

Timely Connections: Faith, Empathy, and Choice in the Fiction of Madeleine L'Engle

Throughout her acclaimed children's/YA fiction, Madeleine L'Engle weaves an intricately connected story web in which characters are shaped by their relationships with time. Families like the Austins—who appear in works including *Meet the Austins* (1960), *A Ring of Endless Light* (1980), and *Troubling a Star* (1994)—live within the constraints of *chronos*, that ordinary and quantitative measure of time that governs clocks and seasons, while the Murry-O'Keefes—whom we encounter in works like *A Wrinkle in Time* (1962), *A Swiftly Tilting Planet* (1978), and *Many Waters* (1986)—inhabit the world of *kairos*, that qualitative, measureless conception of time linked with permanence and timeliness.

Though the realms of *chronos* and *kairos* may at first seem discrete and even opposed, L'Engle's fiction suggests that their true relationship is much more complex: select characters move between realms, and even those firmly rooted in one share essential questions, struggles, and triumphs with those from the other. My paper, then, will explore how the temporal and timeless overlap in L'Engle's work, highlighting how characters in both *chronos* and *kairos* invite readers to understand faith as an act of imagination, empathy as an affirmation of life, and love as a matter of choice; examining L'Engle's legacy among readers from decades past, including how her Episcopalian faith has shaped that legacy; and reflecting on insights her novels offer contemporary and future readers about what it means to be human and how even the youngest individuals may fight against the atrocities of war, hatred, and greed.