

## Homosexuality, Homophobia, and Childhood Sexual Abuse in the Novels of Madeleine L'Engle

In *Listening to Madeleine*, Leonard Marcus's portrait of Madeleine L'Engle written through brief interviews with family, friends, and colleagues, book reviewer Christine A. Jenkins comments on L'Engle's offensively "liberal" attitude towards homosexuality in her YA novel, *A House Like a Lotus* (331). But *House* was not the first book in which L'Engle attempted to grapple with homosexuality, and her own complex views towards it.

As part of my research for editing the interview collection *Conversations with Madeleine L'Engle* (U Press of Mississippi 2018), I spent much of the last year (re)reading L'Engle's novels both for children and for adults. During that (re)reading, I noticed L'Engle's recurring preoccupation with issues of homosexuality in her fiction, a preoccupation present from her first novel *The Small Rain* (1945) to her last, *A Live Coal in the Sea* (1996).

In this talk, I propose to explore and interrogate L'Engle's depiction of homosexuality in her novels and her discussions of it in her interviews; her characters (and her own) struggles with homophobia; and her linkage of lesbianism with sexual abuse and male bisexuality with marital betrayal. And to place her thinking about homosexuality in the context of psychological and politically "liberal" views of homosexuality as they evolved throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

FYI, 2018 is the centennial of L'Engle's birth.