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SEEING WHAT DOES NOT YET APPEAR: REFLECTIONS ON LOVE AND IMAGINATION

Caroline J. Simon

This paper explores the connection between love and insight into individual destiny. An individual's destiny is what God intends, but does not compel her, to be. I define "imagination" as insight into someone's destiny and contrast this with "fiction-making," which is the creation and projection of a narrative which is unconnected with that person's destiny. Imagination functions differently in three types of love: romantic love, neighbor love and friendship. I use the narratives contained in three novels, *Middlemarch*, *Ironweed*, and *The Great Gatsby*, to explicate the role of imagination in each of these kinds of love.

"Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."
1 John 3:2

"Hate is just a failure of imagination," thinks a character in one Graham Greene novel.¹ If hate is a failure of imagination, is love success in imagination? Philosopher Martha Nussbaum claims that love is "always a kind of generous fiction-making."² But this fiction-making is precisely the basis upon which Denis de Rougemont, in his classic *Love in the Western World*, condemns romantic love. According to de Rougemont, "Orthodox Christianity allows no room...to illusion," and, hence, de Rougemont concludes, no room for romantic love.³

There is, in any kind of love, a kind of puzzling tension. To love is to esteem and to prize. But if our love takes a specific, concrete human being as its focus, there will be many reasons not to esteem or to prize the person. Every particular person has faults and failings. But the lover, qua lover, seems committed to overlooking these imperfections. This is puzzling, because if love is committed to being "blind," in what sense is this love directed to *this* particular person? If love refuses to see what is there in all its sometimes distressing reality, then does love by its nature involve fantasy and falsification? But should love, then, be avoided rather than cultivated?

In what follows I will argue that imagination, in the sense of seeing what does not yet appear, is central to all kinds of love; not just romantic love, but neighbor love and friendship as well. However, I will argue that there is an important distinction between seeing what does not yet appear and fiction-



making.⁴ To see what does not yet appear is to see *more* fully, not to be involved in illusion. What makes all *true* loves true is that they are informed by hope in contrast to wishful thinking. This contrast undergirds and is elaborated by the discussion of the narrative which follow. For now we can say, quite roughly, that wishful thinking leads us to see people as *we*, for a variety of reasons (often connected with our own selfish interests), want them to be. Hope leads us to see ourselves and others as *God* wants them to be and to commit ourselves to bringing this about. As St. Thomas Aquinas says, hope is a divinely infused theological virtue which orders the will toward supernatural ends and is “about things which are not yet had.”⁵ And, as we Christians believe, hope does *not* disappoint (Romans 5:5). I will also argue that imagination functions differently in romantic love, friendship and neighbor love, and that this is one of the ways these three loves are distinguished from one another.

I say that I will “argue” for these claims, but these arguments will be narrative rather than demonstrative. I will appeal to the stories set out in three novels to make my points concerning love. My hope is that this will not be a mere persuasive device, but will function to provide genuine illumination. Thus, this paper can be seen as an experiment in “narrative philosophy.”

I. Imagination and Individual Destiny

Political philosopher Glenn Tinder’s concept of a destiny will be helpful in understanding the distinction I want to make between imagination and fiction-making. According to Tinder, “My destiny is my own selfhood, given by God, but given not as an established reality, like a rock or a hill, but as a task lying under a divine imperative.”⁶ Destiny is unlike fate in that a destiny can be failed or refused; it is what God intends, but does not compel me, to be. Christians believe that no one’s destiny is completely fulfilled in time, but has an eternal aspect. Because of this, “They insist that a human being in essence is not something here and now in front of us, which we can examine and understand, as we might an automobile or a building, but is something that has yet to be discovered and realized; this, they believe, can finally be accomplished only beyond the limitations of space and time.”⁷ Destinies always involve elements which are yet to be fully realized; this is why insight into a person’s destiny involves hope and what I here call imagination. Tinder asserts that each person’s destiny is unique and personal, but our destinies intertwine in complex and mysterious ways.⁸

Tinder’s field is political philosophy, hence he makes a significantly different use of this concept of destiny from the one I will make here. For my purposes it will be helpful to fill out Tinder’s suggestive, but rather vague, concept in a certain direction. From here on, I make no claim to be expositing Tinder, but am extrapolating. I take it that destinies are narrative accounts of

the actualization of potential properties. Aristotle makes the distinction between having a property actually and having one potentially.⁹ It is part of the human condition that not all of the potential properties we are born with can be actualized in the life span of a single individual. Midlife crisis is often depicted as the sudden, vivid awareness of these “roads not taken.” Actualizing some of my potentials precludes actualizing others. For example, one cannot both become a professional athlete and maintain one’s amateur status. Moreover, some of the potential properties I was born with need to be cultivated at particular times or they will be lost, at least from a naturalistic point of view, forever. If I ever possessed the potential property of being a world-class dancer, I have long since lost it. When Tinder talks of failing one’s destiny, I take it that what he means is having made choices which make it impossible for one to actualize some of the potentials which constitute one’s destiny.¹⁰

Individuals have many potential properties which will not be part of their destinies. It seems likely that destinies contain only properties which are both valuable and significant. A property is valuable if having it is better than not having it. I have the potential property of being morbidly obese; I also have the potential property of becoming a skilled torturer. Neither of these is part of my destiny, I assume, because neither of them would be valuable for me to have. It may be easier to explain significant properties by contrasting them with insignificant ones. I take it that the potential property which I have of now becoming an expert on baseball statistic is insignificant. My actualizing this property is of little importance, and since I very much doubt that (barring special circumstances) God has an opinion on my level of expertise in this area, it is not part of my destiny. A property might be valuable, but not significant. For example, I take it that the property of being well-rested is a valuable one,¹¹ but getting a good night’s sleep on any given night may not be part of my destiny. Significance is a matter of fecundity and centrality to a core of valuable properties.

Value and significance are necessary, but not sufficient, conditions for an actualized potential’s being part of a person’s destiny. This is because destinies are both open-ended and individualized. By claiming that destinies are open-ended, I am denying that they are blueprints for individual lives. While I think that there may very well be an individualized core of potential properties which God intends for me to actualize, I think that this core is compatible with my life taking on any number of different shapes. Destinies can be failed and refused, but God confers on humans the dignity of being creators of their own destinies within the limits set by God’s intentions. It is probably too simple to say that God’s intentions have to do with *being* rather than *doing*; however, I doubt that very many people fail their destiny by making a geographic move or even a career choice. By claiming that destinies are

individual, I mean that the core of potential properties which forms a destiny will vary from person to person. What God intends me to be may be significantly different than what God intends you to be. Christians believe that we are all destined to be Christlike, but individuals can, I think, be conformed to Christ in unique and personal ways.

It would be salutary to be able to say much more about the nature of destiny. Although what I have said here fills out the concept of destiny somewhat, it leaves many questions unanswered. This is, however, the nature of the concept. For the purposes of discussing love and insight, it is useful to have a Christian conception of selfhood which is narrower than Alvin Plantinga's individual essences,¹² and broader than Robert Adams' vocations.¹³ Individual essences are complete and consistent sets of world-indexed properties; consequently my individual essence represents all the possible paths my life could take. My destiny, in contrast, includes only those paths which do not thwart God's intentions for me. My vocation is narrower still, tracing those paths, if any, which represent commands which God individually addresses to me. Because destinies are open-ended, much of my destiny may lie outside of any vocation. My life may very well be shaped according to God's intentions without this being brought about by a special "calling" or divine address. Destinies occupy this middle ground because, intuitively, God's intentions are broader than God's commands but do not encompass all possibilities. Because of the nature of the middle ground occupied by the concept of destiny, it is inevitably more "fuzzy" than essences or vocations. We think we grasp the concept of logical consistency well enough, in principle, to spell out an individual's essence. Problems with the nature of special revelation aside, we think we understand individualized divine address and hence how someone comes to have a vocation. Coming to terms with the murkier idea of divine intentions is more daunting.

This is more than a theoretical problem, since the practical question of how one can know one's destiny is pressing. However, I take it to be part of the human condition that we often have only a very dim understanding of destiny, our own or anyone else's. Many occult practices seem, in fact, to be a way of trying to get around this feature of our humanity. If we only *knew* we could feel so much more like masters of ourselves. And perhaps this is one reason for the negative attitude taken toward divination by much of the biblical witness. As a Christian, I believe that, apart from grace, we are incapable of fulfilling, or in some cases even glimpsing, our destinies. Moreover, left to our own devices, our natural bent is toward what I will call fiction-making.¹⁴ So perhaps the only helpful practical advice here is not very philosophical: Pray without ceasing.

When I use the term "imagination" what I mean to refer to is insight into someone's destiny. Although it is often presumptuous to make claims about

someone else's destiny without extensive knowledge of him and special connection to him, others sometimes do have more insight into our destinies than we do. Love, in all its forms, involves and makes possible the work of attention necessary to have such insight; as such it is itself a gift of grace. In contrast, when I use the term "fiction-making" I mean the construction and projection of a narrative for oneself or another which is unconnected with that person's destiny. No matter how generous fiction-making may be, it is at best a pleasant entertainment. At worst, it may seriously interfere with someone's attaining his or her destiny.

I now turn to how imagination and fiction-making function in romantic love.

II. *Imagination and Romantic Love*

Dorothea Brooke, the heroine of George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, is a clear case of how generous fiction-making functions in romantic love. Near the beginning of the novel, Dorothea, or Dodo as her sister affectionately calls her, is in love with Edward Casaubon. Given that Dorothea is of marriageable age, that Casaubon returns her regard, and that his social position makes him an eligible match, this should be cause for rejoicing. But her sister Celia's reaction to the idea of Dorothea marrying this man is "a sort of shame mingled with a sense of the ludicrous"¹⁵ (p. 41). How can this be? Well, partly because Dorothea and Celia are looking for different things in a man and a marriage. George Eliot describes Dorothea's ideal this way:

...The union which attracted her was one that would deliver her from her girlish subjection to her own ignorance, and give her the freedom of voluntary submission to a guide who would take her along the grandest path.

"I should learn everything then," she said to herself.... "It would be my duty to study that I might help him the better in his great works. There would be nothing trivial about our lives. Everyday-things with us would mean the greatest things. It would be like marrying Pascal. I should learn to see the truth by the same light as great men have seen it by. And then I should know what to do, when I grow older: I should see how it was possible to lead a grand life here—now—in England" (p. 23).

When Dorothea looks at Casaubon, she sees a man who fits this ideal. "His manners, she thought, were very dignified; the set of his iron-grey hair and his deep eye-sockets made him resemble the portrait of Locke. He had the spare form and the pale complexion which became a student..." (p. 12). If she marries him she thinks that she will "be allowed to live continually in the light of a mind that she could reverence" (p. 38).

In contrast, when Celia looks at Casaubon, she sees the moles and sallowness of an aging man who has disagreeable habits. She says to her sister, "Really, Dodo, can't you hear how he scrapes his spoon? And he always blinks before he speaks. I don't know whether Locke blinked, but I'm sure I

am sorry for those who sat opposite to him, if he did" (p. 42). Clearly, Celia does not see Casaubon with the eyes of love.

Here we have an example of some of the standard features of romantic love. According to Carol Caraway, "the crucial constituents of romantic love are concern, admiration, idealization, the desire for reciprocation, and the passion for union."¹⁶ Romantic idealization, according to Caraway, "involves...having a conscious or unconscious ideal of a perfect lover and responding to an actual person on the basis of that ideal."¹⁷ Roger Scruton argues that the idealization involved in romantic love means desiring the person *as a man* or *as a woman*, and thus essentially involves a conception of gender.¹⁸ Dorothea's taste in men may be idiosyncratic, but seeing the object of her affection as an instance of her ideal is not. Sir Charles Sedley's line, "All that in woman is adored/In thy fair self I find—" captures part of the essence of romantic love, spoken from the male point of view. Dorothea sees in Casaubon all that she finds adorable in man. For her the qualities she identifies with men are intellectual ability, wisdom, and learning. Celia values other "male" attributes, so the ideal man by her lights is not a fallow scholar, but a robust outdoorsman. That the ideals projected in romantic love vary as a matter of individual taste is, of course, not a problem. Celia, after all, isn't marrying Casaubon. The problem is that in seeing Casaubon as the embodiment of her ideal, Dorothea fails to see him as he is.

This sends Dorothea into a fit of weeping six weeks after her marriage, for by then "her new real future" has replaced the fictitious (p. 177). Casaubon has not changed in this short time, but the light in which Dorothea sees him has. Eliot tells us:

...whatever else remained the same, the light had changed, and you cannot find the pearly dawn at noonday. The fact is unalterable, that a fellow-mortal with whose nature you are acquainted solely through the brief entrances and exits of a few imaginative weeks called courtship, may, when seen in the continuity of married companionship, be disclosed as something better or worse than what you have preconceived, but will certainly not appear altogether the same (p. 177).

Alan Solbe has argued that the idealization involved in romantic love is a form of epistemic irresponsibility, in other words that it always involves irresponsible belief-formation.¹⁹ As critics of romantic love are quick to point out, the noonday light of marriage often reveals the object of one's idealization as worse than the projected ideal.

Feminists have been especially severe in their pronouncements about romantic love. Simone de Beauvoir says, "The innumerable martyrs to love bear witness against the injustice of a fate that offers a sterile hell as ultimate salvation."²⁰ And feminist theorist Ti-Grace Atkinson characterizes romantic love as "a euphoric state of fantasy in which the victim transforms her op-

pressor into the redeemer."²¹ Women are made victims not only by being duped by their projected ideals, but also by having to live up to the ideals projected upon them by men. As psychologist Robert Johnson says, "Our culture trains women that their role is not to be human beings but to be mirrors who reflect back to a man his ideal or his fantasy. She must struggle to resemble the current Hollywood starlet; she must dress and groom herself and behave in such a way as to make herself into the collective image of anima. She must not be an individual so much as the incarnation of men's fantasy."²²

But, of course, men also suffer when false idealization leads to disappointment. Before his marriage, Casaubon sees Dorothea as embodying *his* ideal of womanhood. She is compliant, teachable, admiring and helpful—all that a woman, by his lights, should be. After marriage, he finds to his dismay that she is all *too* teachable, for she learns so quickly that she soon is in a position to know that Casaubon's mind is *not* a mind which she can reverence. Casaubon is soon aware that to see himself through Dorothea's eyes is to see himself for what he has long feared himself to be: a third-rate scholar who will wander aimlessly through labyrinths of minutia without ever having one great, original thought. He and Dorothea, thus, have all the ingredients for a miserable marriage: they each know that they cannot be what the other sought.

Such are the situations which inspired Yeats' lines: "All true love must die,/Alter at the best/Into some lesser thing." Carol Caraway, however, argues that romantic idealization is not always epistemically irresponsible nor is it necessarily oppressive. She argues that idealization is pernicious when it "involves either failing to acknowledge the other's true nature or acknowledging his nature and then trying to change it to fit the ideal."²³ "Idealization," as Caraway uses it, is perception of an individual which is shaped by an ideal; thus it may involve attributions of actual, potential or purely fictional properties to a beloved. Romantic idealization, she argues, will be beneficial in cases where it (1) involves attributing positive features to the beloved which the beloved in fact has, (2) contributes to increased self-awareness by making the beloved aware of positive features which she previously did not know she had, or (3) motivates the beloved to acquire positive characteristics by aspiring to fit the lover's view of him. She also points out that ideals can grow and, in a healthy, ongoing love-relationship, will change. "For," she says, "rather than y's changing to fit x's ideal, x's ideal can be changed to fit y. Accordingly, rather than Cyrano's having his nose bobbed to fit Roxane's ideal, Roxane can modify her ideal to include having a large nose."²⁴

If this is correct, then de Rougemont is wrong to think that Christianity must condemn all romantic love as involving illusion. Seeing someone as embodying my ideal of manhood may not be falsification because he, or his

destiny, may in fact fit my ideal. It may be objected that this overlooks the fact that the ideals involved in romantic love are supposed to make the beloved a worthy object of *devotion*.²⁵ I may correctly see that my beloved has *some* of the characteristics of my ideal, but if in fact some concrete human being really has *all* the features of my ideal, doesn't that show that my ideal is too unambitious to be a *romantic ideal*? What this objection ignores, however, is the potential for growth and change in both the beloved and the ideal. This potential in itself will not protect romantic love from being either oppressive or misguided. To see this we need only think again of Dorothea and Casaubon. Dorothea's ideal oppresses Casaubon because it includes a standard of intellectual greatness which Casaubon is *incapable* of achieving. Her ideal puts him in the situation of either having to pretend to be more than he is or live with the knowledge that he is a disappointment to her. Casaubon's ideal oppresses Dorothea in a different way. To conform to its demands for compliance and acquiesce she must stifle valuable aspects of herself, aspects which may be central to who she is. So, in order for the ideal involved in romantic love to foster growth rather than oppression, the beloved must have the *potential* to grow toward the ideal and the ideal must be such that growing into it would fit, rather than warp, the particular beloved. That is, the ideal must fit the beloved's destiny. The ideal will thus be a means for seeing what does not yet appear, rather than a fantasy or a piece of wishful thinking.

I want to claim that the idealization involved in romantic love involves genuine insight and hope if and only if the features it ascribes to the beloved are part of the beloved's destiny, or at least are not incompatible with his destiny. If I ascribe a level of intelligence to my beloved which he at present lacks, but can, should and will (without undue manipulation) attain, then seeing him through the eyes of love is genuinely *creative* and what it creates is not a fiction, but reality.²⁶

If Roger Scruton is correct in claiming that romantic idealization involves attributions of characteristics thought to be exemplified by the "ideal man" or the "ideal woman," Christians may differ over whether such ideals are parts of any individual's destiny. Those who take the claim that in Christ there is "neither male nor female" to be a claim that gender will not be an element of eternity will think that exemplifying ideal womanhood or manhood will not, as such, be part of any individual's destiny. Such people may take this as a reason for thinking that romantic love always involves fiction-making rather than imagination; on such a view there would be no such thing as true romantic love. One could take the position, however, that although "ideal womanhood" is not part of anyone's destiny, the features of a particular conception of womanhood could, as it happens, fit the properties of a particular woman's destiny. The same might hold, with appropriate changes, for a particular man. In such cases, romantic love could involve genuine insight,

albeit in a round-about way. Those who think that God has built an ideal of manhood and womanhood into the everlasting nature of things will take the gender-based qualities involved in romantic idealization (when it fits the beloved) as more central to a man's or woman's destiny. I leave this issue to be sorted out by theologians. However, all Christians can, I think, agree that we should do what we can to cultivate romantic ideals in ourselves and others which will not thwart the destinies of persons. The current popular culture's ideals of the romantic partner, whether male or female, are often impoverished and demeaning. Such things are not easily or quickly changed, and their influence on each of our personal romantic ideals is subtle. Under the present circumstances it may not be too strong to call it a minor miracle that anyone ever does love wisely or well.

III. *Imagination and Neighbor Love*

In Protestant Christianity, there is a long tradition of drawing a sharp contrast between eros, or romantic love, and agape, or the neighbor love which is thought to be distinctively Christian. Luther, Kierkegaard, and Anders Nygren are among those who find a significant dichotomy between the two. According to these thinkers, eros is drawn to a perceived good or value and is thus, at bottom, both preferential and self-interested. On the other hand, agape is "spontaneous, unmotivated, indifferent to value, creative, and an initiator of fellowship with everyone, even our enemies."²⁷ On this view, neighbor love can be had toward everyone, because it loves *in spite of* what it sees. The secularized counterpart to this conception of neighbor love is Kantian respect for persons, which, since it depends purely on will and is directed to all rational beings regardless of their other properties, can be morally required of everyone toward everyone.

Such a conception of neighbor love would involve little, if any, role for what I have called imagination. If neighbor love is essentially *indifferent* to value, then loving one's neighbor need not involve seeing him in light of what does not yet appear. However, there is another, and (I think) richer, conception of neighbor love, more often associated with the Catholic tradition, which does involve a role for imagination. This conception of neighbor love is eloquently set out by Simone Weil in a discussion of the parable of the Good Samaritan. She is worth quoting at length. She says,

Love for our neighbor, being made of creative attention, is analogous to genius. Creative attention means really giving our attention to what does not exist. Humanity does not exist in the anonymous flesh lying inert by the roadside. The Samaritan who stops and looks gives his attention all the same to this absent humanity, and the actions which follow prove that it is a question of real attention.²⁸

Christ taught us that the supernatural love of our neighbor is the exchange of compassion and gratitude which happens in a flash between two beings,

one possessing and the other deprived of human personality. One of the two is only a little piece of flesh, naked, inert, and bleeding beside a ditch; he is nameless; no one knows anything about him. Those who pass by this thing scarcely notice it, and a few minutes afterward do not even know that they saw it. Only one stops and turns his attention toward it. The actions that follow are just the automatic effect of this moment of attention. The attention is creative. But at the moment when it is engaged it is a renunciation. This is true, at least, if it is pure. The man accepts to be diminished by concentrating on an expenditure of energy, which will not extend his own power but will only give existence to a being other than himself, who will exist independently of him. Still more, to desire the existence of the other is to transport himself into him by sympathy, and as a result, to have a share in the state of inert matter which is his.... It is not surprising that a man who has bread should give a piece to someone who is starving. What is surprising is that he should be capable of doing so with so different a gesture from that with which we buy an object. Almsgiving when it is not supernatural is like a sort of purchase. It buys the sufferer.²⁹

It seems clear that supernatural charity or neighbor love is here portrayed as involving more than operating on the general belief that everyone does have a destiny. In a particular situation, I may act on what I take to be the normative implications of such a general belief, and this may not involve imagination. Such action need not involve anything over and above conscientiousness. This, however, would be very different both cognitively and affectively from *seeing someone as having a destiny*. Cognitively, the difference is between belief-formation based on taking someone to be an instantiation of the bound variable in the proposition "Every human being has a destiny," and belief-formation based on attending to him as the gestalt: perceiving this-person-with-a-destiny. The former need not involve any emotions at all. The latter both depends on and engenders what Lawrence Blum calls the altruistic emotions.³⁰ And the latter *does* involve what I have called imagination; theologically, this amounts to the claim that, unlike Kantian respect, supernatural charity is *supernatural*. Thus, it involves imagination even in the limiting case where although I see someone as having a destiny, I know too little or see too dimly to have any notion of what his destiny is.

I do not know whether novelist William Kennedy has read Simone Weil, but he clearly understands this conception of neighbor love. The following are excerpts from a passage from his Pulitzer prize winning novel, *Ironweed*.

In the dust and sand of a grassless vacant lot beside the Mission of Holy Redemption, a human form lay prostrate under a lighted mission window. The sprawl of the figure arrested Francis's movement when he and Rudy saw it. Bodies in alleys, bodies in gutters, bodies anywhere, were part of his eternal landscape: a physical litany of the dead. This one belonged to a woman who seemed to be doing the dead man's float in the dust: face down, arms forward, legs spread.

'Hey,' Rudy said as they stopped. 'That's Sandra.'
 'She dead?'
 'She's just drunk,' Rudy said, standing up. 'She can't hold it no more. She falls over.'
 'She'll freeze there and the dogs'll come along and eat her ass off.'
 'If she's drunk she can't go inside the mission,' Francis said.
 'That's right,' said Rudy. 'She comes in drunk, he kicks her right out. He hates drunk women more'n he hates us.'
 'Why the hell's he preachin' if he don't preach to people that need it?'
 'Drunks don't need it,' Rudy said. 'How'd you like to preach to a room full of bums like her?'
 'She a bum or just a heavy drunk?'
 'She's a bum.'
 'She looks like a bum.'
 'She's been a bum all her life.'
 'No,' said Francis. 'Nobody's a bum all their life. She hada been somethin' once.'
 'She was a whore before she was a bum.'
 'And what about before she was a whore?'
 'I don't know,' Rudy said. 'She just talks about whorin' in Alaska. Before that I guess she was just a little kid.'
 'Then that's somethin'. A little kid's somethin' that ain't a bum or a whore.'³¹

Francis sees Sandra as more than an inert body, more than a bum and more than a former whore. He pays her real creative attention, finding her lost shoes, sneaking soup and a blanket to her from the Mission whose rules will not let her in. Francis who describes himself as "just a bum" refuses to see Sandra as just a bum, and thus can reach out to her with true neighbor love which does not try to buy the sufferer. Because the Mission lacks the creative attention which is supernatural charity, they will not give to those who are unwilling or unable to barter for their bread. He insists on seeing her as someone who was once "a kid," someone who once was, and perhaps still is, full of unrealized potential. A child is someone who is not a bum and not a whore, someone such that to her belongs the Kingdom of heaven (Mark 10:14).

Enda McDonagh makes a similar use of what I have called imagination to enrich the concept of respect. "To respect another person is to take whatever time is necessary to see their goodness. Respect literally means to 'look again,' to 'take a second look.' It means we cannot settle for first impressions, or casually dismiss people from our lives. To have respect for someone is to look far enough into the person to see their goodness, even if that goodness is more a promise than a fact. We respect them when we call them to this goodness and commit ourselves to eliciting it."³² Respect, in this sense, is the same creative attention involved in supernatural charity or neighbor love and requires more of us than Kantian respect for rational nature.

Neighbor love, thus, involves seeing someone as having a destiny even

when there is little overt evidence that this is so. Like romantic love, it involves imagination. Because Christians refuse to see people from a merely human point of view (2 Cor. 5:16-17), we take this exercise in imagination to be more than fiction-making. But there is, of course, something superficially similar to neighbor-love which does involve fiction-making—sentimentality.³³ While neighbor-love is redemptive, sentimentality is not. It is no less difficult to tell neighbor-love from sentimentality than to distinguish true romantic love from fantasy. There are no algorithms; here as elsewhere we can attempt to exercise practical wisdom but will sometimes also need to walk by faith, not by sight.

Often, from a human point of view, seeing people as having a destiny will look like foolishness. What good does it do, after all, to pay close attention to a drunk or to find her shoe? Perhaps none; perhaps it would be much more prudent to coerce her into sobering up and listening to the sermon. But perhaps in the mysterious fullness of things treating her as more than she yet appears to be will work toward her redemption, or ours.

IV. *Imagination and Friendship*

As we have seen, in romantic love imagination projects a personal, but socially shaped, vision of a worthy candidate for union. This will involve beliefs about valuable gender-based qualities and in *true* love will fit the beloved's destiny. In neighbor love, one is given, through grace, the creative imagination to see another as having a destiny even when all outward signs are against it. I see the person as having a destiny without having any clear idea of what his destiny is beyond the general Christian belief that it will somehow involve Christlikeness. Friendship involves imagination as well, but here it plays yet another role. In friendship, I want to argue, imagination endorses the friend's vision of what he or she aspires to be. This role of imagination in friendship follows from the fact that friendship is by nature a relationship between equals in which paternalism is inappropriate. I can love people like Kennedy's character Sandra, but unless their relationship to their own selfhood changes, I cannot be their friend. Helping a person like Sandra will involve seeing that she has lost track of her destiny and helping her to recover or attain her lost vision of herself. In contrast, imagination's function in friendship is to affirm that the friend's view of her destiny is substantially correct. Friendship commits itself to helping one's friend attain her vision of herself. If the judgment that one's friend's self-concept fits her destiny is true, it must be based on insight into her destiny; true friendship thus involves imagination. The narrative I want to use to make this point is Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*.

The first thing that Nick, the narrator of Fitzgerald's novel, tells us about himself is that he is inclined to reserve all judgment. He says, "reserving judgment is a matter of infinite hope. I am still a little afraid of missing something

if I forget that, as my father snobbishly suggested, and I snobbishly repeat, a sense of the fundamental decencies is parcelled out unequally at birth."³⁴

Nick lives next door to Gatsby's lavish, Long Island mansion. He has heard rumors about Gatsby and seen him from a distance, but meets him for the first time at one of Gatsby's large, extravagant parties. Nick, at first, doesn't recognize that he is talking to his host and is embarrassed at this faux pas. Nick describes Gatsby's reaction:

He smiled understandingly—much more than understandingly. It was one of those rare smiles with a quality of eternal reassurance in it, that you may come across four or five times in life. It faced—or seemed to face—the whole external world for an instant, and then concentrated on *you* with an irresistible prejudice in your favor. It understood you just as far as you wanted to be understood, believed in you as you would like to believe in yourself, and assured you that it had precisely the impression of you that, at your best, you hoped to convey (p. 48).

This is a fine description of some of the central elements of friendship.³⁵ A friend is someone who is on your side, someone who is willing to see the world from your point of view. As Marilyn Friedman says, "One's behavior toward the friend takes its appropriateness, at least in part, from *her* goals and aspirations, *her* needs, *her* character—all of which one feels *prima facie* invited to acknowledge as worthwhile just because they are hers."³⁶ Moreover, friendship involves acceptance. It requires us, as Richard Wollheim puts it "to be continuously aware of and to accept what others are really like, so that their awareness of our awareness and acceptance, both of them and of their singularity, becomes a source of strength to them."³⁷ Friendship also involves believing in the friend, and praising the good qualities he possesses, especially, as Aristotle pointed out so long ago, those qualities which the friend is not always sure he *does* possess.³⁸

Gatsby's smile is remarkable in its ability to intimate so many of the central elements of friendship. But it is even more remarkable in being able to convey all this to someone he knows nothing about. This is Nick and Gatsby's first meeting, so if all that Gatsby's smile conveys is true, this amounts to friendship at first sight. Aristotle says that "a wish for friendship may arise quickly, but friendship does not."³⁹ The impossibility of instant friendship follows, in fact, from some of the elements of it alluded to in the quoted passage. How can Gatsby be on Nick's side without knowing what Nick's side is? How can Gatsby see Nick as Nick at his best wants to be seen unless Gatsby knows what Nick's aspirations are?

The acceptance and understanding which are central to friendship require that you must know someone fairly well before she can be your friend. There are other elements of friendship which also require knowledge. Lawrence A.

Blum has pointed out the connection between knowledge and the care and willingness to help found within friendships. Blum says,

The caring within friendship is built up on a basis of knowledge, trust, and intimacy. One understands one's friends good through knowing him well, much better than one knows non-friends, hence much better and more deeply than one knows their good. One is more sensitive to one's friend's needs and wants than one is to nonfriends. In genuine friendship one comes to have a close identification with the good of the other person, an occurrence which is generally much rarer and at a much shallower level with other people. In addition one gives much of oneself, unselfishly, to one's friend, as part of caring for him. One takes this for granted and does not typically regard it as a sacrifice.⁴⁰

To be a friend is to be willing to go out of one's way to help your friend accomplish his aspirations. Following Aristotle, Nancy Sherman emphasizes that "In choosing a friend, one chooses to make that person a part of one's life and to arrange one's life with that person's flourishing (as well as one's own) in mind. One takes on, if you like, the project of a shared conception of *eudaimonia*."⁴¹ In order to commit oneself to one's friend's conception of the good life, one needs to know what his conception of *eudaimonia* is.

If all of this is true, then what Gatsby conveys in his smile shows him to be either clairvoyant, naive, reckless or a charlatan.⁴² It is part of the genius of Fitzgerald's novel that it leaves us guessing among these alternatives throughout. As Nick soon discovers, Gatsby's persona is to such a great extent the product of fiction-making (generous and otherwise) on the part of Gatsby himself and those around him, that penetrating to the reality behind the fiction takes patience and energy. Is Gatsby the suave Oxford man, "a person of some undefined consequence?" Is he "simply the proprietor of an elaborate road-house next door" to Nick's house (p. 64)? Is he a bootlegger, a killer, a hero, a farm-boy, or Sir Lancelot?

Nick becomes Gatsby's friend when he comes to see that under the facade there is at least some real core which he can endorse. When Nick comes to see Gatsby as a man willing to take the blame for something he did not do in order to save the woman he loves, Nick can sincerely say "You're worth the whole damn bunch put together" (p. 154). He is now on Gatsby's side, alone, seeing Gatsby as Gatsby at his best would want to be seen.

What (it seems to me) Nick has learned in the course of the novel is that, if one wants to have a friend, one cannot reserve judgment forever. In order to become someone's friend I have to have made several judgments. I need to judge that he has a clear enough sense of who he really is that I can commit myself to seeing him the way he at his best would want to be seen. I also need to judge that who he really is, or at least is trying to become, is something I can endorse. In the language of this paper, I need to judge that the person's vision of himself is relatively fitting to his destiny. As Nick learns in the course of the novel, this means that I cannot be everyone's friend. Some

people are so completely fictions of their own making that they haven't a clue as to their own destinies. Some people, like Tom and Daisy in the novel,⁴³ are vastly careless and confused, letting other people clean up their messes (pp. 180-81). We can judge that something like this is true of someone without giving up the infinite hope which Nick thinks reserving judgment involves. But when we extend a hand to them, it will not be the hand of friendship, but that of neighbor love.⁴⁴

Paul Wadell has argued that when friendship is located within the Christian story, the distinction between friendship and neighbor love breaks down. He says,

[Aristotle] argued that when friends are brought together by a mutual love for the good, their friendship is a relationship in which they become good. In this way, though they are special to one another because of the love they share, precisely because of what their friendship does to them they are opened more fully to others. Similarly, we shall suggest that when friends are brought together by a mutual love for God and a desire to follow Christ, their friendship is a relationship in which they learn the ways of God, imitate Christ, and thus learn to embrace those they hitherto ignored. In this context, agape is not something other than friendship, but describes a friendship like God's, a love of such generous vision that it looks upon all men and women not as strangers but as friends.⁴⁵

I will close this section by pointing out how the account of friendship and neighbor love given here differs from Wadell's.

In the gospel of John, Jesus is quoted as saying a rather puzzling thing, "You are my friends if you do what I command" (Jn. 15:14). More than one sermon preached on this text has tried to explain this "if" away, because it makes it look as if Jesus's love is conditional; that he is like a child who will not play with those who refuse to let him set down the rules of the game. But unlike Wadell, Jesus seems to think that God cannot call everyone a friend. The account presented here explains why. Christians believe that the person who attempts to follow Jesus is the person who knows in what direction her destiny lies. Jesus can be such a person's friend because he can endorse her view of who she really is.⁴⁶ This means that, at least on this side of eternity, agape *is* something other than friendship, according to the Christian story. Agape is the love based on an infinite hope that someday everyone will be God's friend; in the meantime, God, like everyone else, has fewer friends than neighbors.

V. Conclusion

The point of this paper has been to illuminate the roles of imagination in love and to contrast these with fiction-making. As we have seen, the roles of imagination differ depending on the kind of love involved. These differences are subtle, as one would expect, given that the boundaries between romantic love, neighbor love, and friendship, although real, are "fuzzy." Imagination in romantic love involves gender-based idealization. Imagination in neighbor

love involves seeing someone as having a destiny. Imagination in friendship involves endorsing one's friend's view of his destiny. The differing roles of imagination are not the only distinctives among these kinds of love. The nature of "sharing one's life" with a friend, a neighbor, or a beloved will obviously differ enormously,⁴⁷ as will the role of one's sexuality. And, no doubt, there are other important differences. Clarifying these differences may help us understand the nature of our loves. Such understanding may aid us in reflecting about what our relationship with others are and can be. However, the point of such clarification is not to endorse a simplistic view of human relations.

Any actual, healthy, on-going human relationship will standardly involve more than one kind of love and, hence, more than one role for imagination. Perhaps the ideal marriage would be one in which true romantic love and friendship were combined. In such a relationship the growth of each spouse's ideal for a romantic partner would dovetail with the unfolding destiny of the other. This would combine with endorsement of each other's self-concept and a commitment to their shared conception of *eudaimonia*. Since it is wise not to expect that any actual marriage will continuously fit this ideal model, healthy doses of neighbor love and grace should be available to aid the relationship through the pitfalls of real day-to-day living. One thing which the account of romantic love given here should have made clear is that it is inherently fragile. Though true romantic love is not itself prone to distortion, it is very easily confused with something which is. Hence, unless it leads to and is combined with friendship, it is unlikely to underwrite stable relationships. Our culture is developing massive amounts of empirical confirmation of this prediction.

Most friendships will also involve combinations of friendship and neighbor love. Sometimes our friends may seem to us to be heading in mistaken, or even tragic, directions. We may think that they have lost sight, for the present, of their destinies. If open dialogue seems ineffective, we may be tempted toward paternalism and covert manipulation. The equality and mutuality essential to friendship may dwindle; over the long term this may lead to an open rupture of the friendship. However, patience, wisdom, and neighbor love may sustain friendship through such intervals. Even when they cannot, neighbor love still hopes infinitely for reconciliation.

By examining the role of imagination I hope to have displayed its preferability to creative fiction-making. The projection of illusion is an ever-present temptation in human relationships, but it is a cheap and unsatisfactory substitute for imagination. De Rougemont is right that Christianity allows no room to illusion. Yet I, for one, am happy that this does not mean Christianity must forego love in any of its forms.⁴⁸

NOTES

1. *The Power and the Glory* (New York: Penguin, 1962; first published 1940), p. 131.
2. "Steerforth's Arm: Love and the Moral Point of View" in *Love's Knowledge* (New York: Oxford, 1990), p. 356. The character in Graham Green's novel, however, thinks that the opposite of hate is not love, but pity: "When you visualized a man or woman carefully, you could always begin to feel pity—that was a quality God's image carried with it" (p. 131).
3. Denis de Rougemont, *Love in the Western World*, tr. by Montgomery Belgion (New York: Harcourt, Brace and C., 1940), p. 70.
4. As will become clearer below, but should already be apparent, I am using both "imagination" and "fiction-making" as technical terms. Their definitions are given on page 315. In ordinary usage both terms have to do with "making things up." The contrast which my technical use of them is intended to highlight is roughly that between seeing what does not yet wholly exist, but should (imagination), and "seeing" what either will not exist or that which does or will, but should not. C. S. Lewis's novel *Till We Have Faces* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956) has as its theme the distinction between something like what I am calling imagination and fiction-making. Given the way I have defined these terms, both imagination and fiction-making may focus on and bring about what modal logicians call "the actual." The person who shapes his life in defiance of God has actualized a fiction; the person who shapes her life in cooperation with God has actualized a destiny (see p. 316).
5. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Treatise on the Virtues*, tr. by John A. Oesterle (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), p. 122.
6. Glenn Tinder, *The Political Meaning of Christianity* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), p. 28.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
9. Aristotle's conception of potential properties seems to be quite broad, including the acquisition of capacities (becoming musical), externally conferred attributes (the shape imposed on a stone by a sculptor) and even what might be taken to be corruptions (the greying of a dark-haired person's hair). Thus, it is unclear that Aristotle would recognize a distinction between potential properties and possible properties. (See *Metaphysics* 1009a35; *Of Generation and Corruption* 317b14-319; *Physics* 189b30-192b5.) While I think that destinies are more likely to include the development of capacities than the acquisition of what might be called (in a loose sense) accidental properties like hair color (whether naturally or artificially acquired: see further remarks on page 314-315), I do not want to settle this issue by definition. To the extent that we have an intuitive grasp of the idea to which Tinder refers, it can include both the unfolding of properties which are in some sense "packed into" the individual and directions which an individual history might take which are less closely tied to his present properties. It is not conceptually impossible that e.g. Jonah's destiny be tied to going to Nineveh.
10. Biblical narratives often say surprising things about what choices lead to failing one's destiny. What in their choices explains why King Saul's narrative is a thorough-going tragedy, while David is a "man after God's own heart?"

11. Perhaps even the property of being an expert on baseball statistics is a valuable one. Since nothing in this paper hinges on this issue, I choose to suspend judgment on it.

12. See *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 7-120.

13. "Vocation," *Faith and Philosophy* (October 1987), pp. 448-62. I do not mean to imply that Adams ever intended to define selfhood solely in terms of vocation.

14. I do not mean to claim that it is impossible for those who do not consider themselves Christians to fulfill their destinies. It would be presumptuous for me to pretend to know specifically where or how such grace is operative.

15. George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (New York: Bantam Books, 1985). First published in 1871.

16. "Romantic Love: A Patchwork," *Philosophy & Theology*, Volume 2 (Fall 1987), p. 77.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 92.

18. *Sexual Desire: A Moral Philosophy of the Erotic* (New York: Free Press, 1986), pp. 235-83. He argues that this holds for homosexual love as well. The male who romantically loves another male will see him as the ideal male; the woman who loves another woman will see her as embodying ideal womanhood.

19. Alan Solbe, "The Unity of Romantic Love," *Philosophy & Theology* (1987), pp. 374-97.

20. "The Second Sex," in *Philosophy of (Erotic) Love*, ed. by Robert C. Solomon and Kathleen M. Higgins (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1991) p. 240.

21. Quoted in Carol Caraway, "Romantic Love: A Patchwork," p. 76.

22. *We: Understanding the Psychology of Romantic Love* (San Francisco: Harper, 1983), p. 109.

23. Carol Caraway, "Romantic Love: Neither Sexist nor Heterosexualist," *Philosophy & Theology*, Volume 1 (Summer 1987), p. 363.

24. Caraway, "Romantic Love: A Patchwork," p. 93.

25. See Keith E. Davis, "Near and Dear: Friendship and Love Compared," *Psychology Today* (February 1985), p. 24.

26. On this use of "reality," not every thing that is actual is real. See footnote 4.

27. Paul Wadell, *Friendship and the Moral Life* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), pp. 93-94.

28. Simone Weil, *Waiting for God*, tr. by Emma Crauford (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), p. 149.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 146-47.

30. Lawrence Blum, *Friendship, Altruism and Morality* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980).

31. William Kennedy, *Ironweed* (New York: Penguin Books, 1983), pp. 29-31.

32. This is Paul Wadell's summary (in *Friendship and the Moral Life*, p. 163) of Enda McDonagh's view in *Gift and Call* (Saint Meinrad, Indiana: Abbey Press, 1975), p. 49.

33. It is part of the power of Kennedy's novel that it deals with a subject matter which tempts many toward condescension without succumbing to sentimentality.

34. F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (New York: Macmillan, 1980, first published 1925), p. 1.

35. I am indebted to Bobby Fong for first calling my attention to the connection between this passage and friendship.

36. Marilyn Friedman, "Friendship and Moral Growth," *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, Volume 23 (March 1989), p. 4.

37. Richard Wollheim, *The Thread of Life* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 278.

38. See Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1381b.

39. *Nicomachean Ethics* 1156b30f.

40. Lawrence Blum, *Friendship, Altruism and Morality*, pp. 69-70.

41. Nancy Sherman, *The Fabric of Character* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 132-33. "Eudaimonia" is often translated "happiness," but, since happiness is so closely connected in the modern mind with pleasure or contentment, "living well" or "human flourishing" would be less misleading translations.

42. Another alternative is that Nick's memory of Gatsby has read back into itself a promise of what their relation was to become. If so, then the issue should be put somewhat differently: Is Nick's memory of Gatsby a piece of generous fiction-making or is it the product of friendship?

43. Tom and Daisy are both willing to use others to their own purposes, let others take the blame for them when it is convenient, and seem indifferent to the amount of damage their actions and attitudes do to others.

44. As Nick says of Tom in the novel, "I shook hands with him; it seemed silly not to, for I felt suddenly as though I were talking to a child" (181).

45. *Friendship and the Moral Life*, p. 96.

46. Again, I do not mean to preclude the possibility that some follow Jesus without knowing that that is what they are doing. Thus I am not claiming that explicit Christian profession is a necessary condition of fulfilling one's destiny, or that such profession is a guarantee. The New Testament is explicit about the possibility that Christian profession can be for some just another means of fiction-making. Some who call Jesus "Lord" may just be fooling themselves. See Matthew 25, for example.

47. See, for example, the contrast between Robert Nozick's characterization of romantic love as the quest for a "we," ["Love's Bond," in *The Examined Life* (New York: Touchstone, 1989), pp. 68-86] and Simone Weil's emphasis on the notion of distance in friendship in *Waiting for God*.

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