Legends of Light: Crafting middle grade fantasy in the tradition of Catholic philosophy and medieval visual culture

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Crafting Middle Grade Fantasy in the Tradition of Catholic Philosophy and Medieval Visual Culture

Bernadette Lamb
Curled up on the top mattress of my brothers’ bunk bed, I leaned over my dad’s shoulder to see the words. Strange sounds rolled off his tongue (betraying his familiarity with the text), and I wanted to know how they were spelled. Then came the deep notes of an improvised tune by a man who still jokes about being the Reuben Kincaid of my musical family. The memory is hazy now, but I recall feeling both safe and entranced.

This was my introduction to The Hobbit, and one of countless hours spent drinking the nectar of stories alongside my family. When I entered fictional worlds as a girl, I was simultaneously filled with excitement, sorrow, solace, and joy. I returned again and again in wonder to Jan Brett’s mitten, stretched to fit a bear. The eerie shock of the automaton in The Invention of Hugo Cabret still haunts me, and David Christiana’s painting of the fairy Rani losing her wings was always sad but somehow beautiful. I remember feeling the knife in Ani’s back in The Goose Girl, and the rush of tears as Reepicheep created the wave to Aslan’s Country…

In reflecting on the stories that have stayed with me, I have realized that they all possess a piercing quality. Storytelling’s effect on us, be it visual or literary, is distinctly human. St. John Paul II describes this sensitivity as “a kind of musical string that vibrates when a person meets...”

By highlighting a selection of middle grade/young adult fantasy novels and introducing my MFA thesis project as a part of that tradition, I discuss the need for books which invite families to come together and contemplate the joys and sorrows of the human experience.

Legends of Light
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This essay promotes the writing and illustrating of middle grade literature that mirrors the wonder-inducing experiences of leafing through an illuminated manuscript and stepping into a Gothic cathedral. An examination of Catholic medieval visual culture moves into a discussion on its underlying philosophy and theology, which are profoundly centered on relational healing and the dignity of the human person. Christian writers including St. Pope John Paul II, C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Josef Pieper, Madeline L’Engle, Dr. Bob Schuchts, Makoto Fujimura, and Andrew Peterson inform an exploration of mercy, forgiveness, and love as self-gift in the context of illustration and storytelling at large.

By highlighting a selection of middle grade/young adult fantasy novels and introducing my MFA thesis project as a part of that tradition, I discuss the need for books which invite families to come together and contemplate the joys and sorrows of the human experience.
up with beauty. Beauty delights and attracts. And because it attracts, this indicates that there is something else beyond it, which is hidden.8

In my sixth year of studying illustration with a children’s literature bent, I find myself longing again for those days when stories were spoken over me. I still read, mostly essays and spiritual reading, but nothing quite replaces the experience of a parent’s voice tripping over syllables and shaking with emotion as they share a favorite book.

I can chalk it up to sentimentality or my personal desire to grow in receptivity, but I feel that my thirst for this experience is largely on behalf of others. Fewer and fewer young adults I meet possess appetite for reading, and fewer still maintain positive relationships with their parents. “Positive” may be too simplistic a word, because as we all mature through our teenage and college years, our rose-colored glasses break and we begin to see our parents as real people. We understand them to be human beings, wrestling with their own questions about the world, life, and death. However, I do believe that it is possible to see our parents with empathy, that we might forge healthy relationships with the people who raised us. I believe in the power of forgiveness to heal and bring the hope of reconciliation.

I believe in love that steps into brokenness, and that sharing stories is a part of that.

Now, it may seem naïve to suggest that our stories or books themselves could save civilization—and it is. The form, even the content, of a well-told children’s story is not the end. If a culture is to be fostered in which families read aloud to each other and discuss the finer aspects of storytelling, a commitment to relationship must be at its core. The restoration of family life and community is the goal. Books ought not be an idol, but an aid in this pursuit.

Relationships are raw and messy because human beings are intensely flawed. As a person of faith, I frequently hear the word “brokenness” thrown around in Christian circles. While I see where this stems out of the understanding that humanity’s connection to God has been broken because of sin, I’ve always balked at labeling people as broken...because that entails that we can’t be put back together.

The Japanese practice of kintsugi approaches a meaning of brokenness that I can get behind: after a piece of pottery shatters, the artist sutures its shards back together. This wonderfully echoes the Catholic teaching on Christ’s resurrected body, which still bears His scars as the ultimate mark of His loving sacrifice. “Wounded” might be a more apt word than “broken”...because God is the Divine Physician, who desires to heal people from all ills.

The stories we read and write cannot save us. However, touched by the perennial philosophy of Christianity, some stories form doorways through which readers are invited to bask in the light of the Savior’s love.

Given the countless authors, philosophers, and theologians who have spoken to the value of reading, particularly reading fiction, I hope to add to the discussion as it pertains to middle grade audiences. Young readers contribute experiences that are meaningful and unique. Thousands of adults who read the same stories growing up will have different memories, all tangled up with the smell of their grandparents’ couch or the crackle of pages warped by the rain. Children’s books accompany us through the physical and emotional changes of childhood and adolescence, and characters are friends in more than just good times. The protagonists of well written stories show us how to grow in virtue. Virtue is often overlooked or seen as archaic in today’s postmodern culture, but when we reflect on the stories that have moved us, and even shaped our character, can we not say that fortitude, prudence, humility, and charity (to name just a few) are desirable qualities which further human flourishing?

The artistic, philosophical, and theological contributions of the Catholic Church to the medieval era and our own are vast and undeniable. Instead of tracing a full history of these influences or developing a new line of theology, I aim to highlight the connective tissues which bind them together. By exploring a constellation of thinkers, linked together by the pursuit of creating books for young people that are true, good, and beautiful, I hope others might experience the joy of these connections. Even more so, my invitation to families, makers, and teachers alike—Christian or not—is to recognize the responsibility we all have to tell hope-filled stories to our children.


9 Encompassing Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Protestantism, which share the same foundational beliefs in the Holy Trinity, the death and resurrection of Jesus as the Son of God, and the Bible as the inspired Word of God.
Legends of Light

period (the Magic Tree House books) or come into contact with a medieval-esque magical reality (Guillermo del Toro’s Trollhunters television series). Children and adults alike are still intrigued by settings—historical or invented—in which heroism is played out on a grand and visible scale. The dynamic between peasantry and nobility makes for layered socio-political conflict, and sweeping battles and intricately embroidered gowns conjure up inevitable visual interest. Deep down, however, I think people still resonate with these tales because we all desire to see evil vanquished, good triumph, and love prevail. Actual medieval European history is far more complicated than “inspired-by” stories make it out to be. Life had its difficulties then, between high rates of infant and child mortality and the greater likelihood that a family member might die in a war…but people still found joy and love and comfort in their communities. They laughed over meals and teased lovesick teenagers. In other words, they were real people who lived real lives.

Religious identity in this era was integrally tied to one’s family and immediate community. People made daily and vocational decisions in the context of Christian, Jewish, and Muslim belief systems. Far from being an ancillary or forgotten part of life, God was a real being to whom whole cultures were dedicated.

As we shuffle through the wall into our medieval city, our senses fill with color. Dyed fabrics decorate carts, and the smell of sausage and cheese mingles with that of animals. A band of troubadours regales a crowd of children. Rising above the crowded buildings, we see the pointed spires of the cathedral, and our hearts lift at the cry of a sparrow. We’re home.

“Medieval” comes from the Latin medium aevum, which means “middle age.” Historians generally place the Middle Ages between the fall of the Western Roman Empire and the Renaissance, from the mid-fifth century A.D. to the end of the fifteenth century. This period in Europe gave rise to folklore and epics such as Beowulf and the legend of the Holy Grail. Hallmarks of these tales include questing knights, the defeat of a great evil, and a return to a lover and peaceful kingdom. From a storytelling standpoint, the influence of medieval Christianity is seen throughout history. The chivalric medieval zeitgeist that especially captured the nineteenth-century Romantic, Pre-Raphaelite, and Arts and Crafts movements travels down into the invented worlds of C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien.

Today, the popular understanding of the Middle Ages is bound up in medievalism, an enthusiasm for the period which “may manifest itself in the use of archaisms, in the choice of medieval settings for narrative works, or more broadly in endorsement of values associated with medieval societies (e.g. chivalry, religious faith, social hierarchy).” Portal fantasy stories proliferate for young people, in which modern-day characters travel to a historical time period (the Magic Tree House books) or come into contact with a medieval-esque magical reality (Guillermo del Toro’s Trollhunters television series). Children and adults alike are still intrigued by settings—historical or invented—in which heroism is played out on a grand and visible scale. The dynamic between peasantry and nobility makes for layered socio-political conflict, and sweeping battles and intricately embroidered gowns conjure up inevitable visual interest. Deep down, however, I think people still resonate with these tales because we all desire to see evil vanquished, good triumph, and love prevail. Actual medieval European history is far more complicated than “inspired-by” stories make it out to be. Life had its difficulties then, between high rates of infant and child mortality and the greater likelihood that a family member might die in a war…but people still found joy and love and comfort in their communities. They laughed over meals and teased lovesick teenagers. In other words, they were real people who lived real lives.

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Any cursory overview of Western European history will cover the Catholic Church’s incredible contributions.
to the development of medieval art and architecture. Frescoes, tapestries, sculptures, mosaics, manuscripts, and cathedrals were all results of a steady and affluent patronage. While a large percentage of projects were commissioned for the wealthy and not made available to the public, many objects and places made for worship would have been seen by common people as well. One of the most remarkable aspects of this work was that it told stories visually by interacting with a stained glass window or the images in a prayer book, even those who were illiterate could encounter the story of Salvation.

**Pages of contemplation**

The Gospel saturated the visual culture of medieval Europe. Biblical scenes and symbols were repeated across church walls, vestments, and psalters. The form of the book as a conveyer of this story seems commonplace to us today, who live in a world where literacy is common. Because of the labor involved in the creation of these books, aristocrats, churchmen, and royalty had first access. By the late Middle Ages, however, decorated manuscripts found their way into the hands of ordinary teachers, doctors, and merchants. 2

Medieval manuscript illuminators took on the final step in the creation of manuscript pages, often made of vellum. After the scribe completed his rubrics in red ink, he would leave notes for the illustrator to indicate where to apply gold or a certain color. This work was repetitive and meticulous, requiring a steady hand. Gold, or gilding, was placed down and burnedished after the illuminator applied a chalk or gesso ground to the area as an adhesive. An inherently collaborative process, manuscript creation involved assistants or apprentices who could obtain experience by 3

Painting background elements. 5 Image-making this intensive is not without intentionality. Rooted in a language of symbolism, the Church and her artists would have been concerned not only with the aesthetic value of these manuscripts, but their devotional value, as well. Gold, as precious a metal then as it is now, was reserved to illuminate books for patrons in high social standing, including church officials.

These painted scenes, or miniatures, operated both as visual exegesis (an interpretation or explanation of Scripture) and an aid in prayerful contemplation. The latter is of particular significance to me, as it offers a unique way to engage with the imagery in books. Obtaining knowledge and understanding is not the only goal of viewing art. As principal churches of dioceses, 9 cathedrals enormous books that envelop us? 3 As principal churches of dioceses, cathedrals possess a stateliness and grandeur not often found in other parishes. Gothic cathedrals, built between the mid-twelfth and sixteenth centuries, are particularly known for their pointed arches, towering spires, and vaulted ceilings. Their upward architectural lines emphasize heaven and union with God as the Christian’s ultimate goal. Figural narratives in stained glass, frescoes, and icons invite the viewer to be a part of a larger story.

Romantic composer Richard Wagner popularized the term *Gesamtkunstwerk*, German for “total work of art,” to describe the opera. In that medium, he emphasized that all forms of art were integrated and pointed toward the same

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2 Meaning “good news”: the story of the salvation of the world through Christ, as recorded in the New Testament.


5 Capitalized to refer to the Catholic Church.


8 Pieper, 24.
end, from acting and dance to music and fiction.” Some art historians, unsurprisingly, apply this term to Gothic cathedrals. Visually all-encompassing, these buildings use every material imaginable (including light) to draw the eye toward heaven, and the soul into the most gesamtkunstwerk prayer of all: the Mass.

The medieval celebration of the Mass engaged every sense. Gregorian chant resounding over every pew, the cool touch of holy water, the sharp smell of incense, the sweet taste of Jesus’ Presence in the Eucharist—every detail communicated to the complexity of humanity’s bodily nature. Incense and Latin may not be as commonly used today, but the tangible signs of the Sacraments remain. At any Mass, there is always something to find physically grounding as an aid in prayer. Even to initiates of the Christian faith, the beauty of a cathedral is a strange and mysterious thing. While they may have the symbolic vocabulary to make sense of and engage with its visual narratives, its otherworldliness shuts down temptation to intellectual or spiritual pride. In other words, cathedrals are nearly “incapusable”: they resist being contained and studied as mere historical sites, or being engaged with on a purely academic plane. The wonder experienced in such spaces points us toward the three transcendentals: truth, goodness, and beauty. They are named for a reason, transcending our limited experience on earth, the fullness of which always seem just out of reach—and the painful longing we experience is encapsulated in another wonderful German word, sehnsucht. C.S. Lewis writes often about this deep ache in his fiction and nonfiction. In Mere Christianity, his conclusion is this: “[I]f I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.” The practice of contemplation, then, is not about passively accepting the reality of any experience. It specifically invites us to remain in a space of unknowing with a posture of hope.

Once we have understood contemplation, we can wonder what this wondrous place is communicating to us. The Mass, as the Church teaches, is the sacrifice of Christ in heaven. This sacrifice is communicated to us through time—generations of artistry, theological development, religious traditions, and prayer. In other words, it is communicated to us through people. Our predecessors, yes, but as the Church holds that Scripture is the inspired Word of God, so too would she say that He inspired the beauty of cathedrals such as Sainte-Chapelle in France. To Catholics, cathedrals represent the ongoing conversation between a loving God and His people.

The sensory aspect of these architectural, living “books” ultimately does something remarkable: it honors the whole human person. As a sacred place of prayer, it speaks to the soul. But it also speaks to the body, declaring our physical selves as good. Cathedrals are a cry made of stone and glass for each human being to give their whole self to their Maker, just as He gave Himself for them. It is this relationality, this emphasis on wholeness, which I find core not only to sacred art, but to the art of storytelling at large.

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12 The body, blood, soul, and divinity of Christ which, as Catholic teaching holds, becomes literally present under the visible form of bread and wine during the Mass.


14 “It is Jesus in fact that you seek when you dream of happiness; he is waiting for you when nothing else you find satisfies you; he is the beauty to which you are so attracted; it is he who provokes you with that thirst for fullness that will not let you settle for compromise; it is he who urges you to shed the masks of a false life; it is he who reads in your hearts your most genuine choices, the choices that others try to stifle. It is Jesus who stirs in you the desire to do something great with your lives, the will to follow an ideal, the refusal to allow yourselves to be grounded down by mediocrity, the courage to commit yourselves humbly and patiently to improving yourselves and society, making the world more human and more fraternal.” Pope John Paul II, “World Youth Day: vigil (Tor Vergata, August 19, 2000)” [John Paul II, “Youth Day: vigil (Tor Vergata, August 19, 2000) | John Paul II,” accessed May 5, 2023, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/2000/jul-sep/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_20000819_gmg-veglia.html].
Above
Bernadette Lamb. May 2019. Photograph of the colored mosaic facade of the Duomo di Orvieto (Cattedrale di Santa Maria Assunta) in Orvieto, Italy (constructed 1290-1591).

Clockwise from bottom left

• Side chapel fresco ceiling in the Duomo di Orvieto.
• Library ceiling in the Duomo di Siena (Cattedrale Metropolitana di Santa Maria Assunta) library in Siena, Italy (constructed 1196–1348).
• Striped marble columns and starry ceiling in the Duomo di Siena.
Legends of Light

Bernadette Lamb

A Cloud of Outrageous Blue

Set in the Middle Ages, Vesper Stamper’s second illustrated young adult novel draws on both history and legend. In fourteenth-century England, sixteen-year-old Edyth finds herself all alone. After losing her family to the plague and a murderous mob, she is transported to a priory. There, she works in the scriptorium as a conversa (laywoman living with religious). Edyth’s secret—that she has synesthesia—gets out, and those around her see her as a prophet. As she investigates the sub-prioress’ connection to a strange illustration about a comet, the plague worms its way into the priory... and Edyth may be everyone’s only hope of finding a miraculous, and maybe even magical, cure.

Key themes of Outrageous Blue include religious fanaticism versus true faith, suffering out of love for one’s friends, and the hope of healing and resurrection. At many points, Edyth comes up against seemingly unsurmountable odds and a bleak future. She is prevented from seeing the boy she loves, abused for having synesthesia, and kept in the dark when dangerous secrets surface. When her friend Alice is forced into a solitary enclosure for asking too many questions, Edyth exhibits compassion by risking her own safety to bring Alice food and comfort. At the climax, her ultimate act of resistance in the face of death is to make the most beautiful manuscript possible.1

Stamper’s illustrations draw on the visual language of illuminated manuscripts while retaining a twenty-first-century spareness. Her design sensibilities show through in her focus on flat shapes, and she portrays Edyth’s synesthesia by placing saturated colors in otherwise grayscale images. Characters’ visions are interspersed with scenes occurring in real life, drawing out the novel’s magical undercurrent.

Reflection questions: medievalism

- Which “medieval” stories for young people are concerned with conveying parts of actual history, and which stories incorporate the mythos and legends of that time? Is one more educational than the other? Why or why not?

- Find an illustrator who incorporates some element of Catholic medieval visual culture into their work, such as Gothic lettering or architecture. Is the decoration purely aesthetic, or does it invite the viewer to a form of contemplation and/or further sensory engagement?

- Where are contemplative and multimodal experiences found in books that are not about the Middle Ages?

In applying the concept of woundedness to written and illustrated narratives for young people, I focus on the fields of psychotherapy and Christian philosophy and theology. These disciplines ultimately define woundedness in relational terms, giving voice to how our decisions made from a place of hurt continue to damage relationships with the people around us.

Wounds and the whole person

In the Catholic worldview, the human person is made in the image and likeness of a loving God, unique in the capacity to reason, and “capable of knowledge, self-possession, and freedom, who can enter into communion with other persons—and with God.” The story of Salvation is ultimately a story of a relationship: of Adam and Eve wounding humanity’s relationship with God and God, over time, wooing His people back to Himself. This culminates in God performing the ultimate act of mercy and love by becoming man in Jesus Christ and giving His life for the salvation of souls. Jesus’ resurrection from the dead is the ultimate act of mercy and love by becoming man in Jesus Christ and giving His life for the salvation of souls. Jesus’ resurrection from the dead is the

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1 “Morality: referring to the goodness or evil of human acts. Human freedom makes a person a “moral subject” or agent, able to judge the morality (goodness or evil) of the acts which are chosen. The morality of human acts depends on the object (or nature) of the action, the intention or end foreseen, and the circumstances of the action (1749; cf. 407).” Catechism of the Catholic Church (Australia: St Paul’s Publications, 2000), 888.

2 “Concupiscence: human appetites or desires which remain disordered due to the temporal consequences of original sin, which remain even after Baptism, and which produce and inclination to sin (1649, 1426, 1995).” Catechism of the Catholic Church, 871.


4 “Person, human: the human individual, made in the image of God; not some thing but some one, a unity of spirit and matter, soul and body, capable of knowledge, self-possession, and freedom, who can enter into communion with other persons—and with God.” The story of Salvation is ultimately a story of a relationship: of Adam and Eve wounding humanity’s relationship with God and God, over time, wooing His people back to Himself. This culminates in God performing the ultimate act of mercy and love by becoming man in Jesus Christ and giving His life for the salvation of souls. Jesus’ resurrection from the dead is the

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Above

reason for the hope of the Christian faithful, and the lens through which they are called upon to view suffering. The Catechism of the Catholic Church details that suffering is caused by two elements of evil: the fact of living in a fallen world (e.g. losses by natural disaster), and the fact of moral evil, which results from the free choice to sin (e.g. losses by war). I will touch on both, focusing on the effects of wounds and healing around the emotions and relationships between human beings. The wounds we actively cause each other are particular interest to me. We are deeply wounded when others cause us suffering, and when, in acting out of the ensuing trauma, we perpetuate that suffering in ourselves and others. More often than not, this leaves invisible scars on our inner selves.

The goal of psychotherapy is to help each patient understand and address these inner mental and emotional wounds. Marriage and family therapist Dr. Bob Schuchts acknowledges that it is all too easy to identify a person solely by their diagnosis and not see them as a whole person. The danger of this is not only that the root of an issue is not addressed, but also that the person’s true identity as a beloved child of God is obliterated by a label. According to this train of thought, a patient is not “a person who has bipolar disorder,” but “is bipolar.” A teacher might go so far as to consider a student “unmotivated” or “a problem child” if they exhibit misbehavior, effectively disregarding the myriad of mental, emotional, and relational challenges the student may be facing outside the classroom. Names are significant. What we call ourselves and how we refer to others point to our deepest sense of self.

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9 Karol Wojtyla, now St. Pope John Paul II, spoke and wrote openly against these philosophies during and after he lived through the dark night of Nazi- and Communist-occupied Poland. His emphasis on the human person—especially the community art of theater—to sustain a culture under oppression echoes C.S. Lewis’ note on friendship:

7 “Evil’s opposite or absence of good...” Montreal: results...it is permitted by God, who knows how to derive good...” as often perceived by those in crisis is this: ‘we are not the sum of our weaknesses and failures; we are the sum of the Father’s love for us and our real capacity to become the image of his Son.” Christians and non-Christians can recognize the importance of this idea. One’s child, student, or reader is not a composite of grades or aptitudes. Rather, the unconditional love which a good parent gives to them indicates their inherent dignity and worth, totally apart from anything they could ever do or say. Such a declaration is radically counter to the philosophies of materialism and relativism,” which demand that a person “contribute to society” (in any number of ways) in order to be considered of value.

7 The idea that usefulness is the purpose of human existence is one of many lies we believe. In his work, Schuchts describes seven key interior wounds and their effects: abandonment, fear, powerlessness, hopelessness, confusion, rejection, and shame. These wounds cause us to develop false beliefs about our identity and consequently make “inner vows” that damage how we relate to others and view the wider world. Abandonment, for example, might make one believe that “I am all alone” and then vow “I will take care of myself and not rely on others.”

8 As readers of fiction, we often identify with characters because they share core wounding experiences with us. Therefore, stories can be catalysts for personal reflection surrounding wounds and healing; for example, a child reader may encounter a character who feels despair and draws parallels to their own feelings of hopelessness. As literary theorist Cathy Caruth writes, “one’s own trauma is tied up with the trauma of another,” and all wounds are crying out to be seen and healed.

9 The characters who stay with us, the ones whose soliloquies we memorize and fates we remember, face not simply external conflict but internal turmoil, as well. They haunt us because they are like us. We, who agonizingly yearn for the subtle presence of love in our lives, may find ourselves in a character who faces what we consider an impossible situation in which, no matter what we do, no one else will love us. We recognize them as tangible representations of our own internal fears and loyalties. We see the other’s internal struggle as an opportunity to confront our own, and we traverse the same emotional landscapes together.

10 St. John Paul II once shared with a gathering of youth that “We are not the sum of our weaknesses and failures; we are the sum of the Father’s love for us and our real capacity to become the image of His Son.” Christians and non-Christians can recognize the importance of this idea. One’s child, student, or reader is not a composite of grades or aptitudes. Rather, the unconditional love which a good parent gives to them indicates their inherent dignity and worth, totally apart from anything they could ever do or say. Such a declaration is radically counter to the philosophies of materialism and relativism,” which demand that a person “contribute to society” (in any number of ways) in order to be considered of value.

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Tales that pierce us

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Thomistic personalism and self-gift

In brief, Thomistic personalism proposes a way of looking at the world that is neither collective nor individual. Centered around the human person, it honors the individual as uniquely worthy of love and respect, inviting—not compelling—them to love others with their free will. St. Thomas Aquinas describes love as the human ability to will the good of the other, and willing the good entails furthering the good through action. Therefore, this philosophy posits an “understanding of man as a person who ‘finds himself’ by making a self-gift of self.” In smaller ways, this donation of self can look like choosing to set aside one’s daily preferences and desires out of love for one’s spouse or children. Ultimately, the greatest act of self-gift is “to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”

—Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, Ia, Q.97, Art. 2
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• Are wounds only inciting incidents/plot devices or integral to character arcs? In other words, are characters’ personalities and choices markedly affected by these wounds?

• What vocabulary can we use to discuss these themes of woundedness with young people? What wounds are common to their experience today, and what stories might speak to them where they are?

The Horse and His Boy

C.S. Lewis’ *The Horse and His Boy* follows the adventures of a boy named Shasta, his newfound friend Aravis, and their two horses. The story begins with the children running away from seemingly predetermined fates: Shasta from being sold into slavery and Aravis from an arranged marriage. What might have been a simple journey to freedom becomes convoluted as Shasta meets his lookalike and tries to warn his country about an impending attack.

Shasta deals primarily with the wound of hopelessness. Toward the climax, the lion Aslan asks a despairing Shasta to share his troubles. Shasta’s initial conclusion is that there is something wrong with him, that he is singularly unfortunate to have gone through so much suffering alone and for a seemingly meaningless purpose. Ultimately, this points to a fatalism that only pulls him deeper into anxiety. In response, Aslan articulates a new memory—he breathes on and speaks truth to Shasta.

Once the fullness of the past has been revealed, Shasta no longer sees his journey through the narrow scope of fear, but is granted peace in recognizing that he was never alone after all.

Aravis’ stepmother hates her, and her home life doesn’t get any easier when her father sets her up to be married. Faced with the prospect of wedding a man who could have been her grandfather, Aravis drugs her stepmother’s slave in order to run away. Later, her journey takes a surprising turn when a lion attacks and leaves behind ten deep scratches on her back. The lion, revealed to be Aslan, explains to the girl that these were equal to the lashes later given to the slave for her supposed negligence. In Aravis’ plot to escape, she thought nothing of the harm that would come to those she duped. Acting out of a wound, she wounded another, and Aslan’s scratches force her to feel and understand this reality. It is far from a comfortable encounter, conveying that the wounds a character creates cannot be healed until they are willing to repent of their own wrongdoing.

Reflection questions: wounds

- How are characters’ wounds expressed in middle grade and young adult literature? Are they external (e.g. traumatic loss), internal (e.g. a lie to oneself which affects their relationships), or a combination of both?

- Are wounds only inciting incidents/plot devices or integral to character arcs? In other words, are characters’ personalities and choices markedly affected by these wounds?

- What vocabulary can we use to discuss these themes of woundedness with young people? What wounds are common to their experience today, and what stories might speak to them where they are?

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Self-gift is the greatest act of love and can lead to the deepest healing of wounds, particularly those of pride and self-sufficiency. In the context of storytelling, it is often a character’s total self-sacrifice at the end which moves the reader’s heart (in what J.R.R. Tolkien dubs eucatastrophe, the joy of the “good catastrophe” and “highest function” of fairy tales). Reading and discussing such heroic acts (large and small) in a fictional setting invites audiences to reflect upon their own mysterious capacity to love others through self-denial.

In our medieval imagination, the battlefield’s earth is now mingled with blood. As we look about us, the din of violence gradually abates. The bodies of our friends and foes lie still, and we look down to see that we, too, have been stabbed. In our delirium, a woman discovers us and calls for aid…and the next thing we know, we are being carried away on a wicker stretcher, her hand at our side.
The sky moves in and out of focus above us, and we think, I am surely going to die.

In the European Middle Ages, there were no organized field hospitals until the late fifteenth century. A king might be accompanied by a surgeon, but more often than not, soldiers held their wounded comrades together with bandages. Who, then, is this woman? And what is this tent she is bringing us to?

The next thing we know, a man enters after us. His countenance is unremarkable, but his eyes pierce us beneath our half-removed armor and crusting blood. Lie down, he commands, gentle but firm. Our mind is still caught in the fog of battle, and our stomach turns at the thought of the men and women we cut down…our own friends. Then come the most shocking words of all: Do you want to be healed?

An offer of reconciliation. Renewed communion with our king, with those we have wounded. This man appears as God does in the story of Salvation: “After the unity of the human race was shattered by sin God at once sought to save humanity part by part.” He didn’t falter, but at once set into motion the most magnificent rescue plan in the history of all stories.

The Gospel story, after all, does not end in death and despair. By suffering on the Cross, Christ redeemed the world, opening the gates of heaven once again to those who would follow Him. Far from leaving humanity to labor in the effort of continual reconciliation, He established His Church and continues the work of salvation, redeeming human suffering itself through His ultimate sacrifice. In short, the Catholic worldview is inherently bound up in the healing of what has been wounded, and the unification of what has been fragmented.

Do we want to be healed?

If “healing is the entire content of our redemption,” why does humanity shy away from it? Perhaps because we know that, in order for a surgeon to do his work, he must first probe our wounds, behind which “terror lurks like a

This means that sufferings, large and small, can be transformed by Jesus if offered to Him in prayer. This core tenet of the Christian faith—redemptive suffering—does not mean that all suffering will miraculously disappear through prayer this side of heaven, but that He can turn it into opportunities to grow in faith and holiness.


Catechism of the Catholic Church, para. 1848.
If the existence of hospitals, therapy clinics, and churches are any indication, healing is not something we can do on our own. It requires the presence of others to bring us back to health. The Church's understanding of this is particularly robust, as it is reflected in the stories of those who have been and continue to be healed. While the Body of Christ is called to live in joy and freedom—as a family, we must also recognize the importance of our own vulnerability.

The risk of relational vulnerability

There is a catch about relationships, however: they are difficult. Specifically, it is difficult to learn how to love others and allow ourselves to be loved in return. Catholic theologian John Paul II wrote that love is to will the good of the other. Willing another's good is not easy; it is not about safely removing oneself from the intimate mess within another human being. Instead, an act of love requires vulnerability and a willing to understand the other's perspective. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be put out.

But we balk when others brush up against our vulnerability or treat it as transactional. On one hand, we may feel uncomfortable with our festering interior wounds. It is all too easy to become wholly self-focused. When we fail to seek healing ourselves, both our own and the other person's lives may be affected. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be put out.

We do not only fear the further pain of diggung to the root of a wound, but we also fear the possibility of rejection. Writing on the topic of charity, C.S. Lewis describes what becomes of an irrevocable hurt:

“There is no safe investment. To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be put out. The only way to be sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbles and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements, lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket—safe, dark, motionless, airless—it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. The alternative to tragedy, or at least the risk of tragedy, is damnation. The only place outside Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers and perturbations of love is Hell.”

So if we are to find healing through community, where do we begin? The reality is that the vast majority of relational healing is found with the help of a few close, challenging, compassionate relationships. These people may or may not be ones who have deeply wounded us, but if they are human and we have known them for any length of time, we have surely been locked in more than one scuffle. They are people who encourage us and hold us accountable; they can be mentors or peers, family members or friends, share our worldview or not. The common thread is that both parties must be reciprocally vulnerable and willing to understand the hard work of love. In these relationships, we must embrace an element of risk. There will always be a chance that someone can wound us again... but this, according to Salvation history, is our lot on this earth as flawed creatures. While the Church says we should not put our undying trust in human beings, people do exist who selflessly choose—for a lifetime or a season—to walk alongside and seek healing with us. In other words, there are those who choose to love and teach us to love in return... and they are worth the risk.

In addition to reflecting on particular people and instances of healing in our lives, we can turn to fiction to enlighten us. In J.R.R. Tolkien's short story "Leaf by Niggle," the titular character is kept from painting his magnum opus (a tree) by the interruptions of his neighbor Parish. We never know whether the leaf will grow to its full size, nor whether the tree will ever come to fruition. Similarly, we never know whether the healing journey we begin will ever come to fruition. This is the reality of relational healing. It is not always easy. But it is worth it.
reparation” after an offense."

Catholicism does not hold that forgiveness is forgetting or denying a person’s offense. Rather, it is the gift of releasing a person of their debt to us. Forgiveness also frees us (the offended) to love, removing interior shackles that tie us to that person. It does not mean that our feelings toward them are instantly transformed, however. Though it is normal to experience a just anger after forgiving someone, forgiveness relieves us of the need we feel to harbor bitterness and resentment.

Ultimately, forgiveness is emphasized as necessary to our own healing. When He teaches His disciples to pray to God the Father, Jesus says that they must forgive others if they want to be forgiven.” Not only this, but our ability to receive another’s forgiveness depends on our wholehearted contrition for the harm we caused. True apology and forgiveness cannot be partial or faked.

Reconciliation, the work of repairing a relationship with someone after initial forgiveness, is often a longer and winding path. This is where the aforementioned reciprocity is key: we can forgive another person and they can choose not to accept our forgiveness, but reconciliation requires mutual self-gift and receptivity. In our fallen world, some relationships are never restored to what they once were. Instead of slipping into fatalism, though, the Church—through Scripture, Tradition, and the witness of the saints—challenges humanity to be merciful and pursue reconciliation despite human frailty.

Indeed, Christ’s radical call to love and forgive one’s enemies is a radical one. The New Testament is filled with exhortations such as “do not return evil for evil” and “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” These words are a challenge to live out and may feel like an impossibly lofty standard. However, Catholicism has never taught that the saints arrived at their holiness of their own strength. These figures intensely struggled with sin and were just as human as anyone today. Their sainthood is a work of and gift from God alone; they only needed to be humble and continue to say “yes” to Him. Christ himself even understands the weakness of humanity: He who “in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning.”

When mercy is given and received, transformation occurs within us. Where shame and fear once took root, we now feel understood, worthy, safe, free, valued, hopeful, and enlightened. Our need for control is shattered, and all of a sudden we find ourselves capable of serving others—capable of love.

Restoring the garden

In full flower, healing transforms the landscape of our interior lives. Agrarian imagery and metaphors are superabundant in the Bible. Gardens, in particular, feature both as a place of intimate communion and great pain (the Garden of Eden, the beloved in the Song of Songs, the people of Israel in exile, the Agony in the Garden).

Fujimura and singer-songwriter Andrew Peterson draw frequently on this scriptural garden-language in their respective journeys as working artists and founders of Christian arts-and-faith ministries. Fujimura writes about the importance of vulnerability in the broader work of cultivating healthy culture: “Culture care starts with the identification and articulation of brokenness. It creates a safe space for truth-telling. But it does not stop there. It starts with listening, and then invites people onward toward beauty, wholeness, and healing.”

To love one’s neighbor—indeed, to love all the people

24 "Reparation: making amends for a wrong done or for an offense, especially for sin, which is an offense against God." Ibid, 897.
25 Uniquely, Catholic theology holds that God is simultaneously wholly just and merciful—His calls humanity to repentance, but instead of having them pay the impossible debt they owe, sent his only Son to pay it in their place. This is the epitome of forgiveness. While He still calls for daily repentance and the pursuit of a life of virtue, the gates of heaven are no longer closed, and He continues to extend His endless love and forgiveness. Therefore, by Jesus’ death and resurrection, both God’s justice and mercy are satisfied.
27 Salvation itself, the crux of the Christian life, is defined as both “the forgiveness of sins and restoration of friendship with God, which can be done by God alone.” Catechism of the Catholic Church, 898.

31 Schuchts, 175.
32 See Makoto Fujimura’s International Arts Movement and Andrew Peterson’s Rabbit Room.
33 Fujimura, 46.
We wake in the tent to the sun on our face. Bleary-eyed, we lift ourselves from a tangle of blankets. Our wound throbs, but it no longer pierces us through. Our stomach fills with dread as we imagine the carnage and ravaged earth outside. Instead, we move the tent flap aside to a wonder…wildflowers sprouting among dew-filled grass. While the earth bears scars, the dead have been buried and those mourning are being consoled. Fullness of healing—ours and the field’s—is a long way off yet, but as we recover, we can take up a quill and imagine what telling hope-filled stories might look like.

in one’s neighborhood—we must be willing to go beyond listening. Whatever our religious or political persuasions, we cannot write a person off if they hold different beliefs than us, or if their particular woundedness makes us squirmish. If a man sees a leper on the side of the road, he must first meet him amidst all the sores and pain… and then ask him if he would be touched and carried and treated. We must become, as Fujimura puts it, “a bouquet of flowers in the heart of conflict.”

Niggle himself learns that receiving another in pain is, in fact, a worthwhile thing. At the end of “Leaf by Niggle,” three figures discuss the merits of the artist’s existence, one arguing that his life was not particularly “useful.” They realize, however, that Niggle did manage to make something beautiful out of it, even if it was small, unseen, and fleeting. Healing is often unseen, but that doesn’t mean we have to experience it alone.

The thought of suffering a hard blow without another’s comforting presence is crippling to most of us. Recounting the day he was dropped from his record label, Peterson describes the faithfulness and consolation of a good friend: “That’s community. They look you in the eye and remind you who you are in Christ. They reiterate your calling when you forget what it is. They step into the garden and help you weed it, help you to grow something beautiful.”

Like Niggle and Peterson, we would do well to recognize who our fellow gardeners are. Who in our lives have we let into our inner fields? Who is tilling the soil, planting new seeds, harvesting, and reminding us to let certain plots lie fallow? Alternately, whose gardens are we neglecting…and whose are we choosing to cultivate?

The Two Princesses of Bamarre

Gail Carson Levine’s The Two Princesses of Bamarre follows two sisters and their unconditional love for one another: Princess Addie, who is shy and beset by many fears, and Princess Meryl, who is ready to take the world by storm with her sword fighting skills and wit. Both grow up enmarossed by the stories of the mythic hero Drualt. The story launches into effect when Meryl is struck down by the Gray Death, a fatal illness. Forced with the prospect of losing her sister and dearest friend, Addie embarks on a quest to find an antidote. In a whirling series of perils, she faces gryphons, an ogre, and a dragon, and her bravery is tested time and time again.

At the climax, Addie brings Meryl to the mountain waterfall that is meant to cure her. Nearby villagers, who have been taking advantage of the water’s healing properties, are of the same village which refused to save Drualt’s lover when she was on the brink of death. Their selfishness is a foil to Addie’s tireless sacrifices for her sister, and solidifies her transition from fearfulness to courage. The villagers also signify the danger of isolation, leading to a fear which harms others. Addie, on the other hand, has learned that love means taking risks.

While Meryl is healed, she cannot return home with her sister at the end due to a magical transformation. After such a harrowing ordeal to save her, Addie is crushed and faced with the most challenging obstacle yet: letting their relationship change. In accepting that their lives can no longer be as closely entwined, Addie realizes that she, too, has experienced a healing of her own.

Reflection questions: healing

• Which characters in media for young people are treated or even celebrated as “broken”? Which characters are depicted as simply wounded, with hope of healing and redemption?

• Are other characters in these stories catalysts for the main character’s healing? If so, how?


34 Ibid, 65.
35 Tolkien, “Leaf by Niggle.”
36 Andrew Peterson, Adorning the Dark, 155.
For my master’s thesis in Illustration & Visual Culture (Washington University in St. Louis, 2023), I embarked on the adventure of crafting a pitch for an illustrated middle grade novel titled “A Locked Door.” This story incorporates the aforementioned themes of this essay—the visual treasures of medieval Christendom and themes of woundedness and healing found within Catholic philosophy, especially that of St. John Paul II, J.R.R. Tolkien, and Josef Pieper.

An illuminated ballad

The cover lettering and decorated borders of “A Locked Door” draw from Irish medieval illuminated manuscripts. The arched door shape of the cover recalls the frame of an icon or altarpiece. My decision to lean into a simple geometric language for the characters also pulls from designed medieval elements, which have likewise been used in other medievalist media for children such as Cartoon Saloon’s Irish folklore films (The Secret of Kells, Song of the Sea, and Wolfwalkers). Jewel tones hark back to the pigments used in manuscript decoration, and the composition gold leaf accentuates moments which involve magic in the fictional world, and perhaps divine intervention. In selecting scenes to illustrate, I focused on key moments on the main character Haven’s journey which mark emotional/healing points as well as external plot developments.

A Locked Door

In the depths of a prison on a rock in the sea, fourteen-year-old Haven can still smell smoke on his clothes. The village of Bairnoss has been burned to the ground. His home is gone…and his family with it.

Suddenly, a melody shocks him out of despair—the song his sister Ita used to sing, played by a cellmate on the strings of a fiddle. The man presses the instrument into his hands. With a newfound hope that Ita is alive, Haven plots his escape and journey home.

A runaway slave named Mora joins him on the flight north, chasing the life of a hero and any opportunity to use her bow. Dangers prowl along their path while nightmarish memories threaten to tear them apart. To protect what is good and true, Haven must learn to open his heart and lay down his sword—or risk losing everything.

And all the while, there may be something more, something ancient and otherworldly, happening to the island of Ivinesh.

In the spirit of illuminated manuscripts and epic ballads, “A Locked Door” weaves an adventure about loss, healing, and the mystery of eternity.
Bernadette Lamb. 2022-2023. Process work. In my mixed media explorations, I practiced working quickly and letting paint move on its own to emphasize the “musicality” of mark-making. Mediums include fluid acrylics, colored pencil, gouache, oil pastel, ink, and collage (“A Locked Door”).
Healed heroism

In addition to the illustrations and sketches, the prose of "A Locked Door" draws on medievalist traditions and Catholic philosophy surrounding healing. As I outlined the story and wrote a sample chapter, I realized just how much Haven and Mora’s stories deal with internal and external wounds. As the two travel to Bairnoss together, encountering magical creatures and evading the killer of Haven’s parents, their injured interior selves collide. They both suffer from familial loss, and the lies that they believe about themselves lead them to act and react out of woundedness. Haven’s character arc involves moving from a place of revenge and despair to surrender and hope. Key to this is the redemption of his strength, which is re-oriented from revenge to protection. Mora, on the other hand, deals primarily with pride and self-sufficiency rising out of a wound of abandonment. Her transformation occurs in the form of humility and self-sacrifice, as she recognizes that life is about so much more than her grand plans.

The role of friendship and music as healing agents is core to the story’s plot. Without learning to be vulnerable, Haven and Mora would never reach their journey’s end. In addition to being a love of mine, music plays a key part in echoing the multimodal, sensory nature of storytelling in medieval cathedrals.
Deepest shame and our deeper dignity. Shadows, however, are the realm of deception. When illuminated, the things that frighten us are exposed for what they truly are: dusty lies that we have been believing for far too long. Lies that say we are lost causes, unlovable, broken forever. Now, we may be wounded; our floors may be scuffed and the walls of our inner rooms in need of paint, maybe even renovation, but our wounds do not define us.

In other words, illustration-as-illumination ought to be a clarifying agent. Not a de-mystifying agent, but a communicative one. This is where I think there should be


4 C.S. Lewis wonderfully expands this metaphor in Mere Christianity: “Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on: you knew that these jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently He starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of—throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself.” Lewis, Mere Christianity, 205.

A proposal

I would like to close by proposing the term illustration-as-illumination to describe the type of visual storytelling discussed in this essay: illustration which promotes human flourishing, especially interiorly and relationally. Illumination comes in many forms—the glow of a lamp, precious metal added to vellum pages, the shock of spiritual revelation (St. Paul’s blinding conversion is also known as his “illumination”). The metaphor of a lantern in a dark room serves well in this definition.

Visual storytelling as a practice—whatever formal precedents it draws on—ought to shine a light on all things: dark corners as well as the lovely wallpaper; our deepest shame and our deeper dignity. Shadows, however, are the realm of deception. When illuminated, the things that frighten us are exposed for what they truly are: dusty lies that we have been believing for far too long. Lies that say we are lost causes, unlovable, broken forever. Now, we may be wounded; our floors may be scuffed and the walls of our inner rooms in need of paint, maybe even renovation, but our wounds do not define us.

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Right

some healthy overlap between design and fine art thinking. Like the paintings made to be housed in museums, illustration can also communicate mystery. In fact, I believe that the best illustrations communicate things that can’t be fully expressed in words and pictures, things that are deep and inherent to the human condition.

**Invitation to love**

In our image- and media-saturated world, clearly it is important to develop some philosophy of seeing: how we receive images and what, ultimately, they are for. Given the fact that this particular conversation is about the Christian worldview, there is a clear opportunity for Catholic and other Christian artists to add to lines of theology about these topics. But to think and work in this vein on a philosophical level is in no way exclusive to people of faith— we can all wonder at and pursue the three transcendentals which have so captured humanity throughout history. A story which reveals the complexity and mystery of the human person cannot amount to anything unless it points toward those transcendentals: that which is true, good, and beautiful. As makers and consumers of story, we must acknowledge that the dark exists… but we cannot remain in it. To avoid slipping into naivety, this conviction must be rooted in the radical practice of forgiveness and a hope that life can bloom after death. Those of us who are illustrators ought not simply be satisfied creating work that makes us happy. Though it is important to develop some philosophy of seeing: how we communicate self-giving love to the people nearest to us... and see what happens. "For a Christian there can never be a Christ crucified, for Christ crucified who is "the power of God and the wisdom of God." There is no going back, there is no making amends, for there is no unmaking. [t]here might be as much need for the arts as there is for the scriptures, for there is no communication when there is no communication."

**Coming home**

After pondering such a broad picture, it is difficult to imagine how to live these ideals out. If we are to be “re-enculturists,” like Fujimura writes, we “must speak like children...Our arts and conversations should point toward beauty and healing.” How do we do this?

In a more concrete way, storytellers might experiment with creating works that act like “little liturgies”— multi-modal stories that mimic the holistic experience of walking into a cathedral. In the novel Kristin Lavransdatter, a heart-wrenching realization occurs within the literal walls of a church, but these stories can be about one person or many, and in any setting (not just medieval). They might be a quiet and contemplative look at ordinary life, or one that the best illustrations communicate things that can’t be fully expressed in words and pictures, things that are deep and inherent to the human condition.

character’s tale about a more universal aspect of human living. They might be highly specific, speaking healing to a particular community, or thrive on conveying the broader mystery of one or more of the transcendentals. Sharing life-giving literature with one’s family is akin to sharing a feast. Good books must be chewed on and digested. As with food, we must allow time and hearty discussion for our taste to mature. Andrew Peterson speaks of songwriting with another, beautifully simple metaphor: "Remember to a child a song may glow like a nightlight." Maybe one story isn’t a Thanksgiving spread, but if it brings a single person warmth and safety for a moment, it is still an immeasurable gift.

For artists and writers, it is crucially important that the work is just that: the work. Our worth is not determined by the speed of our careers, our accomplishments, or the size of our audiences. In his humble way, Peterson reminds us what the true work of art actually is:

"I am convinced that poets are toddlers in a cathedral, slobbering on wooden blocks and piling them up in the light of the stained glass. We can hardly make anything beautiful that wasn’t beautiful in the first place. We aren’t writers so much as gleeful rearrangers of words whose meanings we can’t begin to know. When we manage to make something pretty, it’s only because we are ourselves a flourish on a greater canvas." 12

Most days, the truth of our dignity can be difficult to believe. In a world rife with hurt and discord, it may feel easier to sit in the shadows. To remain in our pain to complain, fret, despair... the Psalmist, being human, felt all these things as well. We cannot deny our woundedness or our shortsightedness when it comes to the context of eternity. What we can do, in the precious time given to us, is communicate love. "Art is communication," L’Engle writes, "and if there is no communication it is as though the work had been stillborn." Good art, good storytelling, is inherently relational. As writers, illustrators, scholars, teachers, parents, let us strive to be agents of light, life, and love. That may sound like a tall order. Well, it is. Bearing light begins interiorly. It grows from the smallest decisions, the littlest acts of patience and humility. Let us communicate self-giving love to the people nearest to us... and see what happens. I, for one, can’t wait.

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5 Josef Pieper addresses this subject in his essay “Learning How to See Again.” Pieper, 30-36.

6 This line of thought does not exclude tragedies, which can be rec- enci...s, let us toil to “keep the good light” so we all can cultivate communities that heal. Like the keepers of light or distort the gift of creativity, but cultivate it in order to remain in it.

7 In the vein of Tolkien, this is an invitation to love Creator, audience, and self as sub-creator.

8 Once again, I must mention the speed of our careers, our accomplishments, or the size of our audiences. In his humble way, Peterson reminds us what the true work of art actually is:

10 Peterison, 168.


12 “For a Christian there can never be a Christ crucified, for it is Christ crucified who is “the power of God and the wisdom of God.” There is no going back, there is no unmaking. [t]here might be as much need for the arts as there is for the scriptures, for there is no communication when there is no communication."

13 For more on art as hospitality, read “Serving the Audience” in Adorning the Dark, Peterson, 87-105.

14 Fujimura, 66.


17 L’Engle, ix.

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8 Josef Pieper addresses this subject in his essay “Learning How to See Again.” Pieper, 30-36.

6 This line of thought does not exclude tragedies, which can shed light on the value of life. It does, however, exclude sto- ries which totally promote hopelessness and nihilism.

7 For more on art as hospitality, read “Serving the Audience” in Adorning the Dark, Peterson, 87-105.

8 See section epigraph.

9 Tolkien, “On Fairy-Stories.”

10 Peterison, 168.


12 “For a Christian there can never be a Christ crucified, for it is Christ crucified who is “the power of God and the wis- dom of God.” There is no going back, there is no unmak- ing. [t]here might be as much need for the arts as there is for the scriptures, for there is no communication when there is no communication."

13 Fujimura, 66.

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