

## **Hood Initiation: Jewels of Leadership or Jinns of Temptation**

**By Margie Buttignol & C. T. Patrick Diamond  
(with Little Margie)**

### **PROEM**

#### *(A Poetic Introduction)*

I envision myself standing on the bank of the tenure-stream. Can I make it to the other side without perishing along the way? I wonder if my publication record is yet strong enough to ensure me safe passage to the other side of the stream. Perhaps I will perish in the waters of initiation before I can even begin an academic career...

“How deep is this water?” I wonder. Touching the bottom of the stream with my toes I feel a steep incline begin. I cling to the familiar bank of my doctoral student identity even after I have defended my thesis and been ritually hooded at convocation. Positioned at the bank of the tenure-stream, I imagine my self surrounded by the waters of initiation into Academe. But, as I linger there, memories of another initiation flood into my mind — my entry into the mysterious world of Brownies when I was seven years old...

According to Campbell (1949), we re-live the same experience over and over again in spirals. Is this why

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I have chosen to link my two experiences together? Where will my new spiral take me? (Buttignol, 2000a, pp. 147-148)

### **Spiraling into Academic Leadership**

As depicted in the above excerpt, I have previously described a personal experience of ill-attempted entry into Academe as a tenure-stream professor. This time, using arts-based methods of inquiring into educational leadership, I seek to understand my still unfolding processes of initiation and rites of passage. In viewing my professional development as an educational leader embarked on such a journey, I now wonder what might lie ahead for me.

As in my previous piece of work (Buttignol, 2000a), I use the concept of the rite of passage as part of an analytical framework for understanding my new spiral; this time, a hazardous descent into the Cimmerian-like world of educational leadership in the Academy. Homer depicted the Cimmerians as wandering a darkened landscape “beyond the ocean stream” where the sun never shone (Pope, 1907). This benighted thoughtscape is also described below as resembling certain “mean streets of [contemporary] urban American society” (Gordon, 2000, p. 407). Both images depict regions of what was to me, at the beginning of this journey, the unknown and misty world of leadership in higher education.

Always in search of a better landfall where I can be reunited with my personal self, I now present an arts-based sequel of what has happened to me after my first failed attempt at entering Academe. Here, I describe how I landed into the world of leadership within an Academic administrative structure rather unwittingly and even naively. Through arts-based representations, I describe my rite of transition *from* being a “limited contractual” instructor (now hooded and armed with a Ph. D. degree) in a university-based preservice teacher education program *to* that of becoming a field coordinator in the same program. As in my previous failed tenure-stream account (Buttignol, 2000a), “my rendering of experience as provided in this article may be considered as both a heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990) into self, and an arts-based approach to professional development (Diamond & Mullen, 1999)” (p. 147).

I shape my personal stories and myths through my encounters with my dreams, images, and especially the voice of my childhood creative self. Her name is Little Margie. She writes using a special child-like font called *Four Decibels and Falling*. Patrick, one of my previously designated “helpers” (see Buttignol, 2000a, p. 149), retains his Merlin-like position and anonymity—although he is writing with me here as a present, supportive co-author. Other “helpers” from my original journey are also now on this one. I elaborate their role as benign, protective powers below. I use Campbell’s (1949) hero[ine]’s journey motif to provide my account of threshold passages with explanatory and symbolic structure. I then use arts-based strategies and personal forms (dreams, images, and the figure of Little Margie) to give the account dramatic impact.



*Little Margie's Trashing*, 36" X 24" collage and acrylic on canvas by M. Buttignol, 2000

I next divide this paper into six sections: An inquiry into leadership using heuristic and arts-based approaches to research; Using myths of creation and the hero[ine] as a framework for leadership development; My departure or “call to adventure”; My return or “taking the treasure home” (including my initiation

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along the “road of trials”); The Treasure; and, A letter of advice to each “leader in preparation” (from me, Patrick, and Little Margie). The inquiry question that I continue to examine is twofold: “What is leadership?” and “What kind of a leader can I be?”

### **An Inquiry into Leadership Using Heuristic and Arts-Based Approaches to Research**

I inquired into my encounter with leadership through using heuristic phenomenological (Moustakas, 1990) and arts-based strategies (Diamond & Mullen, 1999). I documented my engagement with the above twofold question through personal writings recorded in my sketchbook from September 1, 1999 until June 31, 2000 (Buttignol, 1994-2002, Volumes 1-9). Here I recorded my personal experiences of leadership as I worked with it and as I observed and spoke with other leaders about it. As well, I documented the development of my perceptions of leadership as prompted through: reading the literature (Bender, 1997; DePree, 1989; DePree, 1992; Diehm, 1992; Fisher & Ury, 1981/1991; Pater; 1988; Rubin, 1997; and Smith, 1975) and watching films (*Spartacus*, *Gladiator*, *Mean Streets*, and *The Star Wars Trilogy*) and television programs (*The West Wing*, *The Sopranos*, and *Hockey Night in Canada*). The leadership experience that is elaborated further here was previously represented through a 36" X 24" collage on canvas (with an accompanying Artist's Statement) that I created for the 2000 Annual Meeting for the American Educational Research Association in New Orleans, Louisiana (Buttignol, 2000b). This pivotal self-image appears on the previous page and is considered again below.

### **Using Myths of Creation and the Hero[ine] as a Framework for Leadership Development**

Creation myths can be found in most of the world's cultures. They are widely acknowledged as also illustrating, by metaphor, the experience of either the beginning of consciousness or the coming to a new level of consciousness through experience (Campbell, 1949). Hero[ine] narratives may be considered to be creation myths on a mini, local scale. As such, they are stories about the task of creation or development within an individual, a gaining of new awareness. I use the term “hero[ine]” to illustrate the value of connecting a personal journey to the development of human personality, character, and educational leadership. I do not use the word “hero[ine]” to valorize the journey — I am not describing someone who is self-centered, selfish, pompous and perfect without shadowy or darker aspects of self. And certainly not my struggling self.

I view my human (in this case my professional) development as a series of spirals through which I experience events over and over throughout my life — but

hopefully with deeper levels of understanding being glimpsed each time. Jung (1956) and Aron (1996) refer to this spiraling process as “individuation.” According to Hall (1977),

In the process of individuation there is no single creative or heroic act, but rather a succession of transformations over a lifetime, each straining and testing the ego anew.... (pp. 147-148)

Rites of passage reveal a classic archetype: The initiate severs connections with the ordinary world (rites of separation); s/he is secluded, in the bush or in a cave, where a body of unique knowledge is transmitted (rites of transition); and if the initiate survives all of the challenges presented, s/he is ceremonially returns to the ordinary world along with changes in status and rights (rites of incorporation) (Malinowski, 1954; Turner, 1969; Moore and Myerhoff, 1977; van Gennep, 1908/1960). Campbell (1949) describes this developmental crossing of successive thresholds as the “monomyth”:

The mythological hero[ine], setting forth from his [or her] commonday hut or castle, is lured, carried away, or else voluntarily proceeds, to the threshold of adventure. There [s/he] encounters a shadow presence that guards the passage. The hero may defeat or reconcile this power and go alive into the kingdom of the dark (brother-battle, dragon battle; offering charm), or be slain by the opponent and descend in death (dismemberment, crucifixion). Beyond the threshold, then, the hero[ine] journeys through a world of unfamiliar yet strangely intimate forces, some of which severely threaten him [or her] (tests), some of which give magical aid ([magical] helpers). When [s/he] arrives at the nadir [or lowest depths] of the mythological round, [s/he] undergoes a supreme ordeal and gains [a] reward. The triumph may be represented as the hero's...expansion of consciousness and therewith of being (illumination, transfiguration, freedom). The final work is that of return. If the powers have blessed the hero, [s/he] now sets forth under their protection (emissary); if not, [s/he] flees and is pursued (transformation flight, obstacle flight). At the return threshold the transcendental powers must remain behind; the hero[ine] re-emerges from the kingdom of dread (return, resurrection). The boon [or reward] that [s/he] brings restores the world (elixir). (pp. 245-246)

If the hero[ine] is able to follow through on the quest, a new release of imagination and creativity results. This energy may be used more narrowly for personal enhancement. However, if the hero[ine] remains faithful to the basic pattern of his or her journey, this creative energy will also be used to benefit others. Jung (1956) connects the challenge or temptation posed by treachery in the hero[ine]'s journey with the development of his or her inner voice and a fuller and more comprehensive consciousness:

That is why...in mythology, the birth of the hero or the symbolic rebirth coincides with sunrise, for the growth of personality is synonymous with an increase in self-consciousness.... The problems of the inner voice are full of pit falls and hidden snares. Treacherous, slippery ground, as dangerous and pathless as life itself once

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one lets go of the railings. But he [sic] who cannot lose his [sic] life, neither shall he [sic] save it. The hero's birth and the heroic life are always threatened. (p. 378)

I believe that individuation involves, above all else, being able to hear my inner voice(s) through all the din of the inner and outer noise(s). I reveal that inner voice later, in the person of Little Margie, my five-year-old self as artist.

### **My Departure or "Call to Adventure"**

I next describe my experiences of working as a new leader by borrowing the image of the "hood." I came to feel that I was working from within the sometimes dark and secluded streets of a mean "hood." Here, in the Academy, as Gordon (1999) warns:

You can be killed and never know where the bullet came from . . . The mean and dangerous streets that I work on are not found in urban centres. My 'hood' is . . . found in institutions of higher learning — the hood I work in is the Academy. . . . [Y]our smile of recognition speaks volumes about the parallels of life within the Academy and life in the mean streets of urban American society. The 'hood' metaphor works because you, rather we — those of us that live in this "academic hood" — are vulnerable as our urban counterparts. The only difference is that the danger is very subtle and the blood and bloodletting is invisible to the naked eye. (p. 407)

To inquire into and to evoke my experience with leadership, I provide a metaphoric account of my entry into that realm in a perhaps not untypical academic "hood." I adapted Norum's (1999) strategy, so that all identifying details and other factors are "changed to protect the guilty and innocent." My work is not meant to exact any kind of revenge. Indeed, revenge is widely acknowledged as "best served cold." Rather, my account has been written to understand and "attack the problems not the people" (Fisher & Ury, 1981/1991). As to the identification of the players, like the painter Veronese at his 1573 hearing before the Inquisition, I too plead that, as an arts-based inquirer, I "take the license which poets and madmen take" (cited in Childs, 1997, p. 2). Like a painter-playwright, I take details garnered from real life but then make each of my characters the amalgam of many observed prototypes. While my treatment is fictional, some lessons may still be drawn. Truer than true. I hope to nurture conversation about ways to keep leaders' inner voices, or personal self and creativity, alive within any of the mean streets or "hoods" where they work. These are not abstract issues in teacher education but human realities embodied in daily and imagined experience.

Jung believed that dreams provide a snapshot of the developing psyche. They and other artful images can be interpreted in the light of the archetypal hero[ine]'s pilgrimage. I can place my dreams along key points of my own spiraling professional journey. A relevant former dream of mine suggested that I was receiving a call to adventure. I was convinced that my leadership position was being challenged. This sense was illuminated by attending to what the dream was telling me.

Here are the details of that disturbing dream that occurred as I pondered my future as leader:

I dreamed of a celebration...it seemed like an anniversary celebration. There was a long narrow table full of flat wrapped gifts that looked like books. The white table cloth was spilling onto the floor. The gifts were wrapped in white parchment-like paper with white raffia tying everything together. As I approached the table I noticed a large brown mass tied to the top of one of the gifts. I gasped! It was a large sea tortoise, cut in half along the shell from head to tail. I saw no blood though. I peeked inside the open shell side and saw the tortoise intact, holding its head and appendages in under the half shell for protection. Further down the table was another half tortoise shell — with another tortoise hiding. (Galveston, Texas, February 19, 2000) (Buttignol, Sketchbook, 1994-2002, Vol. 8)

What was it that this dream image was offering me at that time? How did the dream inform the choices that I needed to make back then? What meaning does this image still hold for me? Clearly, there had been warnings of impending blood letting, and my slowly dawning sense that I was under attack was proving well founded. But did I know when to withdraw? And to where? And how far? In an additional note written under the record of the tortoise dream I had written to my self,

Sacrifice is often a prominent motif in hero[ine] stories. What have I left behind? What lies ahead? Where lies my unique path of professional development? What is this longing? Do I have the courage to engage in the new and the unknown? I feel vulnerable. How can I protect my fragile leader self? (Galveston, Texas, February 19, 2000) (Buttignol, Sketchbook, 1994-2002, Vol. 8)

Campbell (1949), in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, analyzed the pattern of hero[ine] myths and stories from all ages and cultures. I have already described the journey of the hero[ine]. I reconsider it here with elaboration for emphasis. The hero[ine] myths and stories are structured into three parts: (1) The departure or the “call to adventure” (there is a moving away from the home place and the way that things have been; the hero[ine] may be frightened by this call); (2) The initiation or the “road of trials” (the hero[ine] crosses the threshold into adventure by descending into an unknown world, a cave, a pit, or into the wilderness; the hero[ine] may be tempted to turn back for safety; the hero[ine] slays the dragon or finds the treasure at the end of the cave; with this new power the hero[ine] is a new person); (3) The return or “taking the treasure home” (return is not automatic though and it may be refused; before returning a threshold needs to be crossed, with all of its dangers; if the hero[ine] follows through, the return is made and the treasure is brought home to share). I next emphasize the final stage (the return) as this represents my most recent (chronological) experience.

**My Return or “Taking the Treasure Home”**  
*(Including My Initiation along the “Road of Trials”)*

From this vantage point of “my return” I could reflect back upon the other two stages (the departure and the initiation). Standing on the threshold to return home after my leadership journey, I encountered the problem of discernment. I now realized that I had met both protective helpers and wily tempters all along the way. But how could I know which from which? Who were my “mystagogue[s] or guide[s] of souls” (Campbell, 1949, p. 9) who carried my human spirit forward rather than holding it back? Although protective helpers may appear to be off-putting when first encountered, they will consistently help expand our powers and vividly renew our lives. Ultimately even more deceptive are the wily tempters or jinns of temptation who initially pose as appealing to deceive the unwary. Tempters may urge me not to move forward, not to complete the necessary tasks. They may abandon me with incomplete instructions so as to sabotage my chances of success. Tempters may try to convince me to keep the status quo even though I have already taken the first steps on my new journey. Although tempters’ motives may vary and are not for us to judge, growth depends on our willingness to challenge their power over us.

I now use arts-based strategies (including collage, metaphors, archetypes and literary forms) as charms. They illumine my inquiry into my experience as I stand on a threshold leading away from one leadership world that I perceived as threatening, toward another more positive vision of leadership. The first representation is provided by a miniature version of the 36" X 24" collage or self-image of Little Margie. The second are words from Little Margie that came to me in a daydream months before I created that collage. The third is a poem written by Robert Duncan. The fourth is an untitled poem that I wrote based on another of my dreams. I follow these with four more writings from Little Margie, my childhood self. Little Margie continues to inform my creative leader self, even though I have betrayed her time and time again.

As in my previous works (Buttignol, 1998; Buttignol, 2000a ), I present the narrative of my inquiry in terms of pieces that are fluid and ambiguous. I use a fragmentary, piece-like form to describe my experiences of initiation. Arts-based forms of inquiry and representation provide me with new ways of perceiving leadership experience. Like Ronai (1992) who uses the asterisk to “denote a shift to a different temporal/ spatial/attitudinal [/contextual] realm” (p. 102), I use spirals as one of my favorite symbols. Spirals, like the knot and the labyrinth, “stand for the tortuous path to enlightenment” (Fontana, 1993, p. 75), or to the lessening of doubt.







Although miniaturized and in black and white, Little Margie's passion and pain cry out: bared teeth, bloodied red slashed lips, clawed fingers, strangling cord, paper gagging, dirtied hands, crossfire mud splattering, Dark Queen's mirror shattering, treasure trashing. How can I keep Little Margie (my creativity) alive as I grow into my leadership role? Trashed and betrayed, Little Margie screams at me saying,

i hate YOU margie.  
why have YOU done  
this to me again?  
YOU promised to  
protect me. now i  
am choking with  
paper. gagging and  
suffocating with paper.  
squeezed  
too tight by this  
black telephone  
cord. i do not trust  
YOU anymore.

i have to go now.

little margie  
(Little Margie, January 26, 2000)

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**My Mother Would Be A Falconress**

My mother would be a falconress,  
And I, her gay falcon treading her wrist,

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would fly to bring back from the blue sky to her, bleeding, a prize  
where I dream in my little hood with many bells  
jangling when I'd turn my head. (Robert Duncan, 1968, p. 52)

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#### **Untitled**

A barrel of crabs  
One separates and tries to climb out —  
Immediately  
the others reach up with open claws  
clamping on and pulling down  
to a pile of writhing  
with viscous parity maintained  
until the next time.  
(Margie Buttignol, June 1, 2000)

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#### **Little Red Hen**

Why does the little red hen want to force the other animals to  
make the bread? maybe they don't like the way that she makes  
the bread. maybe they don't want to make bread with such a  
bossy red hen. all of the animals know that in the end, the little  
red hen will take all of the credit for making the bread anyhow!  
(Little Margie, February 22, 2000)

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#### **Chicken Little**

Chicken little always says the sky is falling. that's her problem.  
she's just making it up so that she has something to fix.  
(Little Margie, February 22, 2000)

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#### **Boy Goldilocks Takes the Chairs**

that big boy is mean. he is just like goldilocks. every time he  
comes into a room, he asks someone else to move from their  
chair. then he takes it without even looking at them.  
(Little Margie, June 15, 2000)

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**Pee Pee Right on My Front Door!**

one day a boy cat sprayed pee pee right onto my front door. my mommy told me that sometimes girl cats do that too. mommy said that the girl cat pee pee does not smell as strong, but the puddle gets bigger and it makes more mess.

(Little Margie, June 15, 2000)

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**Mirror Mirror (on the wall)**

mirror mirror on the wall  
who's the fairest one of all?  
the dark queen must be the fairest in the land.  
"only i am the fairest in the land. snow white must die!" says the dark queen as she smashes the mirror into a million pieces.  
then, she dresses up like an old woman and gives snow white a red apple with poison in it.

(Little Margie, February 22, 2000)

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...and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. and lead us not into temptation...

(Little Margie, sometime in May, 2000. Excerpted from the Lord's Prayer)

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**My Return or "Taking the Treasure Home"**

**(Including My Initiation along the "Road of Trials") (Continued)**

To take the treasure home, I now reflect on these different representations of my experiences with leadership. The first of them is my 36" X 24" collage and acrylic on canvas. I originally entitled it as *Little Margie and the Sweet Sting: The Temptation of a Leadership Role* (see Artist's Statement in the Appendix) (Buttignol, 2000b). It has since assumed a subtitle, *Little Margie's Trashing*. Here, I covered a life sized photocopied image of Little Margie with garbage (used sticky papers, e-mails, office garbage can paper, pages from my day planner, used coffee cups and lids, a shattered mirror, magazine images). Envisioning her as often caught in a crossfire, I even splattered her with freshly slung mud. Perhaps most gruesomely, I strangled her body with a 100 feet long

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black telephone cord cocoon. In text written below her image and in her own hand, Little Margie berates me and threatens abandonment. Despite all of this abuse and neglect, she still wears a colourful butterfly halo and her eyes remain bright blue. I know that she is still alive.

In the collage, Little Margie's appearance and her words to me insisted on my facing the hazards of my leadership role. I could not continue to be blind to the operations of power. My collaged image confirms that the perilous journey of the hero[ine] is a work not of attainment but of reattainment, not of discovery but rediscovery, that is, of self, of creative self, of my child-like Little Margie. But I had been restricted in consciousness and punished. I had even cried for two weeks after what felt to me like a public stoning at the hand of the Dark Queen and her evil henchmen. A more balanced, realistic, and humane view of leadership was waiting for me to claim it. Castaneda (1974) maintains that this claim does not come easily:

Being timid prevents us from examining and exploiting our lot as men [sic] . . .  
Most people move from act to act without any struggle or thought . . . A [warrior]  
gives his [sic] last battle its due respect. It's only natural that his last act on earth  
should be the best of himself. ( pp. 84-84)

Through my leadership experiences, I learned that the leader must become a warrior who can "fight the good fight," and "give it out as well as take it."

In my journey as leader, I had descended into "unsuspected Aladdin caves [where] there were not only jewels but also dangerous jinn" (Campbell, 1949, p. 8). Jinn are haunting demons of the desert wilderness who are "very dangerous to unprotected persons" (Campbell, 1949, p. 74). They often have the power of assuming any form they choose, even that of apparent guide. Regardless of shape and gender, I realized that some previously unsuspected helpers may indeed have been wily tempters. I draw from many sources to evoke a composite figure of my non-helpers that I now recognize as archetypal. What I did discover, despite their fictional treatment here, were details of the profiles of these tempters.

### **The Treasure**

What "treasure" or discoveries did I bring home from my harrowing journey into leadership? How do the archetypal profiles of tempters that I have developed inform me? As in Robert Duncan's poem, I felt that, in my leadership journey, I was being held captive by others more powerful than I was and being made their creature, or their pet. Accused of not taking initiative, I was often pushed back into my place whenever I did. They were the gatekeepers, the watchers of established boundaries. The dangers of encountering this kind of shape-shifting and vengeful leadership style are evoked by the claws of the crabs, the self-serving of the Red Hen, the false alarm of Chicken Little, the blatant status positioning of Boy Goldilocks, the ritualistic "spraying" by cats of both genders, and the poisonous red apple of the Dark Queen. Perhaps such ogre-like parent figures have not answered personal calls to adventure and so seek to

prevent others from answering theirs. Yet paradoxically they can still be “helpers” if we can recognize that their presence as tempters alongside the path may announce a new phase in the journey — if we have the insight and courage to spiral away from them and press ahead. “The adventure is always and everywhere a passage beyond the veil of the known into the unknown” (Campbell, 1949, p. 82).

As I hope I have shown here in this paper, whenever a person’s world becomes more complicated than his or her present view can permit or understand, s/he is being called to cross the threshold and go on a hero[ine]’s journey. But help can come through the contributions of self and others. As an arts-based or magical helper, Maria Rainer Rilke (1934/1993) urges his protégé (and us) not to merely find the answers to the questions — but rather to live with the question itself:

Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the *questions themselves*.... Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. *Live* the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer. (p. 35)

Once I live with the question, I come to understand the challenges presented by the tempters. My responsibility is then to respond as a *different* kind of leader, and always to be receptive to dreams and other arts-based insights. Just as the overall sweep of the monomyth can illuminate the dreams, the dreams can inspire the journey. Using Moustakas’ (1990) articulation of heuristic phenomenological research, I now re-examine my returning journey. I guide my inquiry with my twofold research question: “What is leadership?” and “What kind of leader can I become?” Still living with the question I can now more easily articulate what leadership *is not*. I have learned that leadership for inner growth *is not* the same as public administration. Promoting professional development of self and others *is not* the same as seeming efficiency, superficial expediency, and blind ambition. A metaphor for my vision of leadership at this time is that it is a type of alchemy where the intentions of others are amalgamated with those of the leader and transformed into joint action for the benefit of all. The fullest potential for shared growth is realized when the treasure is brought home in this way.

Alchemy, as an interactive and mystical metaphor, harmonizes well with my perhaps romantic account of the journey of leadership formation. Those along the way who proved to be genuine helpers for me were prefigured by Roger Bacon, the medieval scholar of learned sources; and Paracelsus, the Swiss healer-writer. The true magical leader, as shown through the work of these European alchemists, seeks to help others to pursue their quests and has nothing to do with personal gain or venting ill-will against others. The tempters and non-helpers, as I perceived them along my journey, were prefigured by those lost souls in Dante’s inferno who were busying themselves in the pursuit of self-glory and self-gain. A generative leader helps others along the way that *they* choose to pursue. Such a leader carries “keys for unlocking

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the whole realm of the desired and feared adventure of the discovery of self. [This leads to] a wonderful reconstruction of the bolder, cleaner, more spacious, and fully human life” (Campbell, 1949, p. 8). The generative leader is also the inquirer who comes to know by discovering and assimilating his or her opposite. In my case, from the experiences of being led and tied down, I learned to become a leader who takes off her own “belled” hood and who returns from the blue sky with the prize of recovered self rather than with bloodied prey. Little Margie needed to become Leader Margie, even Warriress Margie, who sacrifices parts of her self for others.

In this account and through my different representations of my experiences with leadership, I have sought to show that one of the values of artistic humanists is “the mirror of self-examination which they raise so that society can become aware of its own shortcomings as well as its strengths” (the 1965 Senate Report on the establishment of the National Endowment for the Arts and the Humanities cited in Childs, 1997, p. 3). I began with a poem of initiation from an earlier experience. I then used the stages of Campbell’s (1949) hero[ine]’s journey to describe my descent into the misty and murky regions of leadership—in a “hood” called Academe. Throughout, I examine the importance of positioning my personal stories and myths through dreams, images, and the person of Little Margie my childhood creative self. Now, almost at the end of this journey, I feel myself being pulled towards yet another spiral, into a different leadership realm. In search for ways in which my art can inform my pedagogy, I find myself advancing further into another world of leadership. This time, my first step will be to enroll in a visual arts course, and after that preparation for leadership in school administration.

Will the artfully depicted experiences described in this paper continue to inform my twofold question, “What is leadership?” and “What kind of leader can I become?” Like Green (1991) I believe that “the arts may...move [me] into spaces where [I] can create visions of other ways of being and ponder what it might signify to realize them” (p. 27). Even as Veronese resolved his dilemma with the Inquisition by accepting a change of title, I too could re-title my paper as “My *imagined* tales of hood initiation . . .,” that is, if any unintended hurt were perceived.

I present my final response to my leadership experience in the form of a letter of advice to future leaders (and to myself). It is the “treasure” that I have returned with and that Patrick, Little Margie, and that I now leave for you, my reader.

### **Dear Leader in Preparation**

Here are some things that you might choose to take with you as you journey towards becoming an ever better leader. Use them as you will. You may even want to reproduce these treasures onto colored cards and periodically toss them into the air in jeweled Rune fashion. Let them act as your mirror of self-examination. Check to see how well you are implementing those insights that land right side up. Perhaps

those that remain covered represent aspects of leadership for you to continue to work on.

- ⊙ champion things that are becoming
- ⊙ become a guide, guardian, and helper to self and others
- ⊙ help set joint goals and provide energy to achieve them
- ⊙ help everyone to become they best they can become
- ⊙ live the questions now
- ⊙ spiral together
- ⊙ watch out for those cats hanging around your front door
- ⊙ take charge without taking over
- ⊙ approach Trojan horses with utmost caution
- ⊙ attack the problem not the person
- ⊙ know when to “tortoise in” for cover
- ⊙ know when to roll with the punches
- ⊙ know when to seize your shield
- ⊙ hold close only those you have thoroughly tested
- ⊙ remember that you don't have to be friends with everyone
- ⊙ never ask anyone to do what you wouldn't
- ⊙ be wary of perfunctory and sanitized “to-do lists” often presented by tempters to enact status and undermine your self-reliance
- ⊙ don't be afraid to say “no”
- ⊙ do no harm
- ⊙ be alert to hope
- ⊙ be trustworthy
- ⊙ remember that moral authority can only be earned
- ⊙ entertain dreams and the arts to expand possibility
- ⊙ involve without smothering
- ⊙ encourage without punishing
- ⊙ ride the shades of gray between what is and what ought to be
- ⊙ enjoy the journey
- ⊙ take care of your own little margie
- ⊙ and discern the jewels from the jinns

Sincerely,  
Margie, Patrick and little margie (hopefully now three of your helpers)

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> My description of Patrick (despite his protests) is as one of my designated helpers, my dissolver of mists. Merlin the Magician of the *Arthurian Romance* has long been an enchanting image for Patrick. I feel that, like Merlin, Patrick teaches others how to learn in happy ways that help them to “be born again, like little ones” (White, 1958, p. 12). For some

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time now, I have been tapping into this child-like aspect of self by reconnecting with memories of my sense of wonder (experienced as Little Margie, my five year old self) as recorded in my dreams, and my sketchbook. Little Margie has acted as my prompt, helping me to re-enchant and renew my sense of wonder. I needed to help her shake off the spell of my would-be tempters. None of us escapes unscathed. Even though he was a wizard, Merlin was beguiled by the enchantress Nimue who encased him in a rock; and later Vivien, the *Lady of the Lake*, entangled him in a thorn bush by means of spells. As the legend goes, there he still sleeps, though his voice may be sometimes heard.

<sup>2</sup>We last heard that the Dark Queen now holds court for enthusiastic upstarts, in a room high atop the tower. Her motivation is simple and deadly: Identify the competition; Seek and destroy; Off with their heads! When and how will she be stopped?

<sup>3</sup>Margie has commenced a new professional spiral into a hospital-based mental health unit for children and adolescents.

<sup>4</sup>i have to go now. little margie

## **Appendix**

### **Artist's Statement**

Title: *Little Margie and the Sweet Sting: The Temptation of a Leadership Role*  
(a.k.a.. Little Margie's Trashing)

Media: acrylic paint on 36" X 24" canvas; computer printed text; photocopied and enlarged kindergarten portrait, office litter, newspaper cuttings, shattered mirror, 100 foot black telephone cord, a butterfly halo, and some freshly slung mud.

In *Little Margie and the Sweet Sting: The Temptation of a Leadership Role*, I have used personal sources assembled as I studied my creative self (again represented by "Little Margie" at five years of age) and my new role as a university-based Field Coordinator of a Preservice Teacher Education program. I have identified a theme — related to "binding and loosing."

I incorporate collage and acrylic painting on a 36" X 24" canvas. This combination of collage and acrylic was first used in 1912 when Picasso (1881-1973) decided to anchor a piece of oil cloth into the paint on his canvas to represent a caned chair seat. Braque (1882-1963) and other Cubist painters continued to apply this form by adding everyday "found objects" to their paintings. These objects can either be glued to the canvas or board, or pressed into thick wet paint which becomes an adhesive. Some examples of commonly used "found objects" are: pieces of newspaper, wallpaper, advertising, packaging, used envelopes and personal letters. The purpose of capturing real objects in the surface of the painting is to emphasize that the painting exists in its own right and is not merely an illusion of reality.

To further the interpretation of *Little Margie and the Sweet Sting: The Temptation of a Leadership Role* I reflect upon butterflies, halos, and strings...

The butterfly provides a metaphor for transformation, even transfiguration. It symbolizes beauty and life that is able to arise from apparent death inside the seemingly lifeless cocoon.

The halo shows a persistent and courageous life force — creative energy — emanating from the head.

For me, the main finding of my 1999 self-study and artistic rendering was that, "every time that I cut my string away, it comes back again." Only now am I able



to grasp the creative value of this existential tension. Only now can I articulate this phenomenon as “binding and loosing.”

I wonder what self transformations await now that I am beginning to accept “binding and loosing” as part of my human condition, and fundamental to leading my creative life.

—Margie Buttignol, Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, April 2000

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