

Chapter Two

Unravelling the Pattern:

The Magus Figures in *The Wheel of Time*

A significant plot or pattern element in contemporary high fantasy is the use of a range of superhuman characters (i.e. those of a higher nature or possessed of magical powers) who function as helpers to or opponents of the hero. For the purpose of my thesis I am defining the *magus* as a superhuman character, whether male or female, who is given or progressively assumes a role of responsibility for keeping the pattern of mortal existence in balance, in order to save his or her world from destruction by the forces of the Dark. Although the trope of the magus has been much written about, as a kind of magical warrior, less attention has been paid to the role played by this figure in high fantasy as an interpreter of the discernible patterns of the heroic quest. It takes an extraordinary interpreter in the text to make sense of the pattern of destiny that forms around the central characters in works such as Robert Jordan's *WOT*. It is in the light of pattern interpreter and keeper, or of pattern disrupter, that I wish to explore the dualism of Light and Dark that Jordan assigns to the stock figure of the magus, which continues to play such a pivotal element in the fantasy genre.

Accordingly, this chapter provides an exposition of Jordan's patterning of Light and Dark in his presentation of three female magus figures. Moiraine symbolises 'good' and rationality. She is dedicated to keeping Rand within the pattern that will bring victory for the forces of Light. Lanfear, an agent of the Dark Lord, is dedicated to seducing Rand to other darker paths. Cadsuane, who appears once Moiraine and Lanfear are removed (from the narrative), is an inscrutable figure who symbolises balance, but may have mixed motives – a combination of the attributes of Moiraine and Lanfear. Her unfinished tapestry

of Rand is a metaphor for the hazardous nature of his heroic journey, a reminder that either the Light or the Dark could be victorious. These three characters are constructed to provide the necessary guidance and testing of the hero.

Jordan also utilises a magus-like figure, Thom, a travelling bard, as a means of projecting himself into the narrative. Thom stitches together stories from fragments of all manner of heroic tales, past and present, and so represents the hero as an interlaced character. Thus Jordan is the storyteller both inside and outside the text, providing yet another facet to the patterning of his already complex work, and highlighting the feature of the magus as both pattern-keeper and interpreter.

Brief history of the magus figure

As was documented by E. M. Butler in *The Myth of the Magus*, this legendary figure of superhuman powers is an archetype central to myth and religion across many cultures.¹ This well-respected theoretical work identifies the anthropological origins of the magus in ancient rituals performed by a shaman or wizard to ensure the prosperity of the tribe. Butler traces the figure's subsequent development through pre-Christian religious and mystic philosophers, through mediaeval sorcerers and alchemists, and on into the eighteenth and nineteenth-century occult revival. Traditionally, too, in literature this figure has repeatedly appeared as a seeker, prophet, seer, teacher, guardian, shaman, and conduit for the forces of both good and evil. Moreover, much Western fantasy literature – and many post-mediaeval writers in particular – are indebted to the more specifically Celtic tradition of this archetype for one of its most enduring and enigmatic figures.

Merlin – seer, magus, mentor and shape-shifter – has performed many roles and re-appeared in many guises since his earliest appearance in the fabled court of Camelot, while

¹ E. M. Butler, *The Myth of the Magus*, Cambridge, (1948) 1993.

always maintaining his magical powers and aura of mystery. Despite his pre-Christian origins, tales of Merlin's life evolved from within the mediaeval Christian tradition as did those of other Dark Age figures such as Beowulf. As Gwyneth Evans observes, 'later writers [continue to] link the pagan prophet/mage to their own Christian or post-Christian world views'.² For writers of fantasy like J. R. R. Tolkien, and later writers such as Robert Jordan, who have been strongly influenced by the *LOTR*, one of the most crucial topoi of their narratives is that of the magus. In a variety of guises, this chameleon-like figure forms part of the matrix on which the stories are created, and functions as an important, even crucial, intersection between the human and the supernatural. In works of high fantasy it is this figure who has been given, or has acquired, knowledge of the true path that the hero must follow for the good of the world; it is also this figure who takes up the responsibility of mentor and guide to the main protagonists in an effort to save their world from imminent annihilation.

In Jordan's world of the Wheel, the pattern of the Third Age weaves relentlessly towards *Taimon Gai'don* (the Last Battle) but, as mentioned in the previous chapter, while the Age Lace is to be woven by all life-threads, some strands in the web are not yet set, and so the final outcome can be influenced by the choices and actions of the hero Rand, who is the Dragon Reborn. Because he is *ta'veren*, Rand is one of the key characters whose life-thread is spun out by the Great Pattern specifically to bring change to the emerging weave. For a time, like the ripple effect of a pebble dropped into a pond, he will influence the weaving of the life-threads of those around him. As explained by his Ogier friend Loial:

sometimes the Wheel bends a life-thread, or several threads, in such a way that all the surrounding threads are forced to swirl around it, and those force other threads, and those still others, and on and on. (*EOTW*, 554)

² Gwyneth Evans, 'Three Modern Views of Merlin', *Mythlore*, 16.4, Summer, 1990, p. 17.

Thus Rand may, to some extent, alter the Pattern of the Age and although his destiny continually pushes him towards a final confrontation with the Dark Lord, it is not yet certain if he will stand as a champion for the Light or for the Shadow. Ba'alzamon, one of the Forsaken and mouthpiece for the Dark Lord, can taunt Rand by suggesting: 'You have served me before. Serve me again ... or be destroyed forever.' (*GH*, 588) Therefore, if the depicted world is to survive, it is imperative that the young hero be brought to accept some measure of guidance from the magus figures who serve the cause of the Light, and so to develop the strength to resist the lies and temptations which are offered by their Dark counterparts.

As noted by John Timmerman, the Manichaeism which forms the underpinning framework for many high fantasy texts such as Tolkien's *LOTR*,³ Le Guin's *Earthsea* and Jordan's *WOT*, also dictates that the 'magic and presence of supernatural powers' must be 'inescapably allied with the [eternal] problem of good and evil'.⁴ Manichaeism, which survived until the thirteenth century, was a 'religious system with Christian, Gnostic, and pagan elements ... based on a supposed primeval conflict between light and darkness, and representing Satan as coeternal with God'.⁵ Thus, it offers the writer of high fantasy a useful cosmological framework in which light and dark can be presented as essential, eternal elements, one in which an imbalance between the two precipitates the hero's call to adventure.

The Buddhist cosmology in which a universal equilibrium must be sought through a harmonising tension of light and dark also suggests a similar pattern, and in the eclectic manner of fantasy writing both Jordan and Le Guin's work also reflect the influence of this

³ Tom A. Shippey suggests that Tolkien's presentation of evil in *LOTR* is more complex and ambiguous, and could reflect both the Boethian view of evil as 'internal, caused by human sin and weakness and alienation from God', and the Manichaeism view that 'evil is a force from outside'. In his *J. R. R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*, London, 2000, chap. 3, 'Concepts of Evil', pp. 112ff.

⁴ John H. Timmerman, *Other Worlds: The Fantasy Genre*, Bowling Green, Ohio, 1983, p. 72.

⁵ W. R. Trumble & A. Stevenson (eds), *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 5th ed., 2 vols, Oxford, 2002, p. 1691.

Eastern thought. In regard to fairy tale, to which fantasy is related, Le Guin has remarked that ‘evil, then, appears ... not as something diametrically opposed to good, but as inextricably involved with it as in the yang-yin symbol’.⁶ In *Earthsea* the Equilibrium is to be kept through a balancing of light and dark, for one cannot exist without the other. Similarly in the *WOT*, both light and dark are woven into the Great Pattern.

Writers of high fantasy assign to the trope of the magus as wielder of magic or superhuman qualities, a dualistic role, creating figures that can become powerful conduits for either good or evil, as portrayed in the characters of Tolkien’s Gandalf the Grey and Saruman the White. Magi can also provide powerful surrogates on earth for the cosmic polarities of Light and Dark – as depicted in the *WOT*. Such figures of the Light may be swayed to the side of evil, if hunger for knowledge or improper power negates either caution or the judicious use of their special abilities. Then in turn the inherent danger in the use of power can become a useful literary device for heightening the tension of the ongoing struggle between good and evil that provides the driving impetus for the onset of the protagonist’s quest. So, for example, the refraction of pure white light into the colours of the spectrum, glimpsed when Saruman swirls his white cloak, is a metaphor for his fall to the Shadow through his insatiable desire to obtain forbidden knowledge and power. When Saruman sneeringly tells Gandalf that the ‘white page can be overwritten; and the white light can be broken’, Gandalf sagely replies, ‘in which case it is no longer white ... [a]nd he that breaks a thing to find out what it is has left the path of wisdom’. (*Fellowship*, 252)

Jordan’s response to this famed Tolkienian scenario is realised in the *WOT* through the leading female figures of Moiraine Aes Sedai and Lanfear (Daughter of the Night), a former Aes Sedai, who during the Age of Legends chose to turn to the Shadow for personal gain. In the Jordan sequence the traditional concept of the central magus figure as

⁶ Ursula K. Le Guin, ‘The Child and the Shadow’, in *Language of the Night*, edited by Susan Wood, rev. ed., London, 1989, p. 56.

being solely male shifts to incorporate figures of either sex, which is in keeping with the concept of balance in his imaginary world. But insofar as Moiraine and Lanfear are presented as opposing representations of mind/body, purity/sexuality the author is here again drawing on stock motifs.

Le Guin, too, seeks to redress her earlier presentation of a masculine domination of magical powers when she revisits Earthsea in the novella *Dragonfly*.⁷ In this more recent tale Irian, a young woman from the Island of Way, unexpectedly gains admittance into the male-dominated and sexually sterile world of the wizards on the island of Roke, where she is recognised by the Patterner of the Sacred Grove as being the catalyst of unprecedented change:

All this year the patterns of the shadows and the branches and the roots, all the silent language of his forest, had spoken of destruction, of transgressions, of all things changed. Now it was upon them, he knew. It had come with her.⁸

Le Guin's text reflects both personal and contemporary societal changes in regard to feminine and masculine stereotyping. Jordan gives strong and important roles to his female characters and even presents a world in which females have held the power for three thousand years, but his work is not entirely free of gender stereotypes.

In Jordan's *WOT*, in keeping with his Manichaean framework, the magus figures fall into two main groupings, being either of the Light or of the Dark. Those of the Light are presented as the interpreters of the Great Pattern (through prophecy, archival manuscripts and foretelling), desperately needed if the world is to survive in its present form. Jordan's world is depicted in its Third Age, and looks back to the Age of Legends, a golden era that was destroyed by human greed and over-reaching for power.⁹ These figures

⁷ Ursula K. Le Guin, in *Tales from Earthsea*, New York, 2001, pp. 197ff.

⁸ Le Guin, *Tales*, p. 256.

⁹ This is equivalent of the Roman myth of the Golden Age of the Gods, the Silver Age of semi-gods, and the Bronze Age of men.

act, with limitations, as mentors/guardians to the main protagonists. Their Dark counterparts, too, are interpreters of the Great Pattern as they seem to have knowledge of the prophecies. But they seek to disrupt the cosmic pattern in order to replace it with an alternative one, which would bring chaos and fulfil the Dark Lord's promises to them of limitless power and immortality. Indeed it is prophesied that, if the Dark Lord gains control of the Wheel of Time, he will recast it in his own image and bring into existence a world of eternal Shadow. Jordan's light and dark patterning of the magus figures, who are so constructed to both test and encourage the development of the main protagonist, is interlaced with a type of pseudo-magus figure, one whose magical ability lies solely with words; a mercurial character, through whom the author gains entry into the realm of his own story-world.

The spell of the storyteller: Magic with words

A wandering minstrel I –
 A thing of shreds and patches,
 Of ballads, scraps and snatches,
 And dreamy lullaby! (The Mikado, Act 1)

Jordan's re-working of the traditional archetype of the magus or wise man is given a twist as Thom the gleeman provides a surrogate or alter ego for the author, which allows him not only to co-inhabit the world of the Wheel, but also to keep to the fore the importance of 'story' itself in maintaining the pattern of life within his depicted world and, by implication, its important role in our own lives, whether in oral or written form.

Through his portrayal of Thom Merrilin, also a prominent mentor/guide to the central protagonists, Jordan anticipates and then undercuts our expectations of the stock figure of the magus. On the one hand Thom appears to fulfil the traditional role of the

superhuman wise man, but on the other his carnality and fallibility eventually reveal him to be a very human and much less romantic or elevated figure. Nevertheless, his essential goodness is not tarnished and his human warmth and foibles make him a character of great appeal, so he functions as a kind of 'rogue' wise man figure, but one whose unfailing sense of higher moral purpose in life puts him firmly on the side of the Light. The gleeman, who from his age, white hair, beard and name is strongly reminiscent of Merlin or Gandalf, has to date in this on-going series displayed no magical powers. Yet, paradoxically, early on he is introduced as an imposing and seemingly magical figure for even his 'deep voice ... sounded in some way larger than that of an ordinary man', and 'in the open air it seemed to fill a great room and resonate from the walls.' (*EOTW*, 47)

The following word picture of Rand's first sight of him at his home village of Emond's Field, brings this character to life and imparts a sense of great age and of a certain grandeur:

The white-haired man whirled, cloak flaring. His long coat had odd, baggy sleeves and big pockets. Thick mustaches as snowy as the hair on his head, quivered around his mouth, and his face was gnarled like a tree that had seen hard times. He gestured imperiously at Rand and the others with a long-stemmed pipe, ornately carved, that trailed a wisp of smoke. Blue eyes peered out from under bushy white brows, drilling into whatever he looked at. (*EOTW*, 46)

This stereotypical description, and the fact that Thom declares he is 'there for his art' – which includes not only his storytelling, but also his juggling, sleight of hand and fireworks – must draw some comparison with the representation of the wizard Gandalf and with his arrival in Hobbiton. (*EOTW*, 49) Gandalf was initially introduced in *LOTR* as 'that old wandering conjuror' and his fame throughout the Shire is mainly brought about through his 'skill with fires, smokes and lights'. (*Fellowship*, 24; 25) But the narrator soon warns the reader that Gandalf's business is 'far more difficult and dangerous', thereby

cloaking him in an air of mystery. (*Fellowship*, 25) Since Thom must trigger echoes of Gandalf, this account sets up an expectation in Jordan's reader that Thom the Gleeman, too, could well have hidden superhuman talents. This thought is strengthened by Thom's wariness at Moiraine Aes Sedai's arrival in the village and his seemingly deceptive remark to her that he is but 'a simple Gleeman, that and nothing more.' (*EOTW*, 52)

Jordan repeatedly states that he is in control of his narrative, likening himself to an 'Old Testament God' with his 'fist in the middle of [his] characters' lives'.¹⁰ Therefore, the character of Thom can feasibly be considered as a covert persona for the author, a way of giving himself not only a voice in the text, but also an active 'physical' presence and a further measure of control. For the author/creator is also the teller of great tales, an artist, like the gleeman, who creates magic with words, and in the depicted world the old gleeman's mind is said to be the repository of 'all stories ... of Ages that were and will be'. (*EOTW*, 51) Upon arrival in the small village of Emond's Field, Thom assures his eager audience not only that he has 'all stories' but that he will 'make them come alive before [their] eyes'. (*EOTW*, 51; 50) Furthermore, he wears the distinctive garb of his trade, the gleeman's coat of many patches and colours, which is a marvellous metaphor, and signal for the reader, of the way in which Jordan's own *WOT* narrative is to be pieced together from many different bits of story, that in the end will make a coherent pattern and a strongly woven whole. Such a concept is strengthened by the fact that, despite the village innkeeper's dismissive observation that like the garments worn by all gleemen, Thom's 'is more patches than cloak' (*EOTW*, 16), and by inference flimsy, the opposite is true for it is revealed to be an article of some substance:

His cloak seemed a mass of patches, in odd shapes and sizes, fluttering with every breath of air, patches in a hundred colors. It was really quite thick,

¹⁰ Ernest Lilley, 2002, 'Robert Jordan Interview', *SFRevu*, <http://www.sfrevu.com/ISSUES/2003/0301/Feature%20Interview%20-%20Robert%20Jordan/Interview.htm> (accessed 19 March, 2003).

Rand saw, despite what Master al'Vere had said, with the patches merely sewn on like decorations. (*EOTW*, 46)

In this way Jordan is able to privilege the role of the author as a teller of tales and to emphasise the importance of 'story' by suggesting that it provides the framework for a storehouse of collective human memory, and that, over time, like a patchwork garment, it is continuously being added to and altered, so that history as 'story' is timeless and never-ending and becomes part of the rich fabric of life.

Legend and story

Jordan has also said that, on one level, the *WOT* series gives him the chance to explore the source of 'legends and how they alter over time'.¹¹ He seems to be referring to the way that fantasists are continuously drawing on an eclectic selection of traditional motifs, myths and legends, or the re-workings of these things by other writers, which they in turn reshape anew to suit their own purposes. On this recurring literary braiding of plot motifs and character types, Northrop Frye, in *Fables of Identity*, asserts that 'every literary work catches the echoes of other works of its type in literature, and so ripples out into the rest of literature and thence into life'.¹² This view is also suggestive of the way in which 'story' and 'reality' continuously bleed into one another, blurring the boundaries between the two. Jordan's view of the transmutability of legends and other traditional material is echoed in the world of the Wheel by Thom, when he explains to Elayne about stories changing through the ages and reveals how the gleemen take up and preserve important events by continuously weaving them into their repertoire of tales, so that reality is constantly in the process of becoming 'story'.

¹¹ Vishad Sukul, 'Spokes of the Wheel: An Analysis of Robert Jordan's Writing', <http://www.dragonmount.com/Articles/Downloads/WoT-paper-Vishad.pdf> (accessed 10 Feb., 2004).

¹² Northrop Frye, *Fables of Identity: Studies in Poetic Mythology*, New York, 1963, pp. 36-7.

My epic ... and Loial's book – will be no more than seed if we are both lucky. Those who know the truth will die, and their grandchildren's grandchildren will remember something different. And *their* grandchildren's grandchildren something else again. Two dozen generations, and you may be the hero of it, not Rand. (SR, 327)

As the gleeman tells tales of 'what has been and what will be', he imparts a sense of time in his world as a continuous spiral that allows for a confluence of past, present and future, an idea frequently explored by the writers of fantasy, whether in totally Secondary Worlds like Tolkien's, Le Guin's and Jordan's or, as in the magical-realism works of writers like Susan Cooper, Alan Garner and Diana Wynne Jones, through an intersection of mythical past ages with the depicted mundane world of the characters.

Furthermore, writers of high fantasy work to keep the reader under the spell of the story and, indeed, they invite the reader to believe in and imaginatively co-inhabit their Secondary Worlds. So Jordan's introduction of a subtle narratorial voice that speaks from within the text, in the guise of an important and entertaining character, ensures that the pattern of the narrative is not disrupted nor the spell of the story broken.¹³

In the world of the Wheel it is through story that information is gathered and distributed and this is largely done through the gleemen, who 'travel like dust on the wind'. (EOTW, 309) Thus, the history and mythology of the world are preserved and retain a vibrant, on-going presence. The gleemen also speak of what may come to pass through the recital of long-memorised verses of ancient prophecy that have been handed down by word of mouth from one generation to the next. It is through the repetition of story that the inhabitants of the Wheel world retain a sense of place and self, for it is the threads of story

¹³ This technique may be compared with that of Henry Fielding's use of an overt omniscient narrator in his 18th century 'realist' novel *Tom Jones*, where the narrator interjects and personally addresses the 'Dear Reader', thereby disrupting the flow of the story and ensuring that the reader takes a more objective or even morally judgmental role. And of course postmodern literature also plays with this device – both metafictionally and in terms of exposing the framework/construct of the story.

that weave a pattern of life by drawing the past into the present, and foreshadowing the future. This sits well with Jordan's cosmology of a patterned and fatalistic world, one in which the inhabitants accept without question that throughout the repeating Ages 'the Wheel weaves as the Wheel wills'. (*EOTW*, 92) Story in Jordan's imaginary world is universal, and so it percolates throughout all levels of society via the public performance of the gleemen or by rumour. The hierarchical nature of the world of the Wheel is reflected in the different registers used by Thom in his recitals, from the 'High Chant' of the Old Tongue, used in the Royal Courts, through to the popular 'Plain Chant' of the taverns, down to 'Common'.¹⁴ Thom's pride in his performance of story and his 'contempt' for 'Common' which 'meant simply telling' a story the way you might 'tell your neighbour about your crop' perhaps reflects an authorial vanity shown in the preference for the work of the artist as opposed to that of the layman. (*EOTW*, 210-11) A measure of the beauty of Thom's craft is captured during his one of his recitals in 'Plain Chant'. This performance occurs during a brief stopover in the city of Baerlon with the Emond's Fielders a few nights after they first flee their home village. Thus at the Stag and Lion Inn, he re-tells an old favourite of cavalcade titled 'The Great Hunt of the Horn':

'prancing, silver hooves and proud, arched necks', Thom proclaimed, while somehow seeming not only to be riding a horse, but to be one of a long procession of riders. 'Silken manes flutter with tossed heads. A thousand streaming banners whip rainbows against an endless sky. A hundred brazen-throated trumpets shiver the air, and drums rattle like thunder. Wave on wave, cheers roll from watchers in their thousands, roll across the rooftops and towers of Illian, crash and break unheard around the thousand ears of the riders whose eyes and hearts shine with their sacred quest. The Great Hunt of

¹⁴ This resonates with the Nordic Skald who, as noted by Karl-Johan Norén, 'had several ways to tell a story, ranging from highly formal styles like *drottkvaettr*, to pure prose'. See his article 'Norse and Germanic Mythology in *The Wheel of Time*', <http://hem3.passagen.se/kjnoren/jordan/norse.html> (accessed 19 March, 2003).

the Horn rides forth, rides to seek the Horn of Valere that will summon the heroes of the Ages back from the grave to battle for the Light.' (*EOTW*, 210)

Thom's recital is imitative of Jordan's own range of styles and voices. For Jordan's purpose, as is shown through Thom's recital of the ancient tale of the legendary Horn of Valere, the gleeman is a versatile and extremely useful vehicle for imparting all kinds of knowledge, both fantastic and true, not only to the inhabitants of his own world but to the reader. Thus a deeper understanding of the depicted world grows naturally from within it, in a way that not only encourages the reader's belief in the reality of this realm, but heightens the emotional involvement in it.

The gleeman's extensive repertoire is a particularly useful literary tool for revealing many details of ancient battles and heroic deeds that help to flesh out the background of his world's long and glorious history. In a sort of parallel, the recital of verses taken from the prophecies of the Dragon highlights the urgency of the role the reincarnation of this figure must play in the approaching Last Battle, if the destruction of their world is to be averted. Thom's sharing of cryptically worded and riddle-like verses of ancient prophecies also provides puzzling clues to be unravelled by both protagonist and reader, thereby adding to the dramatic tension as Rand slowly moves towards an acceptance of the mantle of Dragon Reborn being thrust upon him by fate. The gleeman's remark that 'a prophecy that was easily fulfilled would not be worth much' reinforces the importance of story and adds to the epic sense of Jordan's own narrative, as well as suggesting that the hero's quest will take him upon a long and arduous path, for maturity and self-knowledge are not easily to be won. (*EOTW*, 190)

Jordan also highlights the fact that, in the depicted world, the inhabitants' acceptance of information is selective; they tend to relegate unpalatable although true stories (such as those indicating the existence of Trollocs and Fades or a Dragon who is

both destroyer and saviour) to the realm of fable. Thereby, they would dismiss them as part of ‘a great sackful of gleeman’s tales’, for Thom openly admits that some of his ‘stories are exaggerated, in a way’. (*EOTW*, 233; 100) When the gleeman first makes mention to Rand of the prophecies of the Dragon, as found in the *Karaethon Cycle*, Rand is quick to reply that ‘nobody tells ... those stories in the Two Rivers, [n]ot in Emond’s Field’ and that the village Wisdom (i.e. healer) would ‘skin them alive if they did’. (*EOTW*, 189) In other words, unduly alarmist stories that could disturb the villagers’ peace of mind are to be ignored. But, as in our own world, denial of disturbing aspects of life does not negate them, nor does it preclude the changes they may bring; and eventually fears of the unknown need to be confronted and overcome, a lesson the main protagonists must master on their painful paths towards maturity. Yet, on the whole, Thom’s travels throughout the lands over a period of many years make him a credible eye witness and chronicler of events, so that when he first warns Rand, Mat and Perrin to beware of entanglement with the ‘Aes Sedai witches’ of the White Tower because their true motives cannot be fathomed, his words have the ring of truth. And his words alert the reader that the role of these women is ambiguous and not always to be taken at face value.

Thom’s identity as a gleeman and teller of fantastic tales is also linked to his trademark cloak of patches, worn in all weathers, hot or cold, as ‘he always’ wants to ensure that ‘everyone’ knows he is ‘a gleeman’. (*DR*, 352) Moreover, when forced by circumstances to remove this garment, chameleon-like he reluctantly shrugs off this colourful persona to reveal other aspects of his character. Throughout the narrative the absence or presence of his cloak signals either the mental tucking away or opening up of his bottomless ‘bag of gleeman’s tales’. An excellent example of this occurs early in the first book when he prepares to flee from the city of Baerlon with Rand and Mat because the two youths are being stalked by a deadly ‘Fade’. He removes his gleeman’s cloak and,

significantly, folds it ‘into a bundle around his instrument cases, inside out’ so that the patches are ‘hidden’, thus signalling a putting away of ‘story’. In its place he dons a drab ‘dark brown’ cloak, becoming a stranger whom his two companions view as a scary ‘tall man’ who menacingly approaches them ‘with the hood of his cloak pulled up to hide his face’.¹⁵ (*EOTW*, 397; 396) Although at this point, after aiding Mat and Rand’s escape, he is thought to be killed by the Fade, because they carry his bundled up cloak and instruments to safety, hope remains that Thom and his stories will return – which of course, in time, they do.

When Mat next encounters Thom in the village of Salidar, stronghold of the rebel Aes Sedai, where he has temporarily become guide and protector to Elayne and Nynaeve, the youth muses that he ‘did not know what to make of him without his gleeman’s cloak.’ (*LOC*, 803) On another occasion as he and Thom make plans to escape from the city of Ebou Dar, where Mat has been held as the sexual ‘toy’ of the Queen, he muses that the one-time gleeman seems ‘positively drab in plain bronze-coloured wool and a dark cloak’. (*WH*, 341) The gleeman’s change of apparel throughout the narrative clearly signals a change in the role that he will adopt: a device that enables Jordan to bring out different aspects of this character’s personality to suit the pattern within his own greater narrative. Such changes fit well with the fact that essentially Thom, who with his oral performances brings story to life, is a highly experienced artist or illusionist. By this method Jordan creates an intriguingly adaptable character, whose multi-faceted personality metaphorically mirrors his gleeman’s coat of many colours. Furthermore, Thom’s ability to influence the way in which people perceive him, merely by the wearing or not wearing of his cloak, presents a type of shape-changing, an art that traditionally has been one of the supernatural

¹⁵ Compare the hobbits’ first sight of Aragorn/Strider in the inn at Bree. (*Fellowship*, chap. 10)

abilities attributed to the magus figure. Thus Jordan, like so many writers before him, adapts traditional archetypes to fit his own purpose.

In line with the author's use of multi-stranded and intricately interlaced plots and sub-plots, and like other leading characters, Thom is woven into and out of the pattern of the narrative, playing a more prominent part in some books than in others, but always maintaining a presence, albeit only briefly, as in the latest volume (*COT*). As the later volumes in the series become increasingly concerned with the intrigues and politics of the various nations and the Dragon Reborn struggles to unite them before the Last Battle, so too Thom's role changes and he is portrayed as a less romantic and far more worldly-wise figure. Moiraine Aes Sedai reminds him that she is aware that he is no 'simple gleeman' (echoing his earlier words), but a man who is purported to be able to 'play' the deadly political 'Game of Houses in his sleep'. (*SR*, 272) His prowess in the chess-like moves of the popular game of Stones has already hinted at his ability to manipulate tricky situations to his own advantage. Moiraine, as if 'reading from a page', recites other details of his past:

Thomdril Merrilin. Called the Gray Fox, once, by some who knew him, or knew of him. Court-bard at the Royal Palace of Andor in Caemlyn. [Queen] Morgase's lover for a time ... It is a shame that such a man calls himself a simple gleeman. But such arrogance to keep the same name. (*SR*, 272)

Thus, Jordan is able to legitimise Thom's role as it shifts from theatrical storyteller to political spy among the kitchens of the influential and wealthy or in the city taverns, where servants are inclined to be off-guard around a gleeman and so, loose-tongued. As a gleeman Thom is an acceptable figure at all levels of society which puts him in the perfect position to gather a wealth of material. It is a common trope in many genres of literature for a spy to be characterised as a liminal figure and thus enabled to cross thresholds. But from the fifth book on Thom lays aside his cloak, and ceases to bear any significant

resemblance to the earlier projection of a Merlin or Gandalf type of figure. In the second book (*GH*), his passionate love affair with the young woman, Dena, and drinking bouts following her untimely murder, along with the hints of various other females who are willing to share his bed, make him a far more vulnerable and carnal figure. In fact, he never attains that aura of otherworldliness apparently informed by a Christian concept of grace that some critics have attributed to the wizard Gandalf. Yet, Egwene's puzzling dream of Thom putting 'his hand into a fire to draw out the small blue stone' that Moiraine wore on a chain across her forehead, does suggest that in some way he holds the key to her rescue from the strange realm of the *Aelfinn* and *Eelfinn*, and so helps to retain a hint of his formerly more mysterious status. (*FOH*, 267) And Jordan, like Thom, is fond of pulling surprises out of his bag of stories.

Thom's role may change throughout the texts, but his ability to beguile his listeners with words, like that of his creator, remains constant, whether he is in the guise of flamboyant, artistic gleeman, wise counsellor and protector to the main protagonists, lover, or cunning and persuasive contestant in the political 'Game of Houses'. By positing the gleeman as his alter ego, Jordan gains a versatile voice and presence within the text itself. Through Thom he foregrounds constantly the notion of the storyteller (both the gleeman and himself) as a type of silver-tongued magician who, through agility with words, not supernatural powers, weaves stories that have the capacity to enchant an audience (both inside and outside the text) and thus extend the bounds of what is conceived to be possible.¹⁶

However, despite Thom's charm and magus-like qualities, strictly speaking, he is not really a magus. The true magus figures in the *WOT* are the characters who display the

¹⁶ Speaking of the magic quality of words, Le Guin has said that one aspect of her *Earthsea* trilogy is about herself, the 'artist (i. e. the writer) as magician'. See 'Dreams Must Explain Themselves', in Le Guin, 'Language', p. 43.

talent to channel the One Power, the source of magical prowess in Jordan's imaginary landscape. But before turning to an analysis of them, and their function in relation to the main protagonists, it is worth considering their scholarly and custodial nature as they too are presented as preservers and interpreters of the stories of the past, although their purpose is one more strongly tied to the journey of the hero.

Keepers of the cultural 'Tree of Tales'

Tolkien referred to stories as leaves 'from the countless foliage of the Tree of Tales',¹⁷ a metaphor for the way in which stories, like leaves, are not only constantly renewed through time, but also are a means of preserving the cultural heritage of a people. As the collecting, writing, telling and preservation of stories throughout time constitute one of the central motifs in the Jordan texts, those who engage in these activities can be seen as the keepers of such a cultural 'Tree of Tales'.

Book-learning is always a valued attribute in fantasy, and the scholarly nature of the magus figure is a common conceit; for example, Belgarion's grandfather in the Eddings books has a fantastic study, while Hogwarts school for wizards contains an extensive library of rare and wonderful books, and in Cooper's *The Dark is Rising* all ancient and true knowledge of magic is stored in the 'Book of Gramarye'.¹⁸ In the Jordan world the White Tower contains extensive archives of ancient manuscripts, as well as numerous objects of power that date from the Age of Legends. Many of the Aes Sedai scholars have devoted their lives to the interpreting of prophetic documents in an attempt to forecast the future patterning of events, which may help them to guide the long-awaited Dragon Reborn to victory. A helpful comparison can be drawn with the hoard of 'scrolls and books' held at Minas Tirith, where both Gandalf and Saruman had long sought to increase their

¹⁷ J. R. R. Tolkien, 'On Fairy-Stories', in *Tree and Leaf*, London, 1964, p. 51.

¹⁸ Susan Cooper, *The Dark is Rising*, London, 1976, pp. 104ff.

knowledge of ancient lore. It is to the recorded story-patterns of the past that Gandalf turns to seek clues to the events of the past that have contributed to the shaping of the present crisis in Middle-earth. (*Fellowship*, 245-46) In Jordan's imaginary world, book-learning is also valued by the general public: inns contain small libraries, and even the al' Thors' modest home in Emond's Field boasts a couple of treasured 'wood-bound' books, including *The Travels of Jain Farstrider* – one of the Wheel world's legendary heroes. (*EOTW*, 65) Perhaps this love of books in the imaginary world is a reflection of the avid reading habits of the voraciously curious reader of fantasy in our world.¹⁹

In Jordan's *WOT* even certain non-human characters, the Ogier giants, are portrayed as notable scholars, historians and storytellers. They are known in the Old Tongue as 'alantin' or 'Treebrother', guardians of the remnants of the old groves known as Steddings. (*GH*, 290) Because of their longevity they have gathered and preserved a wealth of stories about the world of the Wheel, which in turn become woven into the pattern of the current story. Loial ventures forth into the wider world because 'the old stories caught [him]', and '[t]he old books filled [his] unworthy head with pictures', and a longing to travel. (*EOTW*, 638) In turn, he becomes caught up in the new story-like quest of the main protagonists, and it is his store-house of old knowledge that enables him to guide his companions through places such as the labyrinth-like passages of the other-worldly Ways. He also looks forward to 'watching from close by as the Pattern wove itself around' the three *ta'veren* youths, and is constantly taking notes for a book he plans to write about their adventures. (*GH*, 644) Thus, in Jordan's world the Ogiers can be viewed as gatherers and keepers of the stories, or leaves, of a never-ending cultural 'Tree of Tales'. As the Aes Sedai women of the White Tower, a society of magi, are also portrayed as long-lived

¹⁹ Le Guin in her *Earthsea* novels emphasises book-learning and the potency of words. But following the death of the wizard Ogion, Tenar (former priestess of the Tombs of Atuan) leaves his precious spell-books on the 'mantle at Oak Farm' with her son Spark who 'can't read a word of them'. In this instance Le Guin uses the putting aside of long-held magical lore to subtly foreshadow the changes to masculine-held power of the wizards of Roke that will come to pass in her later additions to the *Earthsea* series. (*Tehanu*, p. 26)

gatherers, protectors, and interpreters of story patterns, by association, they too can be viewed in a similar light.

The role of female magi: Interpreters, keepers or disrupters of the ‘Great Pattern’

Female Aes Sedai

Breakers of the world. Puppeteers who pulled strings and made thrones and nations dance in designs only the women from Tar Valon knew.

(*EOTW*, 101)

As the Aes Sedai priestesses of the White Tower are the major society of magi in the *WOT*, a brief contextualisation is necessary before I focus on individual magus characters. Jordan is among the first writers of high fantasy to give multiple strong and leading roles to female characters, although despite their high profile his three central heroes are traditionally male. The author has stated that:

One thing I did want to explore was how things would work out if one popular thread of fantasy in the last few decades were turned on its head. There are many books about women who must struggle to become sorcerers ... because women just aren't allowed to do that. What, I thought if it were men who were not allowed to become wielders of magic.²⁰

The action of Jordan's sprawling chronicle takes place in the Third Age, at a time when the male side of the One Power (*saidin*) has been contaminated for 3000 years by contact with the Dark Lord, and no male has hitherto been able to channel the *saidin* force without going mad. In this way Jordan has conceived of a largely matriarchal society, one where female Aes Sedai or priestesses – as in some ancient civilisations of our world – have

²⁰ Robert Jordan, an email to the researcher, June 3, 2004.

developed great status and power. In a review of Jordan's tenth book (*COT*), William Thompson remarks perceptively that the author's portrayal of 'a magical order predicated upon a feminine principle, with the male side associated with chaos and madness, becomes a conceit hardly envisioned by Tolkien or his immediate imitators.'²¹

Indeed over the past 3000 years, in the world of the Wheel, Aes Sedai priestesses of the White Tower at Tar Valon have formed the moral and philosophical controlling mechanism that the society in general has accepted. Thus Moiraine informs Egwene that:

[The] Tower has been a bulwark against the Shadow for three thousand years. It has guided rulers to wise decisions, stopped wars before they began, halted wars that did begin. That humankind even remembers that the Dark One waits to escape, that the Last Battle will come, is because of the Tower. The Tower, whole and united. (*FOH*, 268)

Moreover, because of the fearsome nature of the Dragon who once destroyed the Wheel world, and the fact that on his return he is predicted to be both 'saviour' and 'destroyer', many people prefer to avoid or ignore the prophecies, so it is the Aes Sedai who have sought to maintain them for the benefit of the whole world. But the Aes Sedai are not omniscient beings and as keepers of ancient prophecy – which is the key to interpreting the Pattern of the future – they must piece together, like fragments of mosaic, odd bits of highly significant information on which the survival of their world rests. Some prophecies are clearly worded and can be relied upon, such as the Dragon Reborn facing the Dark Lord at the Last Battle: 'When the winds of Tarmon Gai'don scour the earth, he will face the Shadow and bring forth light again in the world.' (*GH*, 130) And it is certain that if the Dragon Reborn is not there the world will fall to 'fire and shadow, forever'. (*SR*, 21) Yet many of these ancient writings are cryptic and subject to multiple interpretations and the

²¹ William Thompson, 2003, 'Crossroads of Twilight: A Review by William Thompson', *SF Site Featured Reviews*, <http://www.sfsite.com/03a/ct147.htm> (accessed 8 Oct., 2003).

Aes Sedai fear that once the Dragon is reborn, unless guided by them, the changes he effects in the Age Lacey may court disaster. Moiraine warns Rand and Mat that:

as the Wheel of Time turns ... places wear many names. Men wear many names, many faces. Different faces, but always the same man. Yet no one knows the Great Pattern the Wheel weaves, or even the Pattern of an Age. We can only watch, and study, and hope. (*EOTW*, 29)

In the possible variations of the pattern of the Age, for all their knowledge and wisdom, not even the Aes Sedai can be certain of the final outcome. Their counterparts among the people of the desert, the Aiel Wise Ones, believe ‘there is no one set path to the future’, although in the World of Dreams (*Tel’aran’rhiod*) ‘it is possible to see some ways the future may be woven.’ (*SR*, 385) Thus Jordan foregrounds the complex nature of events that can affect the weaving of the Great Pattern.

The Aes Sedai’s magical powers come from channelling the female half of the True Source or One Power, the endlessly self-perpetuating life-force that drives the Wheel of Time itself. Moiraine Aes Sedai remarks to Egwene that drawing upon *saidin* cannot use it up, ‘anymore than the river can be used up by the wheel of the mill. The Source is the river; the Aes Sedai, the waterwheel’. (*EOTW*, 169) They are merely conduits for the eternal flow of the One Power, which is neither of the Light nor the Dark, it just exists, and can be tapped by either and so used for positive or negative purposes.

Despite the awe and fear in which the Aes Sedai are held by the Wheel world community at large, Jordan does not present them as totally ‘good and pure’ – instead, they share human fallibility. Moiraine warns Egwene, before she becomes a sister at the White Tower, that at Tar Valon the Aes Sedai she will find ‘are human, no different from any other women except for the ability that sets [them] apart’. They are found to be ‘brave and cowardly, strong and weak, kind and cruel, warm-hearted and cold’, as ‘becoming an Aes

Sedai will not change you from what you are'. (*EOTW*, 182-3) Through them the author thus explores the temptation, loneliness, and responsibility of female leadership.

Jordan divides the Aes Sedai of the White Tower into seven groups known as Ajahs, each denoted by a separate colour: white, blue, green, red, brown, yellow and gray. For many years they have been infiltrated by a secret and subversive society known as the Black Ajah, sisters drawn from all the Ajahs who have turned to the Shadow (Fantasy writers tend not to present characters of the Light as double-agents infiltrating the Dark. In the *WOT* the activities and plans of the Dark are revealed to the reader in sub-plots, which are presented from the viewpoint of the antagonists and so interwoven into the focal narrative.) Jordan thus blurs the distinction between the polarities of good and evil, and highlights the destructive potential of power itself, for the White Tower which outwardly stands as an ancient and pristine pillar of the Light is in fact being insidiously corrupted from within.

In the distant Age of Legends, male and female Aes Sedai had used the One Power in unison, producing an era of great technical and philosophical advancement, a time when the word 'war' was forgotten. As Jordan's world looks back to an advanced age that was eventually destroyed by human greed, a comparison can be drawn with our present Western society, and perhaps a warning that we, too, may stand on the brink of total global destruction. Since the tainting of the male side of the One Power (*saidin*) by the Dark One, which brought about the 'Breaking of the World', there have only been female Aes Sedai. And from that time, when all men who drew on *saidin* went mad, nothing has been more feared than a man who could channel. For three millennia the necessary societal control of 'rebellious' males has been carried out through a process known as 'gentling' (a severing of males from the One Power) – an obviously effective way of negating societal danger, division or disruption.

Queens and their female Aes Sedai advisors have ruled the various nation states with some degree of success, although in a flawed and falling world they have not been able to wholly prevent the insidious reassertion of the Dark. Furthermore, during that same time the numbers of female initiates at the White Tower have slowly dwindled; the fact that the Wheel world is once again in an acute state of rising peril points to the realisation that, in the long run, it is imperative to have a balance between *saidar* and *said'in*, female and male, the two principles on which rests the power (the True Source) driving the Wheel of Time itself. Jordan accentuates this point in his depiction of the ancient symbol of the Aes Sedai which, as discussed in chapter one, shows the influence of Eastern philosophy and the concept of *yin* and *yang*.

Not surprisingly in a world ruled by women for the past three thousand years, those who serve as interpreters of the Pattern or central mentors/guides to the main protagonists are predominantly female. They are drawn from a group that displays varying degrees of talents and strengths in the One Power, that is comprised not only of Aes Sedai priestesses of the White Tower but also at times Aiel Wise Ones, or the more enigmatic Windfinders of the Sea Folk. On the Dark side there are other adepts in the One Power, servants of the Dark Lord, who work against the Pattern in order to turn the hero from his destined path and so bring their Master to rule the world. In particular they consist of thirteen former Aes Sedai from the Age of Legends (five females and eight males), traitors known as the 'Forsaken', although they regard themselves as the 'Chosen'. They work with the mysterious Moridin, the *Nae'blis* (Right Hand) of the Dark Lord, and all of these characters, along with the members of the Black Ajah, can be viewed as Jordan's negative counterparts to those who follow the Light.

It is the two women, Moiraine and Lanfear, who form the focus of this exploration of Jordan's interpretation of the magus figure through analysis of the key roles they play in

the world of the Wheel as, respectively, keeper or potential disrupter of the Pattern of the Age. (As Cadsuane's later guidance of the hero Rand is to temper excess, her role will also be considered.) All of these women have been chosen for analysis because of their central roles in the growth of the hero Rand and the effect they have on the pattern of his journey. Jordan may seem only to draw on the Sophia and Lilith archetypes, one representative of truth, light and rebirth, the other of temptation and destruction, but he is giving his own secularised interpretation of this type of knowledge with a freedom from the close Christian symbolism apparent in the fantasy work of nineteenth-century writers such as George MacDonald. Moiraine symbolises rationality and Lanfear sensuality. They are both magi and these different approaches are important in the reading/interpreting of the pattern and the heroic quest.

Moiraine and Lanfear

Until their unexpected and dramatic disappearance through a *ter'angreal* doorway during a violent confrontation in the fifth volume (*FOH*), the two strong female magi, Moiraine and Lanfear, form an intriguing triangle with the hero, Rand, the Dragon Reborn. Moiraine, as good mentor/guide, seeks to encourage him to accept his destiny and the Aes Sedai interpretations of the prophecies of the Dragon, while Lanfear, the seductive beauty, plots to lure him from his true path, and thus to destruction. In her discussion of the temptation of the hero in fantasy, Karen Schaafsma recognises that 'the negative figure of Lilith never appears in isolation in fantasy (as she might in horror fiction); she is always paired with her opposite, Sophia, whose light brings true vision and heralds rebirth'. Schaafsma further notes that 'the typical hero's development depends upon his encounters

with archetypal feminine figures who may be inspiring or threatening or both, but who act as catalysts for his radical transformation'.²²

This is the case in Jordan's narrative, as it is because of the choice-forming actions of Moiraine and Lanfear, to a large extent, that the hero's mettle will be tried. These actions provide the author with a means of dramatically testing the hero, both physically and spiritually, as he struggles to come to terms with the enormity of the role being thrust upon him by fate. By leaving his village home as a naïve youth and embarking on a journey to the unknown, Rand faces choice and temptation that lead to personal growth and undreamed of changes to his life and to those around him. (A full discussion of Rand's youth, naivety and need for instruction belongs to the later chapters on the hero figures.)

In keeping with Jordan's overarching framework of Light and Dark in his imaginary world, there is clear symmetry in his patterning of these female characters as being representative of the cosmic polarities of good and evil and, perhaps, as a mirror image of the two extremes of human nature. Bearing in mind that Lanfear, before turning to the Shadow in the Age of Legends, had been a powerful Aes Sedai priestess, the concept of Lanfear and Moiraine as representing the two sides of woman (body and mind) has considerable merit. Viewed in this light they can be likened to the positive and negative aspects of the High Priestess of the ancient Tarot, who has been described as: a 'linear descendant of the High Priestesses of antiquity', and the 'embodiment of the lunar goddesses of combination and procreation'.²³ The history, mysticism, philosophy and psychology surrounding the Tarot are as eclectic as the motifs and other traditional

²² Karen Schaafsma, 'The Demon Lover: Lilith and the Hero in Modern Fantasy', *Extrapolation*, 28.1, 1987, pp. 60; 53.

²³ Alfred Douglas, *The Tarot: The Origins, Meanings and Uses of the Cards*, Middlesex, 1974, p. 54.

material ransacked by writers of fantasy, and can be taken from the same sources and so help to explain Jordan's presentation of Moiraine and Lanfear.²⁴

In the Tarot pack the High Priestess is generally portrayed as being seated between two pillars, one light and one dark, symbolising the 'the twin pillars of positive and negative power upon which the universe is founded'. It is said that she is the 'passive link between the physical and spiritual planes', or the 'great feminine force controlling the very source of life'. Under this positive aspect she is 'Divine Inspiration – Sophia, the Gnostic goddess of wisdom'. But in her negative aspect she also becomes 'the *femme fatale* Hecate, Queen of the Dark of the Moon, Lilith ... the weaver of illusions who destroys her lovers'.²⁵ The way the 'moonlight' creates a 'nimbus' around Moiraine, enhances the idea of her purity of spirit, while Lanfear's title as 'Daughter of the Night' links her firmly to the moon and the shadowy realm of night and so of seductive succubus-like dream. (*EOTW*, 183) Many of Lanfear's appearances in the text occur at night, in the amorphous dimensions of the Wheel's mirror worlds, or in *Tel'aran'rhold*, the World of Dreams. In Jordan's world she is regarded as a mythical demon figure, one long 'used by mothers who only half-believed in her [themselves] to frighten children'. (*SR*, 193) A similar representation of light and dark aspects of a feminine figure is to be found in Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*, for the Lady of the Lake 'serves the cause of heroism and the tradition of chivalry', while her opposite the enchantress Morgan Le Fay uses her 'wiles to make [Arthur] her lover, and consistently seeks his death'.²⁶ Thus Arthur's strength of character, his ability to abide by the chivalric code of truth, duty and honour on which the stability of his realm is dependent, is to be tested between the two.

²⁴ The Tarot, like so many fantasy conventions has its origins in 14th century Europe. The designs for the cards are drawn not only from Christian, Gnostic and Islamic imagery, but Celtic and Norse elements as well. (see Douglas, *Tarot*, p. 33.)

²⁵ Douglas, *Tarot*, pp. 54; 54; 55.

²⁶ Margery Hourihan, *Deconstructing the Hero: Literary Theory and Children's Literature*, London and New York, 1997, p.178.

In Jordan's representation both women are slender, dark haired and exceptionally beautiful, and their voices 'musical', but Moraine never invites intimacy and despite her tiny stature has an unsettling air of 'maturity', coolness, 'grace', and 'command' that engenders respect. (*EOTW*, 26) Early on in their acquaintance Rand likens her to a 'High Lady' from a 'gleeman's tale'. (*EOTW*, 25) He freezes under her gaze, and finds her 'dark' eyes are 'deep pools about to swallow him up', and muses on the frightening tales he has heard of the Aes Sedai who are purported to be '[b]reakers of the world' and '[p]uppeteers who pulled strings and made thrones and nations dance in designs only the women from Tar Valon knew.' (*EOTW*, 26; 101) Rand recalls his father Tam's warning that an 'Aes Sedai never lies, but the truth she speaks may not be the truth you think you hear'. (*EOTW*, 644)

However, Lanfear, who often disguises herself as a beautiful young woman called Selene, is deliberately provocative, seductive and flattering.²⁷ At their initial meeting in a mirror world of the Wheel, where Rand rescues her from a monstrous creature, she kneels to him and says demurely yet seductively, 'I am yours, Lord Rand al'Thor'. (*GH*, 253) He believes she looks upon him as if he was 'a hero in a story', and her 'dark eyes' not only 'make him feel as if he were naked', but the 'unbidden thought' of her 'with no clothes' fills his mind'. (*GH*, 254) In her presence he seems compelled to want to constantly be 'close enough ... to smell her heady scent, close enough to touch'. (*GH*, 257) When he takes her hand to help her dismount from her horse, he discovers that the skin on her hand is 'softer', 'smoother' than 'silk'. (*GH*, 255) Thereafter, from their initial meetings with the hero Rand, the two women's opposing roles of wisdom/grace and temptation in the interconnected patterning of the narrative are firmly set in place.

²⁷ Selene of course is the ancient Greek goddess of the moon.

Jordan further heightens his mirror-imaging of this pair of powerful women through a patterning of colour association. Moiraine's accessories are of gold, while Lanfear's are of silver and, as J. C. Cooper points out, 'gold and silver' or 'sun and moon', are the 'two aspects of the same cosmic reality'.²⁸ Moiraine is also associated with blue, the colour traditionally symbolic of 'truth, the intellect, revelation, wisdom, loyalty, fidelity ... coolness' and, in Christian terms, of the 'Virgin Mary as Queen of Heaven'.²⁹ She is of the Blue Ajah, and her commitment to guiding the Dragon Reborn elicits the comment by an old friend: 'You Blues. Always so ready to save the world that you lose yourselves'. (*GH*, 330) The clothing worn when she first appears in Emond's Field of 'sky-blue velvet' cloak, over a dress of 'a darker blue' and with 'a small, sparkling blue stone in the middle of her forehead' fastened in her hair by a 'gold chain' is typical. Her belt of 'woven gold', and the 'gold ring in the shape of a serpent biting its own tail ... an even older symbol for eternity than the Wheel of Time', bring other associations of divine power, and light that help to set her apart from normal mortal beings. (*EOTW*, 27) Like Susan Cooper's mystical 'Lady' in *The Dark is Rising*, who says of herself that she is 'very old ... and has in her time had many, many names',³⁰ Moiraine, too, is presented as an ageless protective figure, a champion of the Light and a version of the archetypal figure that Robert Graves wrote about in his book *The White Goddess*.³¹

By contrast Lanfear, although slender, is 'tall' for a woman, with 'ivory-pale skin', 'night-dark' hair and 'black' eyes. (*GH*, 253) She is always clad in 'white belted in woven silver', her hair hung with 'silver stars and crescents', linking her to the moon and the realm of night and dream. (*FOH*, 16) The association here is not with 'purity' or 'chastity', but with the beguiling and deadly white ur-witch from the myth of Lilita who is

²⁸ J. C. Cooper, *An Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Traditional Symbols*, London, 1992, pp. 40 - 41.

²⁹ Cooper, *Symbols*, p. 40.

³⁰ Susan Cooper, *Dark*, p. 33.

³¹ Robert Graves, *The White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth*, London, 1959.

traditionally presented as being pale skinned, dark haired, and clothed in white. Lanfear's description closely resembles that of the seductress 'Geraldine' in S. T. Coleridge's mediaeval-inspired poem, *Christabel*, who is:

Drest in a silken robe of white,
That shadowy in the moonlight shone:
The neck that made the white robe wan,
... And wildly glittered here and there,
The gems entangled in her hair.³² (lines 58-65)

Jordan's employment of a worldly-wise, wily, and sensuous woman to tempt his naïve and sexually inexperienced hero increases the odds of his susceptibility to her charms and the danger that under her seductive spell he will be lured to abandon his fated and key role in the interpretation of the pattern that can save the Wheel world.

Destiny and duty: Moiraine Aes Sedai

The Pattern pays no heed to human plans... our plans are precarious things. The winds of destiny are blowing ... and we must ride them where they take us. (*GH*, 64-5)

Gandalf as a template for Jordan's Moiraine

Moiraine, as mentor/guide to the main protagonist Rand plays a role similar to Tolkien's Gandalf, but unlike the wizard of Middle-earth she is not an agent of a higher cosmic force from beyond the boundaries of the world of the Wheel. Jordan has conceived of an imaginary world in which the force that provides the superhuman or magical power is an integral part of the cosmology – much as depicted in the archipelago of Le Guin's *Earthsea*. Tolkien's Gandalf is a supernatural being, for he is not explicable in terms of the natural laws or phenomena of the imaginary world in which he operates.

³² Samuel T. Coleridge, 'Christabel', in *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Selected Poetry and Prose*, 2nd ed., edited by Elisabeth Schneider, San Francisco, 1971, p. 71.

Gandalf's background is steeped in mystery, and to the reader is suggestive of an immortality that links him throughout the ages of our mythic lore, not only to the Arthurian Merlin, but also to the Northern God Odin. Furthermore, in the appendices to the *LOTR* it is revealed that Gandalf is one of five wizards sent by the semi-divine Valar to 'contest the powers of Sauron' and who 'came in the shape of men, though they were never young and aged slowly.' (*King*, appendix b.193) Within the narrative, although Gandalf does not explicitly say that he comes from or is directed by a higher outside force, Treebeard's words to Merry and Pippin strongly suggest this to be the case. Treebeard is the oldest living creature and yet he '[does] not know the history of the wizards', only that they 'appeared first after the Great Ships came over the sea; but if they came with the ships [he cannot] tell'. (*Towers*, 462) The mystery that surrounds Gandalf's presence in Middle-earth is echoed by Pippin who wonders: 'What was Gandalf? In what far time and place did he come into the world, and when would he leave it?' (*King*, 740) Following his defeat of the evil Balrog and the survival of his spirit through 'the fire and the abyss' he reappears on a mountain top, 'naked ... sent back – for a brief time, until [his] task is done', which suggests he is directed from a force that lies beyond the perceived confines of Middle-earth. (*Towers*, 490; 491) The giant eagle, Gwaihir the Windlord, who bears him to Caras Galadhon, now finds him to be 'as light as a swan's feather', which further suggests that although he is still incarnate he is a higher and immortal being. (*Towers*, 490-491) Having passed through 'the fire and the abyss' he has returned as Gandalf the White. Gimli refers to Gandalf's head as being 'now sacred' adding to the sense that Gandalf has been returned as an act of some divine grace in order for the destined pattern of events to be played out. (*Towers*, 492)

Throughout the narrative it is Gandalf who appears to have knowledge of a larger pattern of destiny and who acts as mentor/guide to the main protagonists. The narrator

warns the reader at the beginning of the tale that Gandalf's purpose 'is far more difficult and dangerous' than the Hobbits know, thus hinting that he is to be the co-ordinator of a destined pattern of events. (*Fellowship*, 25) The centrality of Gandalf's role in the quest to save Middle-earth is borne out by Elrond who tells Frodo and his companions that Gandalf is to accompany them and that 'this will be his great task, and maybe the end of his labours'. (*Fellowship*, 268) The truth that Gandalf moves to a higher fated pattern is further strengthened by Galadriel who points out that 'needless were none of the deeds of Gandalf in life.' (*Fellowship*, 347) Unlike Jordan's Moiraine, the angel-like Gandalf has foreknowledge of the larger pattern of future events that is not to be gleaned from ancient prophecies. At his coronation, following the defeat of Sauron and the destruction of the One Ring, Aragorn refers to Gandalf as 'the mover of all that has been accomplished'. Gandalf admits: 'I was the enemy of Sauron; and my work is finished. I shall go soon.' (*King*: 946; 950) But for all his powers he is not omniscient, for he explains to Gimli: 'I can see many things far off, but many things that are close at hand I cannot see'. (*Towers*, 484) Thus, Tolkien achieves the appearance of the finer details of the pattern of destiny being subject to chance and governed by the free choices and actions of the mortal beings of his imaginary world.

Christine Brooke-Rose accuses Tolkien of using the Gandalf character as the 'great explainer'.³³ But in her analysis she overlooks the deliberate interlaced patterning of the narrative, the considerable skill and artistry employed by Tolkien in his use of Gandalf, and at times Elrond or Galadriel. Gandalf's foretelling of future events and his ability to guide the main protagonists are woven into the fabric of the depicted world, for they develop organically out of an intimate knowledge of the vast storied past of the depicted world of which he is a part. (It is Gandalf and the elfin brethren who continually reinforce

³³ Christine Brooke-Rose, *A Rhetoric of the Unreal: Studies in Narrative and Structure, Especially of the Fantastic*, Cambridge, 1981, p. 237.

the concept that the larger events in Middle-earth move to a higher, destined pattern.) Gandalf has not been superimposed on the world for the convenience of the plot as Brooke-Rose's words would seem to imply, although this is not to deny that his role serves that purpose.

Moiraine: Jordan's magus of reason

In Jordan's *WOT* Moiraine Aes Sedai is presented as mortal, although long-lived, and some detail is given of her family and her younger days before joining the White Tower. Characterising her like all the Aes Sedai women, Jordan sets her apart from the ordinary through her ability to channel the One Power, that source of magic or superhuman power in the world of the Wheel, and the reason for her enhanced life span. Like a priestess or nun, Moiraine has an air of otherworldliness, and has 'dedicated [her] life' to her 'cause', to find the Dragon Reborn and see him safely to the Last Battle. (*SR*, 124) Yet there are illuminating parallels that can be drawn between Moiraine and Gandalf, for like him she is the catalyst for the commencement of the hero's quest. She seeks out the three rural youths, Rand, Mat and Perrin, and following an attack on their homes by monstrous Trollocs, decrees that they 'must leave, for the sake of [their] village' as 'in one of [them] ... or all three, there is something the Dark One fears'. (*EOTW*, 111; 113) In this manner, despite their reluctance, she sets Rand and his companions on a dangerous journey of personal growth. As they pass beyond the boundaries of their known world of the Two Rivers shire, she hints at their far greater destiny:

You have further to go yet ... much further. But there is no choice, except to run and hide and run again for the rest of your lives. And short lives they would be. You must remember that, when the journey becomes hard. You have no choice. (*EOTW*, 185)

Similarly, when Frodo wishes to relinquish the role of ring bearer and suggests that he is ‘not made for perilous quests’, Gandalf replies: ‘but you have been chosen, and you must therefore use such strength and heart and wits that you have.’ (*Fellowship*, 60) Thus, like Gandalf, Moiraine sets Rand and his companions on the traditional path of the typical hero of fantasy, ‘the sacrificial hero who must abandon the small, personal self so that he can serve as a vessel of renewal for the larger community, for life itself.’³⁴ Jordan’s portrayal of the hero harmonises well with this theoretical observation as he presents a world that is falling to the Shadow, and the Dark One has now touched the idyllic Two Rivers shire; this shatters the illusion that anywhere in the world of the Wheel can now provide a safe haven. Chosen by the Great Pattern, Rand, Mat and Perrin, as *ta’veren*, are plucked from obscurity to play their destined parts on their world stage, and how they perform will have reverberations for all living things.

Moiraine believes ‘everything is a part of the Pattern’, that one ‘cannot pick and choose’ for ‘[t]he Wheel weaves as the Wheel wills’. (*EOTW*, 143; 92) For instance, in the prophecies of the Dragon, known as the *Karaethon Cycle*, it is written that the ‘Dragon will be reborn on the slopes of Dragonmount, where he died during the Breaking of the World’. (*GH*, 128) Twenty years before the commencement of the tale, Moiraine’s own path was set when she and her friend Sivan witnessed a foretelling by an older Aes Sedai, who cried out before she fell dead:

He is born again! I feel him! The Dragon takes his first breath on the slope of Dragonmount! He is coming! He is coming! Light help us! Light help the world! He lies in the snow and cries like the thunder! He burns like the sun!
(*GH*, 128-9)

³⁴ Schaafsma, *Demon Lover*, p. 60.

It was from this moment that the then Amyrlin Seat³⁵ of the White Tower, gave these two young Aes Sedai the secret task to find the child. For she knew that out of fear of a man channelling not everyone at the Tower would allow him the freedom to develop and to fulfil his role at the Last Battle. Moiraine believes that they were ‘chosen for this by the Pattern’, and the urgency of the task is stressed by her decree that ‘we are part of the Prophecies, and the Prophecies must be fulfilled. Must!’ (*GH*, 63) Over the years Moiraine scours the countryside, posing as a collector of old ‘stories’. (*EOTW*, 52) It is a ‘story’ of a man who had found an ‘infant on the mountain’ that eventually leads her to the ‘Two Rivers’. (This is another instance of Jordan’s foregrounding of storytelling.) In this far flung quarter of the land, where the ‘Old Blood of Manetheren seethes still like a river in flood’, and in keeping with the prophecy that the one she sought was to be ‘of the ancient blood, and raised by the Old Blood’ her trail ends. (*GH*, 129) As she later explains to Rand when he first shows signs of being able to touch the One Power:

in Emond’s Field, I found three boys whose name-days were within weeks of the battle at Dragonmount. And one of them can channel. Did you think the Trollocs came after you just because you are *ta’veren*? You are the Dragon Reborn. (*GH*, 129)

Unlike Lanfear, Moiraine constantly urges the youth to accept the role thrust upon him by fate, through remarks such as: ‘You were made for a purpose ... you were born to unite mankind and lead them against the Dark One’; ‘you will face the Dark One, [i]t is your destiny’; and ‘[t]he prophecies must be fulfilled’. (*GH*, 130) From her interpretations of the prophecies she is convinced that ‘the Pattern itself will see him named Dragon, whether he wills it or not’. For he has ‘no more control over his fate than a candle wick has over a flame’. (*GH*, 70) Thus she acts as an externalisation of his conscience, and ever

³⁵ The supreme head of the White Tower. She is a member of *all* Ajahs, and this is denoted by the seven bands of colour upon her stole.

appeals to his sense of duty. A good example of this occurs in the aftermath of the battle against the invading Seachan army at the port city of Falme, when Mat sounds the Horn of Valere to summon the heroes of the past to help them. At this point, Rand engages with Ba'alzamon, a surrogate for the Dark Lord, in a metaphysical battle displayed 'across the sky ... in full view of every soul in Falme', while the ancient 'banner' of the Dragon 'rippled' behind them. (*GH*, 676) Yet, despite all evidence that he must be the much prophesied saviour, Rand rebels against her guidance and his fate, shouting: 'I don't need you ... I don't want you ... I will not be the Dragon'.³⁶ To this she replies:

You are what you are ... already you stir the world ... Three of the seven seals [that keep the Dark One imprisoned] are broken ... when all seven are broken ... the only hope of the world is that the Dragon Reborn will be there to face him. (*GH*, 676-77)

Despite Rand's protests, she is an insistent voice of a higher reason and never deviates from her attempts to keep him on the right path, reminding him 'it is too late to hide ... it was always too late for you to hide', for 'each of us has his part in the Pattern' and so must accept it (*GH*, 678; *EOTW*, 721):

You must choose, Rand ... The world will be broken whether you break it or not. Tarmon Gai'don will come, and that alone will tear the world apart. Will you still try to hide from what you are, and leave the world to face the Last Battle undefended? Choose. (*GH*, 679)

Her fierce belief in her own part in the Pattern and her 'duty' has a darker side, for she warns Rand, Mat and Perrin that, 'before I let the Dark One have you, I will destroy you myself'. She also reminds them of the fact that, 'humankind, and Ogier, everything that lives [is] at war with the Dark One'. (*EOTW*, 180-1; 649) In literature a figure with this kind of tutelary role is often cast as serious and authoritarian in contrast to the seductive nature of evil offered by her opposite.

³⁶ Compare Christ's wish that the cup be taken from him. *The New Testament*, Matthew xxvi, 39

Jordan presents a world that is governed by a type of conditional determinism, so that although life's Pattern is controlled by an inscrutable outside force in the form of a Cosmic Loom, he creates the impression that the characters have some freedom of choice. If his main protagonists were perceived by the reader to be merely puppets treading a totally pre-determined path there would be no chance of failure and little opportunity for believable personal development or growth. Much of the tension in the narrative is generated by the fact that although Rand, Mat and Perrin have destined roles at the Last Battle, there are different paths that they could take along the way. Moiraine's warning to them that 'the Web can still be woven many ways, and some of those designs, would be disastrous', for them and 'for the world', raises the horrible possibility that one or all of the three youths could fall to the Dark or be killed. (*EOTW*, 644) Moiraine's later caution to Rand that although as a *ta'veren* he is fated to bring change to the pattern, any foolhardy actions could 'rip the Age Lace for all time', reiterates the dangers inherent in exercising choice. (*SR*, 363) The survival of the world is thus poised on a knife-edge, and its people cannot trust to 'destiny' alone to keep the Dragon 'alive'. Moiraine's friend and leader of the White Tower, Sivan Sedai, in her wisdom fears that:

This isn't a story; he isn't some invincible hero and if his thread is snipped out of the Pattern, the Wheel of Time won't notice his going, and the Creator will produce no miracles to save us. If Moiraine cannot reef his sails, he may very well get himself killed, and where are we then? Where is the world? ... Doomed ... [to] fire and shadow forever. (*SR*, 21)

Jordan's concept of a Cosmic Loom, like the Anglo-Saxon Wyrd, is that of an inexorable, impersonal force: should Rand's life-thread be cut before he completes his fated task it will blindly spin on without him. The frightening thing for the inhabitants of the world is that if they lose the Dragon Reborn they cannot appeal to a higher power and victory will belong to the Dark. And from that point on it will be the hand of the Dark Lord that 'sets the warp'

and ‘controls the shuttle’ of the Wheel of Time. (*EOTW*, 644) Thus, Jordan uses the concerns and fears of the Aes Sedai to highlight for the reader the epic scale of the heroic quest and the centrality of Moiraine’s mentoring role, which is further emphasised by her friend Siuan who believes that:

Prophecies are meant to announce to the world who he is, to prepare him for what’s coming, to prepare the world for it. If Moiraine can keep some control over him, she will guide him to the Prophecies we can be sure of – when he is ready to face them ... The Light send it’s enough. (*SR*, 21)

Yet, paradoxically, Jordan suggests that the Aes Sedai are but pawns in the Pattern, as they exist in a world where all ‘humankind is made for uncertainty, struggle, choice and change’, and so we see that unlike Gandalf they are not helpers sent by a higher force that is external to the Wheel world. (*SR*, 387) For all the Aes Sedai women’s schemes to protect and guide the Dragon Reborn to the threads of the future which they deem safest for him and the world, he increasingly fights against such control, interpreting the prophecies in his own way, and wilfully refuses to be led. Moiraine has to lament, ‘why could he not have remained the amenable youngling’ whom she had first found. (*SR*, 345) However, she accepts the fact that ‘the Pattern pays no heed to human plans’ and that with all their scheming, they ‘forgot’ that they were ‘dealing’ with a *ta’veren*, and for a time that the ‘Wheel will weave the Pattern around this young man as it wills, whatever [their] plans’. (*GH*, 64-5)

Moiraine admits to her limitations, to the truth that although she has ‘read every word of the Prophecies of the Dragon’ in ‘every translation’ she does not have knowledge of all that could happen, for ‘the Wheel weaves as the Wheel wills’ and ‘no eye can see the Pattern until it is woven.’ (*DR*, 601; *EOTW*, 418) Some things are made clear to her once they have been woven into the Pattern: ‘Prophecies are fulfilled as they are meant to be’, not as the Aes Sedai ‘think they should be.’ (*DR*, 670) For instance, it is only after the Aiel

warriors leave the Wasteland to assist Rand to bring about the fall of the fortress at Tear, that she realises they must be the much-prophesied ‘People of the Dragon.’ (*DR*, 671) She also had no prior knowledge that Perrin would develop the talent of linking with the minds of the wolves, or that Mat would first sound the Horn of Valere that summons the aid of a band of legendary warriors.³⁷

Moiraine, much like Gandalf, can guide her *ta'veren* charges, but she cannot compel them, although her rhetorical advice is designed to sway their decisions, as in the first book (*EOTW*), when it is learned that the Dark One plans an assault on the legendary Green Man's hidden grove. The Green Man has long guarded a concentrated, uncontaminated pool of *saidin* that has the ‘Power to mend the seal on the Dark One's prison, or to break it open completely’. (*EOTW*, 746) Moiraine appeals to Rand, Perrin and Mat's better selves, to their developing sense of obligation and duty to ensure that they take up this particular quest:

Three threads have come together here ... It cannot be chance ... you three did not choose; you were chosen by the Pattern ... You can step aside, and perhaps doom the world. Running, hiding, will not save you from the weaving of the Pattern. Or you can try. You can go to the Eye of the World, three *ta'veren*, three centerpoints of the Web, placed where the danger lies. Let the Pattern be woven around you there, and you may save the world from the Shadow. The choice is yours. I cannot make you go. (*EOTW*, 649-50)

In the *LOTR* Tolkien uses a similar technique, for although Gandalf and the Elven-lord Elrond believe that the carrying of the One Ring to the Cracks of Doom is a ‘task appointed’ for Frodo they both reiterate that he must ‘take it [up] freely’. (*Fellowship*, 264) But at the outset Gandalf's rhetoric, too, is designed to emphasise the fey and terrible danger inherent in the One Ring, against which even he is not immune. Gandalf refuses to

³⁷ Compare Aragorn's sounding of a silver horn to summon the dead to the ‘Stone of Erech’, to fulfil their ancient broken vow of fealty to the Dunedain. (*King*, chap. 2)

accept the ring from Frodo for he fears that the ‘wish to wield it would be too great for [his] strength’ and he could ‘become like the Dark Lord himself.’ (*Fellowship*, 60) The wizard’s words are designed to frighten Frodo, to sway his thought processes in favour of accepting the fated quest. In high fantasy the hero’s necessary development is linked to the ability to make such hard decisions; choices that will lead to the undertaking of arduous journeys into the unknown at both a physical and a spiritual level.

The emphasis is ever on the need for the hero figures to draw upon an inner strength, a steadfast belief in a selfless, higher good. A clear example occurs in the *WOT* when the three *ta'veren* youths’ dreams are invaded by Ba'alzamon and Lanfear. It is a realm wherein Moiraine can offer but limited degrees of protection and she insists that they ‘must find the strength and will’ within themselves, warning ‘I cannot give it to you’. Although it is not easy to stand against the Dark One ‘he cannot’ make them do his bidding unless they ‘let him’. (*EOTW*, 642; 643) An oft repeated folk saying in the Two Rivers is that ‘the hand of the Creator shelters the world, and the Light shines on us all’, revealing a popular belief in the existence of a higher good. (*EOTW*, 14) Moiraine, in opposition to Lanfear, is presented as the voice of caution and oracular wisdom, and it is shown that she fights not for personal gain, but rather uses her powers and knowledge to interpret the Pattern of the Age in ways that will assist Rand to meet his final battle with the Dark One. As these two female magus/mentor figures are divided not only into Light and Dark but also into reason/passion, gender lines mean that Lanfear’s interactions with Rand are necessarily sexualised.

Temptation: Lanfear, daughter of the night

Daughter of the Night, she walks again,
 The ancient war, she yet fights.
 Her new lover she seeks, who shall serve her and die,
 yet serve still.
 Who shall stand against her coming?
 The Shining Walls shall kneel. (A prophecy of the Dark, *GH*, 105)

The tradition of a beautiful temptress who brings about the destruction of men who fall under her spell has a long literary history, sacred and profane, as a representation of evil; for example, the biblical stories of Eve's temptation of Adam that led to the Fall, Delilah's betrayal of Samson, and Salome whose sexual wiles were instrumental in obtaining the beheading of John the Baptist, or the myth of Lilith, the destructive first wife of Adam. From classical myth there is the figure of Helen of Troy in whose beauty lie the seeds of the destruction of Troy, and later representations include Shakespeare's Cleopatra and Lady Macbeth. As Roderick McGillis observes:

she represents a source of evil, a siren who destroys those who fall under her spell. She represents the unknown and the mysterious and to turn away from her enchantments is to preserve humanity. Men fear her and love her, both terrorised and fascinated by her power.³⁸

Lanfear: Jordan's dark magus of passion

In his portrayal of Lanfear (Selene), Jordan makes her the arch-temptress and seductress of his hero Rand, as the most obvious means of exploring the true nature of

³⁸ Roderick F. McGillis, 'George MacDonald and the Lilith Legend in the nineteenth Century', *Mythlore*, 6:1, 19, Winter, 1979, p. 3. The arch-temptress or white witch reappears in literature in many guises, both secular and religious, stretching from the Middle Ages to the present day. Well-known examples include Malory's enchantress 'Morgan Le Fay', MacDonald's 'Lilith', C. Williams's 'Lily Sammile', S. T. Coleridge's 'Geraldine', J. Keats's 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci', and C. S. Lewis's White Witch, 'Jadis'. More recently this figure resurfaces as Ursula Le Guin's 'Lady Serret', in *Wizard* (discussed later in this chapter) and as the wicked 'Mrs Coulter' in Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy.

power and love and their destructive potential at both personal and universal level. For should Rand reject the higher virtues of duty and honour and so fall, the imaginary world as it is known would fall with him.³⁹ Thus, Jordan uses her as a disrupter of the Pattern that is needed to lead Rand to victory. In the Age of Legends, Jordan tells us, Lanfear was known as Mierin, a respected researcher into the One Power.⁴⁰ She had been one of those responsible for finding the Dark One's prison and so for creating a weak spot, the 'Bore', in the Great Pattern that allowed Him to begin to touch the world, but she eventually sold her soul to the Shadow. (*Companion*, 78ff) She was a former lover of Lews Therin, the Dragon, who ended the relationship because she 'loved power' above all else, but she refused to accept the break and, after his marriage to Ilyena, she continued her obsessive claim on him. (*SR*, 175) As one of the thirteen 'Forsaken', trapped in the 'Bore' when the Dark One's prison was re-sealed, for 3000 years she was caught 'in a dreamless sleep where time did not flow' and so she did not age. (*SR*, 175) Upon awakening to the world, she had retained her obsession for power and for Lews Therin, through his reincarnation Rand al'Thor, the Dragon Reborn. If she can but turn Rand to the Dark and bring him to 'kneel to the Great Lord', she believes her own rewards will be great indeed. (*SR*, 176)

Lanfear appears to tempt Rand at key moments, times when if he should be swayed by her rhetoric, her beauty and sensuality, it would lead towards a breaking of the pattern of his destiny and set in motion her desired alternative dark, and destructive pattern of events. Accordingly she seeks to distract him by her sensuality and by promises of personal glory and fame. In direct opposition to Moiraine, she dismisses the power of prophecy. For example, when Rand tells Lanfear that he was 'born' to fight the 'Father of Lies', and to 'fulfil the prophecies', she counters this by suggesting that 'prophecy is no

³⁹ The ongoing temptation of the hero is another element of mediaeval, literary game-play. Compare Malory's portrayal of Gawain and Lancelot.

⁴⁰ This would make her a female equivalent of the Tolkien's Saruman figure.

more than the sign of what people hope for'. Fulfilling them will only 'bind' him to a 'path leading to Tarmon Gai'don and ...death'. (SR, 177) However, if he will but 'kneel to the Great Lord ... he will set you above all others', and '[h]e will leave you free to reign as you will'. (SR, 176) On another occasion she also swears that 'the Pattern has infinite variation ... and every variation that can be will be', thereby implying that in the seeming randomness of the Pattern, Rand does not have to follow the prophecies of the Light, or the White Tower's interpretations of them, as being the only or best way he may take. (GH, 258)

Rand's first encounter with her occurs in a 'mirror world' of the Wheel, at a point when he is struggling to resist the pull of *saidin*, cannot control it and so is afraid of the madness it brings. He reveals his inner core of strength by standing firm against the surrogate of the Dark Lord, Ba'alzamon, who appears in the night with promises of teaching him to 'control that power', and of the 'Great Lord of the Dark' who can 'shelter' him from the 'madness', so that he 'can live forever'. (GH, 244) But in Lanfear's presence it is more difficult for him to remain resolute and clear of mind, as 'there seemed to be a scent to her, something that filled his head with her' and aroused unbidden, strange thoughts. (GH, 255) She tempts him to embrace *saidin*, silkily suggesting 'it is best to wrap it around you continuously, to dwell in it at all times ... and you'll learn uses for it you never suspected.' (GH, 260) He also has the legendary Horn of Valere in his possession, having rescued it from a group of Darkfriends, and so plans to return it to those who will ensure it is taken to Tar Valon for safe keeping. The prophecies say that the Horn is needed at the Last Battle, but they do not link the Dragon with it, implying that someone else is destined to sound it and thereby summon the heroes of the past to aid him. Lanfear constantly works on Rand's vanity, suggesting that he is 'a man for the legends' and that

the ‘man who sounds the Horn will make his own legends’. (*GH*, 255) In addition he can have her:

Think of the glory that will come to the one who finds the Horn of Valere.
How proud I’ll be to stand beside him who holds the Horn. You have no idea
of the heights we will scale together ... you can be a king. You can be
another Artur Hawkwing. (*GH*, 287)

It is further predicted that the finding of the Horn will be a sign that the Last Battle is approaching. As the Horn is tied to the one who first sounds it, whether of the Light or the Dark, the heroes of the past must come to its call. Lanfear thus schemes to turn Rand to the Shadow, to have him use the Horn and so become a powerful tool for her own purposes. In her attempt to sway the hero, her flattering and persuasive rhetoric is constantly accompanied by body language designed to arouse and confuse him. Jordan presents her as a dangerously beautiful woman, as changeable as quicksilver, which both deeply attracts and frightens Rand: ‘Moonshadows veiled her face in mystery as she looked up at him, and mystery made her even more beautiful’. Her eyes seem as ‘dark and deep as night’ and ‘soft as velvet’. (*GH*, 289; 268) She flaunts her body, ‘[her] legs pale in the moonlight’, her slightest touch is a caress that ‘ma[kes] his skin tingle and his mouth go dry’. (*GH*, 288; 301) She can seem young and ‘vulnerable’, or distant and ‘as old and as cold as the mountains’. (*GH*, 261; 300) Her bouts of ‘silent coldness that made even the morning sun seem chill’ have Rand longing to regain her approval, and so provide another way of manipulating his feelings. (*GH*, 301)

Lanfear also materialises after Rand has fulfilled one of the prophecies by taking possession of the crystal sword, *Callandor*, ‘the sword that cannot be touched’, one that is foretold to be ‘wielded by the Dragon’s hand.’ (*EOTW*, 189) This prophetic fulfilment of a step on his destined path towards the Last Battle signals an increase in his stature and

power so that she finds him ‘stronger’ and ‘harder.’ (SR, 172) As foretold by prophecy Rand now bears the heron sign on each palm that mark him as the Dragon Reborn:

Twice and Twice shall he be marked,
twice to live, and twice to die,
Once the heron to set his path,
Twice the heron, to name him true. (SR, 172)

Yet, despite these prophetic markings, Lanfear remains intent on turning him to her and to the Shadow. But at this point her obsessions with him, past and present, converge when she reveals her true identity as Lanfear, and angrily declares that ‘[y]ou were mine, and you are mine’, and that she means ‘to have [him] forever’, reminding him that in the past ‘you loved me.’ (SR, 173; 175)

From somewhere in the recesses of Rand’s subconscious he replies, in what appears to be an echoing of Lews Therin’s words, ‘and you loved power’. (SR, 175) For the reader this exchange accentuates even more Lanfear’s self-seeking and destructive nature. The over-reaching for power which first led to her downfall in the Age of Legends has grown, not diminished with the passage of time. She offers to have Asmodean, one of the male Forsaken, teach Rand to wield the One Power safely:

Let me help you. We can destroy the others. The Great Lord will not care. We can destroy all of them, even Asmodean, once he has taught you all that you need to know. You and I can rule the world together under the Great Lord forever ... Two great *sa’angreal* were made just before the end, one that you can use, one that I can ... Their power is beyond imagining. With those, we could challenge even ... the Great Lord himself. Even the Creator’. (SR, 176-7)

The great folly inherent in Lanfear’s proffered delusions of grandeur is heightened for the reader as it must resonate with the Christian myth of the fall of the rebel angel Lucifer, suggesting a possible banishment to the netherworld is in Lanfear’s future.

Lanfear is even driven to tempt the other two *ta'veren*, with dreams of 'power and glory', as she knows they are linked to Rand and to the Last Battle. She cunningly chooses times when they are at their most vulnerable. Thus, before the wolves guard his dreams, she haunts Perrin and warns: 'the night is always there, and dreams come to all men. Especially you, my wildling. And I will always be in your dreams'. (*DR*, 69) She also materialises to Mat in the liminal zone of the sick-room, a place where the distinction between sleeping and waking, dream and reality can easily become blurred. (*DR*, 223 ff) Jordan's repetition of the motif of Lanfear's tempting of his main protagonists draws attention to the interconnected patterning of their life-paths, and also highlights for the reader the threat she poses to the quest.

Sensual temptation in high fantasy

Although in high fantasy the temptation of the hero figures is achieved in a number of different ways, the bait is always that of unlimited power and/or an immortality that is linked to an ascension of the darker side of life in a way that imperils the safety of the depicted world and can lead to its destruction. For instance, in *LOTR* Tolkien uses the concept of the 'One Ring' that has the power to bestow world control to its wearer. In her original *Earthsea* trilogy, where magic is linked to words and 'true naming', Le Guin uses the mishandling of word-spells. Thus the young wizard Ged, through arrogance and pride, is tempted to use a forbidden spell of summoning that unleashes a darkness into the world, while in his quest for immortality, the sorcerer Cob ruptures the boundary between life and death, light and dark, and threatens the equilibrium on which the world is founded, for there cannot be one without the other. (*Wizard*, 74-75; *Farthest*, 195)

Le Guin, like Jordan, also draws on the archetype of the white witch. At the court of Terrenon, Ged is nearly seduced by the Lady Serret, a coldly beautiful young woman,

‘tall’, and ‘dressed in white and silver, with a net of silver crowning her hair that fell straight down like a fall of black water’. He likens her to a ‘white new moon’. (*Wizard*, 125-126) Her beauty and her words confused his mind and ‘his mind never seemed quite to clear.’ (*Wizard*, 128) In this enchanted state he almost succumbs to the temptation she offers of ‘an evil way [that] may lead to a good end’, by falsely suggesting he can master the ancient and evil spirit sealed in the stone that gives her husband’s court its name. (*Wizard*, 126) She offers ‘power over his own destiny: strength to crush any enemy... foresight, knowledge, wealth, dominion, and a wizardry ... that could humble the Archmage himself.’ (*Wizard*, 133) As she tempts him further with the Stone-spirit’s knowledge of the true name of the shadow that follows him and sees his ‘will shaken within him’, she promises, in words akin to those of Lanfear’s to Rand, ‘you will be mightier than all men, a king among men, [y]ou will rule, and I will rule with you’. (*Wizard*, 134) The hero’s ability to resist her charms, his assertion that ‘it is light that defeats the dark’, and his realisation that they had ‘used his fear to lead him on’, signal the beginning of his self-knowledge. (*Wizard*, 135) After fleeing this ‘domain of a dark power’ he finally embraces the dark Shadow of himself that his foolhardiness had loosed on the world, and thus ‘light and darkness met and were joined and were one’ (*Wizard*, 135; 198) As he and Vetch set sail for home from their quest to the ‘Outer Reaches’, on the horizon a ‘new moon shone: a ring of ivory, a rim of horn’, symbolic of Ged’s right to re-entry into the ‘Great House’ on Roke, through the ‘door of horn and ivory’ and of his rebirth. (*Wizard*, 199; 88) This parallel from Le Guin demonstrates that Jordan is writing within the shared sense of stock figures and a traditional paradigm of the temptation of the heroic figure that haunts much of our old and new mythological, fantastic literature. Thus, the overcoming of such sensual temptation forms a necessary part of the hero figure’s growth pattern.

Jordan's use of stock tutelary and temptress figures

In his portrayal of the magi Moiraine and Lanfear, Jordan thus uses two stock female figures, one to guide the hero to accept a selfless part in a quest where personal development is linked to the healing of the imaginary world, the other to tempt him by way of her sexuality to the seemingly easier but destructive path of self-gratification and self-glory. However, it is a common quest motif that at some point the hero figure needs to be separated from mentor/guides (good or bad) to allow him or her sole responsibility of choices and actions and so room to develop independently. Thus, in Lewis's Narnia series, Aslan was not always present to intervene on the part of the children; Rowling's Dumbledore cannot be relied upon to rescue or to guide Harry Potter; and in Feist's *Riftwar Saga* the protagonist Pug must often manage without the guidance of Macros the Black. Further like examples include Susan Cooper's Mr Merriman who, in *Silver on the Tree*, is called to an emergency in another time-frame, leaving Will and Bran to rely on their own decisions in the Lost Land,⁴¹ and Tolkien's Gandalf who vanishes into the abyss leaving the Fellowship to make its own way. It is also common for fantasists to introduce secondary mentor figures, such as Moiraine's bonded warder, Lan (like Aragorn, a type of 'hidden monarch'), who function as an exemplar for the hero of duty, courage, and self-sacrifice for a just cause. In the *WOT* Jordan resolves this removal of the opposing positive and negative mentor figures at a significant point, after Rand has been thrice recognised as the long-awaited messiah – by his own people as the 'Dragon Reborn', by the Aiel as 'He Who Comes with the Dawn' and by the Sea Folk as 'The Coramoor'.

In *FOH*, book 5, Moiraine and Lanfear engage in deadly combat. This battle culminates in them falling through a *ter'angreal* Redstone doorframe, in a 'flash of white

⁴¹ Susan Cooper, *Silver on the Tree*, Middlesex, 1979, pp. 115ff.

light that did not end.’ (*FOH*, 824-5) Their mutual disappearance means they have cancelled each other out. Jordan thus dramatically removes both their positive and negative influences and Rand must now stand alone. Moiraine fought her opponent in order to save Rand’s life, and to ensure that he fulfils his destiny as Dragon Reborn, putting his safety and that of the world above her own. From a letter she leaves him, opened after her disappearance, it is learned that she chose to forfeit her own life in order to save his, as she had a foretelling of ‘three [possible] branches’ that the pattern could weave. He reads that down one of the paths Lanfear had killed him. Down another he called himself Lews Therin and became Lanfear’s devoted lover. (*FOH*, 829; 830) Moiraine chose, calmly and selflessly, to be instrumental in bringing to fruition the third branch in the pattern, the one that would ensure his survival, as she knew he would not kill Lanfear (or any woman) in order to save himself. By contrast, Lanfear is consumed with anger because Rand has not only ‘let another woman touch [him] again’, but publicly spurns her twice through a strange melding of his past memories and the present situation. (*FOH*, 818) As the former Dragon, Lews Therin, he declares: ‘I was never yours Mierin. I will always belong to Ilyena’, and then as Rand, the current Dragon Reborn: ‘Your name is Lanfear, and I’ll die before I love one of the Forsaken’. (*FOH*, 820) The core Lanfear, unlike Moiraine, is ever driven by jealousy and hate, and twisted by a centuries-old obsession. In her, power, love and hate are inextricably intertwined. She faces Rand, her face ‘a mask carved of ice’ and shrieks: ‘If you are not mine ... then you are dead.’ (*FOH*, 818; 820)

At this point both women are presumed to have died, as the *ter’angreal* gateway back to their world melts ‘as if it were wax’, and Lan, Moiraine’s bonded warder, can no longer ‘feel her presence’. (*FOH*, 825) But Jordan gives Lanfear a brief reappearance, in volume nine (*WH*), where it is revealed that she has escaped from the other-worldly dimension of the *Aelfinn* and *Eelfinn*, this revelation making it possible for the reader to

speculate that Moiraine, too, will eventually return. As she so clearly echoes Tolkien's Gandalf, perhaps such resurrection is to be in a more highly evolved form that may well be needed to tip the balance in the Light's favour in the lead up to the Last Battle. There is also Min's cryptic vision of Rand to consider, where she saw that 'he would almost certainly fail without a woman who was dead and gone'. (*COS*, 603) The author's repetition of hints or clues that suggest Moiraine still has a part to play provides another example of Jordan's use of interconnected patterning of possible futures in the texts.

By the removal, at this point, of these two potent characters who function as a kind of living anvil on which to hammer out the hero's worth, Jordan allows Rand more choice of action to set his own path and so to develop in ways that will be dependent upon his own judgement. Just prior to her disappearance Moiraine remarks that he has already 'changed' from the 'boy' she first met, and 'is hardly the same at all' and she prays he has 'changed enough' for what lies ahead, highlighting once again for the reader the enormity of Rand's quest and of the real possibility of failure. (*FOH*, 813) In the beginning, Rand, Mat and Perrin had been pliable, naïve creatures of circumstance until they began to view themselves and the world at large through different eyes due to their life-changing journeys and ever more demanding actions. Within the pattern of their destinies Jordan goes to great lengths to give them some freedom in the manner in which they will journey along their fated paths. This is particularly true of Rand, as his coming-of-age entails accepting the role of the Dragon Reborn and mastering of control of the One Power. Thus, while Jordan makes it clear that his characters' fated pattern in life cannot be side-stepped, he creates the impression that his three young protagonists have a degree of choice and responsibility in weaving the finer detail of its intricate design. Thereby they may develop the attributes needed to complete the quest.

In her letter Moiraine sets Rand free, advising him to ‘trust no woman fully who is now Aes Sedai’:

We have made the world dance as we sang for three thousand years. That is a difficult habit to break, as I have learned while dancing to your song. You must dance free, and even the best intentioned of my sisters may well try to guide your steps as I once did May the Light illumine and protect you.
(*FOH*, 830-31)

In such epic-style fantasy the success of the quest is linked to the naïve protagonist’s transition from youthful inexperience and ignorance to a state of maturity, great responsibility and self-sacrifice. But the necessary transformation of the young hero at the hands of others can only take him or her so far and at some point the hero must be left to take full responsibility for decision making and actions. Rand’s guilt at Moiraine’s death reveals a growing self-awareness of his faults, for it is a weakness in him that has led to this tragic scenario. Moiraine had known he was incapable of killing a woman, even one as evil as Lanfear, and that at Cairhien ‘she had come to her death knowing it waited’. (*FOH*, 831) To assuage his self-acknowledged guilt, Rand unsoundly reasons that in future he must harden his heart, to become like ‘steel’. Thus Jordan brings into play a new lesson for his young but developing hero, for in a world that is reliant on balance he must learn to operate from both his heart and his head.

Temperance: Cadsuane Aes Sedai

Strong endures; hard shatters. (*POD*, 296)

The book that follows on from the disappearance of Moiraine and Lanfear is fittingly titled *Lord of Chaos*, which seemingly refers not only to the chaotic state of the world around Rand, but also to the instability of his mind as he struggles to retain his

sanity and keep the increasingly insistent voice of Lews Therin, the former Dragon, at bay – a voice that ‘seemed to come from some capering figure in the shadows of [his] head.’ (*LOC*, 114) Although without Moiraine’s guidance he continues to grow in stature, and retains an unbending sense of justice, he becomes increasingly cold, manipulative and arrogant. his choice of action now powerfully fuelled by the bitter memory of Moiraine’s death.

Jordan does not introduce another female magus as the Dragon’s mentor/guide until midway through *COS*, the seventh volume, where Moiraine is replaced by Cadsuane, thought to be the oldest living Aes Sedai. Cadsuane, unlike the clear-cut figures of Moiraine and Lanfear, is a far more ambiguous and more elemental figure, and it is uncertain if she has some devious purpose of her own that may stand apart from the polarities of good and evil, although she does assure Rand that what she does is for his ‘own good ... not mine’ and not for ‘the good of the White Tower’. (*POD*, 587) She is wily enough to know he ‘fights guidance’ and unlike her predecessor, bides her time until he asks her to be his advisor. (*WH*, 509; *POD*, 586) Cadsuane is reminiscent of one of the Three Fates of antiquity, perhaps symbolic of the future or what may be. For she constantly works on a piece of embroidery that seems a metaphor for the plan she is weaving to bring Rand to full awareness and to prepare him for the Last Battle.

The major image on her piece of embroidery was finished, a man’s hand clutching the ancient symbol of the Aes Sedai. Cracks ran across the black-and-white disc, and there was no telling whether the hand was trying to hold it together or crush it. She knew what she intended, but time would tell what was truth ... It would be a disturbing piece, when completed. (*POD*, 291)

In a sense Cadsuane is weaving Rand’s story and through her Jordan implies that the final outcome of Rand’s great quest cannot be brought to pass until she completes her work. (In this regard she is a mortal equivalent or paradigm of the Cosmic Loom that spins the Great

Pattern of life.) Diana Wynne Jones uses a similar motif of weaving in *The Spellcoats*. In that narrative a spellcoat is ‘a poncho-like garment woven with word pictures that either told a story or stated facts. The garment, in the weaving became the spell that made the story or the fact come true’.⁴² Wynne Jones’s central character Tanaqui must weave the story into two ‘spellcoats’ in order to obtain the release of the greatest of the gods (the ‘One’) and her people from bondage to the evil magi. Wynne Jones makes an extensive use of the motif of weaving in her text: for example, the magi are clothed in ‘spellgowns’ that display woven signs of their craft and they weave ‘soul-nets’ to trap departing souls. The fate and fortunes of mortals are spun by the Weaver, the Lady of the Undying and even everyday apparel such as ‘rugcoats’ and skirts is woven with a patterning of words or phrases.

Cadsuane is a harsh taskmaster, although she says of Rand that ‘she will not hurt him any more than she must’. (*COT*, 633) Min has a ‘viewing’ that Cadsuane is to ‘teach’ Rand and his Asha’man of the Black Tower something they ‘will not like learning from her’. (*COS*, 716) From years of ‘rummaging’ in ‘musty corners’ of the White Tower, she has gleaned useful bits of knowledge not known to Moiraine that can assist Rand, for instance, that the crystal sword is a dangerously ‘flawed’ *sa’angreal* and to be used safely must be ‘linked with two women’, with ‘one of them guiding the flows’. (*POD*, 587-88)

As a mentor figure Cadsuane is representative of a balance of reason and emotion and so very human, despite her considerable powers. In contrast to this as Rand grows in stature as the Dragon Reborn he becomes further removed from his former self, and sees himself as hardened like ‘steel’. (*POD*, 311) If Moiraine’s role was to teach him the pattern of his destined duty, and Lanfear’s to tempt him from it, Cadsuane is surely to teach him temperance, to remind him that ‘even the Dragon Reborn is flesh’. (*POD*, 297)

⁴² Diana Wynne Jones, *The Spellcoats*, Oxford, 1979, p. 237.

The world needs him to be strong, for ‘strong endures’, and yet not hard for ‘hard shatters’. (*POD*, 296) In other words, Rand must ‘relearn that he’s human’, he must act with his head and his heart and be brought to ‘laughter and tears again’ or Cadsuane fears that at Taimon Gai’don ‘even his victory may be as dark as his defeat’. (*WH*, 508; *POD*, 296-297)

In this way Jordan yet again brings to the fore the destructive potential of power, a common theme in fantasy, suggesting that the danger inherent in Rand’s cold application of power and ruthless disregard for individuals is that, inadvertently, he may become a type of fearful Dark Lord in his own right. (It is because of their awareness of the destructive potential of unbridled power, even if wielded in the name of good, that Gandalf, Galadriel and Elrond refuse the One Ring.) Jordan’s patterning of a trio of female magus figures is tailored to further the different stages of his hero’s development. Moiraine Aes Sedai as interpreter of the Great Pattern is the catalyst that sets the hero on his inner and outer journeys of growth that are linked to the saving of the world. His ability to rise to the task is tested by exposing him to her counterpart, the temptress Lanfear who offers the seemingly easier path of self-glory. Cadsuane’s further role is one of fine-tuning the hero to ensure that Rand the mortal human is not over-shadowed by Rand the fearsome Dragon-reborn, for the healing of the world of the Wheel depends on a balance between these two aspects of his personality. Thus the roles of these three women are firmly entwined with Rand and help to progress his journey. Jordan’s patterning of the main hero figures – Rand, Mat and Perrin – who embody various aspects of the heroic, presents another interesting trio of interlaced characters that form the focus of the following two chapters.

Interlude

No Turning Back: The Journey of the Hero

‘The Wheel weaves as the Wheel wills.’ (*EOTW*, 92)

‘It is not comfortable being chosen by the Wheel, to be great or to be near greatness.

The chosen of the Wheel can only take what comes.’ (*DR*, 94)



After assessing the roles of the interpreters of the Great Pattern of the Age in Jordan’s imaginary world, it is now possible to turn to the characters for whom the Pattern is made to spin a larger destiny. Accordingly, chapters three and four form an exposition of Jordan’s portrayal of the heroic figure and his or her fated journey, a major theme of the Jordan texts. As the analysis of these crucial elements of the narrative moves from the more general to the specific, it is presented in two inter-related chapters.

Chapter three concentrates on Jordan’s extended and complex interpretation of the heroic quest paradigm and of other motifs that, traditionally, have informed the fated journey of the ‘heroic’ figure. The focus of chapter four concerns Jordan’s portrayal of the primary protagonists, Rand, Perrin, and Mat, as constituting a type of triple-hero figure through an interdependent interlacing of their life-threads. (This interlacing of characters as a general motif is expanded on in chapter three, particularly with regard to the secondary female protagonists whose life-threads are woven into and help to inform Rand’s greater cosmic task.)

Jordan’s use of the heroic motif will be used to examine how the notion of interlacement is extended into the characterisation of his three main male protagonists,

who together form a many-faceted triple hero. This is one of the most interesting contributions of Jordan's interpretation of the hero, since it allows him to explore this figure in a number of ways. In examining Jordan's use of a multiplicity of heroic figures I posit the metaphor of a heroic line that runs throughout the focal narrative and around which the hero figures spiral, so that the threads of their stories become continuously entangled with those of Rand's central quest.

