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Stories That Bark for Themselves: The Fall of a Rooster and a Princess from Pride to Repentant Humility as Depicted in *The Book of the Dun Cow* and *The Light Princess*

As pastors, Walter Wangerin Jr. and George MacDonald told stories budding with the truth of humanity's fallenness and Christ's saving sacrifice. Good stories, a descriptor applicable to their novels *The Book of the Dun Cow* and *The Light Princess* respectively, are often fraught with these truths. Wangerin believed that stories invite the reader to join the experience of the characters and "that *story* conveys truth most effectively and profoundly. As he told one interviewer, 'While the intellect must be addressed in communicating Christian truth, it will not be truth for the hearer until the hearer is also touched deep within himself or herself'" (Yancey). Truth within a story can take many forms, anything from the truth of a character to the truth of a situation. And claims of truth within stories, be the truths minute or grand, or the novels in which they are expressed elegantly profound or simple, are strengthened when they can be traced across different stories because it is a universal understanding noticed by and commented on by various authors.

The common profession of Wangerin and MacDonald, the similarity of theme in their novels, and the disparity of story-style by which these truths and themes are expressed, make each text an excellent companion for the other where different particular and minute truths are highlighted to show a more universal one. These several forms of truth are found within both books. The characters in *The Book of the Dun Cow* are vivid and engaging, each animal entirely

distinct from his fellows with flaws and virtues bundled into one. In *The Light Princess*, the curse placed on the princess removed her gravity, making her both physically weightless and constantly afflicted by a “lightness” of understanding which prevents her from seeing “the serious side of anything” and from comprehending her need for the restoration of her own gravity (MacDonald, *Light Princess* 25).

Not only do both protagonists, Chauntecleer The Rooster and the princess, struggle with pride, but their pride and arrogance prevent them from recognizing their own shortcomings or the steadfast strength of their humble companions. Chauntecleer is ignorant in his opinion that the meek of the earth must have a protector, or they will consistently become victims of the evil which would feed on them. The princess’s cursed lack of gravity, which elevates and lightens her mind and emotions above anything of real substance, disables her understanding in every situation for, as Amy Billone writes, “[l]aughing constantly, she fails to acknowledge the existence of evil in the world” (137). In both books, these proud creatures are given humble companions: for Chauntecleer, the Dog Mundo Cani, and for the princess, the prince. If humility (which is found in the mournful Mundo Cani Dog and the prince) is present, it naturally begins to chip away at the pride of others. Whether the proud ultimately come to humility is determined by their decision to either admit their weaknesses or remain in denial about their situation.

These stories invite the reader to join the host of characters in both their failures and growth and are inherently imbued with the story of Christ:

[h]ow much is born in a story. What Mercy of God? What a collection of love and relationships all the way back, generation upon generation, to the beginning of time. [...]

[Story is] an invitation. It’s an invitation for people to enter into this experience. To

experience something of the grand sequence of confession and forgiveness. (Wangerin, “The Story is an Invitation”)

This “sequence of confession and forgiveness” is tangibly experienced in both books because of the humility and sacrificial actions of Mundo Cani and the prince. Only the humble can bear the weight of final sacrifice through which the proud are humbled after being brought to see their own ignorance and weakness. Stories interwoven with truth are the best way to show and experience this transformation.

If a story is truthful, if it refuses to look away from or water-down reality, it not only naturally invites the reader into its world, but also speaks for itself. It does not require additional commentary to explain or reveal the meaning and significance of the work. As MacDonald said about his stories: “To ask me to explain [my stories], is to say, ‘Roses! Boil them, or we won’t have them!’ My tales may not be roses but I will not boil them. So long as I think my dog can bark, I will not sit up to bark for him” (MacDonald, “The Fantastic Imagination”). In this essay, I am by no means attempting to “sit up and bark” for these stories. But I have experienced both stories and have seen a common truth between them: the stoic humble companion who, through his ultimate sacrifice, rescues those he loves from both their own weakness and the great threat of encroaching evil.

*

The Book of the Dun Cow begins when Mundo Cani Dog arrives at The Coop of Chauntecleer The Rooster and begins to weep, waking the entire Coop and irritating Chauntecleer. Chauntecleer, his hens, Mundo Cani Dog, and other animals such as John Wesley Weasel, Lord Russell the Fox of Good Sense, The Wee Widow Mouse, and the crimson-throated hen, Pertelote are all unknowing gatekeepers of a great and terrible evil beneath the earth: Wyrn.

As Mundo Cani becomes a member of Chauntecleer's land and the animals live their lives, Wyrn begins to stir. His spawn, Cockatrice the serpent-rooster, overtakes a far-away land under the protection of the feeble and aging rooster Senex. Evil begins to spread rapidly as Cockatrice forces Senex's hens to lay eggs for him, which hatch into Basilisks. As Cockatrice, his Basilisks, and the voice of Wyrn spread across the land, Chauntecleer must prepare his homely animals for battle. He gathers all the animals, fortifies The Coop, and fights against the Basilisks as they slither from the swelling and expanding river beside the land. During the second battle, Chauntecleer flies into the sky, fighting and then killing the Cockatrice before he plummets to the ground and is gravely injured. After recovering slightly in the hospital, Chauntecleer watches as a chasm opens in the earth where Wyrn gloats victory and as Mundo Cani Dog runs with a cow's horn in his mouth, jumps into the chasm and kills Wyrn.

The Light Princess begins with the birth of the king and queen's daughter, the princess. At her christening, the child's aunt, the Princess Makemnoit, curses her with a lack of gravity. Therefore, the princess lacks any bodily weight and floats everywhere she goes. She also laughs at anything and everything, for in lacking all forms of gravity she is incapable of understanding anything with weight. The only remedy to her curse, however temporary, is the lake beside the castle, which restores her gravity in both body and mind whenever she swims in it. It gives her such relief that she never desires to leave the lake and spends as much time as she can in it. During one of her swims, a prince from a distant land sees her and falls in love with her. Eventually, Princess Makemnoit discovers that the lake is a temporary remedy for the princess and attaches a serpent to the ceiling of the cave underneath the lake. The serpent sucks the lake dry, and as the water steadily lowers, the princess steadily grows sick. However, words inscribed on a plaque at the bottom of the shrinking lake informs the king that if someone willingly

plugged the hole of the lake with their finger and were faithful to keep their finger firmly fitted in the hole until they drowned, the lake would be forever restored. The prince voluntarily submits to these instructions and when the actions are completed, the princess weeps over him, and he is revived. Her gravity is restored, and the two marry and live happily ever after.

1. Outsiders

It is significant that in both *The Book of the Dun Cow* and *The Light Princess* the characters who knowingly sacrifice their lives for the preservation of others and the destruction of evil are each outsiders to the communities they save. Being an outsider gives Mundo Cani Dog (from *The Book of the Dun Cow*) and the prince (from *The Light Princess*) a clear perception of the characters in each community and a humble and transparent understanding of their own selves in relation to the established community. They each immediately begin interacting humbly with those they will soon save which undermines the ingrained superiority of Chauntecleer and the princess. This begins to carve a path by which Chauntecleer and the princess might be unburdened from their miscomprehension of the stability of their strength and realize that any strength they possess is enfeebled and belittled by their proud natures.

When Mundo Cani Dog began wailing outside of Lord Chauntecleer's Coop about the miserable burden of a nose resting between his eyes and howled "Maroooooned" in such a capacity that every living creature inside The Coop was awakened from their sleep, he was a lonesome outsider approaching an established community in humility (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 5). After Chauntecleer woke from his sacred slumber to the laments of a mournful Mundo Cani, he flew out of The Coop in a fury and perched on his chest and began pecking at his nose while Mundo Cani wept his thanks to Chauntecleer (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 9). Chauntecleer's notions of

lordship broke because Mundo Cani did not quake at the authority of his anger (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 7). Mundo Cani's thankful response (as opposed to a fearful one) caused Chauntecleer to question his ideas of grand authority without causing him to feel that his role as Lord of The Coop was in jeopardy. Mundo Cani's emotional thanks to and admiration of Chauntecleer immediately shows that he understands that Chauntecleer is an authority figure to whom he is willing to submit. For Chauntecleer, the combination of fearlessness and joyful submission is starkly contrasted against his experiences with his hens who fear him. Mundo Cani's interaction with Chauntecleer simultaneously reinforces Chauntecleer's lordship and questions the growing pseudo-divinity of his station.

This encounter between Mundo Cani and Chauntecleer shows several things about the coming friendship between the humble outsider and the proud lord. First, that Mundo Cani becomes a member of Chauntecleer's land and obeys his commands through his own decision and desire shows his willing and unprompted submission. Second, that Chauntecleer is entirely confused by Mundo Cani's behavior, immediately causing him to take particular notice of Mundo Cani and be affected by his humility. Finally, Chauntecleer's ongoing inability to easily rid himself of the "remarkable rag" either physically or from his mind shows the lasting impact of Mundo Cani's humility (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 9). Even in submission, Mundo Cani's humility naturally challenges Chauntecleer's proud nature and begins to influence his mind and heart.

Although not yet firmly established, a companionship is sparked between Mundo Cani and Chauntecleer when Mundo Cani weeps outside The Coop and Chauntecleer confronts him in rage. Mundo Cani is wholeheartedly willing to serve and admire Chauntecleer, already enamored by the beauty of Chauntecleer's feathers, the loveliness of his voice, and the smallness of his beak. By the nature of being an outsider arriving at The Coop of his own volition, Mundo Cani

places himself under the lordship of Chauntecleer, admiring him and giving him the respect that is owed a leader, but Mundo Cani's reaction to Chauntecleer's authority determines their relationship. Mundo Cani is not frightened by Chauntecleer's anger at being woken: "Not his most piercing, his most murderous crow could move this remarkable rag. Not the words of his anger could send the Dog away. Chauntecleer shuddered with rage" (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 9). Therefore, Mundo Cani does not submit to Chauntecleer out of fear, but out of genuine desire, admiration, and servitude. This sets Chauntecleer's relationship with Mundo Cani apart from his relationship with the other animals because, while the hens are under his leadership, they fear his anger. Additionally, because Mundo Cani is an outsider he is not wholly subservient to Chauntecleer. This is seen in the many times Chauntecleer relies on Mundo Cani as a companion to assist him in leading or rescuing vulnerable animals. When the Wee Widow Mouse approaches Chauntecleer in a muddy field, imploring him to rescue her children from the wild river, Chauntecleer requires Mundo Cani's incredible speed to get him to the river in time to save the little mice (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 54). Mundo Cani's unwavering voluntary faithfulness to Chauntecleer establishes a camaraderie and deep trust between the two. Chauntecleer's trust in Mundo Cani and his tendency to turn to him for help is again observed when his three children, One Pin, Five Pin and Ten Pin, are killed alongside their nurse, Beryl, and Chauntecleer, with his wife Pertelote by his side, find them lying on the ground far away from The Coop. Chauntecleer asks Lord Russell to carry Beryl on his back to The Coop, and then he "spread his wings and gathered his children together beneath them. He raised his head and held his children to his breast. 'Mundo Cani Dog.' His voice was as thin as a reed. 'Please look after the Beautiful Pertelote, and bring her'" (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 122). Here, Chauntecleer looks to Mundo Cani to care for his wife as he carries his murdered children back to his Coop. This shows his

immense trust in Mundo Cani. In the moment of Chauntecleer's most profound grief, he relies on Mundo Cani's compassionate and trustworthy character and demonstrates that out of all the animals, the mournful, steadfast Mundo Cani is Chauntecleer's companion and support.

The status of being an outsider to a community does not instantaneously imbue the outsider with humility. Proud Chauntecleer was also once an outsider to this Coop, and while he was initially humbled when God required him to put The Coop into order, he quickly regained his natural pride. Long before Mundo Cani arrived at his door, Chauntecleer lived in a far-off land with his mother. While he lived with her, she was tormented by a wolf who took advantage of her house and food. Chauntecleer, angry that his mother would not stand up to the wolf and angrier still that she said it was God's will for her life to be this way, decided that he would have to fight the wolf himself. Determined to show strength where his mother was weak, he strapped two spikes, named Slasher and Gaff, to his heels and attacked the wolf in the middle of the night. He defeated the wolf, but his mother was killed in the process. Chauntecleer had no remorse, and worse still he laughed at God and scoffed at the animals who said he should take responsibility for his mother's death. He planned to kill each of the leaders of the land one by one, but God intervened and showed himself to Chauntecleer, telling Chauntecleer to obey Him and become Lord of a ramshackle Coop (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 141-44).

Chauntecleer's state of being an outsider is therefore different from Mundo Cani's because Chauntecleer was sent by God to The Coop for the restoration of both The Coop and himself to create order and lead the animals through each day. He was commanded to become an integral part of a community that was made new through the presence of God in him; whereas, Mundo Cani arrived humbly without any explanation as to why he was there. Mundo Cani's covert purpose is not revealed to the reader or most of the animals, only the Dun Cow and, at the

end of the book, Pertelote who knew beforehand of Mundo Cani's final sacrifice. As seen many times in other stories, authority given to rule (in Chauntecleer's case by God) quickly transitions from a position of servitude in leadership to the idea of proper superiority over the ruled. Mundo Cani, however, arrives and submits to the governing authorities of the land, for his purpose is not to rule, but to rescue and save the land through his death. The foreign savior who submits to the authority of the one who believes himself to be rightly superior is drawn from Wangerin's Christian beliefs and possibly from other historical accounts and pieces of literature.

As an outsider, Mundo Cani takes his place as a true leader who dies for his people. The lowly Mundo Cani's position as an outsider makes his final sacrifice a surprise to Chauntecleer, and it shows the disparity between Chauntecleer's and Mundo Cani's perspectives. Chauntecleer was focused on leading his Coop, but Mundo Cani's purpose was to come and sacrifice himself to defeat evil. Later, when the great Wurm (who was put into the earth by God) begins to move and Cockatrice, a serpent-rooster, overtakes a coop to the north of Chauntecleer's land and Chauntecleer and his animals are required to prepare for war against the evil that continues to grow, the Dun Cow quietly speaks to Mundo Cani about what must be done. Mundo Cani will be the one to bury Wurm in the earth, and Mundo Cani must give his life to accomplish it. Mundo Cani's position as an outsider (and his general personality) also allows him to have a relationship with Chauntecleer which is wholly different from the other animals. Mundo Cani is a new presence over whom Chauntecleer cannot have authority until Mundo Cani himself decides to let him (which, of course he does instantly). Because of this, a peculiar mutual respect begins to form which prepares Chauntecleer's attitude and ego for humbling through failure, grief, and guilt.

The prince in *The Light Princess* is also an outsider to the established community of the king, queen, princess, and servants. When he finds the princess after wandering the lands looking for the daughter of a queen to marry, she is alone in the lake beside the castle enjoying the physical and emotional gravity the lake gives her. When the princess was born, the king neglected to invite his own sister, Princess Makemnoit (the only character given a proper name), to the christening. In her anger, Princess Makemnoit cursed the child to live life without any gravity. Thus, the princess spent her day floating around the castle and laughing at anything and everything, whether it be the devastating news of an awful tragedy or a scolding from her parents. She “laughed immoderately” and “could never be brought to see the serious side of anything” (MacDonald, *Light Princess* 25). Swimming in the lake was the only remedy that could be found for the princess’ curse. The prince fell in love with her quickly, but she was not able to fall in love with him for that would require a great deal of gravity.

No one other than an outsider could have fallen in love with the princess because her lack of gravity caused her interactions with those of the court to center around keeping her from being blown by the wind across the countryside. Attendants and courtiers regularly tended to the princess during the daytime and would not have allowed any intermingling to occur. Because the prince was an outsider and met the princess while she was swimming in the lake, he saw her first as she should be and not in her cursed and weightless state (MacDonald, *Light Princess* 51). Anyone from the castle or nearby would not have been able to instantly see her as beautiful the way the prince could, for her condition of weightlessness was well known, and it would have prevented them from seeing any of her beauty. Thus, it was because the prince was an outsider that allowed him to fall in love with the princess and thereby save her from her curse and save the land from destruction. He is able to work outside the normal relations between the princess

and those of the castle which gives him the space to fall in love with her (a quality that immediately contradicts her inherent selfishness) and show her what she lacks. If he had not been an outsider, love would not likely have been possible, and the princess would never have been humbled through the prince's love and sacrifice.

Because Mundo Cani and the prince are outsiders to the lands and communities they enter, they are free of haughty pride within the community, as a foreigner entering a community requires a certain level of humility. This posture gives them clear sight of the persons and situations they encounter which equips them to understand the dire circumstances they face and have the strength to lay themselves down for the flourishing of others. The character of the modest outsider directly contradicts and discreetly challenges the pride of Chauntecleer and the princess (around whom their communities revolve) and prepares them for eventual humbling. But true humbling cannot occur until Chauntecleer and the princess understand how their pride prevents them from understanding their own weakness and the goodness of humility and meekness. Then, understanding their unawareness and witnessing the sacrifice of others allows them to come to a place of repentance and genuineness.

2. The Ignorance of the Proud

The protagonists of both books, Chauntecleer The Rooster and the princess, are ignorant of the pervasive power of evil, do not comprehend the extent of evil and the means by which it will be defeated, or the strength contained within a humble spirit. Their own self-centered perspectives disable them from fully understanding the unbreakable strength of those who are significantly meeker than themselves. Chauntecleer has a clearer view of the immanent evil at hand than most of the animals do, but he is still ignorant in his understanding of the way in which evil can be conquered. His views of good and evil are grand and valiant, and he does not

consider the difference between heroic strength, which draws attention to the hero, and sacrificial strength, which draws attention to those whom the hero saves. Heroic strength is founded on the power of the hero while sacrificial strength is founded on the undeserved gift of the hero. Mundo Cani, however, has nothing but himself to offer. While running to kill Wyrms and sacrifice himself in the process, Mundo Cani cries, “Wyrms, look at me! Wyrms, see me! A Dog! A Dog! A nothing to look upon! [...] Oh Wyrms! Great Wyrms – afraid to look at a nothing, a nose, a flea! Fears to see the speck that calls him out! Such evil, to split the earth, but from a Dog – a Dog to hide!” (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 226-27). Mundo Cani’s only strength (prior to his valorous sacrifice) is his speed. Chauntecleer cannot understand that meekness and humility can overcome evil. When his dear children, One Pin, Five Pin and Ten Pin, are killed by Basilisks, Chauntecleer knows that, inevitably, his Coop and surrounding animals will become intimately familiar with death (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 120). His children’s deaths show the brutality of the enemy and announces that it is coming to infiltrate The Coop and to kill the defenseless innocent and bravehearted alike. This warning and stark grief put Chauntecleer into a defensive frame of mind, fueling his lord-and-protector role which further distances him from understanding the power and influence of a sacrificial act. In his determination to protect his land and defeat the enemy, he turns to ideals of strength, ignorant of the strength of small animals and is “gravely worried over the weakness of his army” (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 172).

Because of Chauntecleer’s God-given position as Lord of The Coop and his inheritance of the natural pride of roosters, he has difficulty realizing and accepting that a lowly creature is destined to surrender his life to defeat the evil which he himself is too weak to conquer. His experience with humble animals supports his understanding that lowliness and humility is weakness, and so he is unable to view them as virtuous. The ending revelation that Mundo Cani,

the lowly and humble, has a more steadfast strength than Chauntecleer and is able to sacrifice his life for the deliverance of others is all the richer and more validated by two specific incidents. These incidents set the precedent that humble animals have a more realistic and grounded outlook, freeing them from the possibility of disillusionment about the outcome. The comparison between the strength of the great versus that of the meek is emphasized in *The Book of the Dun Cow* through several disparate characters: Wyrms are great in comparison to the animals, the Weasels are great in battle compared to the Rabbits, and Chauntecleer is great compared to *Mundo Cani*. In the estimation of each animal in relation to the others, those who are meek are consistently more honorable and can bear a weight that would be thought to overwhelm their strength.

During the first battle against Cockatrice's wretched Basilisk children, each animal fights in a different way:

The Otters fought together. The Weasels fought, each one of them, alone. But the Weasels fought! Most furious and deadly and courageous of all. [...] The Rabbits were there: That alone was their courage. They died easily under the serpents' bite, legs jerking as they did. (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 186)

While the rabbits are easily overtaken by the basilisks, their courage to be present in the battle shows that they are willing to face an evil they are not physically equal to. They have no grand notions of fighting as the Weasels do, but in their humble Rabbit strength they face their deaths head on, standing alongside their companions in battle. Not all small creatures have the strength to fight and face their deaths like the Rabbits do, and not all the small animals are forces against evil (except as being living Keepers of Wyrms); some are victims of the Basilisks and of war. The Wee Widow Mouse is killed in her home, and John Wesley Weasel mourns her death: "John

Wesley came out of the hole again, tenderly bearing the body of the Wee Widow Mouse. He walked to The Coop door, and he stood there, crying [...] ‘Chauntecleer, this is what they are doing. What does Mice do? Mice cleans in the spring. Mice wears aprons and sweeps. But the damned – !’” (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 188). And Pertelote deeply mourns the death of Nimbus the Deer, saying to Chauntecleer, “You choose. Fox, Weasel, Chauntecleer, Lord and Rooster – you all of you choose; and I am born to endure. But who is Nimbus? Oh, God, why does he have to die?” (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 198). Choice in battle seems to be the distinction between humble victims and humble warriors. Chauntecleer has seen the death of the humble, both those who sacrifice themselves in the battle against evil and those who are innocent victims of evil, and has seen the death his mother who, when he was a younger rooster, would not oppose the wolf who used her for his own prosperity. These experiences paired with his natural rooster pride (an inheritance from a long line of strutting, crowing roosters) and his position as Lord of The Coop cause his incomprehension of the true strength of valorous humility, and he therefore unduly relies on his own strength to rescue his Coop and animals. He cannot understand the use and purpose of the meek. He sees the sacrifice of the little animals, but he does not see their impact, nor does he know that simply their presence is the force that once kept Wyrms at bay. He views himself as the savior; he had been their savior before when “he found the northern land in sad shambles” and presumes that he will continue to be their leader and strength (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 143).

While the animals’ general ignorance about the evil within the earth dissolves quickly when they see Cockatrice’s Basilisks invading their land, Chauntecleer’s ignorance concerning the magnitude of the evil and whether might or humility will ultimately defeat the evil is not fully dismantled until the end of the story. Chauntecleer recognizes the seriousness of the

advancing evil when his children are killed by Basilisks. The murder of his children is another instance where evil victimizes the humble. But this is not because of their youthful ignorance entirely; Lord Russell the Fox of Good Sense (ironically named) neglects his duties in caring for the children, and so it is the neglect of Lord Russell that leaves the Pins to their doom. This event adds to Chauntecleer's belief that humble creatures always need the protection of the larger, stronger animal which in turn adds to his inability to understand the strength of the humble or Mundo Cani's final sacrifice.

In his fight against Cockatrice, Chauntecleer realizes that brute strength will not defeat evil when he is nearly killed in their head-on battle. But Cockatrice is not the prime enemy against whom they are fighting, it is Wurm, the great and evil monster within the earth who laughs at Chauntecleer when he is nearly broken from his fight with Cockatrice: “‘Chauntecleer! Chauntecleer!’ cried the voice from underneath the ground. ‘The last sin is the worst. How vain to kill the Cockatrice. But how much more contemptable to glory in an empty thing! Chauntecleer! *I am Wurm!*’” (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 209). Chauntecleer, barely mastering Cockatrice, knows he does not have enough strength or energy to defeat Wurm. Chauntecleer's loss of ignorance ends in despair because his understanding of how evil is to be defeated is centered around himself – he is the protector of his Coop, and he is the one whom God sent to restore it and keep it in order. Now, a great evil is about to decimate his land and murder his animals. What is Chauntecleer's purpose if not to protect his land and his animals? Certainly, it should not be overlooked that while Chauntecleer cannot understand the strength in humility, the defeat of evil cannot be done without him. His role is very important, and the animals would run into confusion without him, and they would be too fearful to know how to respond to oncoming war. He is not completely ignorant to the ways of evil and the forces his animals and he would be

required to face: he recognizes the impending danger when the Basilisks begin slithering into his land, killing his children and his hens. But in spite of this, he does not know the might and hatred of Wyrms and does not know or see his own weakness in comparison to Wyrms' evil power.

After Chauntecleer kills Cockatrice in a bloody battle in the sky (nearly dying himself) and learns that Cockatrice is only the son of Wyrms, the more formidable foe, his belief that his power, valiance, and determination will overcome evil is shattered. He no longer has any strength to stand against Wyrms. While he is not defeated physically and has not lost his life during the battle with Cockatrice, "he'd lost something infinitely more dear. He had lost hope. And with it went the Rooster's faith. And without faith he no longer had a sense of the truth" (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 210). This loss of faith and truth for Chauntecleer comes because he places all of his hope in his own ability to conquer Cockatrice, not realizing that Wyrms is the true foreboding enemy. Because his hope is crushed when his strength is broken (and he is forced to see the meagerness of it) he turns to something equally dangerous: instead of putting hope in that which cannot rescue him or his animals, he abandons hope altogether. He forsakes his animals, his wife, and Mundo Cani to their doom, and pities himself. It is then that "[f]or Chauntecleer one thing and one thing only held any meaning now: his own feelings. All of the rest was mere shadow – smiling, mocking shadow" (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 210). He maintains his ingrained pride, even in the humblest position he has ever been in. Broken in body and resting in a hospital, he wakes to cloth covering his face, and he believes that they left him for dead and thinks, "'Well, they rot!' he decided with monumental dignity. 'I can do without them,' he proclaimed to his soul. 'Let them go their selfish ways. Chauntecleer the Rooster was ever the noblest bird of them all!' and speaking that way in his heart, Chauntecleer composed himself for an eternity of lonely suffering" (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 211). His selfishness permeates every act;

it not only misleads him concerning his own strength, but also turns his affections toward himself, spurning his wife Pertelote and his comrade Mundo Cani. His pride prevents him from admitting near-defeat and accepting care and compassion from his wife and closest friend.

Not only has Chauntecleer's strength been broken, his notions of the authority of his lordship also come into question, for he becomes exceedingly jealous that the Dun Cow gave information to Mundo Cani instead of speaking to the Lord of The Coop (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 139). He believes that the leader should be spoken to – that the leader should be trusted with information. Chauntecleer feels that his authority has been undermined, that his power and command is in danger, and that his ego has been significantly bruised. For, in witnessing the Dun Cow speak to Mundo Cani, Chauntecleer becomes suspicious that something other than his battle-plan is being formulated to which he is not privy. Because Chauntecleer wants to be the sole commander, he holds this incident against Mundo Cani which turns into resentment when Chauntecleer is broken bodily. Chauntecleer's valiant spirit and majestic nature is what allows him to be great and dignified, but also weakens him to lose all hope quickly. If he fails at overcoming Wurm (barely escaping the clutches of Cockatrice), then all the animals are lost to doom and destruction.

As the Dun Cow says to Chauntecleer in their one interaction, three things would be needed for the war against Wurm and his spreading evil, the last of which was “a Dog with no illusion” (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 175), and Mundo Cani is certainly free from illusion. But Chauntecleer is plagued by illusion: pride misinforms those whom it holds in its grip, whispering lies about strengths, plans going the way they intend, and instilling hopes of future praise or self-assurance. Chauntecleer's disillusionment is even more profound and ingrained through the waking dreams he experiences. These dreams are the devilish devices of Wurm, who invades

Chauntecleer's mind and makes him fearful and weak. They attach to his pride. Wrym knows how to play his cards correctly, and so he appeals to Chauntecleer's pride, just as he appeals to Senex, the old, decrepit rooster who desperately desires a son to continue his name, and so Senex gives himself over to Wrym and Cockatrice is born through him, a grotesque and unnatural son. Pride breeds weakness because it prevents its host from understanding the reality of a situation.

The princess's absence of gravity causes her to be proud because she is unable to understand her true condition. The princess' ignorance expresses itself in obliviousness to any news or emotion containing heartiness for

[w]hen she was told, for the sake of experiment, that General Clanrunfort was cut to pieces with all his troops, she laughed; when she heard that the enemy was on his way to besiege her papa's capital, she laughed hugely; but when she was told that the city would certainly be abandoned to the mercy of the enemy's soldiery – why, then she laughed immoderately. She never could be brought to see the serious side of anything.

(MacDonald, *Light Princess* 24-25)

Because she is cursed at christening to live forevermore completely resistant to gravity, she is ignorant of the griefs and joys of others and cannot see her own need for permanent gravity. The lake beside the castle gives her sole relief from her curse, and she “loved this lake more than father or mother. The root of this preference no doubt, although the princess did not recognize it as such, was, that the moment she got into it, she recovered the natural right of which she had been so wickedly deprived – namely, gravity” (MacDonald, *Light Princess* 40). Although she cannot understand that she has been robbed of her gravity (the lack of gravity prevents her from comprehending the cause of her desire to be in the lake) she does desire to feel the force of gravity—which she experiences in the lake. Her weightless mind and weightless body only have

the capacity to desire, to long for a feeling that gives her joy. She does not know that there is something deeply lacking within her, because while she is in the lake, she is content. But the lake's temporary remedy is not a sustainable remedy for she is not able to fall in love with the prince, longing only for the lake. She does not understand that the lake only gives her a taste of what she could have; it does not actually replace her gravity because the moment she exits the water she loses it and returns to her cursed state. The prince understands this through witnessing her both in and out of the lake and says to himself, "If I marry her, I see no help for it: we must turn into merman and mermaid, and go out to sea at once" (MacDonald, *Light Princess* 70). She is almost in love with the lake because it is the place that she can be alone, but she should desire to regain her own gravity.

Her lack of gravity makes it impossible for her to understand or value beautiful things like true relationships and love. While the prince falls in love with her almost instantly, she cannot even comprehend the idea of love for another person. The prince quickly learns of her weightless body and inability to understand anything of substance when she is not in the lake, for he discovered that

while in the water the princess was very like other people. And besides this, she was not so forward in her questions or pert in her replies at sea as on shore. Neither did she laugh so much; and when she did laugh, it was more gently. She seemed altogether more modest and maidenly in the water than out of it. But when the prince, who had really fallen in love when he fell in the lake, began to talk to her about love, she always turned her head towards him and laughed. After a while she began to look puzzled as if she were trying to understand what he meant, but could not. (Macdonald, *Light Princess* 69-70)

She also is incapable of recognizing the significance of the disappearing water, which begins to drain when the serpent sucks it from the roof of the cave directly underneath the lake. She—or the rest of the castle’s inhabitants as well as the prince—do not know that the disappearance of the lake bodes ill for not only the princess’ happiness and health, but also for the lives of all the people throughout the land; their lives depend on this quickly disappearing water. This is seen because the king and queen are concerned for their daughter’s draining health, and the king sends out a message, pleading for someone to sacrifice themselves for his daughter, but neither parent is aware that the water from the entire land is draining or that lives are in peril because of this. The princess cannot understand goodness, beauty, danger, or grief because of her weightlessness.

The princess is uncomprehending because she only understands what she wants, she does not know why she wants it or that the fact that she wants it reveals that which she lacks. She cares only for gratification, and thus, similarly to Chauntecleer, is completely self-centered. In fact, she cannot desire much more than moment-to-moment gratification because her lack of gravity prevents her from truly understanding any situation’s inherent weight or meaning. Therefore, in her eyes (and the king’s and queen’s), the prince’s sacrifice is a simple and considerate deed. Even the title of the chapter, “You are very kind,” suggests that no one, especially the princess, understands the weight of the prince’s sacrifice. For the king and queen, their misunderstanding is attributable to the commonly seen nonchalance of fairy-tale characters when they are presented with a dreadful act. The princess’s uncaring nature about the coming death of the prince is entirely grounded in her weightless state because once she is released from the curse, she mourns the prince’s near-death and rejoices at his resuscitation.

The effectiveness of the meek against evil, thankfully, does not depend upon understanding from the onlookers. In the same way that the prince’s sacrifice could not be

watered-down through the incomprehension of the royal family, the power of the meek (the Keepers) against the raving evil inside the earth does not depend upon their understanding of their role or station. The most grandiose example of the meek possessing a deeper strength than that of the great occurs in chapter four of *The Book of the Dun Cow*, “A cosmography, in which Wyrms is described, and one or two things about him.” The Lord placed the many animals of the lands on the earth and their lives were “the last protection against an almighty evil which, should it pass them, would burst bloody into the universe and smash into chaos and sorrow everything that had been made both orderly and good” (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 23). This monster, Wyrms in name and form, is entirely unknown to the small animals on the surface, and they are not aware of their position as “Keepers” of him, for “very few of them recognized the full importance of their being, and of their being *there*; and that ignorance endangered terribly the good fulfilment of their purpose. But so God let it be; he did not choose to force knowledge upon the animals” (22-23). Their smallness and the inherently mundane nature of their lives add to the reason they are ignorant of Wyrms. This ignorance of his existence (and their role in keeping him locked in the earth) adds to the truth and believability that simply their presence imprisons him. If they had been aware of him, they might have attempted to actively keep him within the earth which would not have shown the effectiveness of their simple existence as “Keepers” of Wyrms.

The incomprehension of both Chauntecleer and the princess is caused by their own pride (in the princess’s case, the pride and lack of gravity with which she is cursed). Their incomprehension prevents them from recognizing their weaknesses, understanding the sacrifice by the humble on their behalf, and accepting that a true character (one that does not rise above its own capacity in pompousness) is more steadfast and stable than a vainglorious character. Their misunderstanding about these things contrasts directly with Mundo Cani’s and the prince’s

foreknowledge of their own deaths. Pride prevents clear vision, but humility allows the meek to understand and sacrifice when the time comes.

3. Foreknowledge of Death

In these two books, the outsiders of each community purposefully and thoughtfully lay down their own lives to save others. Foreknowledge of death shows that the only way to completely destroy evil is through their innocent, humble, and willing death.

Both Mundo Cani and the prince are given foreknowledge of their death. Mundo Cani tells the beautiful Pertelote, Chauntecleer's wife, that the last thing to do in the battle against the great evil corrupting their land is to give himself as a living weapon which he fulfills by leaping into the newly opened gaping chasm of the earth to kill and bury Wurm (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 238). It can be safely assumed that Mundo Cani is given foreknowledge of his death by the gentle and quiet Dun Cow during one of their several conversations. Because Mundo Cani knows of his death well before it happens, he has time to contemplate his commitment to sacrificing himself and could have easily abandoned his sacrificial role. But even in his ample time of contemplation, he chooses to remain steadfast in the task set before him which shows the valiant nature of his humility.

When the evil Princess Makemnoit (who cursed the princess as an infant by removing her gravity) attaches a serpent to the ceiling of the cave underneath the lake so that it will suck the water from the lake, the princess' health begins to decline because she becomes dependent upon the water and the gravity it gives her. To save his daughter, the king sends out a message asking for someone to willingly sacrifice themselves by plugging the hole at the bottom of the lake, allowing the water to refill the lake, drowning them in the process. This deed would satisfy the inscription written on the metal plate laying at the bottom of the lake. The prince hears of what

the king has asked and, after some contemplation, decides that he must give his life over so that the princess will be spared hers. Mundo Cani and the prince's meekness and diligence in carrying out the destruction of the near and virulent evil solidifies their humility because they both have foreknowledge of their deaths and make the purposeful decision to sacrifice themselves to destroy the advancing evil and save those they love. Later, the way others react to the deaths of Mundo Cani and the prince shows the significance of foreknowledge of death. The king is surprised that the prince is willing to sacrifice himself because no one else had been willing to do so.

It might be thought that Chauntecleer also had foreknowledge of his possible death, for before he challenges and fights Cockatrice, Pertelote cries, believing that he will die in battle, and she will be left to endure. However, Pertelote's worries cannot be considered foreknowledge of death. After the first battle of The Coop against the Basilisks, Chauntecleer prepares to fight Cockatrice. Pertelote, in agony, says several times that he will die in the fight, and she will be left alone. Bitter and grieving, she says, "[y]ou will die, and then what? When will I die?" (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 199). Chauntecleer responds saying that "it is not written that I should die" so then, Chauntecleer does not expect death, and going into battle he is not facing the same sacrifice that Mundo Cani does. Here, death is failure and loss. Loss for Pertelote, loss for The Coop, loss for Chauntecleer. His response to Pertelote shows that he intends to escape the battle with his life, if possible. If he loses his life, it will be because of battle, not an intentional and premeditated sacrifice.

Not only is the death of the humble found in Mundo Cani and the prince, but also in several other characters from *The Book of the Dun Cow*. The Rabbits especially are an instance of humble foreknowledge of death. Being Rabbits, they are not equipped for war. But they have

the courage to be present and participate in the fight against evil. Though their death is easy and foreseen, it is meaningful because of their contribution to the good cause against the Basilisks. Surviving war does not determine courage or strength, but unwavering humble resolve paired with the knowledge of oncoming death displays deeply rooted courage. The Rabbits, understanding that they would die, did not rise above what is right of them to do (that is, participate and stand against oncoming evil) simply for the post-mortem glory of fighting viciously and dying in battle. The Wee Widow Mouse's husband dies in a similar way to the Rabbits. He dies fighting the Basilisks, refusing to run away in fear. The Rabbits and the mouse prepare us for Mundo Cani's sacrifice by giving examples of the small and meek creature standing steadfastly against devastating evil, knowing that they might lose their lives but deciding to fight regardless.

It is significant that Mundo Cani and the prince have foreknowledge of death because it shows that their sacrifice is neither a split-second decision nor an act to acquire glory for themselves. Foreknowledge of death shows that they are truly humble enough to lay down their lives. In both cases, because Mundo Cani and the prince are outsiders, the established communities did not expect them to lay down their lives. It would have been expected that of all the characters, Chauntecleer (as lord and leader of his Coop) and the king (as father and protector of the princess) would sacrifice themselves to save those around them. Chauntecleer did not understand that it is Mundo Cani's destiny, and the king is surprised that the prince came to willingly sacrifice himself. In fact, the king is so surprised (because of his experience with pages and others who refuse to sacrifice themselves for the princess, "not that he was unwilling to sacrifice a subject, but that he was hopeless of finding a man willing to sacrifice himself" (Macdonald, *Light Princess* 84-85)) that he nearly kills the prince before he can offer himself for

the princess's sake. Interrupted in his counting house, "[t]he king was in such a rage that before he could speak he had time to cool, and to reflect that it would be a great waste to kill the only man who was willing to be useful in the present emergency, seeing that in the end the insolent fellow would be as dead as if he had died by his Majesty's own hand" (MacDonald, *Light Princess* 87).

Mundo Cani and the prince are humble enough to lay down their lives without the notion of having an epic battle or figuring that they might have the chance to win. The only way to win is to die. Their death saves the lives of others, so they are willing to pay the price for the good of others. This is especially seen in the prince's internal reasoning through whether he should respond to the king's advertisement about sacrificing for the princess: "[s]he will die if I don't do it, and life would be nothing to me without her; so I shall lose nothing by doing it. And life will be as pleasant to her as ever, for she will soon forget me" (MacDonald, *Light Princess* 85).

Mundo Cani doesn't have any grand notions of killing Wurm to gain honor or recognition and does not have ideas of attaining an esteemed reputation through the epic battle. His role is always service, whereas Chauntecleer is thinking about war, which is necessary because war is what the animals face. War and battle will soon be upon them and their acceptance of this fact determines whether they listen to Chauntecleer as their commander in chief, or if they refuse believe him like the flock of Wild Turkeys who absentmindedly waddled directly towards the murderous Basilisks.

Foreknowledge of death painfully shows that they are willing to sacrifice themselves even though they are not obligated to do so. The fact that they are outsiders adds to the importance and gravity of their sacrifice, for they submit themselves to die on behalf of someone who is not part of their "responsibility." It cannot be said for either Mundo Cani or the prince

that it is their duty to die for the safety of others or the preservation of land which is not their own. Mundo Cani is in a way adopted into The Coop by Chauntecleer, but he is viewed always as an outsider who came into The Coop. It does not seem like Chauntecleer ever takes Mundo into the company of his “children” as he views the other animals. Mundo Cani is much more of a companion and right-hand man to Chauntecleer. In moments of danger, it is Chauntecleer and Mundo Cani who see and prevent disaster: when the foolish Wild Turkeys waddle blindly to the river teeming with deadly Basilisks, it is Chauntecleer and Mundo Cani alone who see the Basilisks and, under Chauntecleer’s command, Mundo Cani uses his speed to cut off the Turkeys and scare them back to safety (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 151). Mundo Cani dies because he knows it is his destiny and for the love of Chauntecleer. Although this is not outrightly stated, this is because of his servitude to Chauntecleer. He finds Chauntecleer beautiful, and the hens beautiful, and understands that evil will eventually kill them all. Mundo Cani’s admiration of beauty does not prevent him from understanding what to save or how to save it; it propels him to protect the beautiful hens and animals around him by sacrificing his life.

Both Mundo Cani and the prince, the meek and sacrificial servants, choose the difficult but honorable action by sacrificing themselves even when abandoning this duty would have been simple. But they refuse to abandon their mission because of their love for those around them. Mundo Cani literally runs to his death, and the prince holds his finger in the hole as he dies by inches, his death slowly rising to meet his face. The prince waits it out, death eating him up slowly (MacDonald, *Light Princess* 103). Mundo Cani runs with the broken horn in his mouth and jumps down to meet the great Wyrn (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 228). Both running toward Wyrn and remaining steadfast in holding the finger in the hole of the lake shows their determination to save those they love by carrying out their foreknown deaths.

For Mundo Cani and the prince, they know about and have ample time to consider their own deaths and whether they will willingly go through with it. Foreknowledge of their deaths does not force them into sacrificing themselves but instead shows their true humility in considering their death and wholeheartedly sacrificing their lives for the salvation of others. If a proud spirit were to consider sacrificing their life in this way, they would become caught up in plans and thoughts of grand battles and the imagery of a heroic fighter defeating the enemy, and this would have failed. Only humility could understand and bear the full weight of sacrificing oneself for others. Their sacrifice instigates Chauntecleer's and the princess's fall from pride to humility.

4. Falling

Chauntecleer and the princess understand their companion's sacrifice after they fully experience their own insufficiency. This process of comprehending their true personal standing is two-fold for Chauntecleer and the princess: first they must understand what they lack, and second, they must witness someone else sacrificing in a way they are not able and cannot comprehend. Falling physically from a high point to a lower place puts Chauntecleer and the princess on a path to gaining understanding. Chauntecleer, after falling and subsequently recognizing that Mundo Cani made the sacrifice that he should have made as lord and leader of The Coop, is broken in spirit, but his pride does not allow him to admit his grief or shame. His physical fall while fighting Cockatrice marks the beginning of regaining his understanding. Their own selves and their high opinion of their standing among those around them cement a constant veil of incomprehension which can only be torn by the downward plummet from vain self-importance to humility.

For Chauntecleer, he has to fall physically, so the crumbling of his proud spirit can be complete, and he can come to terms with the strength of Mundo Cani's humility and be brought to personally repent his haughtiness. He is utterly broken in his struggle with Cockatrice when they "whirled together to the ground – then hit with such force that they bounded up again, and only stopped rolling at the wall of the camp" (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 207). The act of falling in *The Light Princess* serves a slightly different purpose than in *The Book of the Dun Cow*. The princess is not broken of her self-centered ideology through falling into the lake with the prince. Instead, she is shown clearly that she lacks gravity and through falling and time in the lake she gains the desire to have gravity of her own. Her deep desire to fall into the water with the prince and to remain in the lake for as long as she can gives leverage for the prince to sacrifice himself to save the lake. Thus, through his death she recognizes she lost something of value to her which rips her from her previously constant state of absent gleefulness and places her in humble grief. This fall into emotion is what restores her gravity permanently.

Chauntecleer experiences several humbling events that prepare him for his fight and subsequent fall when battling Cockatrice. First, during his initial encounter with Mundo Cani, Mundo Cani's humility and adoration disarm the power of Chauntecleer's commanding authority. Second, during his speech with the animals before the battle commences, Chauntecleer witnesses the Dun Cow talking with Mundo Cani Dog and is jealous, "in spite of the importance of his high position and the office which must now demand his whole attention, Chauntecleer was piqued: The Dun Cow hadn't spoken to him so much as a single word. What was this attraction to a Dog with a bulbous nose?" (Wangerin 139).

These instances begin to unravel Chauntecleer's pride, and his fall seals his humble state. Chauntecleer forgets his beliefs about the dignity of a rooster choosing against flying: "Wings on

a Rooster, so Chauntecleer thought, were not for flying. They were for doing absolutely nothing with; for it is a mark of superiority when part of the body does nothing at all. But sometimes Chauntecleer forgot his opinions” (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 7). In this instance, however, Chauntecleer does not momentarily forget his opinions on flying. He abandons them, realizing that he will have to fight Cockatrice for the sake of himself and his animals. In this act, we can see that Chauntecleer’s perspective changed since the first night when Mundo Cani howled outside his Coop. His opinion of himself changed from the superior lord of his animals to a strong leader whose purpose is to guide his animals into battle and conquer the evil that threatens their borders and lives – a noble and praiseworthy commander.

His expectations from his animals transforms from believing that they owe him their praise because he is their lord to believing that they owe him their allegiance and unwavering obedience because their only chance to survive an attack from the Basilisks and Cockatrice are under his command. His action of flying and abandoning his previous belief that refraining from using his wings would show he is endowed with dignity and superiority would seem to be an act of humility, but this does not prove he is humbled. He simply trades one act of dignity for another: superior strutting for battling in the air. It is an action of necessity, a realization that his task is to protect his land and protect the animals who are under his leadership. His opinion of the importance of his personhood is not humbled because he maintains his understanding that he is Lord of The Coop, and his duty is to protect his animals. He still maintains his self-sufficient attitude and is not seriously contemplating the possibility of his own death because, in his mind, his life and person protects the animals who would be lost without him.

Falling is a major theme in *The Light Princess* because, until the end, the princess lacks all gravity of weight or emotion, and so she is unable to fall physically or have any grounding for

her emotions, meaning that her emotions are meaningless; even her laughter and joy lack a certain authenticity and she “never smiled” (MacDonald, *Light Princess* 30). The only type of affection she feels for the prince while she still lacks her gravity is solely based on his ability to help her fall into the lake. She loves what he is able to give her: a brief feeling of gravity. And she loves the lake because of what it gives her: a brief feeling of gravity. She wishes to be able to learn how to fall into the water, which shows that she has gained a desire for that which she does not have. However, because she still lacks true emotional gravity she cannot fall in love with the prince. In fact, she does not understand that there is such a thing as love to fall into (MacDonald, *Light Princess* 70). Experiencing the lake and falling with the prince gives her a thirst for full gravity though, and it is a slight nudge in the direction of coming into the knowledge of gravity and what MacDonald calls *Morbidezza*, that is “depending on the possibility of sorrow” (30). For her, whether she realizes it or not, falling is the shadow of what her heart desires and needs. She is not only incognizant of sorrow and true joy but also does not have any understanding of the situations of others. She does not comprehend or care about the prince’s love for her. Falling is the small experience of what will make her whole again; it gives her a breath of fresh air, a first taste at salvation from her curse. Falling is the beginning of being able to see what she lacks, her own weakness, and need for something other than herself.

Falling for Chauntecleer and the princess involves both physical falling from pride and incomprehension to guilt and the unbearable realization of the sacrifice that is made for them. Chauntecleer especially is met with the overwhelming knowledge of his own lack of awareness of his pride, true weakness, and the strength and sacrifice of *Mundo Cani*. Falling into humility from their previously great heights brings them to weeping and repentance, which cements humility and full understanding within their hearts.

5. Weeping

Without falling from their loftiness and weeping about their faults, Chauntecleer and the princess would never have gained clear understanding about what has been accomplished through Mundo Cani and the prince on the behalf of themselves and others. The moment Chauntecleer and the princess are brought to their knees weeping in grief and repentance (because of their own crumbling world and the sacrifice of their humble companions), they abandon selfish thoughts and focus on the actions of the meek. In their moment of weeping, they feel the gravity of the sacrifice of Mundo Cani and the prince and are brought to humility.

Chauntecleer understands the concepts of humility and pride, but only in the sense that he conforms his pride to the good purpose of leading the animals and does not presume to be superior to God. He does not truly understand humility though. Mundo Cani, while not as intellectually intelligent as Chauntecleer, is humility itself. After Chauntecleer is nearly broken in his battle with Cockatrice, Wyrms' evil rooster-serpent, he watches as Mundo Cani, holding the broken horn of the Dun Cow in his mouth, leaps into the chasm of the earth to kill Wyrms (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 228). Witnessing Mundo Cani's fearless and unwavering sacrifice of his life to defeat the evil which nearly destroyed the earth brings Chauntecleer to his knees: he instantly sees the strength of Mundo Cani and that it is more firmly formed than his own. Then he grieves the loss of his companion, his "heart split. He began to gather dust and throw it upon himself. The high, thin wail of grief and guilt rose up from his chest and filled the air around him. 'Oh, my God!' he wept" (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 227). When the earth closes over Mundo Cani along with the great and evil Wyrms, "In heaven the clouds ripped asunder like a veil. And the light of the sun plunged down and filled the earth. And Chauntecleer could see. And Chauntecleer, in a world suddenly silent, suddenly bright, grieved" (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 229).

In the wake of these events, the final word of Chauntecleer brakes from his throat as he lay against Pertelote: “‘Marooned,’ he said,” imitating the first word Mundo Cani wailed outside The Coop – the word that encapsulated sorrow and humility and remorse (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 229).

Chauntecleer has to confess to Pertelote because he is bitter and trying to forget the past, and if this means forgetting Mundo Cani along with everything else, then so be it, for:

ever since the war was done and the earth closed, Chauntecleer had wanted to forget Mundo Cani, because there was guilt in such a memory. The Dog’s good act stood ever in accusation of the Rooster’s sinfulness. Chauntecleer did not like to think of himself as a failure at the final moment, Therefore Chauntecleer did not like to think of Mundo Cani at all. (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 235)

He does not want to remember the pain he has been through – the battle that occurred, the children he has lost, the fight he has lost, the friend who sacrifices instead of him, the terrors he has seen. By killing Cockatrice, Chauntecleer is shown the full capacity of his own strength – which is meager. He begins to fancy himself mighty but is shown to be entirely weak against the first two attacks from the enemy. His strength cannot compare to the strength he needs to truly save and protect his Coop and land. Over time, Chauntecleer forgets what he first said to God when he was sent to The Coop: “‘But I am the least of all your creatures,’ said the Rooster. ‘You are mine,’ said the Lord. ‘Go!’ So mighty, so glorious was the force of that final command that the Rooster both died and got up at once” (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 143). Chauntecleer’s loss of hope and subsequent proud guilt corrupts his mind and the way he views others. He deliberately insults his wife and closest friends, spurning them and accusing them of treason.

What does the act of weeping and repentance do for Chauntecleer? It allows him to face the past and leave behind his selfishness. It restores his hope because it releases what had been eating at his soul: after Pertelote nudges him to confess his thoughts, Chauntecleer says, ““That should have been *me*,’ he said. ‘I should have gone down into the pit, not Mundo Cani. I should have died instead of him” (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 237). His hope is not restored immediately by Mundo Cani’s sacrifice because he could not allow himself to accept the sacrifice. It is not until he understands that Mundo Cani was destined to face the great and terrible Wyrn that Chauntecleer is able to repent and confess his pride and shameful treatment of Mundo Cani: “‘I despised him,’ Chauntecleer said. [...] ‘He was making ready to die for us, and I didn’t understand that. I judged him a traitor. I made his last moments lonely, and I despised him’” (Wangerin, *Dun Cow* 239). Through confession, Chauntecleer exposes his festering sins to Pertelote and to the remembrance of Mundo Cani, which allows his broken spirit to begin healing. His relationship with Pertelote is strengthened and his friendship with Mundo Cani, his ever-faithful companion, is posthumously reconciled because of his honesty and repentance.

For Chauntecleer and the princess to gain understanding, they first must accept and acknowledge that they lacked insight in the first place which is an act of humility. It cannot be outrightly stated that the princess repents, but her actions lend themselves to this assumption. She was not able to weep in any capacity before the prince sacrificed himself but when he dies (or at least nearly dies), her tears prove that she has shed her lightness of heart and self-centered perspective. As the prince lays on the ground of the princess’s room after drowning, the princess and her old nurse do everything they can to resuscitate him, and as the sun rises, he finally opens his eyes and the princess “burst into a passion of tears, and *fell* on the floor. There she lay for an hour, and her tears never ceased. All the pent-up crying of her life was spent now” (MacDonald,

Light Princess 105-6). When the princess's tears begin to flow, so also does the rain pour, restoring the thirsty land and the prince proclaims: "Then we're all happy." And, sobbing, the princess answers, "That we are indeed!" (MacDonald, *Light Princess* 107). The princess acquires a true sense of joy because she is able to understand and experience the weight of sorrow. Weeping and, in a sense, repentance from pride restores the princess's gravity.

It must be understood that the princess's tears and subsequent restoration of gravity do not follow in the popular mantra that "you had the power to heal yourself within you all along." Healing can emanate from within, but it must be sparked by an outside source. The blind cannot give themselves sight, but if they are offered the opportunity to regain sight or are shown what they were blind to by example, they can choose to remain in darkness or humble themselves and accept that which they were previously blind to. Without the prince's dedicated love and attention during their time together in the lake and his ensuing voluntary death, she would never have been driven to weep. The prince's actions alone preserve her life from the disappearing water and obliterate her curse because his goodness, faithfulness and undeserved death directly cause her tears and repentance.

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Walter Wangerin Jr. and George MacDonald sought after truth in their stories. These good novels invite readers into the experiences of Chauntecleer, Mundo Cani, the princess, and the prince as they either struggle with repentance and forgiveness or sacrifice for their fellows. One of the starkest truths of these two stories centers around the strength of meekness and humility in a character. Humility, which is grounded firmly in the truth of one's own strengths and weaknesses, gives the humble a clear understanding of themselves and gives them the bravery and determination to sacrifice themselves for the salvation of others. Wangerin's

explanation of the journey of an author as he writes can also be said of those who read the stories: “‘If I go as a writer,’ he explained, ‘they assume that I’ve gone through all the torments, all the anguish a prophet should go through and, I mean, I’ve suffered. And not only have I suffered, but I’ve survived in order to write, and I’ve come to some sense of hope, because writing is always putting disorder into order’” (Yancey). While Chauntecleer’s and the princess’s fall from haughty arrogance to weeping repentance is painful, the transformation is something that Wangerin and others have seen time and time again.

In response to a story Wangerin wrote in a creative writing class, his teacher praised him by saying, “‘Wangerin can write the eyes out of a turkey at fifty paces’” (Wangerin, “My Beginning”). That teacher was entirely correct, for he meant that Wangerin got “the details absolutely right” and through those pinpoint details, Wangerin shows that “a detail can carry more weight than just ‘this is a piece of the story.’ It becomes an image” (Wangerin, “My Beginning”). These two authors, pastors by profession, wrote careful and truthful stories about Chauntecleer The Rooster and the princess and because of that, we can see clearer ourselves. As Yancey signed off his memorial to his friend, he said, “Rest content, dear Walter. You have given us a well-crafted life. Because you paid attention, so can we.” Barking stories invite listeners, so let us enter into truth-woven stories with eager ears, struggling and flourishing alongside the characters who do the same.

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