

## 交わる文化：ローレンスヤップの世界

### Crossing Cultures : The Worlds of Laurence Yep

レオナルド・ランドマーク

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#### Introduction to the Golden Mountain Chronicles

Laurence Yep often writes about being caught between cultures. He writes about being an American who's an outsider among Americans because his family name is Yep, not Marks. He's an Oriental in a culture that is European. And he's also an outsider among the Chinese because his native language is English and he grew up in America. He doesn't know the Chinese language or Chinese ways. He's an outsider *there*. He's an outsider *here*. Where does he belong? Does he belong *anywhere*?

One way he tries to understand himself and his situation is by telling the Golden Mountain Chronicles. It's an extended tale in multiple volumes that begins in 1849 in the Three Willows village in Kwangtung Province in southern China and ends in 1995 in the San Francisco Bay area. It follows seven generations of one family, the Youngs, as they move from that village (as told in *The Serpent's Children* and *Mountain Light*) to the Land of the Golden Mountain (as America was known after gold was discovered there). After the Gold Rush, the story continues. For example, *Dragon's Gate* tells about the Chinese who labored on the Central Pacific: tunneling through a mountain to build the transcontinental railroad. And *The Traitor* tells of Chinese miners digging coal in the hills of Wyoming.

The stories are very close to those a black author like Mildred Taylor might tell about her ancestors. During the voyage across the Pacific, Chinese were crammed into the ship's hold and treated very much the way slaves were treated when they were brought to America from Africa. One in three died in many of the early voyages. Yep devotes a separate volume, one not in the Golden Mountain series, to crossing the Pacific and laboring in the gold fields: *The Journal of Wong Ming-Chung*. The Chinese were treated very much like slaves even after they had reached the gold

fields: they had to pay a very substantial Foreign Miners' Tax every month.

Much like the tax collectors in the Gospels, those in California were legally allowed to use force to collect the tax and were allowed to keep part of the proceeds for themselves. The tax was a legalized way to discriminate against the Chinese, for although there were foreigners from many countries, it was only collected from the Orientals. Likewise, although the transcontinental railroad was built after the end of the Civil War, the crew leaders of the railroad work gangs were allowed to treat the Chinese laborers much like slaves. They were allowed to use force against them, they were paid much less than the white laborers, and deductions were made for their living expenses. For the white laborers, room and board were provided for free. However, when job conditions became extreme, the Chinese did riot or go on strike to protest and get better conditions. Even so, about ten per cent of the Chinese laborers died. Yep tells their story in *Dragon's Gate*.

And the Chinese had no legal protection: they could be robbed, beaten, or killed with impunity. Their only hope was if a white man saw a crime committed against them and agreed to testify in court on their behalf. They themselves could do nothing. Once again, as happened to Negroes in Mississippi and elsewhere in the South, Chinese could be beaten and lynched if they tried to defend themselves against white mobs. Yep uses historical materials to chronicle this in the mining towns of Wyoming in *The Traitor*. Historically, the massacre in Rock Springs was not unique. Yep says that many of the small Chinatowns in the West were destroyed in similar events. It is eerily like the pogroms against the Jews in Czarist Russia. Thus, only the big city Chinatowns were left.

There was more than opportunism involved for the Chinese who crossed the Pacific. There was the same

combination of discrimination, famine, and taxes in China that Jonathan Swift saw in Ireland—which drove so many Irish and people from other countries of Europe to try and find jobs across the waters in England or America. One has only to think of the waves of immigration to America after the Irish: the Germans, the Swedes, the Italians, the Greeks, or the Poles. On a personal note, my grandparents came to the United States from Poland and Sweden in much the same way as the Youngs came to the United States from China. The only thing unusual about the immigration pattern for the Youngs was that they were non-whites. And even here they were not unique, for their story is much the same as that of the Japanese. Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston tells it in her memoir *Farewell to Manzanar*.

In this way, the Golden Mountain series is a way for Yep to root himself in time and place: this is the story of *my* family. But Yep complicates things by going back many centuries and showing that same kind of discrimination occurring in sixth century China. He does this in *Lady of Ch'iao Kuo: Warrior of the South*. The lady in the title is Red Bird, a tattooed princess in the Hsien tribe. For her, the Chinese were foreign invaders. She is sent to the home of an exiled Chinese scholar by her father the king to learn the Chinese language and Chinese ways. She is proud of her people and the tattoos on her face and body, but to most of the cultured Chinese scholar's family, she is just a barbarian.

The Golden Mountain Chronicles continue in San Francisco in the early years of the twentieth century in *Dragonwings* and then leap ahead to 1965 in *Child of the Owl*, to 1970 in *Sea Glass*, and finally to 1995 in *Thief of Hearts*. Once again, things are more complicated than they seem because there is a forthcoming book in the series, *The Red Warrior*, which is set in 1939 and deals with his father's experiences on a Chinese basketball team. And because there are also subsidiary stories, such as *When the Circus Came to Town*, which are based on true events. *When the Circus Came to Town*, for example, tells the story of a smallpox epidemic in a small town in Montana in the early years of the twentieth century and cooperation between Chinese and local residents. And *The Star Fisher* and *Dream Soul* are based on the story of one of Yep's grandmothers when she and her family lived in Ohio and in West Virginia. He mentions this briefly in his memoir *The Lost Garden*.

The last three books in the series, *Child of the Owl*,

*Sea Glass*, and *The Thief of Hearts*, are in contemporary America. Legal forms of discrimination have been outlawed, so now the problems are those of the outsider, of social and psychological identity. But once again, Yep complicates things with a parallel series of stories: *Ribbons*, *The Cook's Family*, *The Amah*, and *Angelfish*. They (and *The Thief of Hearts*) deal with the same language, values, and acculturation problems we saw in the early volumes of *The Golden Mountain Chronicles*, but now it's a grandmother coming from Hong Kong or a victim of the Cultural Revolution.

In much the same way, Linda Sue Park tells stories of Korean history and her family, of what it was like to experience colonialism during the Japanese occupation of Korea (as told in *When My Name Was Keoko*). Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston's *Farewell to Manzanar* is of special interest here, because she tells much the same story as Park or the last three of the Golden Mountain books, but from a Japanese-American perspective. She and her family experienced American colonialism in the United States during World War II. Her book tells the reader what it was like to be one of the 110,000 Japanese or Japanese-Americans imprisoned by the American government for the "crime" of having a Japanese name and an Oriental face. Manzanar is the name of one of the ten internment camps set up by the U.S. government during World War II exclusively for Japanese. Her memoir tells of life before the internment (she was seven when she was interned), life in the camp, and of life later "on the outside." The years "outside" are especially close to the experience of being an outsider that Yep describes.

Or the stories Mildred Taylor tells of the racism and discrimination her family experienced over several generations in Mississippi (starting with a half-white great-grandfather in *The Land*). Taylor's ancestors experienced other kinds of discrimination too because not only were they land owners when almost everyone else was a tenant farmer, but they were Negroes who owned land when the only land owners were white.

#### Time and the Interconnectedness of All Creation

So what are we to make of these stories of Yep's? What are we dealing with? Do we have simple, well-crafted but straightforward stories of race, culture, and discrimination? Or is there more? One thing that stands out is the way Yep deals with time, another thing is the interconnectedness of all being. And how *does* Yep deal with these? As we have seen, there is the relatively straightforward chronology of the Golden Mountain

stories, but then there are precursors and parallel stories (such as the *Lady of Ch'iao Kuo*, *The Journal of Wong Ming-Chung*, and *When the Circus Came to Town*). There are also *The Star Fisher*, *Dream Soul*, and the four volumes in the *Ribbons* series (*Ribbons*, *The Cook's Family*, *The Amah*, and *Angelfish*) which are almost cookie cutter replays of much of the experiences in *Child of the Owl*, *Sea Glass*, and *Thief of Hearts*.

But if we can step back, we can see patterns that resemble “the butterfly effect” of chaos theory, that is, very small changes or differences producing unexpectedly large results. Here, where Yep seems to be repeating the same stories of cultural and racial prejudice and conflict, somehow understanding or a change of heart appears.<sup>1</sup> The butterfly effect says “You *do* have to take into account the falling of a leaf on some planet in another galaxy” even when everything you see around you says that such small things are irrelevant.

In *Chaos* James Gleick tells the story of how scientists and mathematicians discovered the principle of deep order in apparently random events. It begins with how meteorologist Edward Lorenz discovered both the relevancy of very small things and the necessity of viewing things from another perspective. In the early 1960s Lorenz was using a computer to model weather patterns and one day typed in “506” instead of “.506127” because the difference was so infinitesimally small it couldn't possibly have any meaning. He went out to get a cup of coffee and returned to see the computer printing out a completely different weather pattern. He learned that what looked like random changes in day to day weather patterns on a linear graph produced a non-linear pattern of deep order (which when graphed produces the “butterfly” shape now known as the Lorenz Attractor). At first other scientists believed he was imagining things, but later they came to see it was true: infinitely small things did make a difference later on in the pattern of things.

This problem of small differences (but connected with dreams and memories) is also something which puzzled J. W. Dunne and led him in 1927 to produce the book titled *An Experiment in Time*. Dunne called it the problem of serial time. The English writer J. B. Priestley read Dunne's book and Russian mathematician P. D. Ouspensky's *A New Model of the Universe* and used their ideas of time in several of his books and plays. For example, Susan Cooper discusses how Priestley used Dunne's idea of serial time in his play *Dangerous*

*Corner*. It is “a play which presents two time-schemes, the possible and the real, and leaves its audience uncertain which is which.”<sup>2</sup> To take again from Cooper, he used Ouspensky's time-recurrence theory in his play *I Have Been Here Before*.<sup>3</sup>

According to Cooper, in Ouspensky's theory of Time we live our lives over and over again (the principle of Recurrence), but not in a circle: in a spiral. As one character in the play says: “We move along a spiral track. It is not quite the same journey from the cradle to the grave each time. Sometimes the differences are small, sometimes they are very important.” And sometimes it is possible to choose and change things (the principle of Intervention). Once again, we cannot estimate or understand the effect of what seem to be small changes or choices. Yep seems to be doing something along the same lines when his stories seem to be almost repeating themselves.

And there are other perspectives on time. For example, in her *Walking on Water: Reflections on Faith & Art*, Madeleine L'Engle comments that “We simply do not understand time.” We understand (or think we do) *chronos* or clock time. But there is also *kairos* or real time. She gives the example of a favorite painting of hers by El Greco that shows St. Andrew and St. Francis of Assisi talking together as friends, with the cross between them, although they lived eleven hundred years apart. How is such a painting possible? It is not only possible, it is the way “the astrophysicists understand time now.” Time “is not like a river, flowing in one direction, but more like a tree, with great branches, and smaller limbs and twigs which may make it possible for us to move from one branch to another.” This is what Jesus and Moses and Elijah did at the Transfiguration, as did St. Andrew and St. Francis when they talked with each other in that El Greco painting.<sup>4</sup>

This problem of the connections in time and space between all being is what Madeleine L'Engle deals with in her 1994 novel *Troubling a Star*.<sup>5</sup> Once again, although L'Engle's reputation is mostly as a writer of children's books, she deals with a very basic problem: the unity of creation. In the words of the poet: “All things by immortal power...To each other linked are ...thou canst not stir a flower without troubling a star.” Or as Vicky Austin, the heroine of that novel learns: “all actions have consequences far beyond anything we can imagine.” And L'Engle herself comments: “When I try to grasp the nature of the universe with my conscious mind, my humanly limited intellec-

tual powers, I grope blindly. I come closer to understanding with the language of the heart..."<sup>6</sup> And we will talk more about that in a following section.

This theme of the relationship of all creation is also the center of Charles Williams' work. He talks about it in terms of three principles: Co-inherence, Exchange, and Substitution. In very simple terms, it means that *all* things are connected: in many different ways, on many different levels. As Mary Shideler puts it in her essay on Williams: "All life is predicated upon giving and receiving, from the physical interplay of sub-nuclear particles and the biological processes of ingesting and egesting, to intellectual and personal development." And "no event is too trivial, no creature too insignificant to be outside the web of exchange..."<sup>7</sup>

One of the characters, a monk named Adam Cook, in *Troubling a Star* says: "I believe in a pattern for the universe, a pattern that affirms meaning, and perhaps especially when things seem meaningless. Everything we do has a part in the weaving of the pattern, even our wrong decisions."<sup>8</sup> Our problem is that we cannot usually see that pattern or understand its meaning. As Jesus says to Nicole Gausseron in *The Little Notebook*: "Nicole, you're looking at the back of the tapestry that I am weaving along with you...I see it from the front." He tells her to accept not understanding that pattern now: *Be content with seeing only the back of the tapestry. It's a bit of a mess. There are threads all over, tangled colors, and parts left unfinished. But all these overlapping pieces, this jumble, produce the impression of unity and harmony from the front. Do you understand?*<sup>9</sup> He also tells her to be small: *Be these little flowers among the rocks...Be simple and little...Really have the heart of a child...Be like the yeast in the dough. Be little.*"

This is also something that characterized St. Thérèse of Lisieux. As her biographer Guy Gaucher says, her relatives the Guérins regarded her as *a little dunce, good and sweet, with good judgment, but incompetent and clumsy*.<sup>10</sup> As Thérèse learns, being small and insignificant can be very painful: *I was completely crushed. I felt abandoned, and so far away, so far...But Pauline (her older sister) I am the Child Jesus' little ball, if he wants to break his toy, he is free. Yes, I will all that he wills*.<sup>11</sup> Later, when she was a Carmelite nun, she learned that the belittling nicknames given to her by many of the others in the Lisieux Carmel "were an invitation to the hidden life, to littleness, to abandonment, to silence." And she accepted that invitation: *What a joy to be so hidden that no one thinks of you!*

*To be unknown even to those with whom you live.*" It was a chosen humility and smallness that persisted until her death. As she was dying one of the other sisters commented: "I don't know why they are speaking so much about Sister Thérèse of the Child Jesus; she is not doing anything exceptional. One does not see her practicing virtue, you cannot even say that she is a good nun."<sup>12</sup> She was so small and so obscure that many of the sisters she lived with didn't notice it.

She chose *"to disappear in order to love. To be that grain of sand, hidden, unknown, of no account, trodden underfoot. What a joy to be so hidden that no one thinks of you! To be unknown even to those with whom you live."*<sup>13</sup> As Gaucher says: "She already knew that love must be put in the smallest things." And since poverty had a special attraction for her, "she chose the ugliest and most inconvenient objects for her use." In her words: *"I applied myself to practicing little virtues, not having the aptitude to practice great ones."* Day after day, year after year (as Gaucher says) she tried not *"to let one small sacrifice escape her, not one look, one word, taking advantage of all the smallest things and doing them for love."* And (as Gaucher reminds us): "No one noticed this heroism in little things." The littleness and powerlessness that characterizes Thérèse's way is also what characterizes Jesus' words to Nicole: Be small, be hidden. If you are small, then I can act.

As Thérèse tells us: *"the weaker one is, without desires, without virtues, the more fit one is for the operations of that consuming and transforming love... One must consent always to stay poor and without strength, and that's the difficulty...It is trust, and nothing but trust that must bring us to love."*<sup>14</sup> Because (as Gaucher says in the same place) "she is weak and powerless she is living proof that love chooses the little ones." Or (to use words that she spoke on her deathbed): *"I see that it is enough to recognize one's nothingness and abandon oneself, like a child, into the arms of God."*<sup>15</sup>

She learned the force of those words when she had what is usually referred to as "the dark night of the soul." Over the period of a year (Easter, 1896 to Easter, 1897) she lost all sense of her faith. She was lost in a black hole. As Gaucher puts it, she literally was like a fish out of water. The faith that she had grown up with, that was as natural to her as the air one breathes, was suddenly removed and she was left gasping for breath. (In a way, this is a preview of her deathbed experience, for she died of suffocation.

Tuberculosis had completely destroyed her lungs and ability to breathe.) But it was through this experience that she discovered she was like everybody else: “she found herself on an equal footing with unbelievers... Through sharing the experience of unbelievers she discovered that she was like them.”<sup>16</sup> And what is this she is saying? It is but another way of recognizing the relatedness, the co-inherence (to use Charles Williams’ term) of all mankind.

#### Different Ways of Being Small

We can also see this sense of connection in a number of Yep’s stories. For example, in *The Serpent’s Children* Cassia comments: “And for a strange moment... I could feel a king of oneness with the field and the valley and the entire clan. It was as if the soil and our bodies were only different versions of each other.”<sup>17</sup> As Jesus had told Nicole, it is only by being small, by recognizing that one is small, that one can become part of the pattern of things. We can also learn that there are different ways of being small.

In a very literal sense we can see the different ways of being big and small in the story titled *Cockroach cooties*. There we have the connection between humans and cockroaches. Humans and cockroaches? How can there be any connection? We learn that the villain of the story, a rather large Chinese-American bully named Arnie, is afraid of cockroaches. Bobby, the one he bullies (and another Chinese-American), uses this knowledge to control Arnie. But then Bobby asks his older brother Teddy to try and look at the world from a cockroach’s viewpoint and see the wonder and unity of all being.

For example, when Teddy tells Bobby that cockroaches eat garbage, Bobby counters: “We throw away all this perfectly good food. Then we get mad when someone else wants to use it...Just because something is different doesn’t make it a monster.” But suddenly seeing ways in which cockroaches are similar to higher animals like cats and dogs (not to mention people) is too much for Teddy: “As Bobby talked, I felt a little dizzy. Bobby made me feel as if I had suddenly stood upside down on my head.”<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, if we take a look at Mary Norton’s *Borrowers* series, we see a world not that much different from the one cockroaches inhabit.<sup>19</sup> For the Borrowers are people six inches tall who live out the spirit of poverty: they own nothing. They literally live out St. Therese of Lisieux’s maxim: “Be small.” Everything they have they have “borrowed” from the larger-sized

humans. Of course, they consider the giants around them as “great slaves put there for them to use” like we do for cows or sheep. And once again we are shown how all of existence, great and small, interconnects. We can experience this same change in perspective in Robert O’Brien’s *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH*.<sup>20</sup>

But then Teddy and his little brother Bobby learn to see the world through Arnie’s eyes also and the effect is the same. For although Bobby is a straight “A” student in his class in elementary school, he is a complete dunce in the Chinese lessons he and Teddy attend. He feels the humiliation that Arnie usually gets in class. And who is the brightest student in the Chinese class? It’s Arnie. He can read Chinese. He can write it. Chinese history is at his fingertips. Later in the story we learn that Arnie’s parents are divorced and his mother works as a waitress during the day and as a cleaning lady at night to support herself and her son. She has no time to spend with her son. And he is left in an apartment infested with cockroaches. Teddy and Bobby live with both parents, parents who love and care for them.

At the end of the story Bobby and Teddy learn they share a common interest in Godzilla and Bobby asks Arnie why he likes Godzilla so much. Arnie replies that it’s because Godzilla is big and clumsy and nobody explains the rules to him (which is an exact description of Arnie). And then Teddy and Bobby realize that Arnie “wasn’t a monster [like Godzilla] either.” They realize that he is “just another human being. Like us.”<sup>21</sup>

Yep’s *Cockroach cooties* was published in 2000, but he told very much the same story at greater length in his 1982 book *Kind Hearts and Gentle Monsters*. Godzilla is here too, but now under two guises: one is as the hero of a small friendless boy named Duane, the other is as the heroine’s mother. The hero in this story is fifteen-year-old Charley Sabini: enthusiastic student at an elite Catholic high school, good athlete, and always willing to go out of his way to help in any way he can. The only problem is, he does not understand how blind and inconsiderate his “help” can be: it’s not wanted, it’s not needed, and it does not allow others to grow. He is shown how blind and insensitive he is by the heroine of the novel, Chris Pomeroy.

In *Cockroach cooties* Teddy learns to see things from a cockroach’s perspective and Teddy and Bobby learn to see things from Arnie’s perspective. Here Charley learns not only about his own insensitivity, but also the pain of living in a broken family. Although Chris has the reputation of being a bully, Charley learns that she

is an only child with a mentally ill, highly manipulative, and suicidal mother. The stress of trying to live with her and always please her led to the heart attack that killed Chris's father. Charley has siblings and caring parents, so has never known this kind of emotional pain. She tells him how his thoughtless remarks and actions have hurt herself others. As he becomes close to Chris, he comes to empathize with her and understand the burden she and others have been carrying and his own insensitivity to it.

Things change and he changes when he accepts his own brokenness. Her mother's mental illness has driven all visitors away from the house, but Charley tells her that he *can* bear it. And as he does so, he is given the strength to bear it. It happens also at the very end of the novel, after Mrs. Pomeroy has made another suicide attempt. Charley has offered to help Chris cope with her mother. She taunts him with her reply: "How could you possibly help me? You don't know the first thing about real pain?" And he replies: "If I didn't know about pai before this, then I do now."<sup>22</sup>

This is very reminiscent of what happened during an out-of-body experience Elisabeth Kübler-Ross had where she had to accept the consequences of her own choices.<sup>23</sup> For her, it meant experiencing physically and emotionally the death agony of each one of the one thousand patients she'd had, one death after another. It was pain beyond comprehension. The only record we have of such pain is in the Gospel narratives of the passion of Jesus. She cried out for help, any help, and was told clearly: "You shall not be given." And finally she realizes: "All I needed to do was to stop my fight, to stop my rebellion...to move from rebellion to a simple, peaceful, positive submission, to an ability to say yes to it." And the moment she did that, the pain stopped.

Chris told Charley of the effects of his attempts to help others, attempts that often ended up hurting others. But she tries the same thing herself with a friendless little boy named Duane who comes to the library where she works part-time. He's a Godzilla fan, so she and Charley get him a Godzilla fan magazine and Chris gives it to him the next time he comes to the library. In the excitement of the conversation that follows Chris tells Duane that Godzilla's not real and then both their worlds collapse: "Helping him had been very important to her, but she had done just the opposite." Her mother had told her repeatedly that she couldn't do anything right, now here was yet another example of it.

Later, they go to visit Duane to apologize and learn from his father that Duane also has lost his mother, just about the time Chris lost her father. When Chris tries to apologize, she's met with pure hate: "He's as vicious as my mother and just about as sick," she comments afterwards. So what can be done? Asking and accepting forgiveness. Chris reminds Charley that he is part of a web of relationships. We have seen this already in *Troubling a Star* and in the three principles of Charles Williams that bind all of life together. She reminds him: "And anyway, if I was able to forgive *you*, you ought to be able to forgive *him*." Jean Vanier talks of this also: "Forgiveness, however, implies...an acceptance of who we really are: that we have been hurt, and that we have hurt others."<sup>24</sup> Understanding this fact, Vanier continues, allows us to recognize the beauty, value, and sacredness of others. It also lets a God-given energy flow in us: "We can start to live the pain of loss and accept anguish because a new love and a new consciousness of self are being given to us."<sup>25</sup> And this is exactly what happens to Charley and Chris.

We can also say that this understanding implies a connection with others, the linking that Madeleine L'Engle talks about in *Troubling a Star* and that Charles Williams embodied in his three principles of co-inherence, exchange, and substitution. Charley's offer to help Chris is what Williams means by exchange and substitution: she has shared her pain with him. He has accepted it and will help her bear it. C. S. Lewis talks about this also in *Till We Have Faces*, Lewis's retelling of the myth of Cupid and Psyche. At the end of her life Orual, Queen of Glome, the older half-sister of Psyche, is shown and made to understand the selfishness and cruelty in what she thought were acts of love toward Psyche. As she understands the pain she has caused her sister, she is also shown the anguish she has borne on her behalf. Orual does not believe she has done such a thing, but is told by the spirit of her former teacher, the Greek slave her father had nicknamed the Fox: "That was one of the true things I used to say to you. Don't you remember? We're all limbs and parts of one Whole. Hence, of each other. Men, and gods, flow in and out and mingle."<sup>26</sup>

If we look at the Golden Mountain Chronicles, we also see examples of this forgiveness, acceptance of pain, and a common humanity. In *Dragon's Gate*, for example, Otter makes friends with Sean Kilroy, son of the overseer. At first Squeaky, Otter's foster father, his Uncle Foxfire, and Mr. Kilroy do everything possible to discourage any contact between the two young men.

But their loneliness and alienation from others is so strong that they continue to meet and become friends. Oddly enough, Otter's parents (Tiny and Aster) were members of a shunned and persecuted minority group in China. Squeaky and his wife Cassia (themselves members of feuding clans) befriended them and promised to raise Otter as their son after Aster and then Tiny were killed.<sup>27</sup>

And after Squeaky is blinded in an ill-planned blasting explosion in the tunnel Bright Star, a member of the crew says: "It could have been any of us who were blinded. All we have is one another. We have to cooperate if we are going to get off this mountain alive."<sup>28</sup> They are ill-matched and also members of different clans. They are the misfits no other crew boss wants, but they have to recognize their common humanity and share what comes. Otter learns this his first night on the mountain, when everyone else in their cabin strips naked and washes in a pan of water. Otter refuses and then is forcibly stripped and washed. Uncle Foxfire and others in the crew tell him the three rules of survival: keep warm, keep dry, and keep clean. Sickness on the mountain means death, not just for one, but for all in the crew. A few days later, Otter is shown the literal truth of this. Doggy, one of the crew veterans and the only musician in the group, gets frostbite and two of his fingers must be amputated to prevent gangrene from setting in and killing him. He accepts and they are cut off, then and there.

Physical pain is an ever-present fact of life. And so is emotional pain. After his foster father Squeaky is blinded Otter wants to go back home to China, even though he is known to have killed a Manchu soldier. Uncle Foxfire tells him he cannot: "When you go to Three Willows, you'll see things with Western eyes." Otter understands immediately because he is already an outsider: "Like a halfling." And when he is in America, his uncle reminds him, he sees things "with T'ang eyes." But the pain and suffering are necessary and have positive effects: they open the door of the heart. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross talks about it in terms of polishing a diamond. You cannot see the beauty of the diamond until it is cut and polished. Uncle Quail and Kenyon say much the same thing in *Sea Glass* when Craig finds "a flat, disklike object" that "seemed to be made of translucent, milky-green quartz." He learns that it was an ordinary piece of glass from a Coke bottle that the sea and sand have rubbed and polished "until all that's left is the brightness and the clearness."<sup>29</sup> Uncle Quail is an old man who's lived through

all kinds of abuse and discrimination and Kenyon is the child of divorced parents, with a mother much like Mrs. Pomeroy. Both have been polished. And Craig realizes it.

Most of the characters in Yep's stories are outsiders: poor, despised, outcast, disfigured or handicapped in one way or the other. Yet it is precisely these who grow in wisdom and grace through their experiences. They are the ones who understand. As Nicole Gausseron says: " 'The poor are our teachers': they keep us in touch with the essential and with the compassion of the heart of Jesus."<sup>30</sup> We've talked mostly about the Golden Mountain Chronicles, but the same could be said about the Dragon cycle.<sup>31</sup> All types of creatures can be poor and despised, outcast or handicapped. In the Dragon cycle, the outcasts include dragons, humans, and an immortal monkey with magical powers. Yep gives the key to understanding all of his stories in one sentence in a short picture book, *The Dragon Prince*, which is subtitled *A Chinese Beauty & the Beast Tale*: "The eye sees what it will, but the heart sees what it should."<sup>32</sup>

#### The World of the Heart

This is also what Jean Vanier says: "The heart, the metaphorical heart" is "the basis of all relationships, is what is deepest in each one of us...The heart is the place where we meet others, suffer, and rejoice with them."<sup>33</sup> It is "the very core of our being." And "heart-to-heart relationships" are where God is present. Jesus tells Nicole this when she asks him: "How do we reach you, learn from you, meet you?" He replies, "*Heart to heart, Nicole.*"<sup>34</sup> Vanier talks of learning this in his relationships with mentally handicapped people in L'Arche.<sup>35</sup> He reminds us that we all have broken hearts. And this is also what Yep is doing. He is telling stories of people with broken hearts: with some kind of stigma, disability, or handicap and this telling opens the way of the heart for us, his readers.

Vanier says that "those who are weak and humble and open to love" are the ones who encounter God. This is exactly what St. Thérèse of Lisieux means when she talks about being small. We are all broken in one way or another, whether others can see our brokenness or not, whether we admit it or not. As Vanier says: "We may be different in race, culture, religion, and capacities, but we are all the same, with vulnerable hearts...throughout our lives we have, every one of us, been hurt in one way or another."<sup>36</sup> And this is enough. As Jesus tells Nicole: "*I embrace you. Just as*

*you are, with your limitations and weaknesses. I do not want you to be anything else. I want you with me.*"<sup>37</sup>

What Vanier says about the heart is not idiosyncratic or sentimental. Mathematician, scientist, and writer Blaise Pascal talks about it in his *Pensées*: "We know the truth not only through our reason but also through our heart. It is through the latter that we know first principles, and reason, which has nothing to do with it, tries in vain to refute them." This is because "knowledge of first principles, like space, time, motion, number, is as solid as any derived through reason, and it is on such knowledge, coming from the heart and instinct, that reason has to depend and base all its arguments."<sup>38</sup> There is also his famous remark that "The heart has its reasons of which reason knows nothing: we know this in countless ways."<sup>39</sup> Jesus says much the same to Nicole when she wants him to explain things to her: "*You do not need to know. That would not serve any purpose...I have not given you the world so you can dominate it by your intelligence. I have given you a field to cultivate.*"<sup>40</sup>

We can see this way of the heart most clearly in the Dragon series and *The Tiger's Apprentice* as well as in the books for younger children (such as *The Dragon Prince*, *The Imp That Ate My Homework*, and *The Magic Paintbrush*). As we saw earlier, it is in *The Dragon Prince* that we directly have the statement of fact: "The eye sees what it will, but the heart sees what it should."

It is this ability to see with the heart that lets the farmer's daughter, Seven, know that she is not looking at an ordinary dragon, but at a magical one. And it is true, because the dragon is also a prince. She learns this at the cost of a life. Earlier in the day, her older sister, Three, had seen a small golden snake in the rice field and wanted to kill it. Seven told her sister the snake was harmless and released it some distance away. Later, the snake changes into a giant dragon and picks up the girls' father and demands one daughter as a bride in exchange for his life. The first six daughters refuse. It is only the youngest, Seven, who is willing to make the sacrifice to save their father's life. Once again, if we look at what has happened, we can see Charles Williams' principles of exchange and substitution here. She is exchanging good for evil in saving the snake's life as well as offering her own as a substitute for her father's.

The sacrifice Seven makes is similar to that which Civet makes in *Dragon of the Lost Sea*. She is asked to give herself as a bride to a magical underwater crea-

ture called The King Within the River. If she doesn't agree, their whole village will starve. Civet describes her sacrifice and the anger, resentment, and fear she feels as she dies. It is this anger and resentment that poison the sacrifice and her life after death. It is this hatred that leads to her centuries' long revenge against the dragons and the destruction of their world. Shimmer, the outcast dragon princess, is given the opportunity to kill Civet the witch but she can't do it because she realizes Civet's immaturity and that hatred is still poisoning her. As Vanier says, she first has to learn to trust and that she is loved. Then she can be healed. And this is what happens in following volumes of the series.

In *Dragon Cauldron*, the third volume of the series, we see both Civet and Thorn (the outcast boy who is Shimmer's partner) sacrifice themselves. They do it because love demands it. When Thorn is about to die he suddenly feels "a kind of peace inside—as if I were connected to something bigger and stronger than me." And as he dies he feels the same kind of pain that Civet felt as she died, but then he passes beyond it: "I felt as if the dirt were burning away from my body...And more than my body. It was as if the impurities were burning away from my soul. I could see how petty my jealousy of Indigo had been."<sup>41</sup>

If we look at George MacDonald's *The Princess and Curdie*, we can see much the same experience. The princess tells Curdie to put both his hands into a roaring fire. Without hesitation he obeys. He feels terrible pain, but then the pain decreases. The pain has been so severe that he is sure he has only burned stumps left. But when he looks, his hands are not only there, they are as smooth as a baby's. And not only that, the princess tells him that he now has the gift to read hearts: when his hand touches another person's, he will be able to judge that person's spiritual condition.

We see a world of magic here in Yep and MacDonald but it is the magic of the heart. It is magic, but very close to the spiritual and physical purification that Elisabeth Kübler-Ross described in her out-of-body experience. It seems in other words that we are looking at that world that Charles Williams saw, where supernatural and material elements interpenetrate. It is the world that Evelyn Underhill tried to describe in her 1907 essay "A Defence of Magic."<sup>42</sup> It is, as she said, a world in which love and knowledge must always be joined. And this interweaving is what Jesus tells Nicole is necessary. When Nicole tells Jesus that she feels confused because she belongs to two different



worlds, the human and the spiritual, he tells her that she's wrong. He says: "I give you these two worlds to live in, and you must shuttle continuously between the two, binding them together... You have to keep going from one to the other."<sup>43</sup>

We not only belong to the physical and spiritual (or magical) worlds, we belong to the worlds of the mind and the heart. Pascal reminded us that not being able to prove something rationally proved nothing at all but the weakness of our reason. And also that it is through our hearts that we have knowledge of first principles. This seems very very close to the implicit and explicit reason that John Henry Newman talks about. He says that someone may have a true impression of a thing without being able to articulate it in the least and that it is legitimate to believe what one cannot wholly understand or is unable to prove.<sup>44</sup> He also talks about the cumulative weight of various types of proof: "One furnishes evidence to another and all to each of them: if this is proved, that becomes probable; if this and that are both probable, but for different reasons, each adds to the other its own probability." He also reminds us: "Nor do these separate developments stand independent of each other, but by cross relations they are connected..."<sup>45</sup>

In our case, we have seen this moving between worlds and the connectedness of all things in the Dragon series as well as in such books as *The Imp That Ate My Homework*, *The Magic Paintbrush*, *The Dragon Prince*, and *The Tiger's Apprentice*. But it is also present in several of the Golden Mountain Chronicles, such as *The Serpent's Children*, *Dragonwings*, and *Child of the Owl*. And the ways in which the worlds connect show us their reality. It may not always be a reality with which we are comfortable, but it is a reality in which we share.

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- 11 Ibid., p. 80.
- 12 Ibid., p. 194.
- 13 Ibid., p. 105.
- 14 Ibid., p. 173.
- 15 Ibid., p. 183.
- 16 Ibid., p. 188.
- 17 *The Serpent's Children*, p. 33.
- 18 *Cockroach cooties*, pp. 39-40.
- 19 Mary Norton's *The Borrowers* is followed by four other volumes (*The Borrowers Afield*, *The Borrowers Afloat*, *The Borrowers Aloft*, and *The Borrowers Avenged*), all of which see the world from the viewpoint of people about six inches tall.
- 20 The rats of NIMH are escaped laboratory animals with very enhanced intellectual abilities, yet they are able to live in harmony with other animals. The humans at NIMH want to exterminate them to conceal all knowledge of their abilities.
- 21 *Cockroach cooties*, pp. 132-133.
- 22 *Kind Hearts and Gentle Monsters*, pg. 173.
- 23 She describes it in *The Tunnel and the Light*, pp. 100-105.
- 24 Jean Vanier: *Becoming Human*, pg. 158.
- 25 Ibid., pg. 159.
- 26 *Till We Have Faces*, pg. 300.
- 27 This is told in *Mountain Light*.
- 28 *Dragon's Gate*, p. 184.
- 29 *Sea Glass*, pp. 246-247.
- 30 *I Am with You Always: The Notebooks of Nicole Gausseron (Book Three)*, pg. 90.
- 31 The cycle consists of *Dragon of the Lost Sea*, *Dragon Steel*, *Dragon Cauldron*, and *Dragon War*.
- 32 The book is not paginated.
- 33 *Becoming Human*, pp. 84, 86.
- 34 In *Walk with Me: The Notebooks of Nicole Gausseron (Book Two)*, pg. 71.
- 35 Vanier started the first L'Arche community forty years ago near Paris.
- 36 *Becoming Human*, pg. 153.
- 37 *Believe That I Am Here: The Notebooks of Nicole Gausseron (Book One)*, pg. 142.
- 38 The quote is from *Pensées* #110. The translation is by A. J. Krailsheimer, pg. 58 in the Penguin Classics edition.
- 39 *Pensées* #423, pg. 154 in the edition cited.
- 40 *Believe That I Am Here*, pp. 104, 123.
- 41 *Dragon Cauldron*, pg. 287.
- 42 In *Evelyn Underhill: Modern Guide to the Ancient Quest for the Holy* edited by Dana Greene, pp. 33-46.
- 43 *Believe That I Am Here*, pg. 121.
- 44 The remarks appear in various works of Newman's. Here they are excerpted from a paper of mine titled "Stephen Crane and the Wafer Controversy."
- 45 The passage is from *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, but is cited in the paper mentioned in the note above.

#### Notes

- 1 James Gleick talks of this in his 1987 book *Chaos: Making a New Science*.
- 2 Cooper discusses Dunne's and Ouspensky's theories of time and their fascination for Priestley in her 1970 biography *J. B. Priestley: Portrait of an Author*.
- 3 It has been possible to read through Dunne's *An Experiment with Time*. It seems that his work is congruent with Ouspensky's theory of Time.
- 4 She makes these comments on pages 84 and 98 of *Walking on Water*.
- 5 The title comes from words in a poem by Francis Thompson.
- 6 The comment occurs on page 4 of the third volume of *The Crosswicks Journal: The Irrational Season*.
- 7 *Charles Williams: A Critical Essay*. The quotes are from pages 25 and 42.
- 8 The quote occurs on page 157.
- 9 *The Little Notebook: The Journal of a Contemporary Woman's Encounter with Jesus* by Nicole Gausseron, translated and edited by William Skudlarek and Hillary Thimmesh, pp. 143-144.
- 10 *The Story of a Life: St. Thérèse of Lisieux* translated by Sr. Anne Marie Brennan ODC, pg. 59. The words in italics are those spoken or written by Thérèse herself.