
GOOD & EVIL

November 2020 Monthly Theme

In Madeleine L'Engle's "A Wind in the Door", fallen angels called Echthroi are destroying large chunks of Creation. The protagonist Meg learns that only by recognizing, naming, and loving these beings, who are both inside and outside of us, can she prevent them from doing more harm. She says, "I Name you, Echthroi. . . . My arms surround you. You are no longer nothing. You are. You are filled. You are me."

Questions for Reflection

- ◆ When in your life have you felt "different" or "other"? What/Who made you feel this way?
- ◆ What are the shadow parts of you that need to be named and recognized? How can doing so help you build more empathy for the "other"?
- ◆ Which wolf do you feed most often?
- ◆ What words/actions do you put out into the world that reinforce the binaries that separate us? What words/actions help to build bridges across those boundaries?



An old Cherokee was teaching his grandson about life. “A fight is going on inside me,” he said to the boy. “It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One is evil – he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego.”

He continued, “The other is good – he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith. The same fight is going on inside you – and inside every other person, too.”

The grandson contemplated this for a minute and then asked his grandfather, “Which wolf will win?”

The old Cherokee simply replied, “The one you feed.”

Complaint of El Rio Grande by Richard Blanco

I was meant for all things to meet:
to make the clouds pause in the mirror
of my waters, to be home to fallen rain
that finds its way to me, to turn eons
of loveless rock into lovesick pebbles
and carry them as humble gifts back
to the sea which brings life back to me.

I felt the sun flare, praised each star
flocked about the moon long before
you did. I’ve breathed air you’ll never
breathe, listened to songbirds before
you could speak their names, before
you dug your oars in me, before you
created the gods that created you.

Then countries—your invention—maps
jigsawing the world into colored shapes
caged in bold lines to say: you’re here,
not there, you’re this, not that, to say:
yellow isn’t red, red isn’t black, black is
not white, to say: mine, not ours, to say
war, and believe life’s worth is relative.

You named me big river, drew me—blue,
thick to divide, to say: spic and Yankee,
to say: wetback and gringo. You split me
in two—half of me us, the rest them. But
I wasn’t meant to drown children, hear
mothers’ cries, never meant to be your
geography: a line, a border, a murderer.

I was meant for all things to meet:
the mirrored clouds and sun’s tingle,
birdsongs and the quiet moon, the wind
and its dust, the rush of mountain rain—
and us. Blood that runs in you is water
flowing in me, both life, the truth we
know we know: be one in one another.

*A Story from Guru Mayi,
the leader of the Siddha Yoga Foundation*

The ruler of a prosperous kingdom sends for one of his messengers. When the messenger arrives the King tells him to go out and find the worst thing in the entire world, and bring it back within a few days. The messenger departs, and returns days later, empty-handed.

Puzzled, the King asks, "What have you discovered? I don't see anything!"

The messenger says, "Right here, Your Majesty," and sticks out his tongue. "My tongue is the worst thing in the world. My tongue can do many horrible things. My tongue speaks evil and tells lies. I can overindulge with my tongue which leaves me feeling tired and sick, and I can say things that hurt other people. My tongue is the worst thing in the world."

Pleased, the King then commands the messenger to go out and find him the best thing in the entire world. The messenger leaves hurriedly, and once again he comes back days later with nothing in his hands.

"Where is it?" the King shouts out.

Again, the messenger sticks out his tongue and then replies, "My tongue is the best thing in the world, my tongue is a messenger of love. Only with my tongue can I express the overwhelming beauty of poetry. My tongue teaches me refinement in tastes and guides me to choose foods that will nourish my body. My tongue is the best thing in the world because it allows me to chant the name of God."

The King is well satisfied, and he appoints the messenger to become foremost among his personal advisors."