, between other worlds as well.

Intriguingly, Vicky appears to be better able to get detailed images from Norberta than from Basil. While her communication with Basil develops to the same mental level, for the most part Basil only seems to sing to and play with her. Contrastingly, Norberta responds with more complete and in-depth communication to Vicky's existential queries. For instance, after one work/play session, Adam, the scientist seeking to understand the nuances of communication and understanding dolphins are capable of, asks Vicky, the poet, to ask Norberta "some serious questions" (L'Engle, 1980a: 273). This time, Vicky moves toward questions that couple time and existence: "*Dearest Norberta and Njord. Do you live in the now, or do you project into the future, the way I do, far too often?*" (274). The question implies that living in the now makes one better able to accept death not as an end, but as a step along the way. Projecting into the future, on the other hand, creates fear of death, because humans can't physically see past death to anything beyond. While many people participate in traditions that accept the idea of an afterlife, they are still in the dark on what it will actually be like when they get there. This existential anxiety can lead humans to feel unable to acknowledge their embeddedness in the environment, because to do so would mean they would have to embrace death. Instead, a stronger psychological bond with their planet could allow humans to be less afraid of death because they would more clearly see the ever-present interaction between birth, life, and death. They would

have a broader perspective on the cyclical nature of these three things, and be better able to accept that if they truly are a cycle, this means that some kind of life emerges and continues after death.

John Muir, the renowned naturalist, believed that this kind of bond with the ecosystem would inevitably lead to overcoming death anxiety. He said, "On no subject are our ideas more warped and pitiable than on death." He continued,

> Let children walk with nature, let them see the beautiful blendings and communions of death and life, their joyous inseparable unity, as taught in the woods and meadows, plains and mountains and streams of our blessed star, and they will learn that death is stingless indeed, and as beautiful as life, and that the grave has no victory, for it never fights. All is divine harmony. (qtd. in Clinebell, 1996: 111)

Muir's words resonate with L'Engle's own belief in the interrelatedness between all parts of what she calls creation (1977). Recognition of that harmony may allow humans to see the beauty in the changing leaves and the stripped branches of autumn, the snows and dead earth of winter. They will learn to see meaning and purpose in the annual cycle of birth, life, age, and death, with rebirth each spring.

Without recognizing that cycle, humans are weighted down by death and grief, the way Vicky feels for much of the summer or, like Zach, are buried in self. With eyes to see the cycles, humans may be able to perceive the constant presence of things, whether they are embodied or not. Clinebell (1996) argues that bonding with the ecosystem during such "existential crises and despairing times" (111) as Vicky is having also helps create a "school" (111) for the participant(s). In this "school," participants' deliberate choice to interact with the environment teaches a "different perspective" on death, one in which "they are no longer devastated or immobilized' by grief as a result of their engagement with the life cycles of other parts of the environment, such as plants or animals (111-12). Bearing in mind that such bonding has many methods, including, for Vicky, meditation and creativity that lead to kything, it becomes a learning experience that leads to a deeper understanding of the ecosystem for Vicky. She says she becomes "part of everything, part of the rock and the sky and the sea and the wind and the rain and the sun and the stars" (L'Engle, 1980a: 209). She becomes more aware of and understanding of her embeddedness in the ecosystem. This leads to healing for her anxieties and a growing ability to move through the pain of watching death and feeling powerless against it, to learning and gaining strength from the experience.

Vicky's questions to the dolphins also focus on the nature of time, and her ruminations over this subject may be factors in her continued fears about existence. Clinebell (1996) argues that in "some aware people, existential anxiety is triggered when they confront the profound (though usually ignored) mystery of time—the experience of the momentary present connecting the forever-past and the unknown future" (111). Moving in and out of material, earth-bound, linear time into a constant present seems to be a continuing part of Vicky's experience of death. The dolphins live in this continual present all the time, but for them it isn't a cause of existential anxiety. What L'Engle suggests, then, is that grief about death, while the dolphins feel it, is not coincident with anxiety, worry, or stress about death and its imminence. She implies that, in the world of this novel, the dolphins connect with the idea that the soul of a living thing continues in the "now" in which they live. Humans, however, are not as capable of accepting this idea that souls are still present after death, as indicated by Vicky's questions about whether the dead and dying are "all right" and about the nature of time. Nonetheless, Vicky is being taught through all the different ways in which she finds she can "practice" dying. She moves outside the limits of mortal body and time through meditation, reading and writing, and now kything.

In response to Vicky's questions, Norberta gives her a series of images, which Vicky says "came flashing across the back of my eyes, in the dream part of my head" (L'Engle, 1980a: 274). That Norberta and Vicky kythe using the "dream part" of Vicky's mind suggests that this type of communication takes place in the collective unconscious, where humans and, ecopsychologists would argue, non-humans can access symbols which have shared meaning (as in Jung's archetypes). This also links to the way Vicky described how she concentrates on calling Basil and Norberta using the same mental techniques she uses to write and read. Calling on these techniques, Vicky lists the images in a kind of free-verse poetic form:

> The ocean.
> Rain.
> A rainbow, glittering with rain.
> Snow, falling in great white blossoms to disappear as it touched the sea.
> And then the snow turned to stars, stars in the daytime, drenched in sunlight, becoming sunlight.
> and the sunlight was the swirling movement of a galaxy
> and the ocean caught the light and was part of the galaxy
> and the stars of the galaxies lifted butterfly wings and flew together, dancing. (274)

L'Engle gives very few clues as to how a reader could interpret this "poem." However, almost every image which Norberta shows Vicky is in some way connected to communication between the living and the dead, the souls of the dead, communication between humans and deity, or some form of meditative contemplation. It is also important that, later on, when Vicky tries to tell Adam, she explains, "their time and ours is completely different." He asks her to kythe Norberta's message to him, and then declares, "Non-linear time […] She was trying to tell you about non-linear time" (L'Engle, 1980a: 275). Vicky thinks about Adam's description of non-linear time as a tree between whose branches we can traverse, and she replies, "Do you mean, maybe for dolphins time is less—less restricted and limited than it is for us?" (276). This sounds very much like L'Engle's "Kairos," or "Kairotic time," described in chapter 2 above as unbounded time. L'Engle also calls this "God's time" and says it can only be "understood […] and recognized […] by anamnesis when we are back in time again" (1977: 17). For L'Engle, a Christian, God's time is the time in which souls live both before birth and after death. If L'Engle is implying, as seems to be the case, that the dolphins live in this time, then this connects the dolphins to the time in which the dead exist after death. It strongly suggests that indeed, this message from the dolphins may be read as Norberta's attempt to help Vicky understand death and the afterlife.

Ecocritic and Pacifica Graduate Institute professor Susan Rowland (2012) suggests that language can never be used objectively because humans must always participate in choosing what they perceive as the right metaphor to convey what they intend as meaning (16). She also proposes that "Language shapes our relation to the world; it is not a neutral medium" (38). In other words, an individual will not choose the exact same words to describe something as will another individual. As we read the images that Norberta conveys to Vicky, we can read into them the sense of reality that *Norberta* in particular wishes to show Vicky. A different dolphin might choose to show her different images in response to her questions, or even be unable to convey images that Vicky could grasp, as Njord seems unable to do (L'Engle, 1980a: 274). Ultimately, however, it must be acknowledged that the symbols chosen as the images Vicky sees are L'Engle's choices, with L'Engle's biases and interests inherent in the choices. She seems to want to encourage readers to consider the many ways in which Vicky shares experience with the dolphins, as the images are of natural elements with which both are familiar. However, L'Engle does not specifically define or interpret the images she chooses, instead leaving the reader to examine and consider possible meanings for the symbols which could connect them to her inference that they are about a different kind of time in which dolphins, gods, and the souls

of the dead exist. This mutual familiarity enhances the relationship between Vicky and Norberta and improves Vicky's ability to develop empathy with creatures so different from herself.

The choice of images also conveys the concept of death, again a shared experience between the humans and the dolphins. Once the dolphins are able to convey a sense of companionship to Vicky, she is able to face and overcome her fear of death. The implications behind combining this with Vicky's writing is that art is part of what makes her able to understand the images and symbols since a writer, or any artist, uses his or her medium to create imagery and explore reality and its meaning through the images. Again, it is also important to look back to the emphasis given to Vicky's reading and writing not just any genre, but fantasy, fairy tales, and poetry (L'Engle, 1980a: 199, 238-39, 249). These genres have to use imagery and metaphor even more extensively than other, more "realistic" types of artwork, because they often take the reader into places that can seem very different from the reader's world. But these alternate portrayals can reveal facets of the world outside the book. They might give the reader an opportunity to explore what embeddedness in an ecosystem can look like, and to learn how it can help with overcoming existential anxiety. The symbols that Norberta chooses to show Vicky take her deep into the cycles of life and the nature of death, frequently presenting metaphors for an afterlife.

In fact, the progression of images follows the pattern of the life and death cycles. Life before birth is suggested by the ocean and the rain. The ocean symbolizes many things, including the source of life (Solomon, 1970: 41n46), and is "central to regeneration" (Thi Dung, 2018: 28). The ocean's relationship to primeval life links it to rain, and both, as water, are associated with predominantly female symbolism (Ferro-Luzzi et al., 1980: 48). Rain is also strongly connected to life through fertility symbolism (Müller and Kruger, 2013: 151), including in both ancient and modern Greek cultures, in which "rain-making rituals represent fertility" (Håland, 2001: 197). It is also interpreted as a communicative link between the psyche and the immortal: "What comes down to Earth from Heaven is spiritual fertility, light and spiritual influences as well" (Chevalier and Gheerbrant, 1996: 782). Showing Vicky rain immediately after showing her the ocean might suggest that Norberta is presenting her with a symbol of the generative processes of conception and foetal development. Reading these images in connection with the womb and fertility also encourages a unique perspective on how L'Engle portrays the developing empathy between Vicky and Norberta, because these processes are so unique to the biologically female body. At one point, Adam states to Vicky that the "dolphins come

more quickly and respond more fully to you" (L'Engle, 1980a: 239). One of the reasons for a rapid and strong connection between Vicky and Norberta may be exclusively gendered experiences. Only Vicky and Norberta, out of the dolphins and humans Vicky builds relationships with throughout this novel, could directly experience pregnancy and childbirth. Basil and Njord, Adam, Grandfather, Zachary – all male – will never be able to share this experience in the way that Vicky and Norberta might. This hints that L'Engle has Norberta share these birth/life images with Vicky because this understanding and a very unique shared embodied experience distinctively situate Norberta to help Vicky gain a depth of perspective on the life cycle and the role of death.

The rest of Norberta's images contain symbolism connecting them to death and the possibility of an afterlife, as well as hinting at communication with the dead. Through these other images, Norberta could be letting Vicky know that she, Njord, and Basil have access to such communication. The image of a rainbow suggests this, and reminds readers of the symbolism that dolphins guide the dead to the afterlife: Rainbows are "a bridge to the heavens" – they are ways for people to travel to the other world and have been evidenced in traditions such as Mesopotamian, Algerian, and even more recently in Constantino Brumidi's painting, *Apotheosis of George Washington* (Lee and Fraser, 2001: 3-4, 14). They are also a symbol of communication from the gods in some traditions, including Byzantine, Islamic, and Judaeo-Christian (Laderman, 2018: 10, 13), where the rainbow is considered to be a message from God that Earth will never again be completely destroyed by water (Genesis 9:11-17 KJV). The rainbow as a symbol of connection between earth and the supernatural occurs in many other cultures around the world, including in Norse (Flom, 1939: 154); Japanese (Witzel, 2015: 22); Polynesian (Chadwick, 1930: 430); Greek (Hooykaas, 1956: 291); and Indonesian (294). The origin of rainbows might evoke additional links between life and death: the rainbow forms when sunlight shines through raindrops. If rain is seen as a symbol of fertility, the conjunction of these two things might demonstrate the fecundity that can be found through death, when the material body decomposes. Through this process of decay, the body literally becomes a part of its environment and provides the nurturing material necessary for other life to generate and thrive. In this way, death itself almost becomes a form of afterlife. At the very least, the reintegration of the physical body with the earth could be interpreted as both a "creative" legacy and as evidence of regeneration, both concepts of an afterlife as evidenced by Drolet's (1990) discussion of Lifton's symbolic immortality idea.

The cyclical patterns evoked by birth, death, and regeneration as symbolized above imply a kind of "eternal" perspective of time, probably L'Engle's "Kairos," further tying Norberta's images into each other. Snow has links to both death and the complex nature of time. *The Book of Symbols* records that in some artwork, such as 18th-19th century Japanese artist Utagawa Hiroshige's "Snow Falling on a Town," "the midair suspension of snowflakes suggests an almost magical suspension of time" (Ronnberg and Martin, 2010: 78). Snow is also obviously seen as a harbinger of winter and therefore of death, as well as a reminder that after winter comes spring/rebirth (78). Its connection to timelessness elicits thoughts of an infinite existence after death, whether that be literal, if one believes in a soul, or figurative, if one instead looks to memories of a person or thing. Thinking about snow as representative of timelessness also suggests a connection to meditation, which was demonstrated above as one of Vicky's specific practices. Thus the snow also serves to remind Vicky that finding ways to step outside the bounds of time is an important factor in how she learns to transcend existential anxiety.

Stars, like snowflakes or sand or leaves, are assumed to be infinite in their variety, just as many people might perceive the many different things that make up the world around them. Stars, along with the sun, which is another of Norberta's images, are symbols of light. In some Central African traditions, stars painted on tombstones appear to "evoke images of the ancestral world," presumably signifying the souls of the ancestors (Denbow, 1999: 410), while in some of the cultures of Indonesia, the dead are assumed to eventually become "one with the […] stars, and the heavens" (Waterston, 1988: 39). In ancient and modern Guatemalan folklore, "[the] belief that human souls become stars after death is still present" (Mazariegos, 2006: 46); and some arctic shamanistic beliefs say that the North Star is a place where multiple worlds are linked (Bogoras, 1909: 307). The sun's symbolism revolves around how it represents a supreme god (Kesser, 1962: 112); and is "the source of light, sight, and the case of grown in nature, the cause of hours, seasons, months, and years, without which human life were not possible" (Notopoulos, 1944: 165). Both symbols seem to be used to round out the life cycle that L'Engle is implying in these images. If stars represent souls and the sun represents a deity in L'Engle's perspective, these images suggest an afterlife that is full of light and includes an innumerable number of beings. L'Engle suggests, through Norbert's images, as she has with earlier experiences Vicky shares with the dolphins, that Norberta has knowledge of an afterlife. This implies that, at least in the universe of the Austin family novels, the Time novels, and the O'Keefe family novels, all living things may go to an afterlife when they die, regardless of species.

Finally, Norberta shows Vicky images of the stars and galaxies like butterflies, flying and dancing in unison (L'Engle, 1980a: 274). In some cultural traditions, such as Chinese, for instance, people may have believed that "a human being could be transformed into a butterfly in the states of death or dreaming." The idea of the "transformable self of humans," or the soul, symbolized by the butterfly also occurs in Greek and Roman traditions, in Japanese Noh drama, in Māori belief, and in Mesoamerica (Yao, 2013: 513-14). Over and over again, the butterfly is connected with the soul: in fact, in some languages, the words for butterfly and the soul are the same (514). Its change from caterpillar to chrysalis to butterfly has also come to signify rebirth (López and Vallín, 2021: 250) or resurrection (Sax, 2001: 52), which may be read to mean that the life of the soul extends indefinitely. Joined with the other images, the butterflies move L'Engle's philosophizing from suggesting that the immaterial portion of a living creature continues to exist following death, to hinting that there might eventually be some type of resurrection and immortality which includes a new and perfected material body.

Joining the image of the butterflies with images of galaxies may be L'Engle's way of proposing that the cycle Norberta shows Vicky is timeless: it repeats and repeats for any and every living organism throughout the universe, unbound by planetary, chronological time. L'Engle (1980a) references "the swirling movement of a galaxy" (274), so she may be hinting that the cycle perpetuates itself for non-living elements of the universe, as symbolized by a galaxy's spiral shape. According to Ronnberg and Martin (2010), the spiral is "the most widespread shape found in the natural world" and represents "an archetypal path of growth, transformation and psychological or spiritual journey." These authors also argue that the spiral is "the path that resolves conflict, allowing for balanced movement and natural unfolding; thus harmonious transformation can proceed" (718). Such harmony is at the end of Vicky's "poem," when "the stars of the galaxies lifted butterfly wings and flew together, dancing" (L'Engle, 1980a: 274). Together, the images Norberta gives Vicky through their kything imply shared knowledge and experience of life cycles. This empathic interconnectedness becomes paramount in Vicky's psychological healing process as she continues to resolve the existential anxiety she experiences regarding death.

Vicky also learns, unexpectedly, that she can communicate with Adam in the same way she talks to Basil, Norberta, and Njord, when she tells him, in her mind, to do a somersault and he immediately responds (L'Engle, 1980a: 263-64). This extended ability to kythe with Adam allows Vicky to transfer to him some of the information she receives

when Norberta tries to show her the "now" in which dolphins live and the pattern that embraces all ecosystems. The experience Vicky has of Norberta transferring symbolic images to her "did something to [her] understanding of time, so that [she] saw that it was quite different from the one-way road which was all [she] knew" (274-75). When Adam receives the images from Vicky, he tells her, "Non-linear time […] She was trying to tell you about non-linear time" (275). The dolphins have perspective on life in which events occur, not exactly simultaneously, but in a continual present, that non-linear time which L'Engle defines as "Kairotic," or eternally present. This, too, connects with the way the symbolism of all the images is joined so closely to the concepts of an afterlife and communication with the dead. If time is not linear, L'Engle could be suggesting that the times of humans, non-humans, and the dead can overlap and cross each other in multiple ways, allowing for many points at which communication becomes more plausible. All parts of an environment, organic and non-organic, material and immaterial – even time – can come together to create a space in which shared experiences, between species, between the living and the dead, become possible.

3.3 Healing with Dolphins

Through examining Vicky's ability to kythe with the dolphins and through trying to understand how the dolphins' perspective on time suggests possibilities for an afterlife in L'Engle's fantasy universe, readers may be able to reimagine how humans could develop deeper empathy with non-humans. This understanding is an essential tenet of ecopsychology. In addition to allowing humans to recognize when the ecosystem is healthy or suffering, ecopsychology's aims are to remind humans that they are, from birth, in a profound relationship with the world around them. Too often, humans instead reject that implicit relationship, thereby losing empathy and understanding (Clinebell, 1996: 142). If humans see only this split between themselves and the rest of the world, then the "fear of our future death derives in fact from this implicit dread or more basic anxiety of being suspended over the abyss at every present moment" (Fisher, 2013: 97). Some people may assume that what follows death is emptiness, a cessation of being, because of the implicit belief that if a thing is intangible it must not exist. However, if humans are taught to recognize their inherent relationship with the world, this relationship becomes a source of healing and mental health, a source of strength for overcoming everyday challenges.

Particularly, it becomes a key to overcoming that fear of death and the abyss of nothingness because it overcomes the misconception that the ecosystem is lost to us. This equation of human health and interconnection with the ecosystem recurs throughout the literature of ecopsychology, and we have seen that it emerges in *A Ring of Endless Light* in fascinating ways. In addition to learning about the connections between all parts of an ecosphere and about how communication with her non-human associates can help her understand the challenges she's facing, such as her existential anxiety, Vicky observes the way the dolphins interact with each other. She thereby learns how humans can interact with dolphins in order to receive healing in times of great mental or physical distress. She learns that the dolphins' view of time, which was discussed briefly above, can contribute to their ability to help humans resolve psychological conflict that surrounds traumas like death. Ultimately, she herself is healed emotionally because of her ability to interact with the dolphins.

3.3.1 How Dolphins Support Others

Just before Vicky meets Basil, Adam takes her to the dolphin pens at his work, where she helps him feed Una and Nini. She also meets three other dolphins, two unnamed, and one called Ynid. Ynid, Adam tells her, is pregnant but will need the two unnamed dolphins during her delivery (L'Engle, 1980a: 97-98). This grouping, of two dolphins set to help a third, becomes very important later in the novel. It is the strongest demonstration of how interconnectedness is an essential aspect of relationships. It seems unnecessary to point out that dolphins live in complete interconnectedness with each other and with their environment. Such an obvious statement about animals might easily be brushed over. However, it's an extremely important part of this novel because it helps readers keep in mind that humans are in many ways not the central focus in the relationship between humans and dolphins in this book. In some ways, the dolphins are even more important to the emotional and psychological meaning of the novel, and they are potentially more intelligent than the humans with whom they interact.

Through demonstrating how they interact with each other, the dolphins teach Vicky and Adam about the strengthening and healing aspects of being in an equal community. They epitomize what ecopsychologists hope to see happening through helping humans develop empathy for the world: overcoming the dualistic splits between human and nature, mind and body, life and death, etc. In the world of this novel, the dolphins understand that

all life tends toward death. They know that death is not an end but a way to recover a more profound relationship with nature, as death leads to the reintegration of the physical body with the elements. They are also able to teach Vicky and Adam more about time in ways that help them see the importance of living in the now instead of in the future or in the past. They teach the humans that living now helps humans develop greater empathy for nonhumans and to overcome fear of death.

When Adam takes Vicky to see Basil for a second time, Vicky can tell Adam is bothered and upset. She doesn't find out till later that it is over Ynid's calf, who is dying from a congenital heart defect. However, Basil tells Vicky, through kything, "that he was trying to make us laugh because something was wrong," and Vicky recognizes that "[s]omehow or other Basil knew that something was wrong, knew without words far more about whatever was troubling Adam than I knew" (L'Engle, 1980a: 159). At first, Basil tries to comfort Adam by playing, but Adam garners more solace from physical touch than from Basil's tricks or jokes. When Basil's presence alone isn't enough to help Adam, the dolphin "submerged, and reappeared far from us, leaping against the horizon. And then another dolphin was leaping with Basil, in unison, the two together in perfect rhythm, like ballet dancers" (159). Both dolphins come back and continue playing with Adam to try to make him laugh. Vicky says, "And it was as though I heard Basil telling me: *A good laugh heals a lot of hurts*" (159-60). Then the dolphins teach Vicky and Adam about how they support each other in difficult circumstances, exhibiting the key role that interconnectedness plays in dolphins' relationships, specifically with each other. Vicky says, "Then the two of them swam, one on each side of Adam, as though holding him against whatever it was that was hurting him. It couldn't have been for more than a few seconds, though it seemed longer, like time out of time" (160). This pairing of two dolphins "surrounding" a third creature provides a way for the dolphins to convey both physical and psychological assistance to the one in need. Through "carrying" Adam between them, the dolphins give him a physical demonstration that they care about his pain and want to help him move through it to a place where he can endure it on his own. The sense that time has stopped, or that somehow this contact with the dolphins has taken Adam and Vicky outside of time, while the dolphins "hold" Adam implies that "now" can be just as long as it has to be in order for healing to begin. It also shows that the dolphins understand that there are both physical and psychological aspects of healing an individual from pain. Through swimming with another creature, the dolphins provide the physical aspects of healing, and through kything with that creature, in the way that they kythe with

Vicky to tell her that laughter heals, they show that they understand that healing must also reach into the psyche in order to be complete.

Lest readers question L'Engle's choice to have Basil and Norberta use this physical holding and psychological knowing as aspects of healing another, L'Engle shows two dolphins doing the same thing for another dolphin, underscoring that this is how she chooses to show dolphins interacting with each other in their own communities. When Vicky and Adam return from their encounter with Basil and Norberta, they find that Ynid's baby has died. The attending dolphins do the same for her that Basil and Norberta did for Adam: "Ynid was swimming in slow circles, carrying a tiny, motionless dolphin on her back. The two midwives swam beside her, pressing close against her as the two dolphins had swum with Adam" (L'Engle, 1980a: 161). The one thing L'Engle never does in the novel is specifically state whether she is assuming that this grief support is an instinctive or a learned behaviour for the dolphins. There is certainly observed evidence of dolphins helping to carry and hold an injured dolphin at the water's surface so the animal can breathe (Kuczaj et al., 2015: 290, 296), but using this technique as a method of emotional support seems to be L'Engle's interpretation. Behaviours can be passed along to subsequent generations, so readers can't assume one or the other. What is clear is that L'Engle wants readers to interpret this as a behaviour that dolphins engage in frequently as they interact with one another emotionally, to heal psychological and emotional wounding, not just to help an animal with physical injuries. It is an important factor in teaching the reader that L'Engle's dolphins act in community with one another and with others (in this case humans) to get through the grief of death.

3.3.2 "Deep Healing" for Vicky

But Vicky herself has not yet experienced "deep healing" through contact with her ecosystem, as Adam and Ynid have. She has only seen how it might work for others. As the story resolves itself, she needs the deepest healing through contact with the dolphins. On a trip Vicky and her friend Leo (Commander Rodney's oldest son) make to the hospital on the mainland to pick up blood for a transfusion for Vicky's grandfather, Vicky makes friends with a little girl called Binnie (L'Engle, 1980a: 282-83). Vicky learns that Binnie is very ill and that her illness is complicated by seizures and by a father who sees medication as against his religion (283). At the end of the novel, Binnie unexpectedly becomes Vicky's biggest challenge for the summer. While on a later date with Zach, Vicky learns

that her grandfather has been rushed to the mainland hospital following a haemorrhage (310). When she and Zach arrive at the hospital to try to find Vicky's parents and grandfather, Vicky sees Grace, Binnie's mother, carrying Binnie into the hospital. The little girl is unconscious after a seizure. While Binnie's mother tries to find a nurse, Vicky holds Binnie. As Vicky is holding the little girl, she says, "the child stirred in my arms and strange animal sounds came out of her throat and her legs began to flail" (313). The seizure becomes worse and worse, and Binnie passes out (313-14). Vicky, still holding the little girl, says, "There was blood on her teeth, her lips. Her mouth closed, then opened again in a tiny sigh. The heaviness of her body became a different heaviness, although she had not moved […] I did not need anyone to tell me that Binnie was dead" (315). The chapter ends with Vicky saying, "I, too, screamed, but mine was an interior scream, because there was no sound" (315). Vicky experiences deep psychological wounding as a result of holding Binnie while the little girl dies. This wound takes form through descriptions of a pattern of darkness and light.

Vicky's negative response to Binnie's death and her placement in such direct contact with the question of death is illustrated first with darkness. "The darkness closed in," she tells us (L'Engle, 1980a: 316). "There was no light. The darkness was deep and there was no dazzle" (317). Vicky seems to have been plunged into Zach's world of nihilism and hopelessness when brought face-to-face with her utter powerlessness over death. But even here, readers can learn. It's important to realize that going through psychological or emotional darkness is a process that everyone faces, and that it is an integral part of being. Both psychological darkness and despair and psychological light, understanding, and hope combine to help form a whole and healthy identity for a person. Vicky learns this as she finds she cannot come out of the darkness prematurely by herself. She must go all the way through it, and finds that while she is in the middle of the experience, even spiritual light "burns, burns" (1980a: 326). She has to connect with her whole ecosystem before she can make sense of the darkness and emerge from it. And the way in which she first has to connect with the whole ecosystem is to face death and accept it. Facing death and accepting it, as Vicky is being forced to do, can lead to humans feeling more satisfaction in life. It helps them push away the fear and the darkness that are normally associated with death. Joy is in part created by the knowledge that humans are connected to everything with which they interact.

The connections start with Adam. Vicky's internal scream after Binnie dies serves as a kythe to him, a call for help that Vicky doesn't realize she's made. She recalls that,

while at the hospital, “I closed my eyes. I didn’t hear what any of the voices said. Then my hands were held firmly. Not my parents’ hands. Adam. ‘You called me,’ he said” (L’Engle, 1980a: 319). Adam is the first person Vicky turns to in her psychological distress, demonstrating the strong connection that has been formed between them as they have learned both to talk with the dolphins and how to moderate their non-verbal communication with each other. For a little while it even seems that Vicky may be able to come out of the darkness just because Adam has arrived after hearing her calling to him (320). However, the emotional darkness is too complete and she is unable to move forward. She is physically unable to respond quickly to others (317). She can’t comprehend the charge her grandfather lays on her when he tries to help her come out of the darkness. Strangely, this charge may also connect Vicky to the dolphins and be a reason she must find healing with them. “You are to be a light-bearer. You are to choose the light […] I will say it for you. You will bear the light,” Grandfather Eaton declares (325-26). In the *American Ecclesiastical Review*, we are told that Christian art maintained “The idea of the dolphin as lightbearer, representing Christ, the light of the world, […] to a late date” (Steinback, 1890: 116-17). Vicky’s grandfather is one of the most special people in her life and her inability to come out of darkness even when he and Adam try to draw her out suggests that her interpersonal connections, as important as they are, are insufficient. Her reconnection with nature must include all of nature in order to bring her through the pain and grief and loss toward an acceptance of death as a part of life. Earlier in the novel, Adam suggests that Basil may be able to teach both him and Vicky about being able to let go of things we love. Vicky responds, “If anybody can teach us, Basil can” (L’Engle, 1980a: 117). This exchange foreshadows how the dolphins help Vicky let go of her pain over Binnie. They help her let go of her fear of death and of the terror she felt while Binnie died. In this way, they help her back into a present where she can experience joy in spite of (or perhaps because of) her experience of death. If death has been viewed by humans as a void, then overcoming fear of death involves learning how to die, seeing death happen, and not being destroyed by the experience.

Adam recognizes that the dolphins might be the key to Vicky’s recovery and comes to take her to them, hoping that they can help her. At this point, L’Engle never specifies whether Vicky calls the dolphins without realizing it or whether Adam calls them for her, but they do come. Several pages of this incident are recorded as if Vicky is composing another free-form poem, as she did earlier with Norberta:

> Surrounded
> by flashing silvery bodies

> tossed up into the air
> caught
> held between the sleekness of two dolphins
> holding me but not hurting
> holding and swimming
> and then leaping with me up into the air
> Basil and Norberta leaping into joy
> with me between them
> and before us and behind us and beside us
> the others of the pod flashing and leaping
> and I was being passed from pair to pair
> And I knew they were trying to bring me out of the darkness and into the light, but the darkness remained because the light was too heavy to bear. (L'Engle, 1980a: 330)

This section of the poem demonstrates again how dolphins heal and help those they are connected with. Just as the midwife dolphins carried Ynid when her baby died, and Basil and Norberta carried Adam when he was grieving over the baby dolphin's death, so now the dolphins carry Vicky by pressing close against her. They know that she is already in great pain, and so they hold her gently. But they are also able to help Vicky swim and leap as dolphins leap.

A particularly important line is "Basil and Norberta leaping into joy / with me between them" (330). This suggests that the dolphins understand that healing the mind has tangible and intangible aspects. It includes embodiment. Physical touch can provide security. It makes the connections between humans and other-than-humans visible in obvious ways, but the aspect of security is significant. In this context, security is a feeling which is experienced because a person or other living creature has a sense that pain and fear can be left behind eventually. Perhaps more important, however, is the intangible aspect of this moment with Basil and Norberta: "leaping into joy." One cannot literally leap into joy, so it's necessary to look at this as a symbol. When Basil and Norberta swam in the same way with Adam as he grieved for Ynid's baby, Vicky said it didn't seem to take very long, but at the same time, it "seemed longer, like time out of time" (L'Engle, 1980a: 160). L'Engle may be implying that "leaping into joy" is a similar experience. Perhaps she sees it as a symbol of leaving earth-bound time and experiencing something outside of human finite understanding.

Ecophenomenologist and professor Ted Toadvine (2014) argues that one of the things that transforms someone into a "world dreamer," someone who has an ability to envision a whole or unified planet, is an element of timelessness. Toadvine explains that "it suspends all time, so that 'time no longer has any yesterday and no longer any tomorrow'

[…] In other words, this imagination inhabits an eternity that lies entirely outside of the passage of time; it is before or after time" (211). Therefore, Vicky's conjectured exit from earthbound time may be a necessary symbol of her healing because it demonstrates that she is learning to see that there is something beyond life. She is gaining the skills of exploring or using the infinite, timeless part of her psyche as the dolphins repeatedly try to lift her out of time and into joy. L'Engle is known for the spiritual undertones in her books, and this idea of "leaping into joy" and being brought to some kind of "time out of time" has significance for the belief in an infinite human soul that is by its very nature an inextricable part of everything around it. As was demonstrated earlier, the dolphins inhabit a space where all times seem to be "now," where there isn't so much "past" or "future." This ability to be always present in the moment has some interesting implications because it points toward the idea of the eternal. By "leaping into joy" with Vicky between them, the dolphins help her begin to move through her grief and pain and into something like an eternal "now." Vicky acknowledges that the dolphins "were trying to bring me out of the darkness and into the light" (L'Engle, 1980a: 330). This further demonstrates that the dolphins have the ability to help Vicky into a place where she can be present in a place where death loses its pain because the memories, if not the souls, of those who die are always "now." This section is also an allusion to the poem from which L'Engle drew the title of the novel. It is by the seventeenth-century metaphysical poet Henry Vaughan: "*I saw Eternity the other night, / Like a great ring of pure and endless light*" (L'Engle, 1980a: 69). Basil and Norberta work to bring Vicky into this ring, "leaping [her] into joy," moving her from finite time into eternity. When Basil and Norberta alone can't accomplish the task of healing Vicky, she is passed "from pair to pair" of dolphins in the pod, all making the same effort to pull her up into their "now."

This concept of the "now" in which the dolphins seem to live, and into which they try to bring Vicky, has interesting implications for the concept of reconnecting humans with the ecosystem. The dolphins don't know any other way to be than to live "intentionally with present realities" (Clinebell, 1996: 70). Through working with Vicky, they are trying to help her make the connection with the present. As was discussed above, the dolphins perceive everything as part of a present whole: both birth and death are always present. Vicky writes in one of her own poems, "The end of all is hinted at the start. / When we are born we bear the seeds of blight; […] Infinity is present in each part" (L'Engle, 1980a: 72). Toadvine (2014) puts it this way: "the immemorial moment within each present is nature at the first day, always recreating itself anew." He continues, "Apocalyptic imagination, by contrast, concerns nature not at the *first* day but at the *last*

day, not as always undergoing a re-creating, but as undergoing its own unravelling" (214). Both life – beginning – and death – ending – are constantly in succession to each other. It is only by getting out beyond the self and into the realm of an ongoing present, through kything, through meditation, through creativity, that Vicky can overcome the existential anxiety she feels and see life and death as a whole. Through surrounding her and trying to help her leap into joy, Basil and Norberta try to help Vicky realize that the burdens of present grief and pain give way to a new present of peace and strength in memories. More importantly, they try to move Vicky into a position where she understands how her continually developing ability to kythe with the dolphins is helping her see how important it is for humans to recognize their embeddedness in the environment. Kything has helped her begin to learn how to be continually present with the dolphins, first of all, and to see how the dolphins are continually present with their own ecosystem. The hope is that as she continues to kythe with and build relationships with the dolphins, her new knowledge will extend to helping her gain a greater understanding of how she fits into her own ecosystem(s).

However, Basil and Norberta's attempts to hold Vicky and bring her up into the present are not initially successful. Consequently, the dolphin pod withdraws from Vicky a little distance, "so that I was the center of a circle." Then Norberta uses a flipper to smack her (L'Engle, 1980a: 330), as if to bring her out of hysteria and back into the present. Getting smacked by a dolphin doesn't seem like it would resolve the issues Vicky has been facing, or help her emerge into the "now" in which the dolphins exist. However, it reminds readers of ecopsychology's emphasis on embodiment as part of psychological experience. Anything that has meaning or that makes meaning must be accessible in some way through embodiment, even if it is something psychological, such as understanding and accepting death. Without seeing or physically experiencing in some way the cycles that combine to make life and death, there is no way for humans to make sense out of death. Being smacked by a dolphin and submerging into the ocean as a result is an experience of a sensory nature. Thus L'Engle uses the next section of Vicky's "poem" in a way that both alludes to and physically represents the Jungian idea of the unconscious: "I submerged, down into the strange green darkness of sea, shot through with ribbons of gold / gulping sea water / choking" (L'Engle, 1980a: 331). Trying to "leap" Vicky out of her despair and into a present where she can reconcile death as a part of life doesn't work, so the dolphins deliberately push her into "the wilderness within" (Clinebell, 1996: 70), which Jungian psychologists have named the "unconscious."

L'Engle brings her mind back to the surface of that "collective unconscious" with summer imagery: "And above the surface the brazen sun shines, heat shimmers on the hills" (1974: 92). This image of rising back into the above-water world is reflected in Vicky's experience as the dolphins continue to work with her to help her be able to "bear the light" again. A few lines from the end of the "poem," we read that Vicky found herself

> rising, sputtering, up into the air
> into the blazing blue of sky
> […]
> And the light no longer bore down on me
> but was light. (L'Engle, 1980a: 331)

However brief Vicky's "descent into the underworld" is, it clearly provides the final moment needed for the dolphins to help her heal from the psychological damage she experienced when Binnie died in her arms. She has been brought to a place where the weight of grief and sorrow can be endured without terror. L'Engle's image of light, the agent of physical sight, as weightless, or being "light," is indicative of Vicky's new ability to endure her circumstances without descending again into deep depression. She has found a way of balancing herself psychologically, and as we have seen, it is her renewed bond with her ecosystem, particularly the dolphins, that has brought her enough healing to find this balance between what L'Engle calls consciousness and the submerged self.

3.4 Closing Thoughts

Throughout *A Ring of Endless Light*, Vicky Austin moves into a mature, empathic, and compassionate relationship with the dolphin family composed of Basil, Norberta, and Njord as she learns to kythe with them. In nurturing and growing this relationship with nonhuman others, she is drawn into a greater understanding of the many embodied experiences she shares with them. This shows L'Engle's movement along the human-nonhuman kinship continuum, a shift from the human interpersonal relationships we saw developed in Chapter 2 above. Vicky's recognition of these shared experiences leads her to ask questions and to try to comprehend the nature of death and the afterlife. As her empathy with these dolphin others grows, her ability to find answers also increases. Consequently, she faces and moves through existential anxiety.

Examining Vicky's relationship with the animal other lays the groundwork for Chapter 4. Like Vicky, Polly O'Keefe (oldest daughter of Meg and Calvin from the Time series) faces a serious psychological challenge in *A House Like a Lotus*. Polly's well-

developed relationship with oceans and islands provides her with a significant part of her ability to overcome a series of betrayals, which includes an attempted sexual assault by a trusted mentor. The novel illustrates, again, L'Engle's fluid movement along the human-nature kinship continuum, this time to the farthest end of the continuum, in which she has laid out a strong and important relationship between a human being and some of the inorganic nonhuman parts of the environment. This emphasizes how she appears to anticipate some of the significant tenets of ecopsychology and its praxis, ecotherapy, particularly the importance of a mutually beneficial relationship between humans and their environment. L'Engle also seems to demonstrate further the idea that human psychological healing is greatly enhanced when humans not only recognize their embeddedness in the world around them, but actively participate in the relationship.

Chapter 4: Oceans, Islands, and Reconciliation with Self and Others in *A House Like a Lotus*

4.0 Opening Thoughts[26]

In Chapter 3, I examined how Vicky Austin, in *A Ring of Endless Light*, learns that many of her human experiences, such as grief and death, are shared by the dolphins for whom she begins to care. Through recognizing that shared experience and through developing a strong, compassionate relationship with the dolphins in the novel, Vicky begins to acknowledge and address her fear of death. *A House Like a Lotus* (1984), the third of L'Engle's O'Keefe family novels, moves all the way across the ecopsychological human-nonhuman kinship continuum by inviting readers to consider the importance of a relationship with the inorganic natural world in Polly O'Keefe's growth and development. This chapter will focus particularly on L'Engle's demonstration that oceans, islands, and their characteristic weather patterns (fog, storms, etc.) are integral to Polly O'Keefe's ability to reconcile her own soul and body, and forgive others for betraying her. Polly's lesson in rebuilding trust in *A House Like a Lotus* complements Vicky's lesson in overcoming fear of death in *A Ring of Endless Light*. This illustrates how L'Engle creates experiences of healing and reconciliation for Polly brought about by profound relationships with the ecosystem, which parallel what was observed about Vicky.

In this chapter, I argue that Polly's unusually deep emotional and psychological relationship with oceans and islands is the key to her ability to overcome betrayals, as well as separation from self and others, through forgiveness and reconciliation. Like the themes of death and existential anxiety in *A Ring of Endless Light*, betrayal is an important motif in *A House Like a Lotus*. Polly undergoes a variety of betrayals which will be discussed in more detail throughout this chapter. They range from betrayal by very immediate and trusted adults and friends to feeling betrayed by circumstances. To provide a careful analysis of this theme and its accompanying questions of separation, forgiveness, and reconciliation, I first provide a brief summary of the novel and a short discussion of its setting. I go on to examine the ways in which L'Engle draws on islands, the ocean, and the sea, including the weather that transforms these entities from one moment to the next, to

[26] *A House Like a Lotus* may be read as containing implicit homophobic discourse, potentially causing offense to 21st-century readers. Roberta Seelinger Trites (2000) cites Polly O'Keefe's internal emotional response to learning about Maximilliana Horne and Ursula Heschel's relationship and states that Polly "[rejects] the friendship for a time" (99); while Christine Jenkins (1998) cites Max and Ursula's physical living conditions as evidence of implicit homophobic discourse in the novel (310).

establish the importance of Polly's lifelong relationship with these ecological features. I examine the betrayals and experiences of separation Polly suffers, which include a sense that her body and soul are metaphorically split from each other. I follow this with an exploration of how L'Engle defines the soul and establishes its importance in a detailed conversation between Polly and Max, including her thoughts on the relation of the soul to the physical body. I then show the impact of betrayal on the link between Polly's soul and her physical body. Finally, I examine how Polly's relationship to and experiences with the oceans and islands help her move toward being able to forgive and reconcile with Max and even with herself. This illustrates how important it is for Polly to achieve reconciliation both within herself and with others in order to overcome the separation caused by betrayal. Thus, just as *A Ring of Endless Light* may be read as demonstrating ecopsychology in action through exploring how animals can participate in ecotherapy, the relationship Polly O'Keefe has with oceans and islands in *A House Like a Lotus* may be read as an example of how the non-living, nonhuman other can be an active part of ecotherapy.

4.0.1 Novel Summary

As I mentioned above, *A House Like a Lotus* is the third novel in L'Engle's O'Keefe family series, which primarily follows the adventures of Meg and Calvin's oldest daughter, Polly. The novel is written as a series of flashbacks that take place while Polly is visiting Greece and Cyprus to help with a literary conference, which Maximiliana Horne (hereafter "Max"), a trusted adult friend, teacher, and mentor, has arranged for her to attend. The novel's structure can make it a little complicated for readers to keep events straight. For instance, it opens with Polly sitting alone in Athens, which is chronologically toward the end of her time in the Mediterranean. During these opening scenes, L'Engle takes readers into Polly's memories of spending around twelve years on the (fictitious) Atlantic island called Gaea, which L'Engle situates off the coast of Portugal. The O'Keefes then move back to the United States, to another (fictitious) Atlantic island – Benne Seed – off the coast of South Carolina, where Calvin O'Keefe works as a marine biologist. Thus Polly, who turns sixteen during *A House Like a Lotus*, has not only grown up almost exclusively on islands and with the ocean as a constant companion; she has also spent most of her life in Europe. This means that she has developed a deep and strong emotional, psychological, and sensory relationship with oceans and islands throughout her life. In the course of the novel, it becomes apparent that L'Engle views this relationship as something mutual. The oceans and islands are not exploited or used by Polly, but instead form an

integral part of who she is, while also appearing to have a spirit or "essence" of their own. They seem, too, to respond to her emotional and psychological state in unusual ways.

Significantly, at one point in the novel Polly tells us that Benne Seed Island[27] feels like home because it is an island. Nevertheless, she struggles to adjust to life in the United States and misses living in Europe and feeling part of the indigenous culture on Gaea, in which she lived for so many years. Polly is introduced to the wealthy painter and intellectual, Max Horne, by her Uncle Sandy Murry. Uncle Sandy (one of Meg O'Keefe's twin brothers) thinks that Polly and Max may have much in common and much to offer each other despite the difference in their ages. Polly becomes friends with Max, who takes on a role as her mentor, teacher, and almost second mother. With her help and guidance, Polly gains self-confidence and begins to adjust to life in America. Eventually, Polly becomes close enough to Max that Max confides in her about her childhood, family life, and former marriage. Polly learns that Max had a baby daughter who died, and now she sees Polly as a second daughter whom she can care for and help. After several months, Polly also discovers that Max and her friend Ursula are a same-sex couple, information which her Uncle Sandy apparently regards as a non-issue and thus doesn't provide to Polly. However, Polly must learn to navigate this new knowledge because despite her Uncle Sandy's unstated assumption that she can easily adjust, she has lived a very sheltered life and has never met a same-sex couple before. Polly works to overcome her own prejudice and that which she experiences from others in relation both to Max and Ursula's relationship and to her friendship with them. As she does, she learns from another friend, Queron Renier ("Renny"), that Max is dying of a rare tropical disease which affects the heart and can be extremely painful.

Because Max is like a second mother to her, the news of her imminent death devastates Polly, who feels like life itself is betraying her. Ursula, Max's partner, takes leave from her work as a neurosurgeon to be with Max while she is dying. However, Ursula, renowned in her field, sometimes agrees to professional consultations with other doctors and must therefore travel. As Max's disease progresses, Ursula becomes more and more uncomfortable with the idea of leaving her alone overnight, fearing that she may need emergency medical assistance and be unable to contact anyone on her own. On one of these occasions, Ursula asks if Polly would feel comfortable staying overnight in case of emergency. Unfortunately, during Polly's stay, Max drinks heavily in an effort to alleviate the physical pain of her condition, and attempts to sexually assault Polly. Polly, in trauma

[27] Benne seeds are a kind of sesame seed.

following this event, takes shelter with Renny. In spite of her obvious distress, Renny sleeps with her in what appears to be a further betrayal of her trust. As a result of both these incidents, Polly experiences not only a breach in her relationships with both Max and Renny, but also a metaphorical split between her own mind and body, which I discuss in detail later in the chapter.

Following these events, Polly leaves Benne Seed Island to help with a literary conference on the island nation of Cyprus. Max had arranged for Polly to attend the conference prior to her betrayal of Polly, and while initially resistant to continuing with the arrangement following Max's betrayal, Polly eventually decides that the trip will allow her distance and time to escape from her traumatic circumstances. This time away from Benne Seed Island allows Polly to reassess her feelings about and responses to the assault, and eventually leads her to a place where she can forgive and reconcile with Max. She is also able to reconcile her own internal split. Before traveling to Cyprus, Polly plans to spend a few days with her Uncle Sandy and Aunt Rhea traveling around Greece. However, Sandy and Rhea arrive after Polly does, so she finds herself briefly alone in the ancient city of Athens. At this point, she meets Zachary Grey, the young man Vicky Austin encountered in *The Moon by Night* and *A Ring of Endless Light*.[28] Zachary tries to engage Polly in a romantic relationship, and later follows her to Cyprus against her wishes. While on Cyprus, Zach takes Polly out kayaking one afternoon and capsizes their boat, nearly drowning both of them. While this seems to readers like a further betrayal of Polly's trust, the near-drowning incident focuses her mind and gives her better perspective on how important Max has been in her life. This allows Polly to come to a place psychologically, spiritually, and emotionally where she is able to forgive Max and reconcile within herself. The novel traces Polly's progression from hurt, fear, and a sense of betrayal to forgiveness, reconciliation, and growing trust. Her changes and growth are intrinsically connected to her relationship with oceans and islands, and this is made very clear in the course of the novel.

4.0.2 Brief Discussion of Setting

As is evident from the summary, oceans and islands are extremely prominent in this narrative. Over and over again, L'Engle draws the reader's attention to Polly's special

[28] L'Engle changes the spelling of Zachary's surname from "Grey" in the Austin books to "Gray" in the last two O'Keefe books. She never indicates why. This is the reason for any apparent discrepancy in direct quotations from *A House Like a Lotus*.

relationship with these geological features. I have counted at least 579 references to both throughout the novel (my copy has 308 pages, averaging roughly 1.88 mentions per page). In counting, I included words and phrases that reference oceans and islands; imagery and weather associated with either; and relevant names (such as Benne Seed Island or the Atlantic). The wealth of these references clearly illustrates that L'Engle considers oceans and islands as essential to the structure and plot of this novel. She seems especially interested in the representation of the psyche (which she calls "soul") as something with hidden depths resembling the ocean. This is important to consider because the analysis of *A House Like a Lotus* demonstrates that Polly's mind and body become, temporarily and metaphorically, split into the mind-body dualism which ecopsychologists and ecotherapists seek to resolve, as a result of the betrayals she experiences.

Given the psychological, emotional, and physical importance of oceans and islands for Polly, it is difficult to decipher L'Engle's reasons for placing the scene of Max's assault on Benne Seed Island in the Atlantic Ocean, particularly because Gaea, the island Polly grew up on, is also in the Atlantic (L'Engle, 1984: 9). However, as indicated earlier, while Polly states at one point that Benne Seed Island is her home (53), at other times she feels like Gaea and Europe are more truly home to her and she misses them (9, 72, 171). Thus, the choice is not one of necessarily negative connotations associated with the Atlantic or with islands in the Atlantic. Instead, it may be the case that being located on the North American side of the Atlantic makes things less familiar and more confusing for Polly as she struggles to try to put down roots in Benne Seed Island. It is also possible that it is harder for Polly to adjust to the North American Atlantic because her childhood experiences of the European Atlantic have imprinted themselves deeply in her identity. As a result, the negative experiences she has on Benne Seed Island loom larger and seem more destructive than they might otherwise have been. Nevertheless, Polly is still very emotionally attached to the ocean while on Benne Seed Island, and the ocean does seem to reflect her moods and provide warnings of the events that happen to her. On the other hand, Greece and Cyprus are part of Europe and the Mediterranean Sea is partially connected to Europe. Thus these locations provide comfort and familiarity for Polly as a result of her familiarity with and consequent homesickness for Europe. Polly feels like she has come home, especially when she is in Cyprus, because there she is on a European island again. As a result the Mediterranean Sea leads her toward forgiveness and reconciliation both with Max and within herself.

4.1 Oceans and Islands as Part of Polly's Identity

L'Engle, then, has made Polly an integral part of what ecopsychologists refer to as the soul of the Earth. The language L'Engle uses throughout the novel, to describe many of the emotions and experiences Polly has even outside of the betrayals and reconciliation she experiences, is indicative of this. Her environments form a part of her, an aspect of who she is and how she experiences events. In one example, L'Engle has Max paint Polly's portrait to resemble Botticelli's "The Birth of Venus." Max describes her idea before she begins painting: "I'd like to paint you in a seashell, emerging from the sea, taking nothing from the ocean but giving some of it back to everyone who puts an ear to the shell" (L'Engle, 1984: 4). This suggests that Polly draws her sense of self from the ocean without depleting it. This is extremely important in terms of ecopsychology and ecotherapy, because one of the discipline's repeated themes is the concept that the human relationship with the rest of the world should be symbiotic (Harper, 1995: 198). Human interactions with the environment are often defined in terms of what humans can gain psychologically and emotionally from being outside and experiencing the world, or what they can gain through exploiting the earth's resources. Many ecopsychology authors, such as Andy Fisher (2013) consider such descriptions of the human-nature relationship to be very negative (5, 16-17, 52). Phenomenologist David Abram, whose work *The Spell of the Sensuous* (1996) has been highly influential in ecopsychology, explains:

> The breathing, sensing body draws its sustenance and its very substance from the soils, plants, and elements that surround it; it continually contributes itself, in turn, to the air, to the composting earth, to the nourishment of insects and oak trees and squirrels, ceaselessly spreading out of itself as well as breathing the world into itself, so that it is very difficult to discern, at any moment, precisely where this living body begins and where it ends. (46-47)

Polly's relationship to oceans and islands as such a fundamental part of who she is can be read as epitomizing this integration of self and other. Max's description of how she envisions painting Polly is a representation of her relationship with the sea as reciprocal. It is such reciprocity that ecopsychologists and ecotherapists would hope to emphasize as the most ethical way for humans to engage with the other-than-human world.

Aside from Max, others are also aware that there is something a little different about Polly, which she herself often attributes to having grown up on islands. This is illustrated when Zachary Grey first meets her. He says, "[You] have an innocence I haven't seen in anyone your age in I don't know how long." Polly replies, "I've lived on islands most of my life" (L'Engle, 1984: 47), suggesting that others' perception of innocence in

her is explained by her childhood environment. She makes a similar comment to another friend, Omio, whom she meets at the conference on Cyprus. Omio, an islander himself, is surprised by Polly's ability to swim so well in the ocean and comments on it. She responds, "I've lived on islands most of my life. We swim a lot" (263). Polly's own assumptions about her unique character traits and abilities, which she then conveys to others, are that the ecosystems with which she is most comfortable must somehow be the source of her strengths (and possibly her weaknesses). L'Engle invites readers to see the conscious and the unconscious joined in Polly through seeing how her abilities and vulnerabilities could derive from her rapport with oceans and islands. This solidifies the concept philosopher David Abram promotes, that "Human persons, too, are shaped by the places they inhabit, both individually and collectively." He declares, "Our bodily rhythms, our moods, cycles of creativity and stillness, and even our thoughts are readily engaged and influenced by shifting patterns in the land" (Abram, 1996: 267). For a young woman who grew up on islands and whose identity is inextricably woven with the ocean, the ocean provides a natural way to describe her state of mind. Some of the specific ocean/island references and imagery bring the reader right into Polly's emotions, reiterating the psychological interrelatedness between Polly's oceanscape and her identity. L'Engle most often uses this imagery to describe exhaustion or sleep. In sleep important dreams of the ocean provide insight for Polly as she progresses toward psychological maturity. This impresses on the reader how connected the development of Polly's psyche is to her constant seascape. For instance, when Polly describes the first few nights of her stay in Athens, she says, "I plummeted into sleep, and slept deep down dark for a couple of hours, and then woke up and felt myself floating to the surface" (L'Engle, 1984: 50). L'Engle likes the idea that her character is drowned in sleep, as if drowned in an ocean, perhaps invoking the idiom "fathoms deep in sleep." Later in the novel, Polly has a flashback describing her first conversation with Max about Ursula and Max's relationship and the high school gossip circulating about whether Polly is lesbian because she spends so much time with Max and Ursula. Polly recounts that, after this emotionally demanding discussion, "I was overwhelmed by great waves of sleep" (126-27). Like drowning in the ocean, sleep is viewed as bringing oblivion at most, forgetfulness at least.

In her non-fiction, L'Engle uses similar imagery for her own sleep experiences:

> I still treasure the time before sleep comes, when I move into the shallows before plunging down into deep waters; and the minutes before I surface into daylight and the routine of the day, when I swim slowly up from sleep and dreams, still partly in that strange, underwater world where I know

> things which my conscious mind is not able to comprehend" (L'Engle, 1974: 104).

L'Engle uses ocean imagery here as a metaphor for sleep and dreaming and the unconscious. In *A House Like a Lotus* she describes Polly's dreams of the ocean to bring these metaphors to life. For example, during a stay at a little Greek inn with her aunt and uncle, Polly recounts, "My room, next to theirs, overlooked the water, and the sound of wind and waves was the sound of home, but wilder, because here the sea beat against rock not sand. But it was still the familiar music of waves, and I slept" (L'Engle, 1984: 172). It is notable that she feels the sound is wilder than what she's used to on Benne Seed Island, as it was the Atlantic where she was betrayed and it is the Mediterranean where she is able to overcome that betrayal. Perhaps Polly's perception of the wilder nature of the Mediterranean waves is important because L'Engle wants Polly to go into the deep part of what she calls the "strange, underwater world" of the unconscious (1974: 104). The strangeness L'Engle associates with the unconscious may coincide with the wildness Polly perceives in the sound of the Mediterranean Sea. While the sound soothes her to sleep, it also takes her into the part of her mind and memory that is currently unsettled and disturbed because of Max's actions. This disturbance is reflected in the wild nature of the waves, further demonstrating how the seas and oceans are closely tied to Polly's identity. Wildness is portrayed as both unsettling and necessary. It illustrates the massive shifts in Polly's thinking and understanding that must take place for her to be mature enough to move toward forgiveness and reconciliation. The combination of soothing Polly and the wildness also demonstrates the complex nature of both the human and the nonhuman. The oceans and seas illustrate Polly's own complexity through their complicated, mixed nature. Thus, L'Engle illustrates clearly that the connection between Polly and oceans, islands, and seas matters at a deep psychological level.

In connection with this idea, L'Engle might intend to emphasize the difference between rock and sand, highlighting the differences in how long it takes water to change the appearance of rock in contrast to changing sand. She suggests that Polly is in the process of developing a firmer sense of her own identity which will allow her to understand human complexity. Whatever the reason, the wild sound of the Mediterranean – the backdrop of the ocean in Polly's life – lulls her into dreaming about the sea. "I was in a small boat in the wide stretch of water between Cowpertown and Benne Seed Island," she explains. "The waves were high and the boat was rocking, but I wasn't afraid. I held a baby in my arms, a tiny little rosy thing, but it wasn't Rosy, or any of my younger siblings. It had no clothes on, and I held it close to keep it warm. Above us a seagull flew" (L'Engle,

1984: 172-73). The sound of the sea pulls her deep down into her unconscious during this dream, and when she emerges in the morning, she interprets the dream as a reminder that Max lost a baby girl when she was married, and now feels that Polly is her second chance at motherhood. She remembers Max saying "that sometimes when one gives something up completely, as she'd given up the thought of ever having another child, then God gives one another chance, and God had done that for her, in me" (173). Earlier, the novel implies that the way Max mothers Polly is through helping her identity and self-confidence emerge more fully. Polly muses that before she became Max's protégée, she "certainly didn't have that inner luminosity Max saw in the portrait of me in the seashell, a luminosity which Max brought out in me" (25). When Polly decides that this is what the dream means, she is able to move toward a better understanding of Max, to move a small step closer to forgiveness. She is reminded that Max has loved her as a daughter, the daughter in whom Max never had a chance to see "inner luminosity." This is especially meaningful because Max's intimate family structure is as a same-sex couple at a time and in a place where the relationship was illegal (see South Carolina Legislature, Code of Laws Section 20-1-10 – it is still on the books as illegal despite the SCOTUS decision of 2015). Many people still felt very negatively toward same-sex couples. Polly's memory that she was mothered by Max helps her develop more compassion toward Max as a complex human being with a desire to parent and help her. As Polly gains this compassion because of what she learns by listening to the ocean, she becomes more mature.

4.2 Broken Trust

Before a journey of growth through traumatic betrayal and internal splitting to maturity, compassion, forgiveness, and reconciliation can begin, there must, of course, be betrayal. In an early conversation between Max and Polly, Max insists that Polly recognize that part of being human is disappointing others, whether purposefully or not. "You won't grow up," Max tells Polly, "until you learn that all human beings betray each other and that we are going to be let down even by those we most trust. Especially by those we most trust" (L'Engle, 1984: 82-83). Max has herself been betrayed by an abusive father and is afraid she has become like him (121-25; 187). This fear alludes to the (debated) hypothesis that adults who perpetrate abuse were often abused themselves (Widom and Massey, 2015). Additionally, Max has lived long enough (the novel implies she is in her early 60s) to see clearly how often people betray each other or are betrayed by circumstances. And Meg Murry-O'Keefe says to her daughter, as they discuss the amount of responsibility

Meg and Calvin are willing to give their children, "Trusting people is risky, Polly, we are aware of that. Trust gets broken" (L'Engle, 1984: 117). Perhaps not unexpectedly, given the semi-autobiographical nature of several situations in L'Engle's fiction, a recent publication by Sarah Arthur, *A Light So Lovely*, suggests that Polly's betrayal in this novel may be based on a betrayal L'Engle herself experienced. Arthur records that an American author, Jana Riess, approached L'Engle on one occasion to express gratitude for Polly's psychological journey through betrayal to forgiveness in *A House Like a Lotus*. L'Engle, in response, stated, "I had a Max, too" (Arthur, 2018: 89). Apparently L'Engle never explained whether her own experience of betrayal was also a sexual assault, as Polly's is. Nevertheless, because she has revealed evidence of betrayal in her own life, she opens a space for readers to trust that she has written Polly's experiences in a way that demonstrates a shared understanding of the betrayals people suffer.

Just as Vicky Austin encounters different types of death in *A Ring of Endless Light,* which vary from deaths of those who are emotionally close to her to the deaths of those who are very distant, so too Polly O'Keefe deals with a variety of betrayals or perceived betrayals in *A House Like a Lotus*. These betrayals range from betrayal by a close trusted mentor, Max, to betrayal by Zach, whom Polly barely knows. Additionally, life itself appears to betray characters and Polly comes to understand that she too may have betrayed others without recognizing it. She might even have betrayed her own mind-body connection. Importantly, one of the intriguing things L'Engle does in this novel is not only to connect Polly's recovery from trauma to her integral relationship with oceans and islands, but to link parts of her negative or troubling experiences to aspects of that relationship as well. This suggests that some weather events characteristic of oceans and islands which she encounters could be read as Polly's environment either responding to the betrayals she experiences or warning her that they are imminent. These "behaviours" of the oceans, islands, and seas provoke thought about their complex nature. Readers are also encouraged to consider the role that more frightening events such as storms, fog, or near-drowning (all elements which will be discussed later in connection with Polly's psychological experiences) might play in bringing about growth and change. The relationship between Polly and the oceans, islands, and seas is just as intricate and multifaceted as her relationships with other humans. Such a reading supports certain principles of ecopsychology, such as the concept that the nonhuman, including the Earth itself, might have a psyche. L'Engle hints at this in Polly and Max's discussion of the soul, which I will examine following my discussion of the motif of betrayal in this novel.

4.2.1 Betrayal by a Trusted Mentor

As outlined above, the most traumatic betrayal Polly O'Keefe experiences is Max's attempted sexual assault. On the night this attempt occurs, Polly is staying with Max in case she becomes ill in connection with her terminal disease (L'Engle, 1984: 179). When Polly arrives at Max's home, Max tells her, "Heavy electrical storms forecast, with possible damaging winds" (181). This brings to mind the idea that the elements, the ocean, the island itself, have a temperament. "Each place its own mind, its own psyche," writes phenomenologist David Abram:

> Oak, madrone, Douglas fir, red-tailed hawk, serpentine in the sandstone, a certain scale to the topography, drenching rains in the winter, fog off-shore in the summer, salmon surging in the streams—all these together make up a particular state of mind, a place-specific intelligence shared by all the humans that dwell therein, but also by the coyotes yapping in those valleys, by the bobcats and the ferns and the spiders, by all beings who live and make their way in that zone. Each place its own psyche. Each sky its own blue. (1996: 262)

In keeping with Abram's description of the ways in which each unique participant in an ecosystem shares some aspect of experience with every other participant in that environment, the thunderstorms predicted as Polly arrives to stay with Max could be read as warnings from the island and the ocean to Polly that something traumatic is about to happen. L'Engle's use of the weather in this novel may simply be a common trope, one of many uses, in poetry and fiction, of John Ruskin's (1856) pathetic fallacy. However, given L'Engle's repeated statements about the interconnectedness of all things, and because she makes oceans and islands such an intrinsic part of who Polly is and who she becomes, it seems reasonable to explore the possibility that these ocean- and island-associated weather events are also specifically connected to Polly. Thus, the storms might be psychologically meaningful in the specific context of this novel.

For instance, electrical storms can feel very oppressive. They can also be violent. The imminence of electrical shock and destruction in the weather foreshadows Polly's own shock and the internal splitting she experiences as she watches Max drink excessively and become incoherent with fear (L'Engle, 1984: 186-87). While Polly declares that she doesn't "mind thunderstorms as long as [she's] not alone" (186), she recognizes something sinister in the storm, as she describes how the storm begins. "The wind was rising," she explains, "but it was not a cooling wind. The gentle whirring of the paddle fan, the slow rolling of the waves across the sand, the chirring of locusts, were hot, summer sounds. A seagull screamed" (184). Many times, rain and wind lighten the oppression of a

thunderstorm and cool the air. The air might also be cooled by hail. Instead, the weather on this particular night is menacing and heavy, disturbing the relationship Polly usually has with her surroundings. While she generally sees islands and the ocean as places where she has been protected and comforted, the nature of this storm reminds readers that she is potentially unsafe. Even after the storm breaks, and after Polly runs from Max, the air remains oppressive. Polly describes it as "a stronger wind from the Atlantic, spattering me with raindrops as I sat huddled in Ursula Heschel's car, parked outside Beau Allaire. I sat there in the humid hothouse of the car and waited" (204). The heat and heaviness of rain and wind make Polly uncomfortable, an unusual reaction for her to the milieu where she normally feels most at home. This parallels the problem that, up until this night, Polly has always felt safe with Max. Now, suddenly and unexpectedly, Max appears to have changed. The ocean- and island-based weather in this scene in the novel seems to be warning Polly about this change, hinting that Polly's relationship with oceans and islands goes beyond loving the setting in which she grew up. Rather, L'Engle implies an unusual idea: that the human relationship with the inorganic nonhuman parts of the environment can be reciprocated by the environment itself because both the human and the nonhuman are complex, many-faceted beings.

As L'Engle brings Polly closer and closer to the attempted assault, she repeatedly brings in the sounds and sights of the electrical storm with the following phrases:

> Thunder again. Low. Menacing. […] Lightning flashed again, brightening the flowers on the screen. 'That's too close,' Max said as the thunder rose. We could hear the wind whipping the trees. […] Lightning again, but this time there were several seconds before the thunder. […] A slow wave of thunder rolled over her response. (L'Engle, 1984: 186)

While Polly remains unafraid of the storm itself, the increased thunder and lightning parallel her increasing alarm over Max's drinking and erratic behaviour. The lightning emphasizes the shock she feels, while the noise of the thunder suggests that both her own and Max's usual ability to communicate is being threatened and obfuscated. This is confirmed both by Max's slurred expressions of fear and by Polly's inability to tell Max to stop drinking (186-87). Polly's immobility and indecisiveness also seem unusual, just as her discomfort with the thunderstorm is odd. In past experiences, she has been very aware of and able to think concisely and clearly about what's happening to her. For instance, in the two previous O'Keefe family novels, *The Arm of the Starfish* (1965) and *Dragons in the Waters* (1976), she shows an intuitive ability to discern negative characteristics in people who were intent on harming either her (1965) or others (1976). Perhaps, however,

Polly's perceived inability to get herself out of the situation she faces with Max is a result of confusion and disbelief arising from the fact that Max suddenly seems untrustworthy. As a result, Polly does not take the kinds of initiative she has in other situations, expecting that, at any moment, her older friend will return to her usual caring and loving behaviour without any intervention on her part.

However, Max's own fears instead drive her to continue to behave in ways that provoke fear in Polly. At the peak of Polly's fear, the storm and the attempted assault coincide with each other: "In the next flash of lightning [Max] stood up, and in the long satin gown she seemed seven feet tall, and she was swaying, so drunk she couldn't walk. And then she fell . . . I rolled out of the way. She reached for me, and she was sobbing" (187).[29] At this point, the storm almost seems to have a mind of its own, both reflecting and enhancing the psychological impact, on Polly, of Max's behaviour. The storm also enhances Max's own fear and makes her look inhuman to Polly. Particularly, L'Engle demonstrates, both through the storm's relationship to Max's attempted assault and because of the assault itself, that Polly's relationships with herself, with her lifelong milieu of ocean and island, and with Max are highly disrupted. Max, who has up until this moment focused on helping Polly develop a mature mind and emotions, now suddenly shows a physical interest in Polly that leaves her feeling confused and adds to her sense of betrayal. This prepares the reader to see how Polly feels her body is split from her mind throughout the remainder of the narrative, and to observe how some of the other betrayals she experiences exacerbate that split.

4.2.2 Perceived Betrayal by a Close Friend

Immediately following Max's betrayal of Polly's trust (the betrayal of a young person by a trusted mentor), while Polly is still in the early stages of shock, L'Engle has her run to a young man called Renny. Renny is a 20-something doctor Polly has been seeing for several months. She considers him nothing more than a friend and a good chance to practice dating when boys her own age ignore her (L'Engle, 1984: 52, 61-63). However, in her state of shock and fear after the events with Max, Polly sleeps with Renny (259-60), admitting that he is "an antidote, but for something far more cataclysmic than not

[29] L'Engle scholar Donald Hettinga (1993) has pointed out that "an earlier draft [of this] scene was much more physical, much closer to a rape," and that many reviewers of the final publication "wondered if most readers [would] even understand what has happened" because L'Engle scaled back the description so much (100).

being asked to a dance" (52). While authors such as children's literature scholar Roberta Seelinger Trites (2000: 100) see this as Polly's own informed decision, others, such as American fantasy author and critic Mari Ness, claim it is statutory rape on Renny's part (2012) because Polly is a minor and Renny an adult. Under the traumatic circumstances, it is hard to unquestioningly accept Trites's claim, but because this is all taking place in South Carolina, Ness's claim is also, technically speaking, questionable. According to South Carolina law, Section 16.3-655, sexual conduct by an adult with a minor is considered criminal by the law if the minor is fifteen or younger (South Carolina Legislature, n.d.). Polly is sixteen and does imply some kind of consent, although it seems to come from a place of trauma and a need for physical comfort rather than from informed decision-making.

Thus, while she appears to have consented, this episode might be read as another serious physical betrayal of Polly's trust because Renny is so much older than she. He is also very aware of the trauma she is feeling about what happened with Max, and, as a medical professional, should have recognized that this trauma would compromise her mental and emotional ability to "consent." He comes to Polly's home the day after their sexual encounter, "full of rather incoherent apologies" (L'Engle, 1984: 269). He confesses that while he "wanted it, too," he "shouldn't have" (270). He acknowledges also that he acted in spite of knowing that Polly was in psychological distress: "Oh, Polly honey, I'm sorry. I know you're hurting. I'm sorry" (270). Given the body of research which suggests that experiencing abuse or trauma can lead the abused/traumatized person to engage in other high-risk behaviours, such as unprotected sexual intercourse (Senn et al., 2006), it is this last line which might lead the reader to perceive Renny's actions as another betrayal of Polly. She trusted him to care for her after her experience with Max. Both his maturity and his role as a physician should have acted as self-restraints for him. Instead, he took a highly traumatized sixteen-year-old's need for comfort as consent and engaged in risky sexual behaviour (unprotected intercourse) with her. As a result, Polly's internal split widens, and her heretofore "big brother/kid sister" relationship with Renny, while not destroyed, is definitely problematized. She can no longer easily talk with him about a further significant betrayal she feels she is experiencing at this time: Max's imminent death.

4.2.3. Betrayed by Circumstance

At some point, everyone feels in some sense betrayed by the circumstances in which they find themselves. These kinds of perceived betrayals are no one's fault. They are simply a risk of living. Yet they still feel like a betrayal of the self by something uncontrollable and not really forgivable. It just is: one can neither condemn nor forgive a virus, for instance, or a natural disaster. Max's illness and inevitable death feel like this type of perceived betrayal by circumstance for Polly. Polly learns about Max's impending death when she becomes acquainted with Renny early in the story. When Renny phones to introduce himself to Polly and ask her to go out to eat with him, he tells her, "I was talking with an outpatient who's a friend of yours" (L'Engle, 1984: 62). A moment later, Polly realizes that Renny, in his capacity as a doctor, has been treating Max. Through spending time with Renny, who enjoys talking about his passion for tropical diseases, Polly guesses that Max has an uncurable disease that is killing her (142-47; 149-51; 156-59). Perhaps it is the nature of this particular betrayal, the feeling that Max's death is a betrayal by life's circumstances, that makes the other two betrayals by Max and Renny appear so cataclysmic. Neither Max nor Renny can stop Max's death. Both should have been – and were – trying to help Polly adjust to this upcoming event. Max was glad to have her coming death "[o]ut in the open" (157) so she could help Polly move into acceptance. Renny was a sounding board for Polly to talk freely about the progress of Max's disease and understand its mechanisms, although he never talks about Max's specific case (doctor-patient confidentiality). In the face of an event that cannot be stopped, then, shouldn't two adults have had enough self-control to resist betraying an adolescent in ways that could be avoided?

Polly is staying at Max's house on the night of the attempted assault to try to make sure Max is safe and doesn't suffer from unexpected side effects of her disease while she is alone (179). Yet when, for instance, Polly nervously tries to suggest that Max should stop drinking, and attempts to resist Max's urging her to drink, too, Max becomes peremptory, refusing to allow Polly to phone anyone for help and ordering her to drink as well (183, 185). Despite Max's pain, readers learn later that she really should have been able to control herself. As Ursula is trying to sooth Polly, she says, "Max, unlike the true alcoholic, will not sleep it off and forget what happened. She will remember everything" (205). This suggests that L'Engle wants readers to assume that Max usually has control over her drinking, retaining knowledge of how she should behave toward others, as well as

control of her own behaviour.[30] It also suggests that L'Engle doesn't see drunkenness as an excuse for Max's behaviour toward Polly. In the case of Renny, he was not drunk, he was not in pain, he was not experiencing fear, he was simply giving in to lust – his own word (270) – during one of Polly's most vulnerable moments. Polly's perception is that life is betraying her by taking Max away from her, slowly and inexorably. Neither Max nor Renny have any right to intensify that particular betrayal, yet both of them do.

4.2.4 Emotionally Distant Betrayal

Polly also experiences betrayal that is much further removed from her emotionally, as she is put into dangerous situations by Zachary Grey, the troubled young man Vicky Austin also had to deal with. Despite Polly's attachment to oceans and islands, it is not possible for her to recover her relationship with Max while she remains on Benne Seed Island. Something there is holding her back, although she explains that the "island itself was home" (L'Engle, 1984: 53). It may simply be that while she stays on Benne Seed, she is too close to Max's coming death and the things that happened with Max and Renny. There is no physical distance between her and the betrayals she experienced. Consequently, she has no emotional or psychological distance. In contrast to her immediate experiences with the Atlantic setting, Polly's trip to Greece and Cyprus in late September (L'Engle, 1984: 3), and the experiences she has with the Mediterranean Sea, provide distance and perspective. Both are essential to regaining the ability to understand the complexity of others (Fisher, 2013: 95-96) and our relationship to them (Sewall, 1999: 131, 254). Perspective and distance help Polly find ways to rebalance the connection between body and mind, rather than leaving her feeling like only her body is important. Most importantly, they give her a better frame of reference for placing Max back into her life. She is better able to, as ecopsychologist and professor Laura Sewall describes it, "look outward, beyond [herself]" in order to gain a stronger "appreciation of the Others," – those who "are our contrasting kin, both different from us and intimately woven into who we are" (Sewall, 1999: 130-31). Polly gains this kind of "relational perspective" (Sewall, 1999: 130) on Max through a serious situation she experiences with Zachary Grey while she is in Cyprus.

[30] L'Engle may have had some experience of this in her own life: research suggests that her father, husband, and son were all alcoholics and that their deaths were likely tied to alcoholism in some way (see Marcus, 2012).

Polly meets Zach in Athens in the week before she goes to Cyprus. Like Renny, he is older than Polly: he is probably 22 at this time. He tells Polly his mother "died a couple of years ago" (L'Engle, 1984: 80). In *A Ring of Endless Light*, she has just died in the spring right before the novel begins (1980a: 46), and he is 20 in that novel (1980a: 146). Polly, as mentioned earlier, is only 16. Zach introduces himself to Polly and takes her sightseeing. She feels flattered and spends several days with Zach while she waits for her aunt and uncle to arrive from America (L'Engle, 1984: 4, 42-48, 70-81, 84-86). She acknowledges, "I wasn't sure I trusted Zachary" (47) – a sentiment which readers may share if they have read the Austin family series! – and later says, "Did I trust this guy? I was not in a trusting frame of mind. But I didn't have to trust him to enjoy being with him" (74). Regardless, she chooses to continue to meet him and explore Greece with him. Readers might consider this choice a high-risk behaviour, especially as Zachary's motives for continuing to spend time with Polly are questionable and Polly is still a minor. Additionally, Polly may feel like their acquaintance is superficial and transient, as she does not anticipate remaining in contact with him after she leaves Athens.[31] He continually makes comments such as that Polly seems so innocent and pure to him (47, 74), she should trust him (74), he's "not going to try anything or anything like that" (71), and she should talk to him about her problems (79, 105, 128). Nevertheless, he also asks her some very crude and inappropriate questions which reveal what he is really after.

For example, when they visit the Acropolis together, he tries to flatter her by saying, "And there's something virginal about you," but he then asks directly if she is a virgin (74-75). Shortly after, he asks her, "What about your parents? Do they still have sex?" She deflects that question but later admits to herself, "I didn't like it when Zachary asked me about my parents' sex life" (80-81). He continues to press her, and while she is sixteen and the age of consent in Greece is fifteen ("Age of Consent," 2020), Zachary's actions feel as much like an attempt to assault Polly as Max's actions or when contrasted with Renny's sexual interactions with her. When Polly resists Zach's attempts to kiss her in ways she isn't comfortable with, he says, "You like me, don't you? […] And you told me you aren't a virgin" (L'Engle, 1984: 104-05), as if that justifies him. In a later attempt, he says, "If you gave in once, why not now, when you know things are really fizzing between us?" (131). He follows this question up at dinner in the evening by asking her why she won't take off her "chastity belt" (132-33). Two things are evident in Zach's behaviour

[31] Unfortunately, she is mistaken. Not only does he follow her to Cyprus, he also turns up unexpectedly in the final O'Keefe family novel, *An Acceptable Time* (1989), where he effectively forces her to go back in time 3000 years and is the reason she is nearly sacrificed.

toward Polly and in Polly's responses. First, L'Engle makes it very clear that Zach is really only interested in sex with Polly, though he controls himself enough not to rape her. He is described in *A Ring of Endless Light* as a "black-haired young Lothario" (L'Engle, 1980a: 133). The term "Lothario" derives from Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote,* in which he features a character who is instructed by his friend Anselm to try to seduce Anselm's wife and test her virtue. After resisting, Lothario finally agrees to try the experiment and eventually succeeds (Cervantes, 2000: 295-337). Consequently, a Lothario is now defined as "A man who habitually seduces women or is sexually promiscuous; a libertine; a philanderer" (*OED*). L'Engle definitely develops this characterization of Zachary in his actions toward Polly in *A House Like a Lotus*. Second, Polly's responses to Zachary's crudeness suggest that she is beginning to re-establish the damaged link between body and mind. Her refusals to him show that she is no longer so absorbed in her bodily perceptions that she cannot remember the importance of mind. She says things such as "We don't even know each other […] Getting to know people takes time" (L'Engle, 1984: 104-05). This emphasizes, by repeating the word know, that thinking, the mind, which are sources of intellectual knowledge, are just as important to her as the physical body. She specifies this by stating, "Chemistry's not enough" (131). Finally, when she thinks she is saying good-bye to Zachary until she meets him in the Athens airport on her way back to South Carolina, she says, "He kissed me goodbye, and electricity vibrated through me. But we don't have to act out everything we feel. I'd learned that much" (166). While bodily experience is an important part of life, Polly's growing resistance to Zach's advances illustrates that it is essential to think carefully about one's reasons for deliberately engaging in certain sensory experiences, such as sexual encounters. The relationship between psyche and body is essential and L'Engle shows Polly beginning to overcome the dualism she experienced after the attempted assault by Max and her sexual encounter with Renny.

Polly's progress toward reconciliation with Max is positive and constructive when she first spends time with Zachary. However, L'Engle goes on to write her into a much more serious experience, in which Zachary unintentionally threatens her with death, a parallel to the near miss he had with Vicky while taking her flying (see Chapter 3 above). In the middle of Polly's work in Cyprus, Zachary arrives (L'Engle, 1984: 274), despite her previous request that he not come because she needs to focus on her job (165). He takes her out swimming and kayaking and plans to have lunch with her (276-77). It's clear from the beginning that Zachary and Polly are opposites when it comes to understanding the ocean. Zachary tries to persuade Polly to swim in a pool, but Polly insists on swimming in

the sea instead (276). Her element is the ocean, while Zachary, she notes, "swam moderately well. […] but he had no stamina" (276). She is connected with her surroundings and he is not. This is further demonstrated when they go kayaking, because in trying again to kiss Polly in a sexually aggressive way, Zach capsizes the boat (279). He blames her for the accident, shouting, "Now look what you've done!" (279). After multiple attempts to get back in the craft, Polly realizes there's very little hope. Zachary can't keep himself afloat, and she can't hold them both up indefinitely. The Mediterranean suddenly becomes the dominant character in a drama of life and death, which was itself caused by Zachary betraying Polly twice over: first by trying to push her too hard romantically and afterwards by seeking to manipulate her emotionally when she resists his advances. Under normal circumstances, Polly could have gotten herself back into the kayak and made her way back to the shore, or at least used the kayak as a floatation device. However, Zachary's inept behaviour leaves both him and Polly at the mercy of the sea. Polly is forced by the situation to face herself and determine what kind of person she is. She says, "I wasn't ready to die. But I couldn't save myself and let Zachary drown" (281). Then she is forced to think about her thinking: "Why not? If I didn't save myself, we'd both drown, and what good would that do?" (281). Omio, one of the people Polly has been working with, arrives in a rowboat to rescue them from a watery death (281-82), just as Polly ultimately decides that she is the kind of person who will do everything in her power to save someone else. She realizes that she is not someone who kills others, either purposefully or accidentally. As soon as Polly recognizes that she is not a destroyer, the sea releases its hold on both her and Zach through Omio's rescue.

4.3. Splitting the Mind and Body

One of the consequences of the multiple betrayals endured by Polly in *A House Like a Lotus* is that she seems to experience a metaphorical soul/body split. She must somehow also reconcile this split while trying to forgive Max for the attempted assault and recover the mentoring relationship she felt with the older woman. Just as the weather which is characteristic of the ocean and islands seemed to signify to Polly that Max's attempted sexual assault was coming, so too it seems to warn Polly of and respond to this internal split she experiences. L'Engle sets up events so that readers understand Polly is divided in herself by Max's assault and by her experience with Renny. In order to clearly establish the importance L'Engle places on the relationship between the psyche (which she refers to as the soul) and the body, I will first carefully examine a discussion between Max

and Polly on the nature of the soul. I will then carefully examine how L'Engle sets up the sense of splitting Polly feels between her body and psyche.

4.3.1 Embodied Psyche, Essence, Reality

It is important to note that, in her nonfiction, L'Engle uses ocean and sea imagery quite consistently to articulate her thinking about the psyche. For instance, in her nonfiction work *Walking on Water: Reflections on Faith and Art* (1980b), L'Engle quotes the philosopher and psychologist William James as saying,

> Our lives are like islands in the sea, or like trees in the forest, which co-mingle their roots in the darkness underground. Just so, there is *a continuum of cosmic consciousness*, against which our individuality builds but accidental fences, and into which our several minds plunge as into a mother sea or reservoir. (90, emphasis added)

Her interest in James' quotation reminds readers of the ecopsychological ideas of both a kinship continuum between humans and nonhumans, and a soul of the world or world unconscious. L'Engle additionally references the idea of the mind as an iceberg, where more of it is under the ocean surface than above it (1980b: 128). She spends significant time in *The Summer of the Great-Grandmother* talking about the conscious and unconscious aspects of the mind in terms of being above-water or underwater (L'Engle, 1974: 69, 90, 103, 104). She acknowledges her extensive use of ocean as a symbol of the psyche, explaining, "If I frequently use the analogy of the underwater area of our minds, it may be because the ocean is so strong a part of my childhood memories, and of my own personal mythology" (1974: 208). L'Engle grew up loving the ocean, just as she writes that love into Polly's character. In most of these instances, L'Engle recognizes that her own descriptions of the psyche often revolve around the concept of its multifaceted nature – conscious and subconscious, above-water and underwater.

Specifically, she asserts the importance of making sure people understand these different facets of themselves and learn to overcome any dualistic split that might exist within the mind (L'Engle, 1977: 20). She also talks about how her own relationship with the ocean involves her body as well as her mind. She describes how, as an adolescent visiting the beach at her father's childhood home, she would "swim out beyond the breakers and lie on my back in the long, rhythmic swells, water below and around me, sky above—lie there and let my mind, like my body, float free" (1974: 209-10). This emphasizes the importance of recognizing integration of body and soul, as well as

integration of ourselves with our environment, as opposed to blindly accepting the Cartesian body-mind dualism.

L'Engle continues to affirm the importance of integrating all aspects of ourselves, saying, "We are meant to be whole creatures, we human beings, but mostly we are no more than fragments of what we ought to be" (1977: 20). She maintains the importance of being "whole, body, intellect, spirit at peace; mind, heart, intuition in collaboration" (1977: 184). She also supports the concept that the world itself is multifaceted. Our physical perception can only extend so far before we must be willing to accept a world subconscious, that collective element that is invisible to the physical eye, but can be perceived by the spiritual or psychological self. "The world we live in," L'Engle says, "the world we are able to know with our intellect, is limited and bounded by our finiteness. 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 before me" (L'Engle, 1972: 93). This trail following concepts of mind, psyche, reality, and the integration of mind and body is particularly interesting because of the continued engagement with the nature of reality that we have seen in so many of the novels explored in this thesis. "Essence," for instance, or what makes an individual itself and nothing else, was used in Chapter 1 above to describe why Charles Wallace is new and different from other humans in *A Wrinkle in Time*. The term was defined in that chapter partly as the reality of a thing. Thinking about psyche in connection with essence and essential nature further expands the ongoing dialog about reality in L'Engle's fantasy universe. In *A House Like a Lotus*, L'Engle very fully defines her idea of this essence, this reality that is a central part of each individual. This episode helps Polly develop her understanding of the importance of the psyche and body functioning in harmony. The word L'Engle chooses in this novel to encompass this element of a person or thing is "soul."

To emphasize the importance of this aspect of the mind or psyche in connection with reality, L'Engle creates a conversation between Polly and Max which further reveals how she defines and views this "essence." This conversation is part of one of the many flashbacks Polly has. Ironically, it occurs immediately before Max's attempted sexual assault, and flags for readers the serious nature of Polly's consequent mind-body split:

> 'Do you believe in the soul, Polly?' Max never hesitated to ask cosmic questions out of the blue.
> 'Yes.' I thought maybe she'd turn her scorn on me but she didn't.
> 'So, what is it, this thing called soul?'
> This scarred thing, full of adhesions. 'It's—it's your *you* and my *me*.'

> ‘What do you mean by that?’
> ‘It’s what makes us *us*, different from anybody else in the world.’
> ‘Like snowflakes? You have seen snow, haven’t you—yes, of course you have. All those trillions of snowflakes, each one different from the other?’
> ‘More than snowflakes. The soul isn’t—ephemeral.’
> ‘A separate entity from the body?’
> I shook my head. ‘I think it’s part. It’s the part that—well, in your painting of the harbor at Rio, it’s the part which made you know what paint to use, which brush, how to make it alive.’
> Max looked at the silver pitcher, sparkling with drops, as though it were a crystal ball. ‘So it’s us, at our highest and least self-conscious.’
> ‘That’s sort of what I mean.’ (L’Engle, 1984: 181-82).

In examining this passage, it is important to note that an individual may believe in or perceive many different facets of reality, such as emotional, spiritual, or psychological as well as physical. It is also necessary to accept and understand that other individuals perceive reality differently. This seems essential to accepting that many people may believe in an “essence” within each individual which is invisible and intangible, but real nonetheless, and to accepting that this intangible “something” is part of what makes an entity uniquely itself. This is a concept L’Engle embraces (1972: 93), and she calls this “something” the soul (1984: 181-82). This concept of an intangible essence at the core of an individual’s being is also supported in ecopsychological philosophy (Fisher, 2013: 58). It is often referred to as the psyche. Despite being invisible and intangible, this facet of each individual nevertheless has substance that can be worked with, injured, and changed, because it can be “scarred” and contain “adhesions” (L’Engle, 1984: 181). In medical terminology, “adhesions” often refers to “internal scars developing after trauma,” which “bind anatomical structures to one another” (Lang et al., 2010). Alternatively, “adhesions” can refer to the initial closing of a wound through the natural process of cells adhering to each other while the body regenerates tissues (Nikoloudaki et al., 2020: C1066), and so L’Engle may simply be using the word to suggest the soul can be wounded and healed multiple times. For L’Engle, the soul can be wounded in ways that are felt in the physical body. Betraying someone’s “essence” is as impactful as betraying the physical self. This passage in *A House Like a Lotus* hints that, just as the physical self retains marks of healing which serve as a reminder of the wound, so too does the psyche. The description of a soul that can be scarred and have wounds which re-open and re-heal – adhesions – implies the idea that the psyche has material substance, that its experiences are embodied.

L’Engle additionally defines the psyche as the way in which one can identify the essence, the individuality of a thing, by having Polly say that “it’s your *you* and my *me*.” Because it is that essence, it helps to create a whole identity. This may be read as being

drawn from a shared Being which ecopsychologists view as a "world psyche" or an ecological unconscious. This "you" and "me" makes each thing unique, but it does not necessitate disconnection from others. Ecopsychologists would describe it as "An intangible, inner presence" which "lends the world the richness of its outer visibility, gives it personality, and unites all phenomena beneath the surface of reality" (Fisher, 2013: 10). This view recalls L'Engle's own discussion of the underwater world of her subconscious, as well as her references to James's idea of islands joined below the water's surface.

Jungian psychologist James Hillman argues that a recognition of and "harmony with" one's "deep self" – that below-the-surface self which L'Engle finds so important – necessitates an ability to recognize and connect to "the environmental world" (Hillman, 1995: xix). Andy Fisher also points out that we need to "[*acknowledge*] the human-nature relationship *as* a relationship. In other words, it means granting the natural world psychological status; regarding other-than-human beings as true interactants in life, as ensouled 'others' in their own right, as fellow beings or kin" (Fisher, 2013: 8). Ecopsychologists think of these "beings" as including the inorganic environment, evidenced by the concept of the ***world*** psyche. L'Engle implies that what she defines as the soul is that part of each individual which not only makes it unique but which joins the individual to the group. The soul helps to establish that ability to interact with one's surroundings in a way that recognizes shared experience. She also strongly suggests through the context and setting of this novel that oceans, seas, and islands can be included in the concept of "beings" or, as she describes below, "creatures." These environmental features play a key role in Polly's life and experience, and are part of that collective ecological unconscious or the world psyche.

As a result, wounds such as the betrayals Polly experiences in this novel, which threaten the link between psyche and body and damage connections with the rest of the world, are particularly problematic. Max articulates this idea to Polly when she says, "We cannot separate ourselves from anything in the universe. Not from other creatures. Not from each other" (L'Engle, 1984: 40). This echoes the sentiments Polly's mother, Meg, expresses in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*, that everything, everywhere interacts (see Chapter 2 above). Yet as a result of Max's betrayal of Polly's trust, Polly experiences a metaphorical division of her body from her mind, as we have already discussed. This psychological wound separates her from Max: "But I had put the glass up between Max and me, erected a barrier, so that we could no longer touch each other" (L'Engle, 1984: 41). In addition to a piece of window glass, through which a person can see things outside of their enclosed

environment, but not touch them, one interpretation of the word “glass” is to consider a looking glass, or mirror. Considering the glass Polly erects between herself and Max as a mirror might suggest that the barrier not only separates Polly and Max, but also leaves Polly confused about what and who she is. She is no longer able to clearly see the differences that make her unique from Max, nor is she able to find the similarities that invite shared experience and empathy. Instead, she sees and feels only her own pain and trauma.

L’Engle develops the conversation about the soul with a metaphorical example of the way in which psychological wounding splits humans from themselves and from others. Intriguingly, this is a fairy tale about a mirror which distorts the view people have of the things around them, making what is good look ugly and evil and what is bad look beautiful and good (Andersen, n.d.: “First Story” par. 2). It is also about ice which closes people off from feeling compassion: Hans Christian Andersen’s “The Snow Queen.” L’Engle alludes to this fairy tale five times (1984: 167, 174, 178, 274, 307), repeatedly having Polly talk about feeling like she has a piece of ice in her heart. This references Andersen’s image of the broken mirror. Shards of the mirror could embed themselves in people’s eyes and hearts. Their hearts became ice and their view of everything around them became distorted (Andersen, n.d.: “First Story” par. 6). Combined with a kiss from the Snow Queen, the shards of glass in Kay’s heart and his eye make Andersen’s character forget everyone he knows ("Second Story” par. 31). When Gerda finally finds him, he is nearly frozen and doesn’t realize it, nor does he know where he is. He is disconnected from himself and his own needs as well as from the world around him (“Seventh Story” par. 2, 8). Through alluding to these sections of Andersen’s fairy tale, L’Engle invites the reader to consider how psychological wounds can lead to changes in a person’s ways of thinking about and treating others. In the same way that a physical wound leaves the body altered, a psychological wound can make an individual unrecognizable to themselves and others, either temporarily or permanently causing a symbolic split between soul and body. Using the image of a piece of ice to stand in for Andersen’s shards of mirror also allows L’Engle to more easily demonstrate the reintegration of Polly’s body and mind later in the novel, since ice is easily reabsorbed into water.

L’Engle rounds out her definition of the essence that she titles “soul” in a way that keeps it connected to bodies of water and focuses reader attention continually on oceans and their importance to Polly. L’Engle has Max, whom she has described as “theologically heterodox” (L’Engle, 1984: 23), quote from the Upanishads, Hindu sacred texts. “*In this*

body, in this town of Spirit, there is a little house shaped like a lotus, and in that house there is a little space. There is as much in that little space within the heart as there is in the whole world outside," Max reads. She then suggests, "Maybe that little space is the reality of your *you* and my *me*?" (L'Engle, 1984: 182). The final line of the quotation brings back the idea of the "ecological unconscious" very strongly – there is something within each individual which contains elements common to the whole world. L'Engle may be using Max and Polly's conversation to suggest that there is a little part of each individual which contains the same ideas, needs, experiences, etc., which are held by other inhabitants of what she would call the created universe. It therefore enables the sharing of experience with other parts of the natural world. It does not seem to be limited to living creatures. The idea that "there is as much in that little" part of the soul "as there is in the whole world" implies that this opening space of shared experience extends to the inorganic as well. L'Engle's image of the opening lotus as explanatory of that space in the soul which seems to connect the human being to the rest of the environment also draws reader attention to the relationship between Polly, the oceans, and the island.

A significant point about the lotus flower which brings it more firmly into Polly's own experiences and her deeply-rooted relationship to oceans and islands is that it is, as artist and critic William Ward (1952) explains, "a flower of the water" in the Buddhist tradition, as well as a symbol of that which "supports the world above the chaotic waters of the universe." Ward also defines it as "a symbol denoting the essence of enlightenment" in Buddhism, and "of the sun and of life, of immortality, and of resurrection" in ancient Egyptian culture (135). It has also been suggested that the lotus is seen symbolically as "predominantly female" and thus further connected with symbolism of the ocean, as water is "itself a predominantly female symbol" (Ferro-Luzzi et al., 1980: 48), making the lotus an especially appropriate way to demonstrate Polly's closeness to oceans and islands, as well as representing her developing psyche. In using the image of this water flower in connection with the heart, mind, or soul, L'Engle draws the reader's attention to the way Polly's sense of self has emerged from her relationship with the environment in which she is tightly bound. It also points at the relationship between the organic and the inorganic. The lotus emerges from and lives on the water, just as Polly seems to emerge from and "live" spiritually or psychologically on islands of the sea. It serves as a reminder that living things often cannot survive without non-living things, and thus points the reader to knowledge of the shared world.

Shared experience is the place where, ecopsychologists argue, “Meaning, born of interaction, is both found and made, is coconstituted,” and is completed “in the opening out of a life process” (Fisher, 2013: 87). This expansion parallels the opening of that lotus shape which Max sees as symbolic of Polly’s own heart and mind opening into understanding. Sharing experience must precede understanding for others. Such interaction, ecopsychologists seem to be saying, is what makes our own individual lives meaningful as we develop the ability to see how our interconnectedness with others enhances the quality of our and their experiences. In addition to emphasizing that something about the whole world is extended into that small part of each heart, it is important to think about what L’Engle, speaking in Max’s voice, might mean by asking Polly if “that little space is the reality” of each individual. That space is continually developing in each individual, and the use of the word “reality” implies that the psyche has an actual, if unobservable, existence. This aligns with definitions of spirit and soul in some spiritual traditions, such as the belief that “There is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure” (Doctrine&Covenants 131:7), or Aristotle’s concept “that the notion of a soul is, in a way, the notion of a particular individual and a substance” (Charlton, 1980: 170, italics removed). Both clearly indicate cultural traditions that despite being invisible to the human eye and inaccessible to the physical senses, the soul is something with substance which is important to the existence of the body and the mind. Breaking the connection between the lotus and the water will destroy the lotus. This highlights how betraying relationships between individuals can damage each participant in the relationship, and, either literally or symbolically, that connection must be restored in order to overcome the breach of trust.

4.3.2 Obscured Mental State

The careful discussion L’Engle presents her readers with about the soul and its importance forces them to consider the impact of the betrayals Polly experiences on the state of both her soul and her mind. And once again, the characteristics of the ocean and island environment with which she has such a close bond reflect and engage with her experiences. If the thunderstorm that accompanies the biggest betrayal of trust which Polly experiences may be read as a warning of the attempted assault, fog on Benne Seed Island might be read as the island’s and ocean’s responses (or parallels) to the ways in which Polly loses clarity of thinking because of Max’s breach of trust. Research done by pathologist Thomas Fuchs (2010) shows that some psychological conditions may make a

person feel somehow disconnected from their body and experience a fog-like dissociation from reality (552). Consequently, the fog episodes portrayed throughout the novel might also be associated with the body/mind split Polly feels (and which I discuss in more detail below).

Polly seems to share the "place-specific intelligence" (Abram, 1996: 262) which is generated by the islands she has lived on throughout her life. It provides some sense of security on Benne Seed. However, as L'Engle has Polly flashback to the beginning of her year of trauma, betrayal, and growth, the reader's attention is immediately drawn to descriptions of the island's weather. Polly tells readers that December on Benne Seed, eight or nine months before her trip to Greece, was "grey day after grey day, with fog rolling in from the sea" (L'Engle, 1984: 25-26). The fog is particularly depressing this December. It is dark, oppressive, and cold. These traits of the fog and sea will invade Polly's emotions for a significant portion of the story, because she feels emotionally frozen and darkened following the attempted assault. The fog obscures physical vision, suggesting that Polly's ability to open her soul to the complexity of others' internal lives – their souls or innermost "realities" – will also be obscured. The fog also symbolizes how she will be unable to identify herself and Max clearly as long as she remains at the Atlantic shore, trapped by the ocean's fog and consequent lack of light. Both the fog and the darkness prefigure her coming psychological trauma.

In addition to emphasizing the way the fog foreshadows how Polly's mind will be darkened, L'Engle's use of fog imagery here identifies Benne Seed Island as an isolated space for Polly by surrounding, obscuring, and effectively cutting it off from the mainland. This sense of isolation highlights how Polly will feel like her body and her mind are cut off from each other, so the fog again presages Polly's psychological reaction to the betrayal she experiences. Early in Polly's narrative, the fog makes it more difficult for her and her siblings to use the sea as a connecting link between themselves and the mainland for getting to school. When it is foggy, they must drive to the causeway at the opposite end of the island from their home instead of Polly being permitted to take her siblings to the mainland in the family motorboat. Thus, the fog increases Polly's isolation from engaging with the ocean she loves. Because the ocean is so important to Polly's embodied experiences, this is further evidence that the fog portends Polly's temporary, metaphorical rift between body and soul. Ultimately, the fog demonstrates Polly's perception that she has been estranged from her own body through impairing what is usually a flourishing emotional, sensory, and psychological relationship with the world around her.

L'Engle uses similar fog imagery three more times in the novel, in the second instance associating it with the ocean, and in the third and fourth instances deploying it as a metaphor to specifically describe Polly's psyche. In the second description, the language used is much the same as in the first example. Polly recounts, "And suddenly, when I was about halfway to Beau Allaire [Max's home], the fog rolled in from the ocean, and the outlines of the trees were blurred, and the birds stopped singing. There was a damp hush all over the island" (L'Engle, 1984: 118). In contrast with the first description, however, in which the fog is portrayed as a frequent accompaniment to winter, this spring fog comes on suddenly. It signifies that things will change very quickly for Polly and that her negative experience with Max will cause her ability to recognize herself emotionally and psychologically to become "blurred" and silent. It also implies that Polly will become psychologically and physically disoriented. The text emphasizes that her vision is impaired by the ocean's changeable nature, which parallels Polly's own coming struggles to balance herself again emotionally and psychologically.

In addition to the repeated emphasis on loss of vision, L'Engle uses "rolling" and "rolled" to describe the way this Spring fog moves from the ocean to the land. These words suggest oppression, as if the ocean is sending something over Polly to warn her that something is coming which will emotionally smother her. This kind of rolling, smothering movement appears to quell whatever it encounters. This is represented by the silence Polly experiences as she finishes her drive to Max's home. L'Engle foreshadows Max's betrayal of Polly's trust, which is moving inexorably toward Polly, like the fog that is rolling inexorably in from the sea. L'Engle may also be using the silence created by the disorienting and dampening fog to signal both how Polly seems unable to move or speak or respond to Max's behaviour and how she never actually tells anyone specifically what happened. The novel does not clarify whether Polly's continued silence stems from a form of protection, both self-protection for Polly and an effort to protect Max from others' negative responses to the attempted assault (L'Engle, 1984: 192), or whether it is a result of shock and trauma. This also seems to be symbolized by the hushing nature of the fog at this juncture in the story.

The third example of fog imagery is connected with the second – it occurs while Polly is visiting Max during the fog just described. As Max describes how her father's sexually abusive behaviour led to the deaths of both her mother and her sister, Polly says, "I shuddered. The fog seemed to be creeping into the room. It did not seem like May" (125). This time, the imagery connects the ocean with the psyche directly. The fog seems

to Polly to obscure Max's normally vibrant personality. It therefore correlates to the way Polly feels about the story Max has shared. Because L'Engle uses the word "shuddered" to describe how Polly reacts to the fog-like feeling in the room, one is inclined to think of mental cold, of fear and an emotional chill, rather than just physical cold. "Shiver" and "shudder" are almost the same, but "shudder" seems to have a much more powerful impact on the reader's mind. Thus, the word demonstrates the psychological impact Max is having on Polly as she narrates this family history. Because L'Engle connects the sensations of cold and fear with the ocean fog, this enhances the Atlantic Ocean's role of predicting danger for Polly. L'Engle's use of the word "creeping" to describe the movement of the ocean fog adds to the impact of "shudder" when thought of in terms of fear. The sneaky feeling L'Engle creates by using "creeping" to describe the fog suggests that it is coming so quietly and stealthily that neither Polly nor Max know it's there until it has enveloped them. The feelings of fear and psychological cold Polly encounters are mirrored in the fog.

The fourth important example of ocean fog is also psychological, but instead of foreshadowing the coming betrayal, it parallels and/or responds to Polly's psychological state after Max drunkenly approaches her. Shortly after Polly escapes from the attempted assault, Max's partner Ursula finds Polly and helps her back into shelter. Polly recounts, "I don't remember how we got from the kitchen to the green guest room. It was as though fog had rolled in from the ocean and obliterated everything" (L'Engle, 1984: 205). It is again possible to read this as if the ocean is responding to Polly's moods and experiences, underscoring the close connection she has to this environment. "Obliterate" is particularly associated with erasing or destroying things, not just hiding them. As a result, L'Engle leaves readers with a sense that the ocean fog, the Atlantic Ocean itself, by obliterating everything around Polly, is responding to the major changes Polly is experiencing psychologically as she is shaken out of her tendency to idolize Max. In Polly's perception, everything she thought she knew about Max, everything that Max has done for her, the familial love they have developed and share with each other, all of it seems to be suddenly wiped out by recent events. In conjunction with this, the fog imagery may also represent Polly retreating into herself, finding a place inside her mind in which to hide after this incident with Max.

4.3.3 Polly's Internal Splitting

In addition to the fog imagery, L'Engle uses a variety of other images to help establish that Polly's own internal connection to herself, that link between her body and her soul, is temporarily broken in this novel. About such a split, ecopsychologist Andy Fisher suggests "that Cartesian dualism truly describes only self-estranged, disembodied, narcissistic experience" (Fisher, 2013: 56). Polly acknowledges her sense of self-estrangement in her questions about who she is. She confesses that her body has suddenly become the only thing she recognizes, suggesting a split between mind and body. However, there is a slight but significant difference between the Cartesian mind/body split and Polly's metaphorical mind/body split. Whereas the Cartesian mind/body split usually emphasizes the mind over the body ("cogito, ergo sum"), Polly's split emphasizes her body over her mind. For instance, immediately following Max's attempted assault, Polly, who is waiting in an automobile for Max's partner, describes how "A wave of sleep washed over me, and I gave in to it, as into death" (L'Engle, 1984: 204). In this instance, the image of death is used to highlight how Polly's own psyche and body are now divided from each other. Much as Max's own physical death will truly separate a soul from a body, sleep provides a metaphorical death for Polly emotionally. It represents a state in which she is not required to remember that she has a body or try to use her mind. Sleep not only temporarily separates psyche and body, but partially obliviates any knowledge of that connection.

The disconnect between body and mind is further emphasized during Polly's intimate encounter with Renny. She states directly, "I was nothing but my body" (260). Under these conditions, the language L'Engle uses in connection with the split from the body definitely implies that she is problematizing it. "Nothing but" entails a lack of other things, specifically things related to the mind or emotions. In this case, Polly's feeling of being "nothing but [her] body" directly contradicts the conversation with Max in which Polly says that she thinks the soul, or psyche, is a part of the physical body rather than separate from it (L'Engle, 1984: 182). Ecopsychology and ecotherapy emphasize the need for humans to be engaged with their own and others' embodied experience, as for instance when ecopsychologist Laura Sewall pinpoints the importance of both the sensual body and the rational mind operating together to explore and appreciate what happens around us and within us. The rational mind cannot dismiss the body's intuition and sensory responses. Instead, humans must learn how to mindfully engage with physicality. While a highly sensual and physical experience (such as sex) can make it seem as if the body is

temporarily distanced from the psyche, Sewall suggests overcoming mind/body dualism requires actively closing that distance and making sure one's mind and body are both engaged in the experience (1999: 83-92). Instead, L'Engle demonstrates that Polly's split extends over about two months. This is evidenced prominently at the start of the novel (which is chronologically after Max's and Renny's actions). Polly describes sitting at a café table in Athens and says, "The heat wraps itself around my body. And my body, like everything else, is suddenly strange to me" (L'Engle, 1984: 4). Polly is no longer familiar with the physical aspect of herself because the types of breached trust she has experienced have made her body seem unreal to her and broken the link between soul and body. L'Engle's use of the word "strange" accentuates not only the disconnect Polly feels from her body, but also connotes that Polly's body has suddenly become weird or bizarre, unrecognizable as a part of the environment she currently occupies. This implies that Polly feels othered from herself. It may be that the sense of defamiliarization, of otherness from her own body, is a result of her body being objectified by people she should have been able to trust. Both Max and Renny seemed to turn suddenly and unexpectedly from treating Polly as a friend to focusing solely on the sensual nature of Polly's physical body.

This unfamiliarity extends from her body to her psyche. It is clarified when she says, "But I had this weird feeling that I'd like someone to come up to me and say 'Hey, what's your name?' And I could then answer, 'Polly O'Keefe,' because all that had been happening to me had the effect of making me not sure who, in fact, I was" (L'Engle, 1984: 5). The strangeness of her body extends to her identity, now uncertain because the link between mind and body is damaged as a result of Max's actions. Polly's desire to have someone say her name out loud signifies that this would allow her to define herself again, as words themselves form a kind of "flesh" for the thing described, give that thing a body, a shape (Fisher, 2013: 133). Certainly L'Engle recognizes the importance of names and how they can affect the psyche of their bearers and users (L'Engle, 1977: 213). Polly, because no one approaches her in this moment at the cafe, must try to "reembody" herself with her own name: "Polly," she says. "You're Polly, and you're going to be quite all right, because that's how you've been brought up. You can manage it, Polly. Just try" (L'Engle, 1984: 5). She names herself, trying to give her psyche the flesh of a word.

In connection with giving shape to ideas through words, Polly's full name, Polyhymnia, which she doesn't like ("My parents should have known better," she says (7)), is the name of the muse of poetry and song. It seems plausible that L'Engle wants to highlight the ability of words to make ideas and identities live. She hints that Polly,

because she shares the name of the muse of poetry, also shares the ability of poetry to embody through the word. This aligns with ecopsychology scholarship which (albeit briefly) mentions poetry and literature as arts which give shape to the world around us and provide a unique perception necessary to human re-engagement with the nonhuman world (Fisher, 2012: 95-97). This is important because, in addition to using her name to give flesh to her world, Polly also mentions her upbringing as important to reengaging her body with her mind and identity. However, there is little information at this point in the story about "how [she has] been brought up." It is therefore possible that L'Engle is hinting, not just at *how* Polly's parents have taught her to handle life, but *where* she has been raised. Thus, "how you've been brought up" for Polly means how the natural environment has shaped and influenced her. In this phrase, L'Engle foreshadows that Polly will eventually resolve the splitting within herself because of her synergy with the specific ecology of oceans and islands.

Similarly, ecopsychologists argue that the development of the psyche doesn't take place in a vacuum. A human being is bound into his or her surroundings, which include other people as well as the other-than-human. This extensive and inclusive world is part of each person's continuous process of becoming (Macy, 2009: 244). It is part of what underpins how the essence, the reality, of any being develops, as Elizabeth J. Roberts explains in her article "Place and the Human Spirit" (1998). "The entire surrounding landscape is infused with meaning, creativity and its own evolutionary story," Roberts says. "Our spiritual identity, like our psychological and cultural identity, is woven into the unfolding of this sacred story through our deepest experiences of natural place" (26). In addition to healing the split within herself, between her body and her spirit, Polly's ability to overcome the betrayal she experiences and forgive Max is intricately connected to her relationship with oceans and islands. This becomes obvious through Polly's responses both to her near-drowning experience with Zachary in the Mediterranean, and to a late-summer storm on Cyprus (which seems to demonstrate how the weather associated with islands once again responds to and reflects the reconciliation Polly begins to feel within herself and between herself and Max). Both of these events will be discussed in more detail below.

4.4 Forgiveness and Reconciliation

The question which points Polly toward forgiveness for and reconciliation with Max, raised by her interactions with Zachary before, during, and after his betrayal of her,

is: Why can she allow Zach to be a complex and flawed human being when she's only just met him, while she can't seem to allow Max to also be a complex and flawed human being, when she has known Max much better and for significantly longer? (L'Engle, 1984: 193-94). This question sticks in the back of Polly's mind as she spends three days in and around Athens with Zachary and then a few more days with her aunt and uncle before she travels to Cyprus. She is forced to find an answer on Cyprus when Zachary's lack of ability to mesh with ocean ecology nearly results in both their deaths. This experience of betrayal is a turning point for Polly, after which she finally moves forward into maturity as the Mediterranean metaphorically drowns her pain and fear and heals her internal split. This allows her to begin the process of forgiving Max and to move back into a connected and resilient relationship with the world around her.

Polly's decision to forgive Zachary after their kayaking accident leads her to reconsider her responses to Max's attempted assault. She sees her way clear not only to moving past Max's breach of trust, but also to fully recognizing and overcoming her own betrayal of Max. While Max's action was a painful and frightening experience, Polly is finally able to put it in perspective. She questions herself in two ways. First, she carefully questions her total rejection of Max. She asks, "Would I truly want to eradicate all of the good times because of one terrible time? […] would I wipe out all the rest of it for that moment of dementia?" (L'Engle, 1984: 302). Second, she questions her opposite response to Zach's endangering her life: "Why was I able to feel compassion for Zachary, who was selfish, who belonged to a world of power and corruption, and who had nearly killed me?" she queries. "Why didn't I want to wipe Zachary out?" (302). This echoes earlier thoughts she and others have expressed.

For example, immediately following the incident with Max, Polly's Uncle Sandy comes to Benne Seed to visit. He tells Polly that Max called him and told him about the attempted assault (287). Polly feels unable to respond with compassion and Sandy asks "Are you being fair to Max?" (288). When he and his wife meet Polly in Athens later, he questions Polly's immediate acceptance of Zach's complex and very contradictory personality. He quietly says, "You're willing to let Zachary Gray be complicated? […] But not Max?" (194). Sandy's questions keep Polly's mind open to the concept that other people share the experiences of betrayal she has had. The questions are part of the necessary distance which ecopsychologists suggest is essential to gaining perspective on others (Fisher, 2013: 95-96). Polly is fully aware of many of Max's complexities and the betrayals Max experienced as a child and a younger woman. This underlying knowledge of

shared experience – that Max, like Polly, was betrayed by someone she should have been able to trust – must be brought into play for Polly to forgive Max and move forward to a friendship based on understanding. As Polly continues to think about what has happened and what it means, she is even able to ask herself the same questions and consider whether she has betrayed others.

Again, it is because of her newly developing acquaintance with Zach that she permits herself to see how she might have betrayed others. In one conversation, Zach says, "I can't imagine you letting anybody down." Polly tells the reader, "The thought flashed across my mind that I had let Max down. I pushed it away" (L'Engle, 1984: 130-31). While she cannot yet accept her own actions as a form of betrayal, readers are able to see her grow in willingness to accept her own imperfections. We are also able to observe how her Uncle Sandy's questions further build on her own growing consciousness of how her actions might have affected Max. While in Cyprus, she visits a shrine to a saint called Osia Theola. On her first visit, she says, "[The] only truth to come to me was that I was still in the darkness of confusion, about myself, and everybody. I allowed Zachary Gray, whom I had known only a few days, to be complicated and contradictory. Why couldn't I allow it in anybody else? Why couldn't I allow it in myself?" (253). In this recognition of the complexity of herself and others, she draws much closer to admitting that her own actions have constituted a breach of trust in her relationship with Max.

As she continues to ask herself these questions, she opens herself up to the immersive experience that the Mediterranean will provide (the moment of near-drowning), which she needs in order to cleanse hate and fear from her mind. Instead of being childish (which, in a presentation given to the Louisiana Library Association in 1964, L'Engle defines as "limited, unspontaneous, [and] closed in" (Townsend, 1971: 128)) in her expectations of other people, the near-drowning leads Polly to a psychological freedom that allows her to see other people *as people*, rather than idols (L'Engle, 1984: 302). She recognizes finally that her struggle is resolved. She states, "And now I knew that I no longer wanted to wipe Max out. To wipe Max out was to wipe out part of myself" (302). While the strength and depth of her relationship with Max led her to be hurt deeply by Max's betrayal, her recognition that she can forgive a young man she barely knows and with whom she has no relationship at all helps her to an awareness that reconciling with Max is much more important to restoring each of them psychologically. This demonstrates a developing maturity on Polly's part. She is able to accept that other people make mistakes, and sometimes they are terrible mistakes. As a result, she now feels free to

forgive the mistakes that hurt her and thus becomes more capable of caring for individuals based on their own identities rather than caring for a false identity she has imposed on them. She is open to seeing beyond betrayals driven by fear (Max) or selfishness (Zach). As she experiences this shift in her mind-set and her expectations she becomes a more mature human being, able to demonstrate compassion (L'Engle, 1984: 90). She is also able to begin the process of her own internal reconciliation.

4.4.1 Repairing the Trust

As Polly's ability to feel compassion and accept complexity in others grows, L'Engle establishes the ways in which Polly is deeply embedded in her environment as an aspect of how her recovery is developed in the novel. We know that oceans, islands, and all things associated with them are hugely important to Polly O'Keefe. They are representative of her personality, of the changes that take place, even of the events that have happened which resulted in broken trust. The ocean has provided a backdrop to most of her life and is an integral part of her identity. Uncle Sandy makes the point that she carries that backdrop with her: "We bring our worlds with us when we travel […] You bring the scent of ocean and camellias" (L'Engle, 1984: 193). Not only is the ocean a psychological part of Polly, it is a physical part of her, demonstrating the way in which the soul and the body should be joined together. Polly's relationship with the ocean, the sea, and islands becomes very important in both helping her forgive and helping her regain the link between her mind and her body that seems to have become fragmented after Max tries to assault her, and she and Renny sleep together.

It is striking that the sound of the Mediterranean Sea, which is the place of warmth and growth for Polly, causes her to dream about the Atlantic Ocean, which was the place of injury and fear, of psychological cold. Through pushing her to face the fear and the cold brought on by Max trying to assault her while drunk and in agony, the Mediterranean Sea's warmth helps Polly bring the shard of ice she repeatedly mentions as being lodged in her heart closer to the surface so that it can more easily be melted. As it continues to melt, the ice becomes a part of the sea again. It is absorbed into Polly's being and helps her emerge a much stronger person. In this way, the oceanscape that is a part of Polly's identity helps her to push toward a renewed psyche and a renewed relationship with her surroundings.

Coupled with ocean imagery describing Polly's emotions and the psychological experiences she has in her dream, L'Engle also uses wave imagery to describe the way

other people interact emotionally with Polly. Specifically, she writes about the love Polly feels she receives from one of the minor characters in the novel, Milcah Adah Xenda, or Millie (214), one of the women participating in the literary conference Polly attends on Cyprus. Following Polly's near-drowning, Millie takes care of her and helps her to recover. While very different in terms of context, Polly's experience with Millie is strangely correspondent to her last interaction with Max. First, Millie's initials spell "MAX," a hint to the reader that Millie is a mirror image of Max Horne. Second, like Max, Millie also lost her children to illness, demonstrating that L'Engle wants her readers to consider how Millie, like Max, may see Polly as a child she can mother (248). Finally, like Max, Millie offers Polly physical touch. However, where Max's touch was perceived by Polly as assault and was induced by Max's pain, fear, and intoxication (186-87), Millie's touch is healing, a back rub that helps reduce Polly's pain and fear following the kayaking accident with Zach (L'Engle, 1984: 286). As Millie rubs Polly's muscles and sings to her, Polly says, "And I realized that she was singing to me as her baby, that for this moment I *was* Millie's baby—perhaps one of the children she had lost—and I was lapped in her love" (286). The word "lapped" gives this image its ocean characteristic. One imagines waves lapping against the shore, gently brushing over the sand, smoothing it. One can also imagine love covering and enfolding Polly as she falls sleep, with the same gentleness as the waves lapping on the shore. In this way, the sound and feel of waves and the sound and feel of Millie's love for Polly blend two common definitions of the word "lap": "To move with a rippling sound like that made in lapping" (OED, v.1, senses 4-5) and "to surround with soothing and shielding care" (v.2, sense 5). Polly feels soothed by Millie's massage and feels like she is wrapped in comfort by Millie's presence. As a result, the ocean imagery accompanying this interaction with Millie, which reverses Polly's last experience with Max, helps Polly move toward forgiveness. She is better able to understand the depth of sorrow felt by a mother who loses a child and the depth of gratitude experienced by that same mother who is offered a second chance to help a child.

As Polly's mind develops toward this understanding, she feels compassion for the change in Max's otherwise motherly behaviour and begins to accept that flaws are inherent to human nature. She starts to understand that the attempted assault does not represent who Max truly is, a mentor and a mother figure who has helped Polly develop emotional and psychological maturity. Because Millie is portrayed as a parallel mother figure, but one who has not acted in ways which Polly perceives as betrayal, Polly is given psychological distance and perspective on Max. This permits her to recognize Max's motherly love for her and allows her to let that love overcome the fear caused by betrayal. It helps Polly

forgive the assault and reconcile with Max. As Polly's body relaxes under Millie's healing hands, she begins to understand with her mind and heart the kind of emotion felt by a mother tending a child. Polly subsequently moves toward accepting the complexity of Max's life and personality. Millie is both enough like Max and enough different from her to give Polly perspective on reconciling with Max. Millie's gentle touch, so different from the last time Max tried to touch Polly, also helps Polly continue the journey toward rehabilitating the connection between psyche and body.

4.4.2 Reconciliation of Soul and Body

We have seen how L'Engle creates an oppressive, dark atmosphere generated by Benne Seed Island and the Atlantic Ocean. This emphasizes how Polly's deep emotional and psychological relationship with oceans and islands is a key to warning her about Max's betrayal and reflects her emotional reaction to the breach of trust. It also draws attention to the loss of connection within Polly (the damage to the link between her body and mind) after Max and Renny betray her. L'Engle shows readers how the conversation Max and Polly have about the soul prepares us for Polly's progress toward reconciling within herself and being reconciled to others. After establishing the types of betrayal, as well as the need for understanding the impact these betrayals have on Polly psychologically, emotionally, and physically, L'Engle develops the plot toward reconciliation and forgiveness. She does so in part by establishing a contrast to the fog and the feeling of emotional cold Polly associates with the Atlantic Ocean and Benne Seed Island. The Mediterranean Sea is a place of bright light and warmth for Polly. These characteristics of this different seascape serve to reflect the changes in Polly's experience as she moves through pain to healing and forgiveness.

The heat is especially intense on Cyprus (L'Engle, 1984: 201). L'Engle seems to purposefully write the unseasonable warmth into the novel at the same point at which Polly arrives in Cyprus. This emphasizes the allusions to ice in Polly's heart, highlighting that heat melts ice. Norine, one of the staff, explains, "We are sorry it is so unseasonably hot. This heat wave began today. We hope it will break before the delegates arrive" (201). Just as the Atlantic appears to be in tune with the danger Polly faces from Max and Renny, the Mediterranean Sea is in tune with her need for warmth and healing.

Polly's deeply entwined relationship with her ocean ecology as a prominent factor of moving her toward forgiveness and reconciliation is strengthened when one realizes that

the heat which the Mediterranean emits starting on the day she arrives in Cyprus breaks immediately after she realizes that she will be able to forgive Max. This step allows her, as we saw above, to recognize that Max is human and that one mistake shouldn't become a reason to "wipe Max out" (L'Engle, 1984: 302). As Polly comes to this realization she says, "I got ready for bed and worked on my school journal. I was in the middle of a sentence when there was a great flash of lightning, coming through the slats in the shutters, followed immediately by thunder, and the *heat-breaking* storm struck" (303, emphasis added). In stark contrast to the lengthy foreshadowing of the storm on Benne Seed Island which warns of and responds to Polly's negative experience with Max, this storm on Cyprus starts very suddenly. It lightens the atmosphere, reflecting that Polly's feelings and emotions, her psyche, have been lightened through her realization that she no longer wants to eliminate Max from her life. When she wakes up in the morning, she mentions "feeling rested and refreshed" and describes: "The sun was warm, not hot; the day sparkled" (306). The island and sea can be read as responding to and reflecting her newfound healing.

It is important to note that the sunshine, clarity, and perfect temperatures contrast strongly to the fog which played such a large role in the weather surrounding Max's attempted assault. We have seen that the fog generated by the weather patterns associated with ocean and island signalled how Polly's psychological state would become blurred and confused by Max's unexpected behaviour. The light and comfort which follow the storm on Cyprus reflect that now, psychologically, Polly has made steps toward recovery. She has changed and grown enough to recognize her own humanity and need for forgiveness, though there isn't enough time left in Polly and Max's story to learn whether Polly has matured into truly understanding Max or not.[32] Her mind and memory are clear and full of light, rather than obscured and fogged by fear. L'Engle illustrates this when, after the storm has passed, Polly describes a "clean feeling of love [which] blew through me with the breeze." She concludes, "I sighed with a joyful kind of relief" (L'Engle, 1984: 305). By joining Polly's psychological change to the breeze from the Mediterranean Sea, L'Engle reiterates the ways in which the oceans and islands, of which Polly is such an integral part, play a significant role in how she has coped with betrayal and come to a place of forgiveness and reconciliation (Trites, 2000: 99, 101). While the trauma has not been obliterated, Polly is moving closer to a mature and compassionate response to herself and others in which remembering the best parts of her friendship with Max helps with recovery

[32] In *An Acceptable Time*, the final O'Keefe family novel (which doubles for many as the final Time novel as well), L'Engle implies that Max died before Polly returned from Cyprus.

(Smedman, 1993: 79). Max, Polly says, has helped her "[expand horizons]," has seen "potential in me that I hardly dared dream of" (L'Engle, 1984: 302). The relief and clarity Polly experiences also signal reconciliation of her internal split between body and soul. As a result of this developing clarity, Polly arranges to place a phone call to Max and Ursula, begging forgiveness for her unforgiving response to Max's apologies. "Urs, it's Polly. Max—may I speak to Max?" she requests. Her repetition of Max's name re-establishes Max as a loved mentor and pseudo-mother. The repetition of her own name when Max comes to the phone pins Polly's own world back into place: "And then Max's voice. 'Polly?' . . . *Polly?*" (307). The echo confirms to Polly that she has regained her own connection between her loved ecosystem, her body, and mind. After the phone call, Polly reflects, "The cold place within me that had frozen and constricted my heart was gone" (L'Engle, 1984: 307). The ice shard which Polly has been imagining in her heart has finally melted. With the echo of her name, this demonstrates that her mind and body are in harmony once again.

The similarities between how this happens and how Gerda frees Kay in Andersen's "The Snow Queen" are quite striking. Toward the end of Andersen's fairy tale, Gerda "shed hot tears" which, upon touching Kay, "went straight to his heart" (Andersen, n.d.: "Seventh Story" par. 7). Kay also weeps and so "the little piece of glass in his eye was washed right out" (par. 7). L'Engle's reference to the shard of ice at this specific moment implies that the storm itself acts as Polly's "Gerda." The rain that accompanies the late-summer storm falls like tears while Polly sleeps. The salt water of her near-drowning experience with Zachary and the tears which are the raindrops falling from the storm melt the ice. Polly no longer needs searing heat to melt or wash anything from her soul. The wound is closed, the breach healed. Now, instead, she can be wrapped in comfortable late-summer warmth from the sea. Polly is once again sure of the link between her body and mind and between herself and the world around her. It has been renewed by her underlying psychological relationship with oceans that has been explored through her experiences with the Mediterranean Sea, which has warmed and healed her. She can take Max as a flawed yet whole person rather than expecting her to be perfect and thereby diminishing Max's reality by that unreasonable expectation. She begins to accept that imperfections and fine qualities together make the complex and wonderful human being, worth knowing and especially worth the hard work inherent in reconciliation. Perhaps even more important for Polly in terms of her present and future ability to engage with and be nurturing of both the human and the other-than-human aspects of the world around her is

the implication that she can now learn to accept herself as complex and flawed, as capable of acceptance, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

4.5 Closing Thoughts

That oceans form such a key part of Polly's identity foregrounds the interconnectedness between Polly and her ocean ecology, elucidating for the reader the reason oceanscapes appear to respond to her needs and help her move toward maturity. This ties Polly's experiences tightly to ecopsychology and ecotherapy. The Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, as well as the islands on which Polly finds herself in this novel, are instrumental in helping her re-establish a stable relationship with those who have betrayed her. The ocean, the fog, the storms, and the many other aspects of this familiar ecology are closely interwoven with Polly's identity. We see how these inorganic elements seem to respond to Polly, to warn her, and to help her reach a place where she can forgive Zach, a young man she barely knows. Once she has reached this point, the ocean and island ecology helps her push past her fear and forgive betrayal. She is also able to finally reconcile her own internal splitting.

As a result, *A House Like a Lotus* brings L'Engle's children's and adolescent novels across the complete human-nature kinship continuum which we have explored throughout this thesis. The novel demonstrates how human beings can be in a meaningful, responsive relationship with inorganic Nature. It provides examples for considering the idea of a psyche in the nonhuman, inorganic environment, as we explored the possibility that the oceans, islands, and their characteristic weather events might be responding to Polly's emotions and experience. As readers, we are invited to reimagine our own responses to the elements and to reconceptualize how we might develop relationships with, not just the organic Other in our environment, but with the inorganic entities that could provide us with emotional and psychological healing. Importantly, the examples of the human-nonhuman relationship do more than simply demonstrate how we can imagine and recollect, in ecopsychological terms, our connection to the inorganic in the world around us. Polly's embeddedness in her ecosystem provides her with psychological healing from a series of serious betrayals – and it also brings her back into connection with the humans in her world. Restoring and reconciling her relationship with Max illustrates the way the human-nonhuman kinship continuum is constantly revisited and renewed through

interweaving the nonhuman inorganic, the nonhuman organic, and the human in one *anima mundi*.

General Conclusion

When I first began thinking about this project, I considered several different authors as potential subjects, all of whom I have grown up or grown into loving. As I considered work I might do on any, some, or all of these authors' novels, I was drawn particularly to Madeleine L'Engle's Austin family series. This was partly because it has not received as much critical attention as her Time series (especially *A Wrinkle in Time*), but I also found myself connecting particularly to Vicky Austin and the emotions and experiences she undergoes through most of the novels in this five-book series. Additionally, I was intrigued by the fact that so few people mention the Austin family series in connection with L'Engle's fantasy. The Austin family novels are viewed by most as being primarily realistic, but few acknowledge that they are set in the same universe in which L'Engle locates her two fantasy sequences, the Time series and the O'Keefe family series. I began to think of the Austin family series as "fantasy," both because of the distinct overlaps between it and the Time and O'Keefe series, and because fantasy sometimes seemed to be playing a role in the series itself.

As I carefully re-read the Austin family novels, however, I also noticed something much more profound happening. This phenomenon went well beyond either a distinction between or blurring of the lines between the fantastic and the realistic. I realized how intricately L'Engle weaves the relationships between her human characters and their nonhuman world – relationships that often involve a strong element of the fantastic or the ambiguously fantastic, even in her realistic series. Part of the emotional appeal of the Austin family series for me has always been L'Engle's descriptions of place, of landscape, of flora and fauna, and other aspects of the natural environment in which she locates her characters. However, I had not previously been so aware of the specific connections L'Engle makes, in these three series, between a character's ecosystem and that character's psychological development, health, and emotional and mental well-being. The more I re-read the novels and thought about these connections, the more I wondered what one might call an analytical lens that examines the close relationship between the environment and the human psyche. I was unable to see anything blindingly obvious on this subject in the ecocritical scholarship I investigated, so I put the two words together myself – ecology and psychology – and came up with what I thought was a new term, "ecopsychology." In fact, in the few minutes before I did a simple internet search, I honestly believed I had come up with an entire new critical theory! I was, however, surprised and delighted to discover that not only were the ideas of ecopsychology and its praxis, ecotherapy, already well known in

some circles, but that there was scholarship on ecopsychology and ecotherapy, including a relatively new peer-reviewed journal, *Ecopsychology* (first volume from 2009).

Equipped with a variety of criticism and scholarship on ecopsychology and ecotherapy, I began to re-read the Austin family series carefully to see what might emerge. Due to the distinctive overlaps between the realistic Austin series and the two fantastic Time and O'Keefe family series, I was encouraged by my supervisors to draw them in to my examination as well. The same relationships between human and non-human also emerged in the two fantastic sequences. The more I read these novels, and the more I read of ecopsychological and ecotherapeutic research, the more I was struck by the distinct lack of research on children's and adolescent literature which draws on the theoretical and practical principles of ecopsychology and ecotherapy. With one or two exceptions, such as a brief discussion of Dr Seuss's *The Lorax* in connection with ecopsychology (Henderson et al., 2004), and an ecocritical reading of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* and *The Secret Garden* which leaned toward ecopsychology more than other ecocriticism I had read (Rowland, 2012), there is little conversation between the two domains. This feels like a significant gap, because in my reading of children's and adolescent literature I often find similar trends to those which emerge in L'Engle's writing. The links between a character or characters and his/her/their natural environment play a key role in the young person's physical and/or mental health and well-being. Author and reader awareness of the Anthropocene, climate change, sustainability, and other issues connected with the environment and our interaction with it—such as decreases in children's outdoor play and education (Louv, 2008)—has increased dramatically during the 21st century. Nevertheless, examining children's and adolescent literature published before the new Millennium, such as L'Engle's work, is important. Even without seeing the full impact and implications of these many environmental issues as we now see and understand them, it is clear that L'Engle and other children's and adolescent literature authors from earlier periods cared deeply about many aspects of the natural environment. They recognized both the devastating consequences of its destruction and the healing and hope that can derive from human love for the world around us. These authors wrote that care and hope into their work in a variety of ways, among them a deep love of their characters for Nature; children growing and changing through extensive outdoor play or experience; and sometimes simply through the depth and detail with which the authors described outdoor scenery, flora, and fauna.

Attention to the child or adolescent reader's response to these novels within the frame of ecopsychology and ecotherapy is another significant gap which emerges from the lack of conversation between these disciplines. I am not suggesting that reading be used as a substitute for a relationship with the environment. Instead, I see potential that young readers might be moved, through reading about young characters' relationships to nature, to develop a strong and meaningful relationship with a landscape feature in their own outdoor space, animals they may see every day, or a tree or plants they encounter in their own play areas. There are few, if any, specifically ecopsychological or ecotherapeutic studies which examine how the reading of texts such as those which I have studied might impact a young reader's psychological, emotional, and/or physical health as it is influenced by the young reader's relationship with the natural world. This omission also raises questions about how the young readers might in turn positively influence the way health issues, particularly mental health, are addressed in the context of human interconnectedness with the natural world if they can share their reading knowledge of the physical and mental health benefits of such interconnectedness. Certainly this bears examination, given the already well-known impact young people such as Greta Thunberg are having on more general environmental policy and activism.

Specifically, the questions I wondered most about revolved around whether or not children's and adolescent literature, such as L'Engle's, which contain prominent interactions and interconnections between the human and the nonhuman, might serve as inductions into a deep emotional bond between the reader and the reader's own natural environment. Such literatures may be more or less fantastic or imaginative, or may be entirely "realistic." However, children and adolescents as readers and as characters do seem more likely to accept fantastic and imaginative events in the narrative. Children particularly also seem to engage more regularly with imaginative play. This suggests that, regardless of the nature of the book being read, fantasy and the imagination may lead child and adolescent readers to more readily reimagine their relationships with the nonhuman though a textual medium. Ecopsychological and ecotherapeutic scholarship, as I have demonstrated throughout this thesis, has clearly established that such a bond between a human being and her or his ecosystem improves mental and emotional health both of the individual and of the community. Close readings of and comparisons between L'Engle's realistic and fantastic fiction have illustrated patterns emerging in the human-nonhuman relationships inherent in these texts, patterns which closely follow known ecopsychological principles. One important pattern is the way in which L'Engle's novels can be read back and forth along Andy Fisher's (2013) kinship continuum between the human and the

nonhuman. Chapter 1 examined the overall continuum emerging from comparisons between these different series. Chapter 2 examined the significance of human-human relationships and how the natural environment can inform and strengthen them. Chapter 3 closely examined the developing relationship between humans and another animal species. Finally, Chapter 4 analyzed the crucial interconnection between humans and the non-living, inorganic aspects of their environments.

Seeing this continuum woven throughout L'Engle's novels raises awareness of the ways in which the relationships that form this continuum might be read in other authors' work. In addition to drawing reader attention to this human/world kinship continuum, examining L'Engle's novels via the principles of ecopsychology and ecotherapy also illustrates four elements that might be contained within a given relationship along this continuum. As I have continued to read other children's and adolescent literature beyond Madeleine L'Engle's work, I have noticed various combinations of these four things in connection with relationships between young characters and their environments.

First, some kind of differentiation usually occurs in which the human character establishes psychological or physical distance from other characters. For instance, in a recent novel by Jewell Parker Rhodes, *Bayou Magic* (2015), Maddy is taken to spend the summer with her Grandmére in the Bon Temps Bayou. She is physically separated from her immediate family, but the change allows her to find a magical ability to see water goddesses and sense environmental danger for the bayou. The distance conveyed in these novels does not shut a human character away from others. Instead, it allows her to see both herself and others as unique individuals who nevertheless share experiences which allow them to build relationships across Fisher's human-nonhuman kinship continuum.

Second, there is almost always something or someone that is in opposition to building those healthy relationships. One example might be drawn from Angie Thomas's Michael L. Printz honour book, *The Hate U Give* (2017). Throughout this novel, Starr Carter and her family face violence and opposition as Starr struggles to make people aware of the truth of her friend Khalil's death. Such opposition in the novels I have both studied in this thesis and read apart from the thesis, usually has the effect, not of driving the human characters away from the relationships, but of bringing them into a better awareness of the importance of their interconnections with their ecosystems. Thomas's novel demonstrates this by several references to Starr's father's garden. "Big Mav" seems to find solace in spending time in his garden, talking to his plants and caring for them, in the midst of the opposition his daughter and other family members face.

Third, after recognizing the opposition and how it often highlights the importance of interconnections, the human characters move toward improved mental health and well-being through *building and strengthening* their relationships with others, human and nonhuman. Specific and detailed examples of this are found in my examinations of L'Engle's *A Ring of Endless Light* (chapter 3) and *A House Like a Lotus* (Chapter 4).

Fourth, and finally, all of the examples I have read both for the thesis and outside of it illustrate to the reader a variety of ways in which emotional and psychological well-being are closely tied to developing healthy relationships across the human-nonhuman kinship continuum as laid out in ecopsychology and ecotherapy. One specific example of this may be found in L.M. Montgomery's *Magic for Marigold*, originally published in 1925 (Bantam 1989). The titular character, Marigold, develops a strong relationship with a friend she calls Sylvia. Over the course of the novel, readers learn that Sylvia is actually an imaginary friend Marigold has created from a (living) plum tree bough. Marigold's relationship with Sylvia is so significant to the little girl that during one chapter, Marigold's grandmother refuses to let her go out the "Magic Door." This is a side door through which she must always enter the orchard in order to imagine Sylvia is there. As a result, Marigold nearly dies because she is unable to play with her plum-tree-bough friend. Both Marigold's psychological and physical health are bound up in her relationship with this living, blossoming branch. Importantly, this increase in well-being often crosses back the other way, too, resulting in benefit to the environment, such as in Rhodes' *Bayou Magic*. Maddy's ability to connect with others and build a love for the bayou ecosystem leads her to be able to call for help from the goddess Mami Wata to stop the Deepwater Horizon oil spill from damaging Bon Temps.

As a result, using ecopsychology and ecotherapy as an analytical lens through which to read children's and adolescent literature clearly illustrates for the audience the power of the natural world to affect the mental health and well-being of both human and nonhuman characters. This is particularly the case with literature in which nonhuman characters have the ability to directly interact with human characters. This may be because the story is fantasy or because a character in a more realistic setting has a lively imagination. In these types of stories, authors may feel more freedom than in realistic fiction to explore the life and experiences of the nonhuman. They also have creative license to explore the ways in which the human and the nonhuman interact through shared experience. In feeling such freedom, authors can create emotionally and psychologically intimate relationships between the human and the nonhuman in their works. They may give

human characters an ability to understand speech, thoughts, or other means of communication and interaction which the author gives to the nonhuman. Audiences then have the opportunity to explore and engage in (through their own imaginative reading) the relationship between human and nonhuman characters. This could lead readers to consider and reimagine how they might engage with their own nonhuman environment outside the book.

The expectation is that such reading and learning to reengage, or "recollect" (Fisher, 2013), our relationship with the ecosystem can have a positive impact on the health and well-being of the reader. And while fantasy literature and that which contains highly imaginative elements lends itself most easily to such readings, the nonhuman also features frequently as a significant part of realistic children's and adolescent fiction. This suggests that ecopsychology and ecotherapy may also be used effectively to examine realistic children's and adolescent fiction. The realistic novels have the potential to illustrate how a reader might find herself actually engaging with her natural environment and building the relationships with the nonhuman that can be mutually beneficial for the well-being of both. From reimagining how the nonhuman might feel and experience the world, to exploring potentially realistic interactions, fantasy, imaginative, and realistic children's and adolescent fiction all have something to offer readers through critical engagement with ecopsychology and ecotherapy.

In my mind, this is extremely important in the continued struggle not only to help people become informed about climate change and its repercussions on mental, emotional, and physical health, but in the constant battle to get people to take steps toward a solution, however small those steps may be. Encouraging children and adolescents to read their books from an ecopsychological viewpoint could offer a new perspective on how relationships between the human and nonhuman may develop in ways that are mutually beneficial to both. If young readers can be encouraged to think about how they live in and the way they treat the environment, that budding awareness might lead to more thought and care about sustainable behaviours. The critical perspectives offered by ecopsychology and its praxis are also uniquely relevant to the reading experience because ecopsychology and ecotherapy (like most psychological and therapeutic practices) focus on the well-being of the individual. Even if a therapeutic experience is "group therapy," the goal is still to improve the well-being and relationship skills of an individual in connection with the rest of the group. Like ecopsychology and ecotherapy, reading is by and large an individually transformative experience. Even when a book is being read to a group, the reception of the

text and the messages of the text will be different for each hearer. Yet at the same time, books, like other words of art, present the same content in the same way for all readers. This makes reading a shared experience, where the readers become acquainted with the same characters and events as all other readers. As a result, books provide a unique shared experience of engagement with a particular set of human and nonhuman characters and the setting designed for those characters. For the young reader, focusing on finding those shared relationships between the human and the nonhuman, and simultaneously with other readers, is a nonthreatening starting point for change. This may be especially true when the texts being read or examined are not imbued with an obvious environmental agenda,

I would hope, however, that such ecopsychological and ecotherapeutic readings of children's and adolescent literature would not be limited to young people. I expect that there are still many adults who, like myself, enjoy reading these literatures, drawing both pleasure and benefit from them. For these adults, I would hope that reading stories for young people might also provide that nonthreatening space in which to explore human-nonhuman relationships and re-evaluate their own attitudes toward caring for the environment. Perhaps those who do not believe in climate change and its accompanying problems still care deeply for some aspect of their environment, such as a pet or a houseplant. A children's or adolescent novel which explores a recognizably similar relationship could catch the attention of a reader who is currently in denial. It has potential to bring that reader to a better understanding of her own relationship with the environment through evoking compassion for a special space, rather than playing on fear of an environmental apocalypse.

And now, more than ever, humans in all stages of life need ways to solidify their connections with the world around them. In January 2016, as I officially embarked on this project, I – like the rest of the world – could never have guessed at the environmental and medical event that would turn things upside down during the final eighteen months of my research. The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-21 has changed the world, to a greater or lesser extent, for all of us. Simple measures for slowing the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus – masks, physically distancing, handwashing, lockdown, vaccines – have been politicized to such an extent that an unfortunate number of people in many countries refuse to follow the advice of medical professionals, thus increasing the spread of the virus. Incidents of domestic violence (Evans et al., 2020) and the use of pornography (Zattoni et al., 2020) increased as lockdowns were implemented around the world. The mental health of people in many countries has been severely impacted (Kumar and Nayar, 2020). But

there have been environmental positives, too. For instance, air pollution resulting from high NO_2 levels as well as some CO_2 pollution was reduced during lockdowns (Querol et al., 2021), and a host of personal social media videos has shown animals roaming through towns and cities from which they had long been absent. In keeping with the principles of ecopsychology and ecotherapy which I have used to read L'Engle's novels in this thesis, ongoing research emphasizes the importance of the human relationship with the nonhuman world for our psychological recovery and well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic (Pouso et al., 2021). In fact, even having some experience of bringing nature indoors has been shown to positively affect mental health during periods of isolation resulting from COVID-19: having a plant inside, or being able to look out the window onto a green space (Dzhambov et al., 2020). This last point is one we have already seen demonstrated in ecopsychology research, as I specified in my general introduction. A 2016 study in the journal *Ecopsychology* showed that simply having better access to direct sunlight through windows improved mental health (Swanson et al., 2016). As a result, people need new ways – or new old ways – to rebuild relationships with the world around them. Why not books? If a book can have such an impact on one reader – me! – who was sure Aslan must exist somewhere, why can't they have a knock-on effect for many who are desperately seeking relief?

There is much potential for extending this research into new areas. Work such as that which Erin Spring (2017) has done, using adolescent literature to draw First Nations youth into a caring relationship with their landscape in Alberta, Canada, is extremely important in showing that literature has this potential. However, Spring never mentions ecopsychology or ecotherapy, and to the best of my knowledge has not heard of them before (Personal Communication, July 2020). Similarly, ecocritic Timothy Morton (2017) has closely examined the relationships between humans and the nonhuman, drawing attention, as ecopsychologists and ecotherapists do, to the importance of mutually beneficial and empathic relationships between the human and the nonhuman. He even very briefly notes ecopsychology as a branch of psychology which is pushing toward this goal (Morton, 2018: 77; Morton, 2007: 185), but says no more about it. Nevertheless, Spring's and Morton's work illustrates that the time is ripe for bringing children's and adolescent literature into a dialogue with ecopsychology and ecotherapy. It suggests that people would be interested in this kind of research and that a gentler touch in drawing the readers themselves into the conversation, such as the individualized approaches of ecopsychology and ecotherapy, is needed. My recent reading has ranged from Louisa May Alcott to L.M. Montgomery and Madeleine L'Engle, from there to Susan Cooper and Terry Pratchett, and

on up through very recent authors such as Lauren Wolk and Jewell Parker Rhodes. It has also included picture books. Texts of all kinds are filled with moments, settings, and characters which draw on the importance of a child's or adolescent's engagement with the natural environment, and how that developing relationship supports physical, psychological, emotional, and mental health and well-being.

In fact, Lauren Wolk (American author of recent novels for young people titled *Wolf Hollow*, *Beyond the Bright Sea*, and *Echo Mountain*) spoke at an annual Brigham Young University symposium called Books for Young Readers during the summer of 2020. She highlighted how readers respond to Nature in her novels. She first of all described the settings of her novels as "really very much a character." Wolk said that Nature is so influential in the books because it is "where I feel most at home, and I really do feel as if the natural world is a strong character in my books, quite deliberately so." She also explained that her readers, both child and adult, "respond very well" to what her interviewer, Jon Ostenson, called "the centrality of nature" in her writing. Wolk stated:

> The ones who live in the country respond very well to it, and the ones who live in the city are intrigued by it, and would like to go out and spend time in the woods. But people who respond most emphatically in a positive way are older people. Even though these are books meant for young people in some ways, I have a very wide range of readers, and a lot of older people write about how they felt so nostalgic as they were reading, how it took them back to their childhoods, even those who didn't grow up in the country, and they really appreciated the attention of [sic] detail. (Wolk, 6 Aug. 2020. Used with permission).

Wolk's observations about her readers of all ages emphasize to me that readers can indeed engage with Nature and the nonhuman through reading. Significantly, her statements affirm that adult readers find that engagement and relationship through children's and adolescent novels just as children and adolescents do. The research need not be limited to only studying the way children and adolescents might respond to these themes in the literature.

Finding a place to begin building a stronger relationship that benefits the reader physically and mentally is important. Through a close reading of a selection of Madeleine L'Engle's children's and adolescent fiction, I have demonstrated that ecopsychology and its praxis, ecotherapy, can be used as a lens through which to read literature as a way of understanding, or of "recollecting," in Andy Fisher's terms (2013), the human relationship to Nature. The next step – a real conversation between ecopsychology, ecotherapy, and children's and adolescent literature – has yet to take place. But I have started that cross-

disciplinary conversation and plan to find ways to continue it as one important aspect of my future work with children's and adolescent literature.

Appendix A

The Time, O'Keefe family, and Austin family series.

Time Series	O'Keefe family series
A Wrinkle in Time (1962)	The Arm of the Starfish (1965)
A Wind in the Door (1973)	Dragons in the Waters (1976)
A Swiftly Tilting Planet (1978)	A House Like a Lotus (1984)
Many Waters (1986)	
An Acceptable Time (1989)*	An Acceptable Time (1989)

**An Acceptable Time* is viewed alternately as the fifth Time novel or the fourth O'Keefe novel

Austin family series
Meet the Austins (1960)
The Moon by Night (1963)
The Young Unicorns (1968)
A Ring of Endless Light (1980)
Troubling a Star (1994)

Appendix B

Family Groupings: Murrys, O'Keefes, and Austins.

Derived from reading novels, but can also be seen in much more detail in inserts at the beginning or ending of each novel.

Alex and Kate Murry
Meg Sandy Dennys → Twins Charles Wallace

Calvin O'Keefe and Meg Murry*	Wallace and Victoria Austin*
Polly**	John
Charles	Vicky**
Sandy	Suzy
Dennys	Rob
Peggy	
Johnny	
Rosy	

*Calvin and Meg O'Keefe are in the same generation as Wallace and Victoria Austin.
**Vicky Austin is approximately two years older than Polly O'Keefe.

Crossover characters:
From O'Keefe family to Austin family novels:
Canon Tallis: *The Arm of the Starfish* (O'Keefe), *Dragons in the Waters* (O'Keefe), *The Young Unicorns* (Austins)
Adam Eddington: *The Arm of the Starfish* (O'Keefe), *A Ring of Endless Light* (Austins), *Troubling a Star* (Austins)

From Austin family to O'Keefe family novels:
Zachary Grey: *The Moon by Night* (Austins), *A Ring of Endless Light* (Austins), *A House Like a Lotus* (O'Keefe), *An Acceptable Time* (O'Keefe)
Emmanuele Theotocopoulos: *The Young Unicorns* (Austins), *Dragons in the Waters* (O'Keefe)
Emily Gregory: *The Young Unicorns* (Austins), *Dragons in the Waters* (O'Keefe – name mentioned)

Appendix C

Text of “Patrick’s Rune” as used by L’Engle in *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*

At Tara in this fateful hour
I place all Heaven with its power.
And the sun with its brightness,
And the snow with its whiteness,
And the fire with all the strength it hath,
And the lightning with its rapid wrath,
And the winds with their swiftness along their path,
And the sea with its deepness,
And the rocks with their steepness,
And the earth with its starkness,
All these I place
By God’s almighty help and grace
Between myself and the powers of darkness.

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