

## Chapter Three

### **The Patchwork Hero: Jordan's Patterning of Heroic Motifs in *The Wheel of Time***

This chapter considers Jordan's portrayal of the heroic figure in terms of the journey or quest, which in general forms the spine of contemporary high fantasy narrative patterns. Typically, the heroic journey is one of self-development and to this end concentration is placed on Jordan's interpretation of thresholds (physical and metaphysical), such as roads and labyrinths, traditional and necessary places of testing and growth for the main protagonists. As the hero's choices, actions and maturation are linked to the restoration of the depicted landscape, so the ethical stance Jordan portrays as necessary in order to achieve this goal must also be given consideration. Last, I examine the role of the supporting characters, and, in particular, the coming-of-age journeys of the young women who surround Rand, for although their stories are linked to his quest they gain personal empowerment and emerge as magus figures of high standing.

#### **The heroic motifs in fantasy**

Rather like the definition of fantasy itself, modern and postmodern scholarly investigations of the heroic figure have resulted in a plethora of competing, and at times contradictory, definitions of the hero and of the purpose of the hero in the body of existing literature that can be drawn upon by the writers of modern high fantasy. Stephen Potts suggests that the 'heroes available to the student of mythology and mythic fantasy' and the 'studies and theories attempting to interpret these heroes' are 'virtually countless'.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Potts, 'The Many Faces of the Hero in *The Lord of the Rings*', *Mythlore*, 66, Summer, 1991, p. 4.

Furthermore, as Bernard Huppé once cautioned:

The hero, we are told, has a thousand faces. The search for him leads into folklore, myth, philosophy, history, art history, anthropology, and psychology, so that the literary scholar can be easily tempted into paths where only a hero should tread.<sup>2</sup>

However, it is not the purpose of this thesis to attempt to disentangle the many threads that have accrued to the literary construct of the heroic figure throughout time – ground which has already been ably covered by scholars from a variety of academic disciplines.<sup>3</sup> Suffice to say that in general writers of Tolkienian-inspired high fantasy draw much of their inspiration for the heroic paradigm from mediaeval romance. Northrop Frye described the typical hero of the romance mode as:

superior in degree to other men and to his environment ... whose actions are marvellous but who is himself identified as a human being. The hero of romance moves in a world in which the ordinary laws of nature are slightly suspended; prodigies of courage and endurance, un-natural to us, are natural to him, and enchanted weapons, talking animals, terrifying ogres and witches, and talismans of miraculous power violate no rule of probability once the postulates of romance have been established.<sup>4</sup>

However, in the modern revival of this mode the romance hero paradigm may well be interwoven with aspects of other source material much as Tolkien himself was also influenced by Anglo-Saxon and Norse epics and, to a degree, by the Celtic myths. Thus, as

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<sup>2</sup> Bernard F. Huppé, 'The Concept of the Hero in the Early Middle Ages', in *Concepts of the Hero in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Papers of the Fourth and Fifth Annual Conferences of the Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies*, edited by Norman T. Burns and Christopher J. Reagan, Albany, 1975, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Critical works on the figure of the 'hero' include: Victor Brombert (ed), *The Hero in Literature*, New York, 1969; Norman T. Burns and Christopher J. Reagan, *Concepts of the Hero*; Pierre Brunel (ed), *Companion to Literary Myths, Heroes and Archetypes*, London, 1992; Robert A. Segal (ed), *Hero Myths: A Reader*, Oxford, 2000; Dean A. Miller, *The Epic Hero*, Baltimore, 2000.

<sup>4</sup> Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, Princeton, 1957, p. 33.

noted by Faye Ringel:

the motivation for the twentieth century hero is not, as it sometimes was in the medieval romance, random chance or adventure; instead, something wrong must be put right, and the quest hero, however unlikely, seems destined to accomplish the deed.<sup>5</sup>

The heroic figure in modern high fantasy, such as Jordan's *WOT*, moves in an imaginary landscape that, as in 'classical epic, is ruled by Fate, its plots [often] determined by prophets and oracles speaking in riddles'.<sup>6</sup> Confusingly, it can also be a landscape in which luck or happenstance may appear to play a part, as in our own world. And, as already discussed, the hero figure's maturation and the restoration of the imaginary world itself are inextricably intertwined. This integrative concept was endorsed by Tolkien, and can also be seen to underpin the philosophy of both Le Guin's *Earthsea* as well as Jordan's *WOT* and it is constantly reflected in the choices and actions of the main hero figures, which have consequences far beyond the personal sphere. In regard to the *LOTR*, Don Elgin has suggested that this text clearly encompasses both comic (i.e. integrative) and ecological traditions:

using a physical environment shaped by humanity's own actions, characters who affirm the imperative of survival while recognising that the system must survive if they are to survive with any degree of freedom, and a general tone that suggests the importance of experience over abstraction.<sup>7</sup>

Elgin's analysis is equally applicable to both Le Guin's and Jordan's concept of the need to achieve a balance between the forces of Light and Dark, life and death, in order to maintain the 'equilibrium' of the Earthsea Archipelago and the 'Great Pattern' of the Wheel world, both of which have come under threat due to foolhardy or selfish human actions.

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<sup>5</sup> Faye Ringel, 'Women Fantasists: In the Shadow of the Ring', in *J. R. R. Tolkien and His Literary Resonances: Views of Middle-earth*, edited by George Clark and Daniel Timmons, Westport, 2000, p. 163.

<sup>6</sup> Ringel, 'Women Fantasists', p. 165.

<sup>7</sup> Don D. Elgin, 'Literary Fantasy and Ecological Comedy', in *Fantastic Literature: A Critical Reader*, edited by David Sandner, Westport, 2004, p. 265. For an earlier discussion on this topic see Elgin's *The Comedy of the Fantastic: Ecological Perspectives on the Fantasy Novel*, Westport, 1985.

The numerous protagonists and complex plotting of the *WOT* make it difficult to analyse Jordan's heroic figures individually in terms of either epic or romance paradigms. His main protagonists are not strictly representative of either of these modes, which respectively are tragic or comic, for he incorporates aspects of both. Jordan stitches together various motifs to construct his multiple interpretations of the heroic figure and of his or her life-changing journey, thereby creating a type of composite personality. The broad characterisation of Jordan's notion of the hero figure, which like his plotting owes a great deal to the interlace technique, shows his consciousness of writing 'secondary' fantasy epic, with Tolkien and other similar writers behind him, and the difficulty of finding his own voice. One of the interesting things about his work is what it tells us about the hero, and thus a critique of Jordan's heroic figures suggests that his composition of the hero is a more eclectic interweaving of the traditional qualities given or uncovered by various scholars, which commonly feature in literature.

Jordan, like his character Thom, in telling the story of the hero gathers up a number of figures, so can be seen to explore the qualities of the heroic (and not so much the heroic person) through a repetition of traditionally-held values such as personal sacrifice, honour, strength, and courage. Jordan's own gleeman's bag of stories, concerning the individual journeys of his various characters, becomes woven into the focal quest of Rand's larger story. Similarly, the gleeman in the *WOT* recites from an endless repertoire of heroic deeds that are stitched together over time, to collectively reveal the larger story of heroic patterning in the world of the Wheel.

## The hero and the journey in quest fantasy

In regard to the centrality of the journey of the hero figure in modern fantasy Clute suggests that:

fantasy can almost be defined as the genre whose protagonists reflect and embody the tale being told, and who lead the way through travails and reversals towards the completion of a happy ending. (Tragic fantasy exists but is uncommon.)<sup>8</sup>

For this purpose, as mentioned in chapter one, fantasists frequently rely on some variation of the traditional fairy tale paradigm of the quest, a complex narrative progression from departure and experience to return, through which common persons may be brought to heroism and to maturity. Both Vladimir Propp and Joseph Campbell describe this journey in similar fashion as a circular quest into the unknown that involves the testing of the hero, the crossing of thresholds, supernatural intervention, helpers or companions, confrontation, gaining of a boon, and the return home.<sup>9</sup> Brian Attebery notes that Propp refers to such ‘structural elements’ as ‘functions’, and that in fantasy they can be ‘reduplicated’:

often these functions are doubled or tripled, a rhetorical device that emphasises their status as parts of a pattern, a story, rather than mimetic renderings of real human beings and lives. The pattern they make is usually a quest.<sup>10</sup>

The panoramic sweep and epic length of Jordan’s *WOT* allow room for an unusually high degree of such reduplication of these traditional functions and, in particular, the author offers an interesting theory of a triple heroic figure – as will be discussed in the next chapter. The reduplication of structural elements complements the interlaced patterning of Jordan’s work; for instance, the narrative threads of the secondary protagonists (female or

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<sup>8</sup> Clute, ‘Structure of Fantasy’, in John Clute and John Grant (eds), *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, London, 1997, p. 339.

<sup>9</sup> Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, trans. Laurence Scott, revised and edited by L. A. Wagner, Austin, 1976. Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 2nd ed., Princeton, 1973.

<sup>10</sup> Brian Attebery, *Strategies of Fantasy*, Bloomington & Indianapolis, 1992, p. 25.

male), as the trials and tribulations of their ancillary quests can both mirror and enlarge the focal quest of the main protagonist Rand. Thus, in Jordan's work we continuously see an inter-linking of stories within stories that continuously add to the complexity of his imaginary world, as well as enhancing the individual personalities of his characters.

In the creation of his male and female characters and their various roles in the *WOT*, Jordan works within the general framework of our Western cultural inheritance, but he does attempt to write beyond its confines and to confront the issue of gender restrictions imposed by (earlier) cultural expectation. In addressing the problems writers may face in their postmodernistic use of inherited material, Laura Comoletti and Michael Drout argue that:

even the most original speculative fiction can contain and communicate cultural constructs and ideological patterns its author would never espouse. Nor would most authors want to so escape, since so much of the resonance of a work of literature relies on stirring deeply embedded cultural patterns, whether these be Jungian archetypes ... or simply long-standing historical and sociocultural patterns of social behaviour.<sup>11</sup>

In his imaginary world Jordan has conceived of a largely matriarchal society, a realm in which for three thousand years only female Aes Sedai have had control of the One Power. But it is a world in which survival is now dependent upon a rebalancing of male and female power, a reflection of the two aspects of the One Power needed to drive the cosmic Wheel of Time itself. Thus, Jordan is interested in exploring the concept of a society in which men and women come together as valued human beings for the common good of all living creatures and for the environment in which they dwell.

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<sup>11</sup> Laura B. Comoletti and Michael D. C. Drout, 'How They Do Things with Words: Language, Power, Gender, and Priestly Wizards of Ursula K. Le Guin's Earthsea Books', *Children's Literature*, 29, 2001, pp. 129-30. These critics acknowledge that in her later continuations to the *Earthsea* sequence, Le Guin successfully challenges the 'cultural constraints that she had inherited from her culture and from her previous work'. p. 130.

## Positioning the heroic figures in *The Wheel of Time*

Jordan states that the impetus to write the *WOT* series came from a desire to explore ‘what it would be like to be tapped on the shoulder and told that you were born to carry out a great mission, and that it was your destiny no matter what you wished’.<sup>12</sup> For the young protagonists in his work, as in Tolkien’s *LOTR*, Le Guin’s *Earthsea* series, or similar fantasy texts, the ‘great mission’ or quest involves both the outer journey to adventure and the inner journey to self-awareness or growth and so, in part, can be viewed as a magnified rite of passage. On the transformative nature of fantasy narratives it may be recalled that Clute suggests:

a fantasy text may be described as the story of an earned passage from bondage ... and which may involve a profound metamorphosis of protagonist or world (or both) – into the eucatastrophe, where marriages may occur, just governance fertilize the barren land, and there is a healing.<sup>13</sup>

In the sub-creations of each of the above mentioned authors the psychological transformation of the protagonists is inescapably linked, and indeed is vital, to the survival of their worlds, which all stand on the brink of apocalyptic chaos.

On one level the narrative may function as a metaphor for the development of the main characters but, unlike the case in fantasy texts such as Stephen Donaldson’s *The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant* series, it does not necessarily follow that the characters and landscape are merely a metaphoric externalisation of the ‘inner landscapes’ of the protagonist’s mind.<sup>14</sup> This type of literary device may well be incorporated on occasions, such as Jordan’s use of Moiraine’s voice to encourage Rand to shoulder the responsibility

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<sup>12</sup> Vishad Sukul, ‘Spokes of the Wheel: An Analysis of Robert Jordan’s Writing’, [http://www.dragonmount.com/Articles/Downloads/wot\\_paper\\_Vishad.pdf](http://www.dragonmount.com/Articles/Downloads/wot_paper_Vishad.pdf) (accessed 10 Feb., 2014).

<sup>13</sup> Clute, ‘Structure of Fantasy’, in Clute and Grant, *Fantasy*, pp. 338-39. See this thesis pp. 20-21.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Moorcock, *Wizardry and Wild Romance: A Study of Epic Fantasy*, London, 1987, p. 16.

of his destined role, which can be interpreted as an externalisation of his conscience.

Donaldson himself asserts that:

fantasy is a form of fiction in which the internal crises or conflicts or processes of the characters are dramatized as if they were external individuals or events ... in fantasy the characters meet themselves – or parts of themselves, their own needs/problems/exigencies – as actors on the stage of the story, and so the internal struggle ... is played out as an external struggle in the action of the story.<sup>15</sup>

In Donaldson's work, the antagonist Lord Foul is a 'personified evil', who is a 'part of Thomas Covenant', an externalisation of Thomas's hatred of the leprosy that plagues him in his primary reality. Thus, the invented world 'is an expression of the characters' and the eventual 'healing' of the Land heralds the 'healing' of the protagonist, whose mindscape is both mirrored in and 'confer[s] reality' on his 'surroundings'.<sup>16</sup> As a consequence, in this type of scenario, the metamorphosis of the protagonist remains paramount. (Yet, paradoxically, Donaldson offers his protagonists the choice of believing the Secondary World they find themselves in to be either reality or just a dream.)<sup>17</sup> By contrast, in Jordan's Secondary World, as in that of Tolkien or Le Guin, the opposite holds true, for the emphasis is laid on the ways in which the growth of the protagonists enables them to confront and, potentially, overcome the disruptive forces that threaten to destroy both the society and landscape in which they dwell. At times they may even fail, as when Frodo finally succumbs to the lure of the One Ring.

In Jordan's world of the Wheel each protagonist's journey of personal development is triggered, not by some need or lack within themselves, but by a disruption to the world order, and so their subsequent development is vital if they are to restore the integrity of

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<sup>15</sup> Stephen R. Donaldson, *Epic Fantasy in the Modern World*, Ohio, 1986, pp. (4-5).

<sup>16</sup> Donaldson, *Epic Fantasy*, pp. (4-5).

<sup>17</sup> Stephen R. Donaldson, *The Second Chronicles of Thomas Covenant*, vol. 1, *The Wounded Land*, Glasgow, 1982, pp.74-8.

their surroundings. Jordan is drawing on the conventions of the epic and romance modes where the hero's task is to fight disruptive forces: Rand fights an evil that has the potential to destroy the Cosmic Loom that weaves the Great Pattern of the world. Therefore, within the construct of Jordan's imaginary world, as in that of Tolkien or Le Guin, the protagonists' personal choices and actions, their positive or negative strengths, potentially have enormous societal and environmental ramifications. As noted by Myles Balfe, such heroes are 'generally defined by their deeds and [they] exist in a dialectic relationship with "their" landscapes embodying the core values that the landscape is thought to represent'.<sup>18</sup> As a result, they are driven to save their worlds, no matter at what personal cost. Therefore Frodo, as ring bearer, does not expect to return home from Mordor, and Rand accepts that to defeat the Dark Lord he may need to sacrifice his life. In Le Guin's *Farthest*, too, the breach between the living and the dead is sealed at the loss of Ged's magical powers. Thus all three hero figures shoulder their designated roles simply because there is no one else who can do it – and in the ever-increasing understanding that the fate of their worlds is irrevocably entwined with their own.

### **The heroic figure and the ethical pattern**

In general, high fantasy creates tension through the interplay between protagonists and antagonists, between the 'selfless' and 'self-seeking' principles that respectively apply to the opposing groups of characters. Through this means authors such as Jordan signal to the reader the desirability of making moral or ethically grounded decisions that are designed to foster integrative rather than selfish individualistic ends. This mode of behaviour is enacted through the actions and choices of the heroic figures as through their adventures and tests and confrontations with the enemy they are enabled to develop traits

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<sup>18</sup> Myles Balfe, 'Incredible geographies? Orientalism and Genre Fantasy', *Social & Cultural Geography*, 5.1, March, 2004, p. 77.

of responsibility and authority. (Yet Jordan, perhaps inadvertently, also adds a sense of moral ambiguity to the above usage of the terms ‘selfless’ and ‘self-seeking’ for at times his male hero figures, Rand, Perrin, and Mat, are in danger of losing self, of becoming ‘self-less’. and must partake in ‘self-seeking’ in order to consolidate their identities.)

Lionel Basney suggests that high fantasy asserts ‘the general possibility of ethics, of ethical action, in an imaginative world specifically designed to display them’.<sup>19</sup> His point of view accords with that of Jordan who states that he believes in the ‘necessity to struggle against evil’, in the desirability of a responsible and morally based society, and that fantasy literature supplies the ideal arena for exploring this: ‘In fantasy, we *can* talk about right and wrong, and good and evil ... discuss morality or ethics, and believe that these things are important’.<sup>20</sup> In other words, codes of ethical behaviour can be modelled in the imaginary worlds of fantasy texts, and solutions found to societal problems which, by contrast, remain inherently problematic in the Primary World. Francis Molson takes a similar stance by suggesting the portrayal of ‘ethical choices’ to be one of the ‘fundamental purposes of this kind of fantasy’, and that such texts often explore how ‘apparently insignificant actions can bring about momentous consequences’ in the invented world, at both personal and societal levels.<sup>21</sup> An example of this is when young Ged, showing off to his rival, Jasper, at Roke, summons Elfarran’s spirit from the dead, an action that releases his own shadow into the world and upsets the fragile balance of the Equilibrium of the Archipelago. (*Wizard*) Similarly, Mat takes the tainted dagger from Shadar Logoth thereby releasing into the wider world of the Wheel a latent seed of evil, which previously had been bound within the confines of this fallen city. (*EOTW*)

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<sup>19</sup> Lionel Basney, ‘Tolkien and the Ethical Function of “Escape” Literature’, *Mosaic* 13.2, 1980, p. 27.

<sup>20</sup> ‘Robert Jordan: The Name Behind the Wheel’, *Locus, The Newspaper of the Science Fiction Field*, issue 470, 44.3, March 2000, p. 76.

<sup>21</sup> Francis J. Molson, ‘The Earthsea Trilogy: Ethical Fantasy for Children’, in *Ursula K. Le Guin: Voyager to Inner Lands and Outer Space*, edited by Joe De Bolt, Literary Criticism Series, Port Washington, 1979, p. 130.

Within the invented worlds these texts posit a pattern or order for human existence that is integral with the natural world, a philosophy of ecological balance – one increasingly found to be absent from the fractured global politics of exploitation of our world. Elgin suggests that the modern fantasy novel has adopted an ecological integrative or ‘comic conception of humanity, placing its emphasis upon humanity as part of a total environment or system and acknowledging the absolute dependence of humanity upon that system’.<sup>22</sup>

As discussed in chapter one, high fantasy narratives usually commence at a time of societal and moral rupture that much favours the Dark, and as the restoration of the order of the world is of most significance, in a sense, the protagonists are merely the tools of destiny, shaped for a specific purpose and driven by circumstances beyond their control to take up restorative roles. Nevertheless, the author shows that it is how they respond to the larger call of destiny and use their free will to make choices that will determine the final outcome of events, and so the story must be told through them as they comprise the central focus.

The order of Jordan’s Secondary World is governed by the Great Pattern of existence, designed by a seemingly beneficent Creator, yet One who plays no further part in its destiny (in a manner analogous to the eighteenth-century doctrine of deism). At the time of creation the Dark One was shut outside the Pattern and can only gain access to the world through the actions of its fallible human inhabitants, and the only known forces outside the world and the Great Pattern are the abstract polarities of Light and Dark. The disembodied Creator (a force obliquely associated with the Light) only speaks directly once in the text when Rand is warned by a strange voice that echoes in his mind: ‘I will take no part. Only the chosen one can do what must be done, if he will’. (*EOTW*, 758) In

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<sup>22</sup> Elgin, ‘Literary Fantasy’, p. 264.

the Third Age of the Wheel, to counter the burgeoning strength of the Dark One the Cosmic Loom spins out three special life-threads known as *ta'veren*. One life-thread is fated to be the Dragon Reborn, saviour of the world, and so cosmic order is ordained by the impersonal mechanism of the Pattern, and it is believed that to correct any deviations in the Great Design the Wheel of Time will automatically spin out the necessary threads to enable partial change to the weave of the 'Age Lace'. (*Companion*, 7) Moiraine's friend and accomplice, Siuan, Arnyrlin of the White Tower, reminds her that until Rand 'proclaims himself' as the 'one true Dragon', false ones will continue to appear simply because 'the Pattern demands a Dragon' as it 'weaves toward Tarmon Gai'don,' and it will 'continue to throw up false dragons' until the 'true' one is revealed. (*GH*, 66)

The inhabitants of the world of the Wheel firmly believe that if they 'tried to walk in the Light, tried to live a good life, and did not name him' the Dark One could not harm them. (*EOTW*, 107) But the author posits no omniscient god-like presence or higher cosmic order that could come to their aid, as hinted at in Tolkien's *LOTR*, which more overtly displays Christian influences. (But as Tom Shippey points out even in Middle-earth there is danger in a 'passive confidence' in external intervention. For 'if there is an external power (the Valar), it has to work through human or earthly agents, and if those agents give up, then the purpose of the external power will be thwarted'.)<sup>23</sup>

Jordan's theory of a benign but indifferent Creator, one who sets up the world and then stands aside, may reflect the growing secularisation of contemporary Western society; the lessening of an unquestioning belief in the doctrine of traditional organised religion, and in an all-powerful God who once gave meaning and shape to people's lives.<sup>24</sup> Jordan chooses to suggest that the fallible/fallen inhabitants of the Wheel world must shoulder

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<sup>23</sup> Tom Shippey, *J. R. R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*, London, 2000, p. 146.

<sup>24</sup> This resonates with earlier philosophical theory of a cosmic Creator of the world who 'set the machine going and then left it'. David Pepper, *Modern Environmentalism: An Introduction*, London, 1996, pp. 137-38.

responsibility for their own actions. Solely from within themselves they need to find the means to repair the fabric of their world order, which rests on the opposing yet complementary forces of female and male power (*yin* and *yang*), and where life and death, good and evil all form part of the pattern of the cosmology. The moral neutrality of the Great Pattern, which blindly spins both light and dark threads, emphasises the need for the human characters to make ethical choices, in order to maintain a balance between these two aspects of life. In this respect the ordering of Jordan's world is closer to that of Le Guin's Archipelago, where the governing principle, the Equilibrium, displays a similarly eastern-inspired philosophy of opposites, and where it is also up to altruistic human endeavour to correct the transcendent impulse of darkness that would disrupt the balance.

## **The hero and the quest as pattern**

### **Crossing thresholds and rites of passage**

It is the journey of the quest and the initiation patterns along the way that give density and structure to the characters' personalities in high fantasy texts. Therefore, in uncovering Jordan's strategies for the use of the heroic figure, analysis of some examples of his extensive use of the convention of thresholds, both physical and metaphysical, should prove fruitful. Traditionally, thresholds are seen as places of liminality where identity is fluid, and it is in these 'between' places where normal boundaries or limits do not apply that the protagonists can be tested. If successful, they may well be brought to enlightenment or rebirth, to triumph over obstacles, and so develop towards a maturity that is needed if the quest is to be fulfilled. Such thresholds in the Jordan texts can be divided into roads and labyrinths. In keeping with the polarity of Light and Dark, which forms the undergirding framework of so many high fantasy texts, the reverse of this is true for the antagonists or anti-heroes. For them, such thresholds prove to be a perversion of the

development associated with rites of passage and, instead, are shown to lead to a reinforcement of their enslavement of both body and mind.

### **Roads to adventure and growth**

In his discussion of Tolkien's process of storytelling, Brian Attebery suggests that 'roads' in the metaphoric sense are constructs that take the 'unwary traveller from 'his own doorstep into realms of fable'.<sup>25</sup> Actual and symbolic roads and the way in which the hero chooses to travel on them play an important, and Tolkienian, role in the Jordan series. In the opening pages of the first book (*EOTW*) it is on a very ordinary road between the village of Emond's Field and the al'Thors' family farm that the Dark first shadows Rand's footsteps. This is the catalyst that forces the central hero Rand al'Thor, and his companions, to undertake ever longer and more 'worldly' road journeys that take them far from home and draw them into a cosmic conflict, which they had thought only happened to heroes in the old stories. They repeatedly remark that their lives are not like those of such heroes, yet paradoxically they too are part of a larger 'story' and gradually through their ensuing life choices and consequent deeds grow to fit the mode of the heroic (clearly a device to encourage ordinary readers to identify with them). This is especially true of Rand as he accepts his destiny and assumes the heavy mantle of the Dragon Reborn, the one prophesied to be both 'saviour' and 'destroyer' of the world. Early on he becomes aware that 'death is lighter than a feather, duty heavier than a mountain.' (*GH*, 679) Through his acceptance of the inevitability of all these contradictory demands he displays a strength and maturity that raise him in stature. At the same time, it must distance him from his companions whose own duties are those of lesser service and more personal loyalties: Rand bears the heaviest burden.

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<sup>25</sup> Attebery, *Strategies*, p. 41.

Another type of primeval road are the ‘Ways’, passages that exist outside the confines of accepted time and space in the imaginary world, that have been ‘grown’ by the One Power and long tended by the Ogier – a gentle, giant-like race of spiritual and actual carers. In the depicted Third Age they too are contaminated by the Shadow and haunted by the Black Wind (*Machin Shin*), ‘steal[er] of souls’.<sup>26</sup> (*EOTW*, 686) The Ways can be interpreted as an intense personal experience or test of the dangerous and the unknown. To enter them is to step into utter blackness, a realm highly suggestive of the convention of the mythic hero’s descent to the ‘classical’/Christian Underworld. To lose oneself in the Ways is to fall into the abyss or to be swallowed by the Black Wind – a fate to which those of the Shadow are also vulnerable as shown by the lifeless ‘frozen shapes of Trollocs ... forever snarling with fear,’ encountered by Rand and his companions. (*EOTW*, 681) They show how safe travelling through the Ways depends on the faith and courage of the one journeying and the companionship of the ‘Company’. Rand and his friends had initially entered the Ways despite their deep fears and the apparent danger, because of an overriding need to reach the Green Man’s grove (in *EOTW*) in time to foil the Dark One’s diabolic plans. Any subsequent journeying in the Ways is to be undertaken only in times of dire need, and when no other feasible choices remain open to the protagonists.

Portal Stones, as discussed in the second chapter, stand as spatially located gateways to alternative realities or ‘mirror’ worlds that might have been, but as they also provide a means of travel from one location to another without crossing the intervening space, they afford another variation on the metaphor of the necessary hard road. Travellers using Portal Stones often experience ‘flashbacks’ to lives that they might have led or might yet lead, visions that shed light on their own personal character weaknesses or flaws. In *GH*, the second volume, during such transportation the hero Rand relives:

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<sup>26</sup> The horror of *Machin Shin* brings to mind J. K. Rowling’s Dementors in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*.

a hundred lives. More. So many he could not count them. And at the end of every life, as he lay dying, as he drew his final breath, a voice whispered in his ear. *I have won again Lews Therin.* (*GH*, 532)

For Rand this is a realisation of the eternal nature of the battle against the Dark and perhaps also a projection of his fear of making the wrong decisions in his role as Dragon Reborn. His brave refusal to give in to dark visions of defeat is evident in his denial of any connection to the defeat of the past Dragon, Lews Therin, for he declares: ‘No! I am Rand al’Thor!’ (*GH*, 533) Yet for the reader Rand’s visions emphasise the weight of the task he has shouldered and introduce the disturbing possibility of failure. By contrast, the Shienaran soldier Ingtar, during the same transportation, was brought to face the truth of his own weak and deceptive nature, the fact that for selfish glory he was and always had been a betrayer of his people and of the Light. (*GH*, 534; 654) Ingtar’s moment of revelation recalls an earlier one when Perrin had thought that ‘sometimes to [his:] eyes, the crescent crest on the Shienaran’s helmet looked like a Trolloc’s horns,’ an image the reader now realises provided an externalisation of Ingtar’s dark secret. (*GH*, 407) Perrin’s far-sightedness is connected to his mental wolf-link, which has enhanced both his vision and his natural intuition. Thus, Jordan, through an associated layering of images, deepens the pathos of the soldier’s fall.

Like Tolkien’s ill-fated hero Boromir, who succumbs to the lure of the One Ring for confused reasons, Ingtar desires to use the numinous Horn of Valere for self-glory. His wish is to atone for his years of betrayal by blowing the Horn to save his nation, to ‘keep the Shienar ... from being swept away and forgotten’, and through this act to gain his own ‘salvation’. In his visions of many lives he sometimes ‘held the Horn, [but] never sounded it’, and he constantly ‘tried to escape what [he had] become’, but ‘never did’. (*GH*, 654-55) But, Jordan permits this tragic Darkfriend, like Boromir, a moment of redemption, as through accepting the truth about himself he finally gives up his life (in *GH*), so that Rand

and the others can escape from the Seanchan invaders. The idea of such belated redemption in the Wheel world is apparent in the popular belief that 'no man can walk so long in the Shadow that he cannot come again to the Light'. (*GH*, 654) The restoration of Ingtar's dignity and worth as a warrior is shown when Rand accords him the Shienaran final blessing: 'The Light Shine on you, Lord Ingtar of House Shinowa, and may you shelter in the palm of the Creator's hand'. (*GH*, 655) Jordan uses Ingtar's emotional journey of self-knowledge through the Portal Stone and his subsequent act of self-sacrifice to foreground the point that the extent of the Dark One's influence in his imaginary world rests upon the choices and actions of very ordinary human characters. Further, Jordan uses Ingtar's weaker character (as demonstrated by his response in the portal vision) as a foil to Rand, to show his strength and heroic nature.

The Ways and Portal Stones are an extension of the characteristics of roads, to be seen as places of journeying into the unknown that bring danger, temptation and challenge and, for some characters, loci of self-realisation and growth. All these Jungian extensions of the notion of the road as a place of intersection with the world of the possible through imagination also encourage the reader more readily to cross strange thresholds and so to enter and accept the altered time zone and spatial constructs of the narrative, and then to mentally inhabit the Secondary World. The book itself becomes a metaphorical portal that the reader opens, and thus it provides the liminal space through which the reader is able to imaginatively enter the Secondary World of the text. Within the Secondary world as the inhabitants enter portals that provide liminal spaces of emotional testing, the reader is brought to vicariously share in their experiences and growth.

### **Labyrinths as thresholds of ‘hope’**

Jordan’s Ways and Portal Stones can further be interpreted as forms of the puzzle of the ancient labyrinth – a motif traditionally symbolic of ordeals and trials, places of temptation, self-realisation through initiation, rites of passage or even death and rebirth.<sup>27</sup> An illustration of this is provided by the array of puzzling symbols that are engraved on the surface of the Portal Stones, each of which offers the key to a different location in time and space. Travellers must choose which symbols to use with great care or find themselves transported to unknown realms, or lost in a space out of time. Even a successful traveller must encounter bewildering layers of previous life experiences, a mental labyrinth from which he or she may not emerge unscathed at journey’s end, as shown by Ingтар’s plight.

The Ways are to be traversed along narrow, spiralling ramps and bridges, that fall away to a bottomless abyss, the only glimmer of light in the surrounding ‘dead black’ being provided by the travellers’ oil-filled lanterns. (*EOTW*, 671ff) The labyrinthine Ways bear comparison with the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur, for although there is no physical thread, the broken white line on the stone floors and the strategically placed ‘Guidings’ (tall slabs of stone inscribed with Ogier script) provide a kind of thread, and the Black Wind to be met therein is analogous with the ancient foe the Minotaur. (*EOTW*, 670)

In his multi-dimensional, imaginary world Jordan also uses the World of Dreams to present a repeating motif of symbolic mazes, such as reflecting mirrors, endless corridors and doors that open into the same room of horrors, or multiple staircases, in which his young male protagonists are relentlessly pursued by Ba’alzamon, mouth-piece for the Dark Lord, or others of the Forsaken. (*EOTW*) These fearful night journeys of the mind emphasise anew the gravity of the danger in which his young protagonists stand, as they

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<sup>27</sup> J. C. Cooper, *An Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Traditional Symbols*, London, 1992, pp. 92-4.

struggle to contain their fears and to resist the lies, threats or temptations of the Dark Lord's minions, these conflicts heightening the suspense of the narrative.

The *ter'angreal* archways used by the Aes Sedai as part of the rites of passage to gain full sisterhood (*DR*, 245-67) and the twisted Redstone *angreal* doorframes through which various characters step into the strange realm of the *Aelfinn* or the *Eelfinn* to seek answers to the future, all provide further examples of labyrinths that Jordan's heroes must engage with or enter. A notable instance of this testing of the hero figure occurs when Mat first steps through a Redstone *angreal* doorframe to a place with no 'straight lines', and walks along 'continuously curved' hallways where even the 'tilework made spirals and sinuous lines'. (*SR*, 245) The riddling answers he receives from the alien beings he encounters give the sense of a verbal puzzle or mental labyrinth; for instance his fate being to 'give up half the light of the world to save the world'. (*SR*, 249) These cryptic words suggest that Mat will sacrifice an eye; an interpretation strengthened by Min's viewing of him with 'an eye on a balance scale', an image that resonates further with Egwene's dream of 'Mat, placing his own left eye on a balance scale'. (*EOTW*, 216; *DR*, 291) Jordan's repetitious patterning of predictions of such a gory sacrifice intensifies the significance of the act, as well as pointing to Mat's underlying moral strength of character – despite his outward devil-may-care attitude. For as the *Aelfinn* and *Eelfinn* are said to speak only the truth, and the Aes Sedai believe Min's viewings will come to pass, the reader feels that Mat will not shirk from his prophesied gruesome destiny. The higher purpose for Mat's bodily maiming resonates with Rand's wounding during his battle with Ba'alzamon. He leaves himself open to a blow in the side, purposely using a tactic known as 'Sheathing the Sword', in order to get under his enemy's guard and so to deliver a fatal strike. (*GH*, 147) Furthermore, Rand is resigned to sacrificing himself to save the world. Thus, by association, Jordan draws the life-threads of Rand and Mat – as he will Perrin – toward the

same destined path, and so weaves the fabric of his story towards the construction of a triple male hero figure.

Although most characters enter the strange realms of either the *Ael'inn* or the *Eelfinn* in search of truth and knowledge, Mat's second encounter there – discussed more fully later – brings metamorphosis through a ritual of death and rebirth, a repeating motif in these texts that is also applied to Rand and to Perrin as well by means of his wolf/human transition. It seems safe to speculate that this motif will apply to Moraine as well, whose Gandalf-like disappearance has already been discussed in chapter two. Jordan's patterning of variations on the motif of death and rebirth further helps to underscore the importance of the transformative development of the protagonists.

Rand's journey into the labyrinth-like forest of 'glass' columns in the central courtyard of the hidden city of Rhuidean, provides a pivotal point in his development as a leader of the Aiel. (SR, 404ff) It is a place where those who would become clan chiefs of the Aiel must face the disturbing truth about their nation's past and either return marked on one forearm with the sign of the dragon, or perish. In Rand's case, he emerges marked on the forearms with twin dragons, 'sinuous golden-maned form[s] scaled in scarlet and gold', a prophetic sign and initiation that proclaim him as the long awaited messiah of the Aiel – 'He Who Comes With the Dawn'. (SR, 558) These glittering 'tattoos' mimic the scarlet and gold scaled creature that is woven on the ancient banner of the Dragon, and thus are symbolic of the future co-joining of the life-paths of the desert tribes with the destiny of the Dragon Reborn.

During Rand's ordeal among the glass spires each step takes him 'forward and back'; a physical journey 'forward' into the centre of the forest of glass, but mentally 'back' in time. (SR, 422) At one point Rand catches a glimpse of Muradin, another would-be Aiel clan chief, weeping, tearing at his face and gouging at his eyes with his nails

through his inability to accept the stark truth of his visions, that his people and the despised, passivist Travelling People were originally the one race. (*SR*, 432) Consequently, Muradin had failed the test and remains lost forever in shadowy void, a space beyond that of the waking world of the Wheel, somewhere between past and present, vision and reality.

Jordan's juxtaposition of success and failure in a patterning of opposites foregrounds the hazardous nature of initiation, and suggests that, for his protagonists, personal development includes finding the courage to confront unpalatable truths and to overcome fears arising from them. Such patterns of initiation are further set against the destructive labyrinthine journeys faced by the Forsaken who, since the Age of Legends, have chosen to walk in the footsteps of the Shadow.

### **Labyrinths as thresholds of 'despair'**

The experiences of two such antagonists, Demandred and Moghedien, reveal that their physical journeys through the labyrinth-like tunnel into the bowels of the black mountain at Shayol Ghul, where 'so long ago' they had first made 'obedience to the Great Lord' and 'pledg[ed]' their 'souls' have led them to an ever-downward spiral into darkness, degradation and slavery. (*COS*, 456) Within the tunnel 'jagged spikes jutted from the ceiling, stony teeth ready to snap shut, the Great Lord's teeth to rend the unfaithful or the traitor'. (*LOC*, prologue, 3) For the present, Demandred will pass freely to receive orders to commit further horrors he dare not refuse. But as Moghedien has failed to please, the 'Great Lord's fangs' descend and force her to slither along the tunnel 'on her belly'. (*COS*, 456-57) Jordan's choice of serpent-like imagery resonates with the Christian portrayal of Satan and by association must suggest damnation. The tunnel leads to a cave where the 'thinness in the Pattern' allows the 'presence' of the Dark Lord to be keenly

sensed, in a rapture of both ‘ecstasy’ and ‘pain’. The location is described as a ‘lake of molten stone, red-mottled with black, where man-high flames danced, died and rose again’, known as the ‘Pit of Doom’. (*LOC*, prologue, 4) It is a scene that vividly recalls Milton’s depiction of Satan’s hellish realm and, for the reader, heightens the horror of how the Forsaken One’s desire for unbridled power and immortality has actually brought eternal entrapment for him and his companions. As a further punishment Moghedien’s soul is caught in a ‘mindtrap’ (*cour’sourva*), to be worn on a cord around the neck of Moridin, the Right Hand of the Dark Lord, and if he should break it she will be severed from her soul to become a helpless, utterly obedient ‘automaton’. The lightest ‘caress’ of his ‘thumb’ upon the crystal is felt ‘across her mind, her soul,’ a reminder of how easily he could increase the pressure and crush her core. (*COS*, 463) The image of a ‘tiny, fragile cage of gold wire and crystal,’ a blending of exquisite beauty with exquisite pain, becomes a cruel, symbolic micro-labyrinth, from which the victim, no matter how she may twist and turn her mind, has no means of escape. (*COS*, 458)

Jordan uses the labyrinth structurally in the hero’s emotional journey as a means of bringing his main protagonists to face and overcome their greatest fears and so gain the strength to accept their fated roles in the focal quest. By contrast the antagonists’ journeys into the labyrinth function to externalise graphically the ever-present fear and torment of their minds, by which means the Dark Lord keeps them in eternal servitude. Jordan thereby points to the folly of their self-seeking, as they have no option but to obey every whim of their Dark master. Through this alternating pattern of light and dark, of hope and despair, Jordan highlights the essential vulnerability of his human characters. These labyrinthic journeys can also be seen to mirror the complicated interweaving of the life-threads of the companions who surround the main heroic figure in Jordan’s Wheel world. The following section extends consideration of this complex motif of the twists and turns, the emotional

testing and triumphant negotiations of the labyrinth, to the way Jordan deploys his other characters throughout the narrative.

### **The interwoven pattern of supporting characters**

In Jordan's world of the Wheel the main protagonist, Rand, is surrounded by a cluster of companions who at times follow their own paths but also have key parts to play for Rand's ultimate fulfilment of his cosmic quest. Like him, too, they must mature, both physically and metaphysically, to enable them to fit their greater roles. In some form or other Jordan's primary and secondary protagonists (female and male) face personal inner struggles as they attempt to come to terms with the emergence of superhuman or super-sensory powers that raise them above the ordinary, while at a more human level they are all brought to explore and develop their awakening sexuality – a recurring point of departure from the Tolkienian model.

Rand is strongly linked to two other *ta'veren* youths, Mat and Perrin, without whom it is prophesied he will fail at the Last Battle. Together they form the core triple hero figure – the focus of the following chapter. As one of their adversaries remarks of their interconnected status: 'Cut one leg of the tripod ... and all fall down'. (*DR*, 77) As well, Rand's destiny is further tied to his young women companions and supporters, Nynaeve, Egwene, Elayne, Aviendha and the seer Min, and they too are threaded into the heroic paradigm. Strengthening the role of the female protagonists and their ties to the main hero figure is Jordan's concept of Rand's triple mental bonding with Min, Elayne and Aviendha – a reduplication of the *ta'veren* threads that link him to Perrin and Mat. Jordan's use of the imagery of weaving, and Min's prowess as a seer, may well seem analogous to the motif of the Three Fates of ancient mythology, which he also evokes in his portrayal of Casuane and her unfinished tapestry. But in this instance Min, Elayne and Aviendha form a

mental web through the weaving of intricate threads of *saidar*, ‘a tracery of Spirit that made the finest lace seem drab,’ and as this ‘spiderweb of Spirit’ settles into Rand he becomes bound to them in an intimate sharing of emotional and physical feelings. (*WH*, 291) In a later episode Rand and Nynaeve are mentally linked through a confluence of *saidin* and *saidar*, which enables him to cleanse the male side of the One Power. Thus, Jordan’s repetition of the weaving metaphor works to interweave Rand’s greater destiny not only with the life-threads of Mat and Perrin, but also with those of his female companions. This tactic emphasises the importance of their roles, as they provide much more than a part of the background against which he is to be viewed.

### **Heroic feminine journeys of growth in the *WOT***

Jordan’s secondary female protagonists may not gain the same heroic status as the three main male figures, but they experience their own life-changing journeys of self-growth and have significant, at times pivotal, roles to play in the focal narrative. Thus Jordan finds ample space for them within the traditionally male-oriented heroic quest paradigm. In his portrayal of these women Jordan moves away from the stereotypical female figures of sage and temptress that informed his presentation of Moiraine and Lanfear and, in part, helped to mould Rand’s character. The significant and individualistic roles that Jordan creates for these women are a distinct departure from the traditional literary assumption of the male hero figure, and befit his theory of a balance between the male and female aspects of the One Power in the Wheel world. Thus Jordan, in a similar fashion to many women writers of modern fantasy (i.e. Ursula Le Guin, Patricia McKillip, Marion Bradley or Robin Hobb), has shifted away from the presumption that:

female characters in the Secondary World must be restricted to the roles played by women in our primary world’s medieval romances – object of the

quest, mother, temptress, witch – or else absent, as in epics such as *Beowulf* or the *Song of Roland*.<sup>28</sup>

In Jordan's *WOT* the three main hero figures (Rand, Mat and Perrin) remain traditional warrior types, but the women who surround this trio are depicted as strong-willed, vital figures, and through their own ancillary journeys assume a heroic cast. The author portrays them as women who are prepared to take their destinies into their own hands and to go in quest of self-knowledge. In line with the interlace technique of his narrative, where each strand contributes to the overall pattern, it is to be expected that their stories will become interwoven into Rand's focal quest, as do the stories of his male companions.

The women's ancillary quests place them in the heroic mode as their stories provide a mirroring of the focal quest. Jordan thus demonstrates that heroism in the *WOT* is not to be entirely focused on a singular (male) protagonist, for the heroic figure comprises a number of interlaced life-threads, including those of Rand's female companions. Jordan's splintering of the hero figure suggests that he is drawing on the concept of the hero in mediaeval romances in which it is 'characteristic ... to have more than one hero'.<sup>29</sup> Yet despite these helpers the final test, signifying the success or failure of the quest, is one that the central hero must confront alone. Jordan emphasises this in the *WOT*, as the Dragon Reborn remains the central heroic figure, the apex of the triangle, but his various companions are caught in the web of his destiny and their ancillary quests can influence the progression of his own journey. A comparison can be loosely drawn with the mediaeval interlaced narrative of Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, and the company of questing knights who surround King Arthur, lynch-pin of the depicted society, as their individual quests impact on the stability of both their king and his kingdom.

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<sup>28</sup> Ringel, 'Women Fantasists', pp. 165-6.

<sup>29</sup> Morton W. Blomfield, 'The Problem of the Hero in the Later Medieval Period', in Burns and Reagan, *Concepts of the Hero*, p. 36.

Jordan's development of Rand's main female companions may be examined in terms of the initiations they face as they negotiate their own ways through a labyrinth-like series of experiences, which lead to death or rebirth and provide a counterpoint to the central heroic quest motif. But the women's journeys of self-growth, and their attainment of extra-sensory or superhuman powers, demand that they abandon either a person or a role in life that is dear to their hearts. Repeatedly, they have to walk away from people who need them and whom they love, unlike the male heroes who are tested according to abstract concepts of heroism. Thus in his testing of his female characters Jordan focuses more on their emotional responses, which for the reader adds a poignancy to their dilemmas that is not so strongly felt in regard to his male characters. This point can be demonstrated through a brief examination of the women's initiation process.

Nynaeve, Egwene and Elayne have the innate potential to become powerful channelers of *saidar*, and their initiation into the sisterhood of the Aes Sedai at the White Tower entails entering a powerful *ter'angreal* in the shape of a triple archway. They must step through each of the arches in turn and therein face their greatest fears – once 'for what was', once 'for what is' and once 'for what will be'. (*GH*, 338-49) The way back to their reality is offered, briefly, each time they enter, and if they fail to return through the archway when summoned they will be lost forever. Nynaeve initially steps through the arch into a stone-walled maze to be pursued by one of the male Forsaken. In this other-worldly dimension she gains the ability to annihilate him with the One Power, but must forego the opportunity to do so, in order to return through the archway. Before joining the White Tower Nynaeve had held the position of Wisdom, or healer, in her home village of Emond's Field, but she steps through the archway for the second time to discover she must now abandon the people she loves to the cruel bullying woman who has replaced her. In the final test she finds herself happily married to Lan, the man she loves, but must make

the heart-wrenching decision to walk away from him and their children, as he begs: 'Stay with me, always'. (*GH*, 351) Jordan thus links his female protagonists to the concept of heroic sacrifice for a higher purpose.

Within the archways Egwene discovers that she must abandon Rand to madness and the Dark, 'to betray him, fail him, again and again'. (*DR*, 266) Jordan gives no details of Elayne's ordeal, but as she weeps uncontrollably and whispers, 'I could not be that awful ... I just couldn't', the reader feels she has faced a similar cruel pattern of testing. (*DR*, 273) As with his male protagonists, Jordan also foregrounds the difficulty of acquiring enhanced powers and of becoming a magus in his imaginary world, which always entails some form of sacrifice and loss. As is explained by Sheriam, one of the Aes Sedai officiating at Nynaeve's initiation:

There is always some reason not to return ... This *ter'angreal* weaves traps for you from your own mind, weaves them tight and strong, harder than steel and more deadly than poison. That is why we use it as a test. You must want to be Aes Sedai more than anything else in the whole world, enough to face anything, fight free of anything, to achieve it. (*GH*, 348)

Their friend Aviendha, an Aiel 'Maiden of the Spear', when summoned to join the Wise Ones of her tribe, must not only put aside her cherished warrior sisterhood, but in a harsh severing of her past life also personally destroy her old clothing and weapons. Aviendha's rite of passage takes her to the hidden city of Rhuidean where she must step through a similar *ter'angreal* archway, to be shown a variety of paths that her future could take. She learns the bitter lesson that some 'despised' things 'must be', while other 'cherished hopes' must not come to pass. (*SR*, 379) Like Rand, she cannot avoid her 'duty' or her 'obligation' to her people, but in futile words that echo his earlier anguished cry against the dictates of fate and so arouse our sympathy, she defies the Wise Ones: 'I am a Maiden of the Spear. I do not want to be a Wise One. I will not be!' (*SR*, 376) But, as

in Jordan's world 'the Wheel weaves as the Wheel wills', both Aviendah and the reader are aware that while the threads of a destined life-path may be somewhat bent, they cannot be entirely side-stepped.

Each of these women faces painful journeys of initiation stripped of all clothing and personal possessions, much as Moiraine did when she gained permission from the Wise Ones to enter Rhuidean. For these women, as with the men, their only weapons of defence during initiation are 'a strong mind and a strong heart'. (*SR*, 379) Their nakedness is symbolic of the laying aside of their previous lives, so they emerge re-clothed in self-knowledge, and such rebirth is celebrated by the putting on of new garments that denote their enhanced status. At the White Tower successful initiates are also symbolically 'washed clean' of their past identities, 'washed clean, in heart and soul' with a chalice of water; a type of holy baptism that adds an aura of sacredness to the rituals. (*GH*, 353) Indeed, Jordan's portrayal of the White Tower and the Aes Sedai bears comparison to the influential mediaeval orders of holy women. Ritual nudity is an old motif of initiation and symbolic of a return to a state of innocence, freedom from earthly taint, or of resurrection in rebirth,<sup>30</sup> so it is intriguing that Jordan does not require his male protagonists to strip off anything, except their weapons, when faced with similar situations of testing; for instance Rand and Mat's journey to Rhuidean. The implication is, surely, that men are to be deemed naked without their weapons.

Jordan suggests that the women's personal sacrifices and painful initiations bring deeper understanding and maturity to prepare them to take on significant roles of leadership within their societies, and to engage in their own dangerous journeys of adventure that are threaded into the focal narrative. These young women are not presented as *ta'veren*, but they are drawn into Rand's orbit of influence and their ancillary quests,

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<sup>30</sup> Cooper, *Symbols*, pp. 112-113.

such as the finding of long-lost objects of power, work to favour his greater cause: for instance, their recovery and use of the long-lost 'Bowl of the Winds', a legendary *ter'angreal*, brings about a reversal of the adverse weather patterns that had been caused by the Dark Lord, thus undermining his influence in the Wheel world and implying that he can be defeated. (*COS*, chap. 38; *POD*, chap. 5) They also discover and arrange for the apparent safe disposal of a 'necklace and two bracelets of jointed black metal' that would enable any female Forsaken or women of the Black Ajah to enslave Rand and turn him to their own dark pattern. (*SR*, 882) In a further twist of Jordan's plotting, only the reader is aware that this *ter'angreal* subsequently falls into the wrong hands and so still poses a grave danger to Rand's future. (*WH*, chap. 21) By revealing this fact to the reader but keeping his characters in the dark, the author achieves an element of intrigue and suspense.

Through the cause-and-effect pattern of actions, as described above, or by narrative echoes and anticipations, Jordan continuously entangles the stories of the women with the central quest. For example, if Rand is to remain sane he must cleanse the tainted male side of the One Power, but to do so requires Nynaeve's assistance as she is the only powerful female channeller in whom he has complete trust. But in order to help him Nynaeve must gain control of her considerable talent, for at an early age, out of fear, she set up a mental block that now prevents her from channelling unless roused to anger. To be able, freely, to access her potential power she must learn to completely surrender to it, a state of mind she achieves, in another symbolic rebirth, after becoming trapped in a sunken boat. On the point of drowning she totally surrenders her mind to *saidar*, shattering her long-held block, and uses her now unfettered power to free herself from the wreck. From this point on Nynaeve is empowered to assist Rand, and her action anticipates his necessary surrender to the female side of the One Power, when they later achieve a mental bridging of *saidar* and *saidin* that enables him to achieve his goal.

Other threads of the women's stories are interwoven into that of Rand's. Elayne not only becomes an Aes Sedai but also comes into her own kingdom as the Queen of Andor. Her ability to unite the factions of her own peoples aids Rand's quest, as his success, in part, is dependent on a unification of the various peoples of the Wheel world. Egwene is appointed as the Amrylin Seat, the head priestess of a rebel group of Aes Sedai from the White Tower, and she then raises an army to over-throw the old hostile regime on the island at Tar Valon. Her friendship and support of Rand anticipates the likelihood of a union between the White Tower and Rand's Black Tower, between female and male, as symbolised by the ancient *yin/yang* symbol of the Aes Sedai. Thus, Jordan integrates Rand's female companions into the greater quest, but along the way he empowers them to achieve their own heroic journeys of self-growth and self-determination, and for the reader they emerge as vital, fully-rounded characters in their own right.

On the persistent use of the 'companions' or 'helpers' motif in epic-style high fantasy texts, Clute makes the following observation:

[The] extended narrative sweep ... offers ample scope within which secondary characters may act out their destinies ... fill the scene, bolster the hero, perform feats he or she cannot, depart upon ancillary quests whose accomplishments will help trigger the climax, and die if necessary.<sup>31</sup>

Clute further suggests that the 'reasons for this are obvious: variety, pleasure, a reservoir of possible response when action is required'.<sup>32</sup> Thus, the author is able to offer the reader an intricately structured and layered narrative that often unfolds through separate yet thematically interconnected storylines. Not only does such a tactic complicate and enrich the overall pattern of the story, it also widens the reader's knowledge of the various main characters and of their world, thereby enforcing a stronger sense of its authenticity that helps sustain Secondary Belief. An author such as Jordan, whose on-going narrative

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<sup>31</sup> Clute, 'Companions', in Clute and Grant, *Fantasy*, p. 220.

<sup>32</sup> Clute, 'Companions', in Clute and Grant, *Fantasy*, p. 221.

currently spans ten volumes (and the expectation is that at least two more will be needed to complete the series), is able to encompass a large cast of characters and ancillary quests, and yet bring them to bear on the focal narrative of Rand's final battle.

### **The metaphor of a 'heroic line'**

Because of Jordan's fondness for multi-stranded yet interlaced plots that at times can loop backwards and forwards across the various books, the metaphor of a 'heroic line', loosely centred on Rand, that runs throughout the narrative, with the three *ta'veren* and at times the women, orbiting and moving across it, seems most appropriate. It is a metaphor that represents the heroic figure textually as well as narratively. As these characters circle in and out of the main narrative, but continuously add threads to it from their own stories, they are all being woven in some fashion into Rand's quest and placed along the 'heroic line' as the narrative progresses. It seems likely that by the time of Rand's prophesied final confrontation with the Dark Lord, the life-threads of the three *ta'veren* youths, in particular, will have become braided together to form a tight weave that enables them to act in unison and thus to form a type of triple hero. Such a union is symbolically suggested by the three ancient war banners that they resurrect: Rand has the banner of the Dragon; Perrin, the Red Eagle banner of Manetheren; and Mat, the banner of the Band of the Red Hand, a legendary warrior troop. Jordan's interlacing of these three main male protagonists allows him to explore different aspects of the hero figure, and it is an exposition of each of these figures that follows now.

## Chapter Four

### Heroic Interlace: The Jordan Hero as Destroyer, Builder and Preserver

‘Men of Manetheren ... thorn to the Dark One’s Foot and a bramble to his hand.’  
(*EOTW*, 132)

This chapter presents a detailed exposition of Rand, Perrin, and Mat, and the interlacing narrative technique that Jordan employs for three main purposes: to present different aspects or personalities of the hero figure; to mirror narrative moments or to provide anticipations of actions for other figures; and to anticipate actions for the individual characters themselves. Through presenting variations upon commonly-shared themes and motifs, whereby the three *ta'veren* youths are reflected one upon the other, Jordan braids the life-threads of Perrin and Mat into the web of destiny that is forming around Rand, the Dragon Reborn. Jordan thus shows that Rand’s two companions form an integral part of the pattern and that they cannot be removed without damaging the overall design of Rand’s fated quest. In the discussion on Rand, and Jordan’s use of the dragon motif, some aspects of the work of Raymond Feist and Robin Hobb are incorporated to provide counterpoint to this argument.

#### The power of ‘three’

Jordan’s use of the triple hero figure draws on the long symbolic power of the number three. Across a diversity of cultures, myths, legends, folklores and religions feature ‘innumerable trinities of gods and powers’ or ‘threefold goddesses’, that can represent

‘different aspects or potencies, of one deity’.<sup>1</sup> Consider, for example, the Christian Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, or the Hindu Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Other well known triple figures include the Parcae, the Three Fates who spin, measure, and cut the life-threads of humankind; the three Graces who bring beauty to the world to lift the hearts of both gods and mortals; and the three-faced figure of the goddess Hecate, whose association with witchcraft sees her reflected much later in the three witches of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. Monsters in classical myth are frequently three-bodied or triple-headed, such as Geryones, the three-headed giant fought by Hercules; the three Gorgons, of whom the most feared is Medusa; and Cerberus, the three-headed dog who is said to guard the entrance to the underworld. Traditionally in European thought the number three is symbolic of ‘infinity, perfection, power and greatness’.<sup>2</sup> It can also be representative of ‘past, present and future’,<sup>3</sup> and this is particularly interesting in Jordan’s Secondary World as each of the three *ta’veren* youths, in different ways, brings the past into the present and uses ancient talents or knowledge thus gained to weave towards the future. For as the Ogier, Loial, explains to them: ‘*Ta’veren* pull history along behind them and shape the Pattern just by being’. (*GH*, 35) Therefore, in some ways they are poised on the threshold between what was and what is to be, a critical point of change (the ‘Crossroads of Twilight’, as suggested by the title of the tenth volume) and Janus-like they can look both ways.

It is a convention of heroic or epic high fantasy that the past may be brought to bear on the present – in the sense that in past actions lie the seeds for the current disruption to the imaginary worlds. For instance, in Tolkien’s *LOTR* the background story reveals how Sauron’s obsession for control and power brought about the forging of the destructive One

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<sup>1</sup> J. C. Cooper, *An Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Traditional Symbols*, London, 1992, p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> Alena Trckova-Flamee, 2004, ‘Thrice-Hero’, <http://www.pantheon.org/articles/t/thrice-hero.html> (accessed 19 May, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> Cooper, *Symbols*, p. 114.

Ring, while in Le Guin's *Earthsea* series it is Ged's arrogant actions that lead to the wizard Cob turning to the black arts and rupturing the delicate barrier between the living and the dead. Similarly, in Jordan's world of the Wheel it was human over-reaching, the lust for unbridled power and immortality that allowed the Dark Lord to lay his touch on the world, and led to the destruction of the Golden Age. Nevertheless, in all such texts the past can also have positive influence on the present and add a further dimension to the narrative. Thus, in the *WOT* the past enters the present through the resurgence of old heroic bloodlines, as with Jordan's simple country folk of the Two Rivers who had long forgotten their distinguished ancestry, or primaeval talents such as Perrin's ability to link with the minds of wolves, or Mat's memories of past battle strategies and of the Old Tongue. In fantasy the disruption of linear time allows room for elements from the past to be activated in the present in order to provide invaluable assistance in times of great need. In Tolkien's Middle-earth, Aragorn's summoning of the dead to fulfil a dishonoured pledge of the past turns the tide in the battle and, similarly, in the world of the Wheel, Mat's sounding of the Horn of Valere compels the dead heroes of the past to assist in his bid to vanquish the forces of the Seanchan invaders. The ability of Rand and his companions to locate the legendary Green Man's grove and the items it holds that are needed to forward the quest, also falls into this category. Indeed, in respect of Jordan's portrayal of a linked three-figure hero, the fluidity between past and present is vital to their make-up and to the fulfilment of the fated roles they must enact. As it is through the minds of Rand, Perrin and Mat that aspects of a previous Age of the world of the Wheel are imposed on their present day so they, too, reflect the repeating Pattern of Ages that makes up the world of the Wheel.

The depiction of the triple hero figure allows Jordan to present an integrated, multi-faceted, multi-talented hero figure, yet to retain believably human characters that the reader can relate to. Perhaps, through the interdependent actions of the triple figure, and those of

the lesser characters who are drawn into the heroic line, such complication of the conventional quest paradigm underscores the concept of universal unity, one which is needed to restore and preserve the integrity of the invented world. In his portrayal of a multiple hero figure Jordan is drawing on a convention in epic or romance to assign specific tasks in the quest to a number of heroic figures. But Jordan's concept of his characters Rand, Mat and Perrin as a form of heroic triad is an interesting adaptation of the convention of the motif of the hero and his companions. In this regard he may well have been influenced by Icelandic sagas, especially as the mythological ancestry of Perrin and Mat is drawn from the Northern gods, Thor and Othin. Indeed in some saga sources, as Dean Miller notes:

[the] permutation of the motif of the hero and helpers presents the following shape or pattern: a pair of heroic figures, each with a specific valence or talent, is joined by a third figure whose powers are drawn from a manifestly different, usually supernatural source. The Icelandic *Þáttr* 'Bósa or Herraúðr' for example, is best described as a breezy adventure tale of warriors and warlocks, one in which Herraúðr has the role of the normative or 'straight' actor while Bósi is a freer spirit, a bit of a trickster, and an uninhibited sexual adventurer. The *tertium quid* is Bósi's brother Smidr, who possesses all the tricks of the magician with all the associated gifts of shape changing and sorcery.<sup>4</sup>

Jordan's reworking of this motif presents a similar pattern: Rand, the Dragon Reborn as the magician; Mat, as a type of trickster/gambler and sexual adventurer; and Perrin, through his mental wolf-link, as a shape-changer who adopts the form of a wolf when he runs with his wolf brothers while in the World of Dreams.

In Jordan's imaginary world these three male figures all follow the conventional stages of the heroic quest: separation as youths from their known world, and personal growth effected through both physical and metaphysical journeys. In different forms each

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<sup>4</sup> Dean A. Miller, *The Epic Hero*, Baltimore, 2000, pp. 106-7.

plays a crucial role in the overall cosmic quest, although Rand, as the reincarnation of the Dragon, stands firmly at the apex of this human triangle. He is set apart as well by his ability to wield the One Power, and by the Christ-like imagery that surrounds and, by association, elevates him further in stature. In another configuration of three, he is a triple messiah known in his own land as the 'Dragon Reborn'; to the Aiel of the desert as 'He Who Comes with the Dawn'; and to the Sea Folk as 'The Coramoor', and all these peoples have their own beliefs and prophecies in regard to him. Through this rhetoric of repetition, the concept of a thrice-named messiah, Jordan is playing on the Eastern notion that there are many diverse paths to the one cosmic Truth and, by implication, making a call for a universal tolerance of the disparate spiritual beliefs in our own world.

In *LOTR*, through his use of the romance convention of a number of heroic figures, Tolkien also advocates the merits of the 'heroic Company', where each member plays a specific part. Thus, at Rivendell, Gandalf reminds Bilbo that 'only a small part is played in great deeds by any hero'. (*Fellowship*, 263) However, in Jordan's Secondary World the fate of the three *ta'veren* youths is presented as being more tightly interwoven than that of, say, Aragorn, Frodo and Sam, for without Mat and Perrin it is clearly foretold that Rand not *might*, but *must* fail. Because of their physical and metaphysical links the three Emond's Fielders constitute a composite secular personality, offering various psychological perspectives on the ancient notion of trinity. In addition as hypothesised by Karl-Johan Norén, within the Pattern as they perform certain roles and tasks, they can be seen to form a secular variation on the classical Hindu trinity of gods, to present a theme of Destroyer–Builder–Preserver, with Rand as the Destroyer (Saviour), Perrin as the Builder, and Mat as the Preserver,<sup>5</sup> a theory which sits well with the Hindu-influenced cosmology

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<sup>5</sup> Karl-Johan Norén, 'The Rand-Mat-Perrin Tripod', <http://hem3.passagen.se/kjnoren/jordan/tripod.html> (accessed 19 March, 2003).

of Jordan's Secondary World. However, there is no suggestion that Jordan is drawing on more than the concept of three god-like figures that together work to one end.<sup>6</sup>

### **Destroyer—Builder—Preserver**

The concept of a secular model of Destroyer–Builder–Preserver is the one I use to ‘unpack’ the way in which each of the three *ta'veren*, through their parallel existences, offers different perspectives on the function of the Jordan triple heroic figure. Each figure is also examined in terms of how his development is enhanced through a fusion of past and present, while the Great Pattern relentlessly weaves the strands of their life experiences towards a catastrophic event in the future. For instance, Rand as Dragon Reborn is presented as the current embodiment of the past Dragon, whose voice he hears in his head, while Perrin develops the ancient talent of linking with the collective, timeless minds of wolves. Through painful initiation Mat gains memories of past lives that provide prowess in battle tactics, along with the ability to speak in the Old Tongue, and so he becomes the ‘sunder’ of the legendary Horn of Valere that summons the crucial aid of heroes from the past. Furthermore, in all three youths the ‘old blood’ of the long forgotten heroes of Manetheren still ‘sings’ in their veins, another linking of past to present, and to their ties as blood-brothers. (*EOTW*, 170) Yet Rand's mind can be taken over by the former Dragon, and the taint on *saidin* can bring insanity; Perrin faces the danger of becoming more wolf than human or of being trapped in the wolf dreaming; and Mat faces being consumed by the evil in the tainted dagger, or by the memories of past lives that continuously assert themselves in his mind. Jordan thus presents each of them with a personal crisis of identity, which must be resolved if they are to develop and to advance along the heroic line of the narrative.

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<sup>6</sup> In the Hindu trinity the three principal gods are Lord Brahma (the Creator), Lord Vishnu (the preserver), and Lord Shiva (the destroyer). But they are complex figures who represent many other things at many levels on the physical, mental and earthly planes.

The struggle for identity faced by these protagonists equates well with the Jungian thought of the 'hero in all its archetypal forms' as being the 'most important figure' in the 'quest', because it 'represents the struggles of the Self for individuation, growth, and centring'. Through 'identifying with the hero' the reader 'travels with him in quest of the *numen* ... the universal truth at the center of one's own soul'.<sup>7</sup> In other words, the quest of the hero to self-realisation can provide the catalyst for personal growth in the reader. But adding to the conundrum of identity faced by Jordan's three protagonists is the paradoxical idea that, while the three *ta'veren* have separate psyches, they are still one, 'three ... centrepieces of the weaving' that will shape the Pattern of the Age Lace. (*GH* 35) It is only by means of their entwined and fated paths that the Dragon Reborn has any hope of victory at *Tarmon Gai'don*. Further, Rand knows well that, even if they are set separate tasks along the way, the 'three *ta'veren* who had been tied together since infancy' at the end would become 'tied together once more.' (*FOH*, 614) Thus, through the interwoven life-threads of Rand, Perrin and Mat, Jordan presents different guises of the hero figure who can be seen to reflect each other and in turn to reflect and embody what is at stake in the world, a narrative technique of reduplication that intensifies the urgency of events in the depicted Age, and through which means the author works to convince the reader of this fact. A detailed exposition of each of these figures may now be made, beginning with Rand, and then turning to Perrin and Mat.

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<sup>7</sup> Stephen Potts, 'The Many Faces of the Hero in *The Lord of the Rings*', *Mythlore*, 66, Summer, 1991, p. 4.

## The triple hero

‘Three threads woven together share one another’s doom. When one is cut all are.’  
(*DR*, 67)

## Rand al’thor: The Dragon Reborn

‘Death is lighter than a feather, duty heavier than a mountain.’  
(*GH*, 679)

Rand as the Dragon Reborn stands at the apex of Jordan’s triangle of male heroes. There are many textual references to Rand as the ‘breaker of the world’ and it is prophesied that he will be both ‘Destroyer’ and ‘Saviour’, and so a seemingly secular Christ figure. In the design of the Great Pattern Rand’s central *raison d’être* is to overcome the Dark Lord at *Tarmon Gai’don*. Thus Jordan suggests that, despite the interlacing of Rand’s life-path with those of Perrin and Mat, and the importance of their roles, the final confrontation with his nemesis will be his alone. All Rand’s actions and tasks are designed by the author to strengthen and prepare him for this climactic event, as in his metaphysical battle with one of the Forsaken at Falme in the second book where he is first publicly proclaimed as the Dragon Reborn. (*GH*, 676) The Dragon Reborn is predicted to be ‘born of *Far Dareis Mai*’ (a Maiden of the Spear) on the ‘slopes of Dragonmount’, and the Aiel say he will be ‘blood of our blood mixed with the old blood, raised by an ancient blood not ours’. (*DR*, 443-45) These prophetic details, surrounding the rebirth of the Dragon, finally force Rand to accept the unpalatable fact that he is a fosterling, and not native to the pastoral county of the Two Rivers. He learns from the Wise Ones of the Aiel that although his mother had been a Maiden of the Spear, she was not one of their people, and had come to them as a stranger seeking refuge. Later, she had died in the midst of battle after giving birth to him on Dragonmount, where he was found in the snow by Tam al’Thor of the Two

Rivers, who then raised him as his own.<sup>8</sup> Thus, Jordan is utilising a common convention from both myth and fairy tale where the hero is an orphan child of mysterious birth, one traditionally associated with water, whose birthright is hidden but who is destined to bring extraordinary benefits to society. Well-known examples of this motif include the biblical myth of Moses, the castaway child in *Beowulf* who becomes king of the Scyldings, or Oscar Wilde's *Star Child*. In regard to this motif Pierre Brunel suggests that:

surrounded by death, threatened from his glorious birth by a hostile universe, given up to the caprices of the waters (as were the Assyrian king Sargon and the founders of Rome, Romulus and Remus), the child is saved by fishermen (Perseus), shepherds (Oedipus), a herdsman (Cyrus) or indeed looked after by kind animals (Romulus and Remus). He then lives an obscure life, very different from the one for which his birth should have destined him. This is the period of hidden life, of apparent death.<sup>9</sup>

In the *WOT* Rand's foster father is presented as a widowed shepherd, and Rand is raised by him in an obscure corner of the country, in ignorance of his true destiny or of the dangerous forces, Light and Dark, that will seek him out and so provide the catalyst for his dramatic rebirth.

When Rand is eventually forced to leave his home he carries with him a heron-marked sword that serves as a bond to his father Tam, for it had once been his weapon. Later, when the precious sword is broken during his battle against Ba'alzamon, at which point he is hailed as the Dragon Reborn, the broken blade becomes a poignant metaphor for his disturbing realisation that he cannot be Tam's blood son, and instead has a fearful heritage that has cast him onto the world stage. His subsequent actions, in fulfilment of old prophecy, such as the taking of the Crystal Sword, 'that no hand but his should wield' make it impossible for him to deny his birthright, as do the prophetic twin heron marks on

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<sup>8</sup> Miller suggests that: 'when the hero-child is born and the mother dies in childbirth we may be seeing a kind of imagined sacrifice: a death pays toll for the extraordinary birth'. *Epic*, p. 98.

<sup>9</sup> Pierre Brunel (ed), *Companion to Literary Myths, Heroes and Archetypes*, London and New York, 1992, pp. 558.

his palms (akin to the stigmata of Christ) and the Dragon markings that appear on his forearms during his initiation in the hidden city of Rhuidean. (*DR*, 675) As well as this, he faces the fact that he is able to channel the One Power, and must wield it, despite the risk of insanity, for there is no ‘unstilled’ male Aes Sedai of the Light living to teach him to control his talent. Rand thus emerges as a reluctant hero who out of a strong sense of duty assumes the mantle of Dragon Reborn, and who ruefully thinks that his life ‘would be easier if this was a story’. (*FOH*, 671) He believes that ‘in stories things always happened as the hero planned, seemingly when he wanted them to happen’. (*SR*, 827) Ironically, for the reader, Rand’s life *is* a story, and one controlled by a pattern created by the author, which adds to the pathos of his dilemma. The burden of his task is summed up by his resignation to the fact that ‘duty is heavier than a mountain, death lighter than a feather’.<sup>10</sup> (*GH*, 679)

Yet, as the narrative progresses and Rand’s leadership qualities are brought to the fore, he becomes colder, more arrogant, aloof and manipulative. His process of isolation is metaphorically expressed in one of Egwene’s prophetic dreams in which Rand is ‘building a wall’ of ‘stones’ to separate him from his friends and allies, and saying: ‘It has to be done ... I’ll not let you stop me now’. (*SR*, 200) To balance this dangerous pattern of behaviour Jordan introduces several women companions into Rand’s life to help to humanise him. And, as discussed in the previous chapter, both Cadsuane and Bair, the Aiel Wise One, believe it to be crucial that he remember how to ‘laugh again, and cry’, and to be human. (*WH*, 508)

By this means Jordan suggests that ‘power’, too far removed from any sense of compassion and human warmth, can easily perform evil in the name of good so that his protagonists, unwittingly, could become party to the tenets of the dark impulse that they

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<sup>10</sup> These words are part of the Japanese Samurai warrior code.

fight against. Warnings of power as a double-edged sword are clearly signalled in the text by the cruel excesses of the fanatical Whitecloaks, supposedly moral warriors of the Light, or by the cold righteousness of Elayne's half brother, Galad, of whom she says: He takes right above mercy, or pity ... [h]e's no more human than a Trolloc'. (*GH*, 363) Such warning is reinforced by the background story, for, as mentioned in chapter two, in the past it was hunger for personal power that brought a group of thirteen Aes Sedai to negate any vestige of human decency and so to embrace the Dark. These Forsaken Ones are even prepared to accept the end of Time itself, and the horror of eternity in a Shadow world, as long as they can be figures of power in it. Thus, on one hand Jordan presents Rand as an elevated figure, but on the other insists that if he is to succeed in his quest he must remember he is a mere mortal. As a consequence there is much tension between the Rand of the past, the naïve shepherd, and Rand the world figure, one marked out by destiny to adopt the overwhelming role of the Dragon Reborn, a dilemma which evokes reader sympathy for his plight. In his depiction of an ordinary, country youth who is fated to take up an extraordinary life-journey of cosmic significance, Jordan's utilisation of Christian parallelism is telling.

In relation to Rand as Dragon Reborn, typology and the prefiguring of Jesus are of special interest, not only because of the many parallels to the Christian myth in the texts, but also because of Jordan's repeated statement that he is an 'Old Testament God with [his fist] in the middle of their lives'.<sup>11</sup> The Wheel weaves as Jordan wills and he constantly reshapes a wealth of traditional material to his own needs, so that although his imaginary world is not presented as overtly Christian, Rand is, in part, a secularised Christ figure, and the enduring power of the underlying Christian mythic material helps to make him much larger than life. A few examples will suffice. The Dragon is prophesied to be reborn as he

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<sup>11</sup> CNN Interactive Chat Transcripts, 2000, 'Robert Jordan Chats About His *Wheel of Time* series', <http://www.cnn.com/COMMUNITY/transcripts/2000/12/12/jordan/index.html> (accessed 19 Sept., 2003).

has been in the past and to bring both destruction and salvation. False Dragons (i.e. false saviours) are also spun out by the (Jordan) Pattern. The mad prophet Masema believes Rand, 'The Lord Dragon' to be the 'source of the Light', while ancient prophecy decrees that Rand's blood is to be shed on the black 'rock of Shayol Ghul', the place of the Dark One's prison, in order to save the world: 'Twice dawns the day when his blood is shed. Once for mourning, once for birth. (*FOH*, 562; *SR*, 387) This brings to mind the darkening of the sun when Christ is crucified. And, as for Jesus, his peace will be 'the peace ... of the sword' that will split 'all in twain'. (*FOH*, epilogue) Rand is also referred to as 'lord of the dawn', and 'prince of the morning' suggestive that, like the Saviour of Christianity, he too will bring Light to the world.<sup>12</sup>

Rand carries a wound in the left side, inflicted by Ba'alzamon during the battle at Falme, which cannot be fully healed. This must suggest the legend of the Fisher King, one symbolic of Christ, with the wound representative of His suffering on the Cross. The Fisher King is traditionally tied directly to the land, which cannot be healthy as long as he is wounded. The world of the Wheel is being torn apart by civil unrest, and the prolonged drought and encroachment of the Blighted Lands are a metaphor for the insidious spread of the Shadow. It is prophesied that 'there can be no health in us, nor any good thing grow, for the land is one with the Dragon Reborn, and he one with the land'. (*COS*, epigraph) The Welsh people have a notion of the Dragon as a divine symbol in life and traditionally the Dragon is to be both feared and revered, so Jordan may be said to be alluding to this concept as well. Rand's unearthly sword of fire, formed of *saidin* when he embraces the One Power, is metaphoric for the destructive and fiery breath of a Dragon and perhaps makes it a fiery sword of retribution, especially as he wields it to dread effect against the emissaries of the Dark Lord. Jordan's use of such resonating imagery is designed to

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<sup>12</sup> For comparison see: *The New Testament*, Luke xxiii, 44-45; Matthew x, 34-36.

strengthen the reader's concept of Rand, the Dragon Reborn, as being an apocalyptic figure.

Jordan deliberately employs a prophetic/oratorical style in the texts in relation to the Dragon figure, these often occurring in a Biblical phraseology, as in this Old Testament-sounding passage:

And it came to pass in those days, as it had come before and would come again, that the Dark lay heavy on the land and weighed down the hearts of men, and the green things failed, and hope died. And men cried out to the Creator, saying, O Light of the Heavens, Light of the World, let the Promised One be born of the mountain, according to the prophecies, as he was in ages past and will be in ages to come. Let the Prince of the Morning sing to the land that the green things will grow and the valleys give forth lambs. Let the arm of the arm of the Lord of the Dawn shelter us from the Dark and the great sword of justice defend us. Let the Dragon ride again on the winds of time. (*EOTW*, prologue, xv)

Other visionary passages are of a later style, with both the New Testament – and Bunyan – seemingly echoed:

And his paths shall be many, and who shall know his name, for he shall be born among us many times, in many guises, as he has been and ever will be, time without end. His coming shall be like the sharp edge of the plow, turning our lives in furrows from out of the places where we lie in our silence. The breaker of bonds; the forger of chains. The maker of futures; the unshaper of destiny. (*DR*, epigraph)

Despite its ambiguity, there is a sense that 'unshaper of destiny' here is meant in a positive light, perhaps referring to the way in which a *ta'veren* brings necessary changes to the pattern of the Age Lace, which are not wholly pre-determined by the Great Cosmic Pattern. By contrast, it is also said of the Shadow: 'The Dark One is the embodiment of paradox and chaos, the destroyer of reason and logic, the breaker of balance, the unmaker of order.'

(*DR*, 239) This sentiment is parallel to that of Le Guin's in her *Earthsea* series and is clearly meant in a negative light.

Jordan presents these and similar visionary passages as prologues or epilogues, thus set outside of the action of the novels. These writings are offered to the reader as excerpts from a variety of historical sources in the imaginary world, some pre-dating the 'Breaking' that ended the Age of Legends, but all deal with prophetic writings concerning the Dragon. The material includes various translations taken from the Karaethon cycle (the 'Prophecies of the Dragon'), along with pieces of poetry, folk sayings, and even a few lines of a chant from a children's game. The authors of these works are purported to be Aes Sedai of notable rank, historical librarians and other employees of royal households, such as the court of the famed Artur Hawkwing or that of the queen of Andor. One is said to be the legendary hero Jain Farstrider, while yet others remain anonymous.

This device of giving the imaginary world a long documented history relating to the deeds of the former Dragon, and to the coming of the Dragon Reborn, deepens the reader's sense of this figure's authenticity and grandeur. The use of such prophetic writings, at the start or finish (sometimes both) of each successive volume, builds narrative tension since for the reader they reinforce the apocalyptic nature of Rand's destiny in the imaginary world. Jordan also intersperses other pieces of prophetic material into the main body of the texts, these being revealed through the knowledge of wise characters such as Moiraine, Lan, Thom, and the Ogier, Loial, or from hearsay among the common people. Thus, he shows the suspense and fear shown by the inhabitants of the Wheel world, especially as they are witness to Rand's fulfilment of some of the prophecies of the Dragon and so cannot deny his heritage. The reactions of the characters in turn evoke an emotional response in the reader, who is also bought to be fearful of the outcome of Rand's actions. Furthermore, the importance Jordan gives to historical documentation among the various

peoples of the Wheel world – that is, the archives of the White Tower, private libraries, the memories and writings of the long-lived Ogier, and the gleeman's bottomless bag of stories -- helps to foster the reader's sense of the credibility of this extensive and detailed storehouse of history, and so invites a belief in the prophecies of the Dragon that it contains.

It is not only through the use of the Christ myth that Jordan adds stature to his hero Rand. He also borrows elements of the Arthurian material, a rich, repeatedly mined source for fantasists, the most obvious of these being Rand's taking of the numinous *sa'angreal*, the crystal sword. (Jordan's coinage of the word *sa'angreal*, that is analogous with *sangreal* – 'holy grail', adds to the impressiveness of the glittering sword that Excalibur-like 'flare[s] as if with a light of its own', and of the hero who displays the ability to grasp and to wield it. (*DR*, 648) A further example is evident during Rand's metaphysical battle against Ba'alzamon in the skies above the city of Falme, where the ancient Dragon Banner ripples behind them, and from then on becomes the standard the followers of the Dragon fight under. (*GH*, 676) Woven into the white banner was a 'figure like a serpent, scaled in scarlet and gold' but with 'scaled legs' and a 'great head with a golden mane and eyes like the sun'. The 'stirring of the banner made it seem to move, scales glittering like precious metals and gems' so that it seemed 'alive'; a symbol that the legendary Dragon (i.e. Rand) now lives again. (*EOTW*, 773) For some readers, the dragon banner in the sky would further resonate with the vision of a flaming dragon in the sky that allegedly came to Uther Pendragon, father of the legendary King Arthur (compare Jordan's 'Artur Paendrag'), and who thereafter carried the emblem of a golden dragon into battle, as did later Anglo-Saxon kings. 'In England before the Norman conquest, the dragon was chief among the royal ensigns in war, having been instituted by such by Uther Pendragon, father of King

Arthur.’<sup>13</sup> The idea of Uther Pendragon has extended into popular lore and Jordan’s mediaevalist sensibilities mean this resonance is not lost on him or his readers.

As the dragon beast has been believed to have qualities of being both ‘protective and terror-inspiring’, dragon effigies in one form or another have been used on the shields of legendary warriors (e.g. Homer’s Agamemnon, in the form of a blue three-headed snake), and by the Vikings on their shields and the prows of their ships.<sup>14</sup> Thus, Jordan is reworking a long, varied tradition, both mythical and historical, of applying the dragon motif in relation to heroic warriors and kings, which, by association, accrues similar qualities of both might and fearfulness to his own protagonist, despite his youth.

Traditionally the motif of the dragon is also ascribed to some form of scaled, wily, avaricious beast, as faced by a multitude of mythic or literary heroic figures, from Siegfried, the slayer of Fafnir; and Beowulf, the mighty king of the Geats; to the humble hobbit, Bilbo Baggins; and Ged, Archmage and Dragon Lord of *Earthsea*. Dragons, it is well-known, are both terrifying and awe-inspiring: Jordan twists these traits to create the sense of an apocalyptic human figure known as the Dragon. In the Wheel world the Dragon Reborn is feared for, in a past incarnation, in saving the world from the Dark Lord he had then brought about its destruction after losing his sanity through the taint in *saidin*. In keeping with Jordan’s ontology for his imaginary world of an eternal circling of time and lives, apocalyptic prophecy must suggest this cosmic destruction and resurrection by the Dragon to be a repeating pattern, to be faced by each successive turning of the Wheel of Time, for it is written:

Yet one shall be born to face the Shadow, born once more as he was born before and shall be born again, time without end. The Dragon shall be Reborn ... and he shall break the world again by his coming, tearing apart all ties that

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<sup>13</sup> The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, 15<sup>th</sup> ed., vol. 4, 2002, s.v. ‘Dragon’, p. 209. (J. S. P. Tatlock wrote a useful article on the use of the dragon ensign. ‘The Dragons of Wessex and Wales’, *Speculum*, 8.2, April 1933, pp. 223-235.

<sup>14</sup> Britannica, s.v. ‘Dragon’, p. 209.

bind. Like the unfettered dawn shall he blind us, and burn us, yet shall the Dragon Reborn confront the Shadow at the Last Battle, and his blood shall give us the Light. Let tears flow ... people of the world. Weep for your salvation. (*GH*, epigraph)

The notion of such an eternal return is clearly symbolised by Jordan's incorporation of the uroboros motif into the official logo for the Wheel of Time series. This ancient motif of the serpent biting its own tail symbolises the infinite renewal of the universe. Yet, paradoxically, Jordan also stresses that a danger to the continuation of the pattern exists, for if the Dragon dies, there can be no hope of resurrection. Ba'alzamon appears to Rand one night and warns that this time at the Last Battle 'the cycle will not begin anew with your death' and that the 'Wheel will be broken ... and the world remade to a new mold', one of the Dark Lord's choosing. (*GH*, 243) Jordan thus implies the uneasy possibility that this time the Wheel of Time may be destroyed and that the Dark will triumph, for neither the characters nor the reader can be sure if the Forsaken One's prophetic words are a possible truth or a total fabrication.

### **Three metaphysical dragons**

Jordan adds to the complexity of Rand's character through a repetition of the dragon motif that provides an externalisation of the triple monsters Rand grapples with in his mind. On a personal level Jordan's protagonist presents a paradox as he represents both Dragon and Dragon-slayer, although the three monsters he faces are incorporeal, and to be conquered on an inner, metaphysical level, and all of them contribute to his development. Jordan sets up each of these metaphoric dragons to test Rand's resilience in different ways: through the temptations, threats and lies of the Dark; through the despair and madness of the past manifested in his mind in the voice of the previous Dragon; and through the potential destruction of self contained in the tainted male side of the One Power.

The first of these monsters Rand faces is the Dark Lord who, in the metaphysical dream realm of *Tel'aran'rhold*, uses surrogate figures, human puppets manipulated by 'black lines like steel wires' that in the dark stretch back into 'unimaginable heights and distances' to give himself form and a voice. (*DR*, 665) Through the body of his puppet, Ba'alzamon, the Dark Lord searches for the one who is the Dragon Reborn. Jordan shows the close ties between the destinies of the three *ta'veren* youths as Rand, Perrin and Mat experience a series of identical nightmarish dreams of pursuit, wherein they must deny the Dark Lord, for at first he is unsure which youth is the one he seeks. This reduplication of dream sequences suggests that each of the *ta'veren* is to be viewed as a potentially powerful figure.

In *Tel'aran'rhold* during a series of maze-like dream sequences, Rand is pursued by Ba'alzamon down spiralling stairs, along endless corridors with doors that all lead to the same room, or faces multiple reflections of Ba'alzamon and himself, 'staring wide-eyed and frightened', into an endless array of mirrors:

In every mirror, the flames of Ba'alzamon's face raged behind him, enveloping, consuming, merging. He wanted to scream, but his throat was frozen. There was only one face in those endless mirrors. His own face. Ba'alzamon's face. One face. (*EOTW*, 351-2)

On a psychic level this dream sequence is a projection of Rand's fear of a loss of his own identity, the possibility that he may not be able to stand firm against the Dark, and that the very monster of his worst nightmares exists within the recesses of his own mind and could sweep him away. In an earlier visitation the Dark Lord, angered by Rand's refusal to accept him as his master, asserts that the 'death of time' will return him 'power' such as a 'worm' like Rand 'could not dream of'. (*EOTW*, 204) He later threateningly warns Rand: 'Serve me and I will give you the world. Resist, and I will destroy you, as I have so often before'. (*GH*, 665) The power and immortality offered by this persona of the Dark is

constantly undercut by the inferno glimpsed when Ba'alzamon's 'mouth and eyes became openings into endless caverns of flame ... peepholes into a furnace that seemed to stretch forever', and suggestive of a horrendous eternity of agony and damnation. (*EOTW*, 202-03) This fearful image is made doubly so by Jordan's mixing of the sacred and the profane – the inferno of the Hell of Christian theology with the destructive, pagan fire of a dragon.

It is Rand's inner core, his connection to 'the soil of his home', which has produced a people as 'strong' and 'hard as the mountains' that finally sustains him, too. Min jokes that, underneath, 'Two Rivers folk' are 'as tough as old oak roots' and if you 'prod too hard' you 'dig up stone'. (*EOTW*, 759; 214) This centre of resilience enables Rand to withstand the onslaught of the lies of the Dark One, and to declare: 'I will never serve you, Father of Lies. In a thousand lives I never have ... I'm sure of it'. (*GH*, 666) A prominent theme in Jordan's narrative, as shared with many other high fantasy texts, is this need for individuals to find the inner strength to face and overcome all doubts, fears, and temptations, and so have the courage of their convictions to make difficult, but morally based and selfless choices.

The second monster is the insistent voice, and invasive memories of the violently insane dead hero Lews Therin, the ur-Dragon, who manifests himself in Rand's mind once the young champion gains some measure of control over the One Power. Therin constantly urges Rand to 'kill them all' and moans of 'death' and the 'pit of doom'. (*LOC*, 783; *WH*, 249) On a metaphysical level this double personality accords with the general Jungian principle that 'every psychological extreme secretly contains its own opposite':<sup>15</sup> in this case, the destructive principle of the unhinged mind of the past Dragon and the constructive principle of Rand, his current reincarnation, the Dragon Reborn whose destiny it is to once again save the world.

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<sup>15</sup> Carl Jung, *Symbols of Transformation: An Analysis of the Prelude to a Case of Schizophrenia*, trans. by R. F. C. Hull, London, 1956, para. 581.

Rand has to struggle to bring salvation to a falling world from a masculine inheritance of power linked with mayhem and destruction. In relation to this Jordan's use of the dragon motif shows the apt influence of Chinese thought where the Dragon is believed to have 117 scales, 'of which 81 are imbued with Yang and 36 with Yin, because the dragon is partly a preserver and partly a destroyer'.<sup>16</sup> In Chinese philosophy it is this principle of *yang* and *yin* that enables the dragon to be transformed into a beneficent being for, unlike in the West, this creature is not seen as the symbol of evil. In relation to such balance Jordan shows that one of Rand's tasks is to redress the imbalance between the masculine and feminine aspects of the One Power (the governing principles that sustain the world of the Wheel), one inadvertently caused by his predecessor Lew Therin. It was through Therin's well-intentioned actions in protecting the world from the 'Father of Lies', during the Age of Legends, that the male side of the One Power became tainted and linked with madness, and if Rand is to remain sane he must achieve the cleansing of *saidin*. His subsequent success of this task through a melding of the two sides of the power will be discussed further on.

In Rand's head the past Dragon becomes increasingly enmeshed with his own personality. He thus catches himself using Therin's 'turns of phrase', or mannerisms, such as 'thumbing his earlobe', and finds the other man's 'memories mingling with his' own. (*COT*, 550; *COS*, 358) He also discovers the name of Therin's dead wife, Ilyena, involuntarily added to his own mental list of women for whose deaths he holds himself responsible, and for whom he now mourns. He also has to fight, consciously, to retain control of his mind, and of the One Power which, increasingly, Therin attempts to wrest from him. Of the voice in his head Rand thinks: 'Are you really there?' (*LOC*, 397) He reasons that he is 'Lews Therin reborn' and that 'everybody was someone reborn' as that

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<sup>16</sup> Richard Cavendish, *Man, Myth and Magic: The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Mythology, Religion and the Unknown*, rev. ed. vol. 5, New York, 1995, pp. 633-4.

was how the 'Pattern worked', but surely only 'madmen' spoke with 'who they used to be'. (*COS*, 146) As Jordan gives no external perspective on Lews Therin neither Rand nor the reader is sure if the voice is real, or a signal that the hero is succumbing to madness as a result of the taint in *saidin*, a narrative device that adds a further element of tension.

Jordan's portrayal of a past personality attempting to assert itself in the present bears a striking similarity to Victorian supernatural writing, as well as to Raymond Feist's fantasy text *Magician*. In Feist's narrative a young and naïve protagonist, Tomas, receives a gift from a dying dragon beast, the armaments of an ancient Dragon Lord, including a magical golden coat of chain mail. Through wearing it Tomas begins to take on the physical and mental attributes of the long dead, non-human and merciless warrior named Ashen-Shugar. In the final battle for control of his mind Tomas emerges as the victor:

*I am Ashen-Shugar! I am Valheru!* Sang a voice within, in a torrent of anger, battle madness, and bloodlust.

Against this sea of rage stood a single rock, a calm, small voice within that said, simply, *I am Tomas*.<sup>17</sup>

In the end, Tomas remains human, but must bear the weight of guilt over the slaughter (and joy in it) performed by him during times of blood lust, when the will of the Valheru had held sway in his mind. Yet he is now neither the boy of the past nor the ancient Dragon Lord, having gained attributes of them both that set him apart:

Gone was the alien cast to his features ... Again he was Tomas, though there were legacies of his experience that would forever proclaim him something more than a man: the elven ears, the pale eyes. Gone was the Lord of Power, the Old One, the Valheru. Where before a Dragon Lord had stood now crouched a troubled, sick man in torment over what he had done.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Raymond E. Feist, *Magician*, London, 2002, p. 540.

<sup>18</sup> Feist, *Magician*, p. 541.

Feist, like Jordan, uses the concept of a double personality as a means of testing the protagonist, a painful rite of passage to adulthood that his hero eventually survives, although not without psychological scars. It is yet to be seen if Jordan's hero will remain untouched after grappling with 'two men inside one skull'. (*COS*, 158) As the narrative progresses Rand and Lews Therin begin to have interactive conversations, as when Therin suggests that Rand should 'work' with him. (*LOC*, 958) As well as this, Rand sometimes glimpses a 'murky' face of a third person in his head, while Therin whispers in his mind: 'How many will we three kill before the end'. (*WH*, 447) It is uncertain whether Jordan intends there to be some merging of a triple personality at the Last Battle, or if the shadowy 'man's face' in his mind that Rand finds 'almost recognizable', is his complete psychological self, to be produced by a blending of his mind and that of Lews Therin. (*WH*, 657)

Such a concept is supported by Egwene's prophetic dream in which 'Rand' wears 'different masks, until suddenly one of those false faces was no longer a mask, but him'. (*POD*, 328) And Sammael, one of the Forsaken, believes: 'Al'Thor was not Lews Therin, but al'Thor was Lews Therin's soul reborn, as Lews Therin himself had been the rebirth of that soul', thus reinforcing the concept of a champion of the Light, one whose spirit has been reincarnated down through the ages to engage in the eternal battle against the encroachment of the Shadow. (*LOC*, 179) This image is also suggestive of the notion that evil in the imaginary but flawed world, for the Pattern contains good and evil, is capable of being beaten back but never totally vanquished, and so may have to be faced again at a future time. The words of writer and critic Hal Colebatch, who believes Tolkien's intent in *LOTR* was to show that 'the human race lives in a hard but not desperate and not hopeless

situation', would seem relevant to Jordan's themes and common to a number of other writers of heroic modern fantasy.<sup>19</sup>

Another contemporary fantasist, Robin Hobb, offers a different interpretation of the dragon motif in her popular *Farseer* trilogy: that of a voluntary forging of man and beast. King Verity, with the aid of his magical power known as 'The Skill' puts his whole essence into carving a stone dragon, and so brings it to life. (This is similar to Jordan's *Aelfinn* and *Eelfinn*, alien beings who feed on human 'sensations', 'emotions' and 'experiences'. (SR, 252)) It is through this strange melding of stone with human flesh and spirit that a special creature can be created in order to save his land and his people. As the last of the king's being 'flowed into the [carved] dragon'<sup>20</sup> his bastard nephew, FitzChivalry, stands witness to his metamorphosis into 'Verity-as-Dragon':

His eyes when he opened them, were black and shining, the eyes of a Farseer, and I knew Verity looked out of them ... He stretched like a cat, bowing and rolling reptilian shoulders and spreading claws... his immense wings unfurled ... His tail gave a single lash, stirring rock dust and grit into the air. The great head turned, his eyes demanding we be as pleased with this new self as he was. Verity-as-Dragon strode forward to present himself to his queen.<sup>21</sup>

King Verity, through his integration with the very stone of the land, becomes its saviour. Hobb, like Jordan, is utilising a variation on the myth of the Fisher King. As noted by Stephen Potts in his discussion on Tolkien's notion of the hero in *LOTR*, this particular myth is represented in figures as 'widely disparate as Osiris, Adonis, Oedipus and Christ'. Potts further contends that such a figure can be described as being:

the hero whose spiritual and physical health determines that of his followers, who must allow himself to be sacrificed if necessary to permit his community

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<sup>19</sup> Hal G. P. Colebatch, 2004, 'The Magic Ingredient', <http://www.abc.net.au/compass/s1120233.htm> (accessed 16 June, 2004).

<sup>20</sup> Robin Hobb, *Assassin's Quest*, London, 1998, p. 802.

<sup>21</sup> Hobb, *Quest*, p. 802.

to live, and who thus embodies in his own person the life-force of his people and their bond with nature and the cosmos.<sup>22</sup>

The actions of King Verity fit this sacrificial paradigm. With other dragon statues from the ancient 'Stone Garden' in the mountains, brought to life by human 'blood' and the lesser magic known as the 'wit', Verity-as-Dragon destroys the invaders of the Red Ships and reunites his beloved Six Duchies. But his metamorphosis cannot be reversed so his humanity is forsaken forever. Once the battle is completed he reverts to statue form, and will 'sleep well in the Stone Garden' unless called into life again by a future world need.<sup>23</sup> Yet, the regeneration of his society is ensured by his wife's conception, as the night before he puts the last of himself into the stone dragon, his brother's bastard son, FitzChivalry, permits the king, through a transfer of minds, to borrow his body, so Verity spends one last night with his queen.

Like other heroic figures such as Frodo, Ged, or Rand, Verity takes up the quest needed to save his world with no thought of self-survival. But, as the necessary sacrificial king, he then becomes the rejuvenator of his world. From the above examples it is apparent that Jordan, Feist and Hobb draw on similar themes from the traditional story-board in their use of the dragon motif. They succeed in reworking them in an individualised fashion, yet all of these narratives are concerned with the making of ethical, moral choices that are key hallmarks of heroic fantasy.

The third internal dragon to be faced by Rand is the monstrous One Power itself, which is not only tainted but, because of Rand's inexperience, is a force that threatens to sweep away his mind, to erase his essence of self. Hence it must be conquered if he is to qualify as a magus:

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<sup>22</sup> Potts, 'Faces', p. 4.

<sup>23</sup> Hobb, *Quest*, p. 829.

The Power felt like life itself swelling inside him ... the Dark One's taint filled him, too, death and corruption, like maggots crawling in his mouth. It was a torrent that threatened to sweep him away, a raging flood he had to fight every moment ... And all the while the deluge tried to scour him to the bone and burn his bones to ash. (*FOH*, 71)

Jordan's depiction of the dangers inherent in *saidin* helps to reinforce his theme of the destructive potential of power itself, and the ambiguity that exists between the impulses of good and evil, as it can become a weapon for either. (In an ironic twist it is Asmodean, a leading servant of the Dark, who is coerced into teaching Rand to use and control *saidin*. But this figure, unlike the soldier Ingtar, does not seek redemption, and for his unwilling betrayal of the Dark Lord is callously murdered.)

The danger associated with power is equally apparent in the female half of the One Power. In a Secondary World where the governing paradigm is presented as a duality of opposites, Jordan equates male power with aggression and female power with passivity, a philosophy of life embedded in the folk wisdom of the Two Rivers where it is spoken that 'a man is an oak, a woman a willow ... [t]he oak fought the wind and was broken, while the willow bent when it must and survived'. (*FOH*, 565) As it is the female side of the One Power that survived the former 'Breaking of the World' without taint, these words become a metaphor for the resilience of women, and are also suggestive of the greater strength to be gained by a tempering of heedless masculine might with the enduring, and more subtle strength of feminine passive resistance.

Masculine control of *saidin* is only to be maintained by dogged mental force, whereas females effect control through willing surrender to *saidar*. Rand's cleansing of *saidin* is brought about through a metaphysical linking with Nynaeve, one of his companions from the Two Rivers. To achieve the link Rand has to 'fight' *saidin* to master it in the 'deadly dance he knew so well', whilst simultaneously 'surrendering' to the

‘tranquil’ flow of the smooth ‘river’ of *saidar*, a contradiction of terms that forms a delicately held balancing of the male and female principles of *yang* and *yin*. This action in turn reflects the patterning of the two halves of the True Source, ‘male and female: ... alike and unlike’, ‘fighting against each other even as they worked together to drive the Wheel of Time’. (*WH*, 658-9) Rand’s personal, metaphysical union of masculine and feminine powers is mirrored in his formation of a ‘Black Tower’, where he gathers men who have the inborn ‘spark’ to channel the One Power. Defined by Jordan as Ash’aman, in the ‘Old Tongue’ one who ‘defended truth and justice for everyone, a guardian who would not yield even when all hope was gone’, these men of the ‘Black Tower’ will surely be used to form a union with their female counterparts, the Aes Sedai of the ‘White Tower’. (*Companion*, 417) For it has been foretold that at the Last Battle the Dragon will ‘conquer’ under the old sign of the Aes Sedai the ‘black teardrop’ and the ‘white ... flame of Ta’Valon’. (*FOH*, 134) Thus Jordan uses this interconnected narrative patterning to highlight the importance of regaining balance if the Wheel world is to be healed.

Through a combination of associations with the Christ figure, the Arthurian cycle, and the motif of the dragon, Jordan lifts Rand, the naïve farm boy, to the status of a world figure, one that is to be both revered and feared. Jordan’s repetition of the motif of triples in relation to Rand, that is, three titles, three internal monsters, bonding with three women, three women mentor figures, and his testing in the triple-arched *ter’angreal*, all reveal and enhance the different facets of his personality as well as contributing to his growth. The motif of triples mirrors the patterning of Rand’s life-threads with those of the other two *ta’veren* youths, thus suggesting that their own journeys will both reflect and advance his cause.

From the apocalyptic figure of Rand I now turn to Perrin, whose axe/hammer dualism is suggestive of him too being a type of destroyer/saviour figure, and it is through

his acceptance of both the destructive and creative aspects of his nature that he also emerges as a constructive force in his world, and becomes the saviour of his home village.

### **Perrin ‘Goldeneyes’**

‘Your hands were made for a hammer, not an axe.  
Made to make things, not to kill’. (*DR*, 66)

Perrin, a former blacksmith’s apprentice, is characterised as humble, kind, a deep thinker who does not act in haste, is physically strong but gentle, honest and reliable, slow to anger yet terrible when aroused, and essentially a craftsman. But as noted by Karl-Johan Norén, his great physical strength, his beard, his hammer and aspects of his personality draw on the association of the god Thor of Norse mythology, whose hammer Mjöllnir was symbolic of both destruction and creation.<sup>24</sup> This link not only makes Perrin a larger figure, but also a man of the people, as Thor was the god of the common, free man. The latter certainly accords with Perrin’s egalitarian thoughts that in the Two Rivers there is no need for ‘lords’ or ‘kings or queens’, because they are all ‘free men’. (*SR*, 741) Perrin’s initial naivety and innate goodness are apparent when Moiraine warns that the Pattern of an Age is neither good nor evil but woven from both, a ‘warp and woof of good and ill’. (*DR*, 378) To him the Creator of the Pattern must surely be a master artisan, and any flaw in the Age Lace must lie solely within humankind itself, for:

he wanted to believe the Pattern was good. He wanted to believe that when men did evil things, they were going against the Pattern, distorting it. To him the Pattern was a fine and intricate creation made by a master smith. That it mixed pot metal and worse in with good steel with never a care was a cold thought. (*DR*, 378)

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<sup>24</sup> Karl-Johan Norén, 1995, ‘Norse and Germanic Mythology in the *Wheel of Time*’, <http://hem3.passagen.se/kjnoren/jordan/norse.html> (accessed 19 March, 2003). Norén also discusses this link to the Northern gods in relation to Mat.

Such imagery of blacksmithing and metallurgy runs through the series in relation to Perrin. Through the associations of magic that have accrued to the work of the blacksmith – for instance, the legendary smith, Weland, and the making of spell-wrought swords and armour – Perrin’s art with metal suggests that, like Rand, he is a type of powerful, magical figure.

Jordan presents Perrin as the most idealistically minded of the three *ta'veren* youths and perhaps the strongest moral voice of this triumvirate. Yet Perrin’s strong axe/hammer dualism reflects the potential for acts of violence in the gentlest of souls, and the anguish of having to resort to such dark means in the pursuit of good:

The axe was a wicked half-moon blade balanced by a thick spike, meant for violence. With the hammer he could make things, had made things at a forge. The hammerhead weighed more than twice as much as the axe blade, but it was the axe that felt heavier, every time he picked it up. (*SR*, 46)

Jordan uses the tension caused by Perrin’s Axe (destruction)/Hammer (creation) dilemma, and the moral ambiguity it generates, as an anvil to strengthen and temper him for his true constructive role in life. Perrin’s underlying decency is shown by the prediction of his fellow wolfbrother, Elyas, that as long as he ‘hate[s] using’ the axe, he will ‘use it more wisely than most men would’, and that the time to give it up is when this is no longer the case. (*EOTW*, 440) These prophetic words are borne out when his wife Faile is kidnapped by the Shaido, at which point, Perrin, driven by the need to rescue her, resorts to cruelly chopping off the left hand of a Shaido prisoner, then throws the axe away. To him the ‘blood’ on his axe ‘had never looked so black’, a metaphor for his self-loathing at what he is capable of when the life of the woman he loves is at stake, and fear, that as in battle, he will come to ‘feel alive’ through such deeds. (*COT*, 597; 600) Faile, in a sense, is presented by Jordan as Perrin’s fatal flaw, his Achilles heel, as love for her can drive him

to override his cautious nature and to act imprudently, much as Rand's inability to harm a woman led to his refusal to kill Lanfear, and so to the apparent death of Moiraine.

All of the *ta'veren* are protectors of women: for instance, Rand confesses to Sulin, a Maiden of the Spear, 'I could not kill a woman if my life hung on it'. (*FOH*, 833) And Mat is devastated when he is forced to kill his lover Melindhra, when she reveals herself as a Darkfriend and tries to stab him. 'He had killed men, and Trollocs, but never a woman. Never a woman until now.' (*FOH*, 804) Perrin's Axe/Hammer dilemma parallels Rand's anxiety about his fearsome nature as he struggles to hang on to the true kernel of his being: 'a shepherd named Rand al'Thor'. (*SR*, 76) But Perrin's decision to throw away the bloodied axe suggests that Rand will learn to temper his power and so avoid the wanton destruction of which he is capable. In regard to the mode of quest fantasy Jane Mobley has observed that:

The sub-plots ... always serve to accentuate the main plot. Either a lesser hero-figure acts out a quest parallel to the main hero's, or the sub-plots provide further adventures or trials for the hero.<sup>25</sup>

In the *WOT* the sub plots of Perrin and Mat provide Jordan with a means of developing their individual personalities, enabling them to develop the strengths and talents that are needed to fulfil their roles as part of the triple hero figure. Thus, the journeys they take, both inner and outer, can be seen to reflect those of Rand.

Perrin's ancillary heroic quest is to save his home village from an overwhelming Trolloc attack, an episode Jordan uses to forge Perrin's leadership skills and so to raise him in stature. Perrin's battle against the Dark forces at Emond's Field can also be seen as a parallel to Rand's greater quest. Thus, Perrin's victory is suggestive of a positive outcome for Rand when he faces the Dark Lord.

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<sup>25</sup> Jane Mobley, *Magic is Alive: A Study of Contemporary Fantasy Fiction* (PhD thesis, University of Kansas, 1974), p. 189.

Perrin's ordeals or 'rites of passage' include facing the murder of his family; the death of many old friends because they rally to his cause against the invading Trollocs; and the grim reality that, despite the heavy losses of his companions, he must continue to 'care for the living' and 'later' find the time to 'weep for the dead'. (SR, 709) His words echo those of Rand, following heavy losses in a battle to rid the city of Caemlyn of Rahvin, one of the Forsaken: 'Rejoice in what you can save, and do not mourn your losses too long'. (FOH, 881) Perrin's self-development is furthered by his acceptance that despite his longing for his former peaceful life as a blacksmith, the passivity practised by the Travelling People cannot hold back the present Dark:

The way of the leaf was a fine belief, like a dream of peace, but like the dream it could not last where there was violence. He did not know of a place without that. A dream for some other man, some other time. Some other Age perhaps. (SR, 743)

Like the other two *ta'veren* youths, Perrin accepts that his understanding of the world has changed since he first left the Two Rivers, although 'he just never thought that he would have to change, too'. (POG, 255) By exposure to the reality of life in the wider world he learns that, for him, it is only through violence (the axe) that a return to the hammer (creation) may become possible. Thus Jordan creates a moral ambiguity that accentuates Perrin's dilemma, and, by inference Rand's as well, for it is only through acts of darkness and death that his people are able once more to walk in the Light.

Perrin's quest to rescue the Two Rivers includes elements of the paradigm of the epic hero, for as noted by John Leyerle, in the epic mode the character 'holds to his commitment and keeps to what he regards as his high destiny' and plays for high stakes, such as the defence of a nation.<sup>26</sup> Jordan uses Perrin's strong impulse to save his home village from the Dark, as a reflection of Rand's determination to save the wider world. But

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<sup>26</sup> John Leyerle, 'The Game and Play of Hero', in *Concepts of the Hero in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, New York, edited by Norman T. Burns and Christopher J. Reagan, 1975, p. 71.

Leyerle further suggests that the epic hero's unswerving devotion to the quest can bring about his own death and cause 'the destruction of his followers, or even of his society'.<sup>27</sup> A good example from earlier literature is the predicted fall of the Geats following the death of Beowulf, for it was brought about by his brave but foolhardy battle with the dragon. However, this typical tragic scenario is overturned by Jordan. Perrin freely offers to give himself up to the Whitecloaks, to be wrongly hanged as a Darkfriend, once the battle against the Trollocs is won, if they help in the 'defence, where and when' they are 'asked'. (SR, 750) His willingness to forfeit his life in order to save the village, and the fact that he is spared such a fate, anticipates that the much prophesied spilling of the 'Dragon's blood' on the 'black rock of Shayol Ghul', may not be a sacrifice of Rand's life. (GH, 387) As a self-effacing hero figure Perrin seeks neither fame nor reward for his efforts yet he receives both, becoming a celebrated, local hero, lauded as 'Lord Perrin', and gaining the hand in marriage of Faile, the woman he loves. A clear sign of Perrin's change of status is reflected by Faile's remarks that 'there will be stories about you in the Two Rivers for the next thousand years. Perrin Goldeneyes, hunter of Trollocs'. (SR, 670) The sheer strength of his will was already evident in his determination to defy the pull of *ta'veren* that ties him to Rand, once he knew of the plight of their home village. Although he knows that he and Mat are an inseparable 'part of Rand's destiny', he also believes that at times the Pattern can send them down 'different paths'. (SR, 45; 230)

Rand's belief that it is Perrin's task to 'save Emond's Field', and his tacit consent to his departure confirms this. He hopes that for a time Perrin can escape the sphere of his influence and prays: 'Help them Perrin ... because I can't' as, at this point, his own life-thread weaves in another direction'. (SR, 253; 357) But Loial, the Ogier, reminds them that 'go or stay ... together or apart ... for a time, the Wheel will bend the Pattern around

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<sup>27</sup> Leyerle, 'Game', p. 71.

[them]' as 'whatever' happens is 'more likely to be chosen by the Wheel' than by the protagonists themselves. (GH, 35) Later, Rand observes that:

The Wheel wove happenstance and coincidence into the Pattern, but it did not lay down the likes of the three of them for no reason. Eventually he would pull his friends back to him, however far they went, and when they came he would use them, however he could. However he had to. Because whatever the Prophecy of the Dragon said, he was sure the only chance he had of winning Tarmon Gai'don lay in having the three of them, three *ta'veren* who had been tied together since infancy, tied together once more. (FOH, 614)

Thus, Jordan stresses the strength of the ties that bind them and that will pull them together again when needed.

Perrin's ability to rally the people of the Two Rivers against all odds, and his subsequent rebuilding of Emond's Field, along with the respect and love he engenders among the people, show a strange harmonising of the axe and hammer, the creative continuity of village life re-gained through the bloody violence of battle, which suggests that any destruction wrought by Rand will ultimately be for the good of the Wheel world. Perrin's success in the Two Rivers seems symbolic of a more universal task to come – a rebuilding of the world following the Last Battle, especially as Jordan has hinted that after *Tarmon Gai'don* the 'surviving characters would still have lives to go on with, even if more "boring" ones'.<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, as the narrative progresses Perrin, who gathers a loyal army under the old Banner of Manetheren, continues to emerge as a competent soldier/leader and one most willingly trust. His campaign secretary, Balwer, a former spy for the commander of the Whitecloaks, is an astute judge of character and he praises Perrin:

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<sup>28</sup> Karl-Johan Norén, 'Summary of the Robert Jordan Interview made at the East of the Sun Fantasy Convention, Stockholm, 17 June 1995 by Helena Löfgren', <http://hem3.passagen.se/kjnoren/jordan/rj-talk1.html> (accessed 19 March, 2003).

You are what you seem, my Lord, with no poisoned needles hidden away to catch the unwary. My previous employer was known widely for cleverness, but I believe you are equally clever, in a different way. I believe I would regret leaving your services. (*COT*, 188)

Despite his axe/hammer duality Perrin emerges as a simple man, a strong advocate for human justice, a person of honesty and open-mindedness, one whom Jordan uses to balance Rand's almost god-like status and the recklessness of Mat, whom I discuss later in this chapter.

### **Perrin's wolf-link**

Perrin, in a further complication to his personal development and a repetition of the pattern of Rand's development, also faces an inner identity crisis as he involuntarily develops the ancient talent of mental communication with wolves. The she-wolf Dapple says that he lives 'between the human world' and their world, giving him a human/wolf duality. By this means Jordan links Perrin to the natural, primaeval world of nature, for his latent talent (a melding of past and present) is 'older than humans using the One Power ... something from the birth of Time ... something long vanished, now come again'. (*GH*, 226) As a 'wolfbrother', Perrin's mind is linked to the collective 'shape' of the 'history of all wolves' including 'a faded image, dim with time, old beyond old, of men running with wolves, two packs hunting together', and the wolves say 'this time comes again'. (*EOTW*, 342; *GH*, 226) This image reflects an age when humans lived more harmoniously with the natural world, and also points to the approaching battle against the Dark Lord as being one encompassing all living creatures, not just humans. For the reader, this yet again reinforces the magnitude of the imminent catastrophe facing the inhabitants of Jordan's world. Egwene's visionary dream of a bearded 'Perrin ... leading a huge pack of wolves that stretched as far as the eyes could see', resonates with Hopper's words to him that in the

'Last Hunt' they will 'run together', which strongly suggests the wolves, through Perrin, are also being woven along the heroic line and have a vital role to play in the fulfilment of the narrative's focal quest. (*DR*, 290; *SR*, 467)

The convention of a mutually beneficial mind link between humans and other species is a common trope to writers of both fantasy and science fiction: for instance, the honoured telepathic communication between dragon and human 'dragonrider' in the Dragon books of Anne McCaffrey, or Ged's ability to converse with such creatures, in the speech of Creation (the 'Making') in Le Guin's *Earthsea* series. Le Guin depicts these creatures as being both majestic and terrible, but not evil. In Jordan's case, as in Hobb's *Farseer* series (to be discussed later), the use of wolves shows the positive influence of traditional American Indian lore, and these authors do not cast wolves as beasts of darkness, in contrast to Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, in which, as Margery Hourihan points out, 'wolves and Wargs, a large and evil variety of wolf,' are allied to the 'wicked goblins'.<sup>29</sup> Hourihan further comments that 'while the totemic beliefs of tribal peoples stress their sense of human contiguity with animals, in the Western tradition, at least since Plato, human beings have consistently defined themselves in contradistinction to nature'.<sup>30</sup>

In American Indian culture the wolf is regarded as a teacher and pathfinder, and an animal whose skills and sense of community make it an example from nature to be followed.<sup>31</sup> In the Secondary Worlds of both Jordan and Hobb, their protagonists, through mental bonding, receive acceptance, loyalty and love from these so-called 'savage' beasts. Perrin is thus regarded as a brother by the wolves and they come to his aid simply because he calls. Similarly, for FitzChivalry, the hero of Hobb's *Farseer* trilogy, the wolf Nighteyes sees him as 'pack', as a brother. For both these protagonists the wolf, as in

<sup>29</sup> Margery Hourihan, *Deconstructing the Hero: Literary Theory and Children's Literature*, London and New York, 1997, p. 124.

<sup>30</sup> Hourihan, *Deconstructing*, p. 113.

<sup>31</sup> Edwin Wollert, 2003, 'Wolves in American Indian Culture', (2003), [http://www.wolfsongalaska.org/wolves\\_in\\_american\\_culture.html](http://www.wolfsongalaska.org/wolves_in_american_culture.html) (accessed 18 June, 2004).

American Indian lore, can be regarded as a personal totem animal, and therefore an integral part of self.

In the Jordan books wolves are respected because they fight the Dark, and they are regarded by the people of the 'borderlands' as 'creatures of good luck'. (*GH*, 229) Once Perrin stops struggling against his talent, and accepts with 'full heart' and full mind' that he is a wolfbrother, he gains a spirit wolf-guide, Hopper, who guards his dreams and warns of impending dangers in the waking world. (*EOTW*, 412) Perrin's only physical sign of the wolf link is the golden colour of his eyes – a wolf's eyes – but he also gains the heightened senses (sight, hearing, smell) akin to those of a predatory animal. It is in the inner spirit realm of the wolf dream that Perrin sometimes shape-changes to a wolf and runs with Hopper – a shaman-like ability recognised in many cultures, including those of the indigenous Americans. At such times 'he felt a shifting inside him, something changing. He looked down at his curly-haired legs, his wide paws', and became aware that he was 'an even larger wolf than Hopper', and in the waking world, he sometimes feels he is 'half wolf already'. (*DR*, 628; *SR*, 467) With the wolves he can forget about his size, and there was no-one to think him 'slow witted' because he 'tried to be careful' and took his time over making decisions. Wolves knew each other even if they had never met before, and 'with them he was just another wolf', thoughts which not only speak of his acceptance of them, but that also reveal his very human insecurities. (*DR*, 81)

Perrin's emerging dual identity is clearly shown through the collective thought pictures which he receives from the wolves, for his image as a man is overlaid with the stronger image of a 'massive, wild bull with curved horns of shining metal ... curly-haired coat gleaming in the moonlight', and to them he is spoken of as the mighty fighter, 'Young Bull'. (*GH*, 227) In the frenzy of battle the narrating voice says he was 'Young Bull-Perrin' and only 'a buried fragment' of him was still human for 'wolves filled him till he

could barely remember being a man'. Like a predatory animal he went for the 'hamstring and throat' of his enemy, 'snarled with his brothers', and 'felt the urge to hurl his axe aside and use his teeth, to run on all fours'. Further, he 'threw back his head and howled' in mourning for the wolves that had died. (DR, 77-79) These images of Perrin in his ecstasy, fierceness, and imperviousness to his wounds in battle, and of his 'howling with rage that filmed his eyes red' create metaphorical associations not only with a wolf but also the battle rage of a Viking Berserk, follower of Odin; a fearful combination that Jordan utilises in order to enhance Perrin's ferociousness and stance as a warrior. (SR, 676)

However, like Rand, Perrin faces the possibility of a total loss of identity. The great danger for Perrin is that he may become totally consumed by his wolf identity and lose all humanity, a lesson Jordan graphically enforces on his protagonist and the reader through the depiction of the wretched, caged man Noal, whose 'mind has nothing that remembers being a man' and who Perrin realises 'may not have fur, but [is] a wolf'. (DR, 119-120) With his wolf mind trapped in a human body, Noal is perhaps a variation on the traditional werewolf. Such a shifting between man and wolf, a pitiful creature totally alienated from both, is a motif more closely associated with the genre of horror, both literary and cinematic. (J. K. Rowling, in *The Prisoner of Azkaban* uses this trope in the sense of the archetypal good werewolf.) Hourihan's research on this topic shows that in Western culture the werewolf came to symbolise the violence of the 'beast within' an externalisation of 'the human capacity for violence, cruelty and slaughter'. Such an image has been perpetuated in a long succession of horror films, including *The Wolf Man* (1940), *I Was A Teenage Werewolf* (1957), and *The Curse of the Werewolf* (1961), *Werewolf of Washington* (1973).<sup>32</sup> Hobb too, despite her positive portrayal of the human/wolf link, also

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<sup>32</sup> Hourihan, *Deconstructing*, p. 124.

deals with this theme of a human fear of succumbing to some form of bestiality that lurks within.

Furthermore, Hobb's use of the wolf/human duality shows some striking similarities to that of Jordan. In her Secondary World she posits a hierarchical order of 'magics' known as the Skill, the Wit, and the Hedge. The Skill gives the ability to link with human minds, while the Hedge refers to all forms of fortune telling such as crystal gazing or palm reading. But it is the Wit, the ability for a human to link with a non-human animal that parallels the old talent of Jordan's protagonist Perrin. In Hobb's world the Wit is regarded as a perversion, and much despised for it is feared that it can make a human a beast. Burrich warns FitzChivalry that a Witted one can lose all trace of humanity and will 'run and give tongue and taste blood, as if the pack were all [they had] ever known'.<sup>33</sup> Yet, as in Jordan, the life of a wild wolf is depicted as a clean and wholesome way of being and some believe it was 'once the natural magic of those who lived on the land as hunters ... a magic for those who felt kinship with the wild beast of the woods'. Such a notion is strengthened by the ability of Queen Kettricken who, through her weak sendings of the Wit, immerses herself in simply 'being', becoming part of the 'great web' of life that 'touched her' and in which 'nothing [is] alone, nothing [is] forsaken', a world where all things are interconnected, a thought analogous with Jordan's Great Pattern of the world of the Wheel.<sup>34</sup> The narrator further suggests that 'the Wit may be a man's acceptance of the beast nature within himself, and hence an awareness of the element of humanity that every animal carries within it as well'.<sup>35</sup> Thus the 'Wit' becomes a two way understanding between a human and another animal of shared thoughts and emotions and a return to a *primaeval* and more natural state of being, one that Hobb implies could lie just beneath the veneer of human civilisation. FitzChivalry insists that he and Nigteyes must not bond and

<sup>33</sup> Robin Hobb, *Assassin's Apprentice*, London, 1997, p. 44.

<sup>34</sup> Robin Hobb, *Royal Assassin*, London, prologue, p. 1; pp. 231-32.

<sup>35</sup> Hobb, *Quest*, p. 88.

tries to deny his 'true nature' by declaring: 'I am human. You are wolf'. Nighteyes wisely replies: 'Outwardly' but 'inside we are pack'. It is through an acceptance of the wolf within that connects him more fully to the complex 'web of life' that FitzChivalry feels a complete person.<sup>36</sup>

The bond between human and wolf is one of equality and this is continuously highlighted by the spirited, interactive thoughts between FitzChivalry and Nighteyes. The wolf's personality is also highly developed and through his dialogue he exhibits an extraordinarily human range of emotions, including rage, arrogance, sly humour, and sorrow and he can be sulky, teasing, and playful, all of which Hobb successfully uses to endear him to the reader. The wolf certainly sees himself as an equal for he tells his human-witted 'brother': 'I will be to you what you are to me. Bond brother and pack'.<sup>37</sup> In Hobb's world the narrator makes it clear that:

the legendary loyalty that a bonded animal feels for his Witted one is not at all the same as what a loyal beast gives its master. Rather it is a reflection of the loyalty that the Witted one has pledged to his animal companion, like for like.<sup>38</sup>

The telepathic link between FitzChivalry and Nighteyes is a far more personally integrated one than that experienced by Jordan's protagonist Perrin whose link is a collective one to the minds of all wolves, although he does form a closer bond with the spirit of the dead wolf, Hopper. However, both Hobb and Jordan present their wolves as noble, intelligent, communally minded creatures and, despite their savagery, the wolf way of life as being clean and free by associating it with images of vast tracts of pristine wilderness and an acceptance of the natural cycle of the seasons.

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<sup>36</sup> Hobb, *Royal*, p. 148.

<sup>37</sup> Hobb, *Royal*, p. 265.

<sup>38</sup> Hobb, *Quest*, p. 99.

Jordan's plotted actions for Perrin, as he matures from an inexperienced country youth and earns both the title of Lord Perrin Goldeneyes, and respect as a warrior and leader, as well as coming to terms with a superhuman talent that has the potential to destroy his identity, can be seen to follow a similar psychological story arc as that of Rand. Thus, Jordan draws them together along the heroic line, and he entangles Mat's life with theirs in a similar manner.

### **Mat: 'Son of Battles'**

'When fate gripped you by the throat,  
there was nothing to do but grin.' (*COT*, 631)

Mat is presented to the reader as a gambler, a person of chance, a risk-taker, and the recurring motif of the dice spinning in his head at times of danger or significant change is a very apt one. Thus, within the trio, he provides a counterpoint to the more measured, cautious personality of Perrin. Mat's love of gambling, especially the alluring 'chance' of dicing, is used by Jordan as a recurring metaphor for the randomness of Fate, and for the pull of the Pattern that surrounds Mat and the other *ta'veren*, from which he cannot entirely escape despite his protests. He knows that when he gets too far from Rand, he can be 'drawn back like a hooked fish on an invisible line', as in 'some strange way' he and Perrin are 'tied to Rand's success or failure in *Tarmon Gai'don* ... three *ta'veren* all tangled together'. (*FOH*, 604) Like Rand and Perrin he brings the past to life in the present in a way that is vital to the outcome of the future.

In a mirroring of the pattern of the other *ta'veren*, Mat also faces an inner conflict that triggers his personal development and advances the weaving of the Pattern of the future. Once he has hung, Othin-like, on the Tree of Life at Rhuidean, 'to die and live again, and live once more a part of what was', he gains knowledge of the Old Tongue and

of past battles and complex battle strategies through remembrance of his past lives. (SR, 249) Mat enters Rhuidean with Rand, and his remembrance of the past is juxtaposed to Rand's experiences in this hidden city where his knowledge is gained by reliving the history of the Aiel people. Mat's initial denial of the memories points to the dilemma he faces between the adult maturity of duty and responsibility, and the feckless freedom of youth -- a dilemma similarly faced by Rand and Perrin. As Mat pushes down memories of past military campaigns he thinks:

*'I am no bloody hero ... and I'm no bloody soldier ... that was not me' ...*  
 He did not know what he was – a sour thought – but ... it involved gambling and taverns, women and dancing ... It involved a good horse and every road in the world to choose from. (FOH, 603)

The phrase 'a sour thought' is indicative of the way the narrator indicates that although Mat stubbornly rails against his fate, he knows he cannot continue to sidestep it. Mat later finds himself thinking that 'battle was a gamble to make dicing in taverns a thing for children and toothless invalids', and a 'game that set the blood racing', which points to his acceptance of a melding of past and present personalities, and is a step forward in his development. (FOH, 609-10) The fact that Mat's utilisation of 'what[ever] got shoved' into his 'head' in Rhuidean must be woven into the Age Lace, in favour of the quest, is stressed when Rand tells Mat he 'needs' what is in his 'head', for he is not a battle strategist. (FOH, 800) Mat's uncanny ability to engage in 'three battles, and three victories.' to 'dance with Jak o' the Shadows' with 'small loss' to his 'own men' gains him heroic status. (FOH, 795; 664) He draws men to him to fight under the resurrected banner of the long dead warriors of the Band of the Red Hand, in the Old Tongue *Shen an Calhar*. (FOH, 794) Ironically, he wonders how they would react if they knew he was just a 'gambler following bits of memory from men dead a thousand years and more', a self-

perception which, for the reader, undercuts the soldiers' idealised picture of him, and serves as a reminder that he is only mortal. (*FOH*, 649)

Mat's success as a battle leader suggests that in the triple hero figure his future role must be to win the coming Second Trolloc war, as he has been given the experience and knowledge to do this. Mat has the ancient 'foxhead' medallion that protects him from the One Power, and as long as he is wearing it he cannot be controlled by those with the ability to channel. Such immunity suggests that to him, also, will fall the task of uniting the forces of the Asha'man and the Aes Sedai. Furthermore, as the *Aelfinn* have prophesied his marriage to the Seanchan princess, Daughter of the Nine Moons, surely this influential link with the invaders from across the Aryth Ocean will give him the clout to utilise the might of their armed forces as well. Mat has a further link to the past as he has scunded the mythic Horn of Valere, which summoned the legendary heroes of the past to assist at the battle at Falme against the invading Seanchan. (*GH*, 659ff) As long as he lives, Aragorn-like, he is the only one who has the power to again call upon them to fight for the cause of the Light at the Last Battle. Thus, through his extraordinary ability as a battle leader, as well as his tie to the Horn of Valere, Mat's role in the *ta'veren* trinity seems to fit that of a Preserver.

### **Associations with the northern god, Othin**

As with Perrin, in his characterisation of Mat, Jordan again encompasses aspects of a Northern god, and uses this to enhance the stature of his protagonist, and to build his character traits.<sup>39</sup> It is obvious that Mat shares many attributes with Othin. For instance, like Othin, he is a master tactician and general; his knowledge gained by hanging on 'Avendesora', the Tree of Life, in the hidden city of Rhuidean equates with Othin hanging

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<sup>39</sup> Norén, 'Norse and Germanic Mythology'.

in Yggdrasil. (SR, 439) The two ravens, Hugin and Munin (loosely, ‘thought’ and ‘memory’) seated on Othin’s shoulders, equate well with Egwene’s prophetic dream where ‘two ravens alighted’ on Mat’s ‘shoulders’ their ‘claws sinking’ into his ‘flesh’. (LOC, 368) The numinous, unbreakable black spear Mat acquires in Rhuidean parallels Othin’s own spear, Gungner, which can penetrate anything.<sup>40</sup> Mat’s spear also tightens the parallel to Othin as it is engraved with two ravens and a verse which includes the actual words ‘thought’ and ‘memory’.

Thus is our treaty written; thus is agreement made.

Thought is the arrow of time; memory never fades.

What was asked is given. The price is paid. (SR, 440)

Furthermore, as ‘thought’ is the ‘arrow of time’, the suggestion seems to be that memory creates a conflation of past and present, which in turn is constantly evolving into the future, a theory that accords with Jordan’s concept of time in his Secondary World as an endless cycle of seven repeating Ages.

Other strong parallels to Othin include Mat’s ability to move easily among both nobles and warriors (he gambles with the nobles in the cities), much as Othin was worshipped by the nobles and those associated with them — the warriors and skalds. The prophecy that he ‘will give up half the light of the world to save the world’ is a hint that Othin-like he may lose an eye. (SR, 249) In gambling Mat has the ‘Dark One’s own luck’, and the way gold and silver coin endlessly pour into his purse is suggestive of Othin’s gold ring, Draupnir, from which other gold rings drop every ninth night. (DR, 345) Yet Mat’s connection to gold also manifests in a far more sinister way, adding another facet to the development of his personality.

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<sup>40</sup> Norén, ‘Norse and Germanic Mythology’. For further discussion on the figure of Othin, refer to Snorre Sturlason, *Heimskringla or the Lives of the Norse Kings*, edited by Erling Monsen, New York, (1932) 1990.

### **Fool's gold: Objects of beauty and destruction**

Jordan's concept of a richly ornamented golden dagger with the power to totally corrupt both mind and body is analogous with Tolkien's golden One Ring. The evil essence of the dagger, as with the One Ring, is suggestive of enormous power but this is an illusion as in reality both objects can lead to misery and human destruction. Mat takes the dagger from the evil city of Shadar Logoth, a place where 'there is not a pebble' that is 'not tainted'. The city's ruins are haunted by an unspeakable evil, known as 'Mashadar', that long ago destroyed the inhabitants, yet it was an evil force, originally born out of human 'suspicion and hatred'. (*EOTW*, 633) Under its influence Mat quickly becomes suspicious, spiteful and his eyes 'burned with hate'.<sup>41</sup> (*EOTW*, 629-30) Moiraine says of the evil contained in the dagger:

It will have waxed and waned in him, what he is in the heart of him fighting what the contagion of Mashadar sought to make him, but now the battle inside him is almost done, and he is almost defeated. Soon, if it does not kill him first, he will spread that evil like a plague wherever he goes. (*EOTW*, 633)

It is only through the healing properties of *saidar* (perhaps, a type of grace) applied by Moiraine and her Aes Sedai colleagues that Mat regains his identity, although his memory is left with holes, later to be filled with snatches of past lives. His contamination is analogous to the two evils that pulse in the unhealable wound in Rand's side, especially as one of them comes from the contaminated dagger, stolen by Padan Fain, who later slashes it across Rand's original wound. (*COS*, 628) Mat's recovery anticipates that a way will be found to heal Rand. Mat's corruption from the dagger also resonates with the taint on *saidin* that can destroy Rand's mind. The power of the dagger to corrupt is shown by

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<sup>41</sup> Compare the influence of the One Ring over Frodo in *LOTR*.

Rand's brief contact with it, for to him it felt like 'a weight pulling him down', words which echo those of Frodo in relation to his own heavy burden, the One Ring. (*GH*, 292)

The horror of what Mat could have become (and of what Rand is still in danger of becoming) is seen through the transfiguration of the pedlar Padan Fain into something Moiraine describes as being 'less than human, worse than vile', and although, Gollum-like, he grovels and weeps to Moiraine that he wants to 'walk in the Light again' she senses this wish for redemption will always be overridden by his 'greed for his promised rewards'. (*EOTW*, 706; 715) He had exercised his freewill and chosen the Dark forty years ago thus setting his own fate, for it is stressed that the Dark cannot take you unless you are willing. Jordan suggests that within the overall Pattern a character's choices (good or evil) can to some extent determine the course of their lives. But in Shadar Logoth, Fain's already degraded soul is merged with that of the evil spirit Mordeth, so that sometimes he was not sure 'who he really was', except that he had become a 'force unto himself, and beyond any other power'. (*FOH*, 14)

Fain's ultimate plight serves as a warning of how evil draws more evil to it, creating a downward spiralling into a deeper darkness that nullifies any kernel of repentance. Gollum-like, he is drawn to seek the dagger, an artefact worked in gold and set with a large ruby that personifies the deceptive face of the evil that has consumed him. (*EOTW*, 359) Its exquisite beauty is juxtaposed with Fain's physical appearance, his 'grime layered ... face', his 'matted ... scraggly, uncut hair and beard', his 'hunched' posture and 'sunken eyes', and the 'rancid smell' of his body, which undercuts the power he hungers after and intensifies the darkness of his fall. (*EOTW*, 703) Without the dagger Fain constantly experiences a sharp 'desire', a 'hunger to be whole'. And with the dagger in his hand he felt he 'was whole again ... one with what had bound him so long ago ... given him life', although his rebirth is an abomination. (*FOH*, 326-27)

Fain's taking of the dagger that changes his life forever is parodic of Rand's taking of the crystal sword, and thus, Jordan emphasises the horror of Fain's predicament. In a further braiding of the *ta'veren* life-threads, Jordan ties this pitiful creature's destiny to that of Rand as the Dark Lord has made Fain 'his hound to hunt and follow' Rand 'with never a bit of rest' and, ironically, he seeks to kill him with the deadly weapon that Mat is responsible for releasing into the wider world. (*EOTW*, 704)

Thus, in a further configuration of the pattern of Rand's journey to maturity, Jordan shows that Mat's dilemma is between the need to act responsibly and the desire to remain feckless and fancy free. (The evil to which he almost loses his life is the result of him ignoring Moiraine's advice not to touch, or remove anything from the city of Shadar Logoth.) But, as with Perrin, the talents he gains draw him into Rand's fate as a clever battle tactician and as sounder of the fabled Horn of Valere. Mat's blowing of the Horn, which summoned the legendary heroes of the past to aid the Dragon Reborn's victory at Falme, anticipates that he will summon them again at the Last Battle. Similarly, in book six (*LOC*) Perrin and the wolves that come to his call play a large part in Rand's rescue from hostile members of the White Tower at Dumai's Wells, suggesting that he and the wolves will again have a crucial role in the final battle. Jordan's tactic of anticipating a future event through the outcome of a previous one strengthens the threads between the three *ta'veren* youths, and adds to the sense of them forming a triple heroic figure.

### **Heroic triad**

In his characterisation of each of the *ta'veren*, Rand, Perrin, and Mat, Jordan uses a reduplication of motifs and associations which are intertwined to produce an impressive triple hero figure, and a worthy opponent to the Dark Lord. Each youth has a link to the past that alters and develops his identity and equips him with talents needed to fulfil certain

tasks in the focal quest of the narrative. In turn, each of them is linked to a god-figure through imagery or physical attributes which help to define their personalities, and to increase their stature. Through their association with both Christ and the Northern gods, Othin and Thor, the catastrophe facing the world of the Wheel is suggestive of a blend of Armageddon and Ragnarok. Thus, Jordan not only presents a multi-faceted hero figure, but he also intensifies the urgency of the task at hand, and the magnitude of the disaster to be faced by the inhabitants of the Wheel world should the life-thread of any of one of the *ta'veren* trio be snipped from the Pattern.

The textual effect of Jordan's use of the notion of interlace, in relation to his three main male hero figures, is to fold the reader further into their stories, and thus into the imaginary world. For example, through the use of tactics such as echoes and anticipations he provides clues that the reader picks up and interprets and that give a sense of participation in events, which encourages an intimate relationship with the characters and their landscape. The repetitions and variations of themes, whereby the reader's response to Rand's actions is moulded by comparison or contrast to the actions of his two *ta'veren* companions, enhances the concept of them as an interdependent and complex tric. Through a reduplication of the ordeals to be faced by Rand, Perrin, and Mat, Jordan reveals the complicated path that is required in order to resolve moral dilemmas. Thus, the author brings to the fore the ambiguity of moral choice-making in the *WOT* (and by inference in our world) and the complications that are central to moral issues. For in the Wheel world good and evil are both woven into the pattern, and his three young protagonists, whose life-threads have been spun out by the Great Pattern in order to bring change, collectively show that it is only through the overcoming of doubts, fears, and uncertainties that moral choices can be made.

Jordan's splintering of the hero figure, his ability to weave the life-threads of both male and female figures into the heroic paradigm, is a textual strategy that has been enthusiastically taken up by the *WOT* fans in their cyberspace representation of Jordan's imaginary world. It is this fascinating extension of Jordan's texts that forms the focus of the final chapter.