# We Are All Individuals Together

## On the Development of Cooperative Heroism in High Fantasy Fiction after Tolkien

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## Abstract:

Heroes have always embodied societal values that are considered important at the time of the hero's creation. The martial Achilles and the chivalrous Lancelot are archetypes of their respective times and cultures. Fantasy literature can in many ways be regarded as a direct successor of the classic epic and the medieval romance. We can thus imagine fantasy heroes to display societal values that are highly regarded in this day and age. In a 2016 paper, Thomas Honegger introduced the concept 'cooperative heroism' to the field of Tolkien scholarship, a large part of fantasy criticism. He argued that Tolkien's famous *The Lord of the Rings* was a prime example of a new form of heroism that depended on the cooperation between individuals instead of the prowess of an individual as had been the case in many stories before Tolkien. This thesis sets up a diachronic comparison of heroes and hero teams before and after Tolkien, with Tolkien at the centre of the argument as introducer of this new form of heroism. Three other fantasy series will be examined (Raymond Feist, Tad Williams, Sarah J. Maas) to see how this form of heroism so focused on the collective has evolved over time and what this means for the representation of the hero in fantasy fiction. It will be argued that this new stress on cooperation between heroes shows distinct new ideas about the hero in our time, one that not only functions within a group, but needs a group to function.

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# Acknowledgements

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# Introduction

On the 18th of June 2016, the Dutch Tolkien Society Unquendor organised its seventh Lustrum Conference "Tolkien among Scholars". Held in the Dutch city of Leiden, the society invited Tolkien scholars from all over the world to give presentations about *The Hobbit, The Lord of the Rings* and all other works that Tolkien wrote during his time or that were compiled at a later date. The final keynote speaker at this event was renowned Tolkien scholar Prof. dr. Thomas Honegger, professor of English Medieval Studies at the Friedrich Schiller University in Jena, Germany. His lecture titled "Heroic Scholars - Scholarly Heroes" reflected on Tolkien's stance on heroism and the legitimisation of heroic violence both in Tolkien's own fantasy writing and in his work on medieval texts. Most of all, Honegger argued that we should view *The Lord of the Rings* as a prime example of 'cooperative heroism,' a form, which according to Honegger was perfected by Tolkien, which sees the cooperation of heroes triumph over the solitary hero who faces his enemies alone and without the help of others. This lecture struck me not only as a scholar of literature, but also as an avid reader of the fantasy genre. When considering the fantasy literature I had read in the light of this newfound idea of 'cooperative heroism,' which Honegger explained further in his article "Splintered Heroes - Heroic Variety and its Function in *The Lord of the Rings*", I found similarities between Tolkien's work and other works of fantasy that had not been explored before. Instead of focusing on the individual hero, the group as a whole would now become the focus.

Now, the fantasy genre is enormous. Each year sees the publication of a large amount of new novels as well as the republication of older works that are still being bought by the million. As of 2015 more than 300 million copies of Tolkien's various works have been sold. Robert Jordan, author of the famous *Wheel of Time* series, stands at more than 80 million copies. George R.R. Martin, who has gained a lot of popularity due to the famous HBO series

*Game of Thrones*, sold over 58 million copies of his work *A Song of Ice and Fire.* Tad Williams and Raymond Feist, authors of *Memory, Thorn & Sorrow* and *The Riftwar Saga* respectively, have seen the publication of around 30 million and 20 million copies of their series (Whitehead). With all these impressive numbers, fantasy literature "makes up a considerable proportion of the market for popular fiction" (James 77). Besides the large sales, fantasy literature is also famous for its extremely long novels, easily spanning over 500 pages with each released instalment. The fantasy genre, then, is huge in every sense of the word.

The amount of critical work written on fantasy literature is far less extensive, though it has been growing at a steady pace in the recent years. There seem to be two subsequent reasons for the lack of substantial scholarly writing on the topic. Firstly, there are still many literary scholars and critics who condemn the genre as a whole, opting to view it as something entirely outside the literary genre. Fantasy fiction is often viewed as nothing more than simple escapist literature with a simple story to keep the reader away from reality for a short period of time. These arguments, as Ann Swinfen points out in *In Defence of Fantasy* (1984), "seem to have its roots in emotion rather than objective critical standards" (1). Fantasy fiction demands from its reader a certain willing suspense of disbelief to invest in a world created in the imagination. Only if this suspense of disbelief is offered by the reader can the work of fantasy actually begin to tell its story. Some works are more effective in bringing the reader in than others and it can be difficult for readers to separate the good from the bad in this rapidly growing genre. Whereas literary fiction has built up a canon over the years, there is no official canon in the world of fantasy literature, making it sometimes an arduous task when deciding what to read next. The complete dismissal of the genre is then not very surprising as it is not always easy to go from realist fiction to the belief in fantastical worlds, but it is problematic for the studies as a whole. When a genre is shoved out of the discussion before research has even started, it will never get further than the doorstep.

Secondly, studies on fantasy works that do exist have a tendency to stand too much on their own. Studies of individual fantasy writers have been written, but in many cases it feels like the authors of these articles are attempting to reinvent the wheel by starting from the beginning instead of building on previous written works. Studies of fantasy literature generally start with a question of definition[1], before moving to their individual discussions, as Keyes notes in *The Literature of Hope in the Middle Ages and Today*. These definitions "are as insubstantial and hard to capture as the unicorn and dragon that frequent fantasy stories. There is a general agreement that definitions exist, but no one agrees on exactly what shape they should take" (13). This general disagreement marks the entire field of fantasy studies. With a genre that is as open as fantasy, with many sub-genres and shifting ideas of how and what to write, it is difficult to pinpoint exactly what makes something fall within the fantasy genre. That is not to say that good theoretical works about fantasy literature do not exist. Swinfen's previously mentioned book is one of them. Colin Manlove's *Modern Fantasy: Five Studies* (1975) and *The Impulse of Fantasy Literature* (1982), Eric Rabkin's *The Fantastic in Literature* (1976), and Brian Attebery's *Strategies of Fantasy* (1992) are among the many studies that have worked to bring fantasy literature into the realm of literary criticism. Collections such as Richard Schlobin's *The Aesthetics of Fantasy Literature and Art* (1992) and David Sandner's *Fantastic Literature: A Critical Reader* (2004) add to this by compiling the most influential articles on fantasy literature together, in order to build an actual theoretical framework. Famous also in the field of fantasy studies are articles written by fantasy authors. Tolkien, most notably, defined a lot of the genre's terminology with his essay "On Fairy Stories" (1939), but other authors, such as Ursula Le Guin with her collection of essays presented in *The Language of the Night* (1989), have written extensively about the

[1] Ironically invoking the comment of Ezra Pound in *The Spirit of Romance*: "The history of literary criticism is largely the history of a vain struggle to find a terminology which will define something." (quoted from Keyes 11).

genre as well. Despite this already available work it is still difficult to use fantasy literature in fields that do not specifically deal with the topic. The genre is left out of discussions of post-humanism and post-colonialism, to name a few, even though there are countless works that take up interesting viewpoints on these matters.[2]

As always Tolkien is the exception in the realm of fantasy. The research done on Tolkien, both as a writer of fantasy literature and as an inventor of languages, has generated a large body of published work that grows every year. Tolkien-research gets its own Wikipedia page, its own societies — of which Unquendor is only one — and its own classes at university.[3] Within Tolkien-research we find the academic depth that is to be expected in the field of literary studies, from research of Tolkien's use of old sources like *Beowulf* to discussions dealing with post-structuralism and ecocriticism. Of course, the work of Tolkien itself meant a great deal for the genre of fantasy. The period after 1945 when *The Lord of the Rings* was published saw a considerable expansion in the publication of fantastical works (James 73). The fantasy genre we know today still seems built on the novels that came out in this period. Swinfen notes:

> This may be partly due to the influence of J.R.R. Tolkien, but this is not to say that many of these novels are simply derivatives of Tolkien's pioneering work. A great many, indeed, appear to have little or nothing directly to Tolkien … the point is, rather, that Tolkien *made fantasy 'respectable'* (1, my emphasis).

[2] The relationship between elves and men would, for example, be an extremely interesting discussion in the light of Orientalism and post-colonialism. Often pushed away from their home territory by an invasion of men, elves find themselves not only in a historical similar position, but are also often described in terms we find belonging to Orientalist views of indigenous cultures that were invaded by Europeans powers.

[3] Utrecht University, for example, offers the course 'Taín to Tolkien' to bachelor students.

Yet, despite fantasy now being respectable, the literary field stayed far away from authors beyond Tolkien.

So why should the literary critic care about fantasy literature other than *The Lord of the Rings* as a topic of research? As noted, fantasy fiction is often viewed as escapist literature, but those scholars that are willing to suspend disbelief and delve into the world of fantasy fiction will find that well written fantasy is actually, and perhaps surprisingly, actively engaged with the contemporary world. This counts especially for pure secondary world fantasy, a term Swinfen uses for novels that are set in worlds which stand entirely separate from our primary world. Because secondary worlds have to be invented from scrap, authors get supreme freedom to shape the new world into whatever they need to tell the story they want to tell. This freedom seems to suggest that the author can do anything he wants, that he is free from any restrictions of the primary world to shape something truly new. But a reader only has to pick up a well written work of fantasy to know that this is far from the truth. If a fantasy is too far removed in setting and story from the primary world, it becomes incomprehensible and the belief in the story world is lost. The fantasy fails. Works of fantasy, especially the pure secondary world fantasies such as *The Lord of the Rings*, depend on their connection to the primary world to make the reader believe and keep him invested (Swinfen 76, Tolkien "On Fairy Stories" 147, Zahorski 59).

However, not only do these works base themselves on the primary world, they also actively engage with primary world issues. Fantasy stories deal with subjects such as "education, personality, morality, social relations, and other aspects of human development" to name a few (Wolfe 7). Their purpose, then, is not just to tell a story about a world that does not exist, but also to reflect on the world the reader is in. Swinfen notes: "the purposes which fantasy seems to serve [is]: the exploration of enhanced imaginative experience of the primary

world itself" (10). She is echoed by George Landow in "And the World Became Strange: Realms of Literary Fantasy" who states:

> Such movements of fantasy literature into the realms of speculative anthropology and theology make it clear that fantasy and romance create their imagined worlds *as a means of exploring this one*. It is important to emphasize once more the essential seriousness and potential humanistic contributions of such genres, since until recently their claims have been consistently scanted by academic critics and other advocates of 'high' culture." (132, my emphasis)

One of the ways fantasy literature approaches and evaluates the real world is by presenting the reader with social issues that parallel the issues of the primary world (Swinfen 95). This will bring us back to the study of heroes within the genre of fantasy. Since fantasy fiction more often than not falls back upon older literature such as works of medieval and classical times, the connection between fantasy heroes and the heroes of old is easily made and often intentional. Traditionally, heroes have always represented values and virtues that were regarded highly in the society the hero's story originates from. Antiquity stories about heroes, so argues Frank Hakemulder in *The Moral Laboratory: Literature and Ethical Awareness*, "were supposed to be a way to teach the virtues these characters represent" (17). Successful heroes "may inspire [the reader] to strive towards noble goals - what I called ideal selves ('I wish I were like that')" (115). The choice of the type of hero in a work of fiction, then, "reveals that society's values" (Keyes 84). This counts for antiquity as much as it counts for stories of fantasy fiction. Sir Lancelot, being the best knight in the world, presented medieval audiences with amazing feats of chivalry, honour, and bravery. He showed them what being a good knight meant. Fantasy heroes are no different, except in the fact that they

might now embody different values because their authors and readers live in different times. In this way, the definition of a hero is ever changing to reflect important values and so the hero will always stay relevant for the current time.

This brings me to the main question of this master thesis. In a world that has been dominated by heroes that face dangers by themselves, Tolkien chose to write a story about a group of heroes that could not succeed unless they all worked together towards the same goal. The bond that is created between his characters and the way the fellowship functions has become iconic for *The Lord of the Rings* and has, I would argue, been picked up by many other writers of fantasy. It is this development that I wish to investigate. In his article, Honegger, understandably, kept his discussion of cooperative heroism focused on Tolkien himself, arguing that cooperative heroism finds a supreme form in Tolkien's work. In this thesis I will expand on his argument and extend the discussion towards other works of fantasy that were published after Tolkien. By doing this, I hope to show that we are leaning towards a new kind of hero, brought forth in fantasy fiction, that reflects what our society today considers important.

In order to show how this cooperative heroism functions and, possibly, how it has already changed since Tolkien, I will perform a diachronic comparison of heroes in fantasy literature. Chapter one of this thesis will discuss heroes of a period before Tolkien, specifically how heroes functioned together in a team. In these times we see far more individual heroes, so team-ups such as Jason and the Argonauts and the collaborative work of the Knights of the Round Table are interesting cases. This chapter will give a more general overview of previous instances of heroes working together and will not have an in depth analysis of these older works since much has been written on them already. Chapter two: Fantasy Theory, Tolkien, and Cooperative Heroism, will present a closer look at fantasy studies and Tolkien. Since Tolkien is generally considered to be the (grand)father of modern

fantasy, and since the concept of cooperative heroism that I will be using stems from an article discussing his work, Tolkien will form the basis for the theory on fantasy literature. The last three chapters will present a close reading of three chosen fantasy series: Raymond Feist's *Riftwar Saga* (1982-1986), then Tad Williams' *Memory, Sorrow and Thorn* (1988-1993), and lastly, Sarah Maas' *Throne of Glass* (2012 - present day).

The choice for these series is based on a few elements. Firstly, they all fall within the same genre of fantasy, namely high fantasy that takes place in a pure secondary world with no direct connection to the primary world. These worlds, which are so highly informed by the complex nature of the primary world, most easily present new sets of values (Swinfen 93). Secondly, they are written in different time periods so that a diachronic comparison can be made. And finally, all these works have gotten significant traction in the world of fantasy literature. Despite having been written almost 30 years ago, both Feist and Williams' novels are still extremely popular. Their books are still being sold as well as reprinted and have been translated into many different languages. As a new writer Sarah Maas has quickly become one of the bestselling fantasy authors of recent years, having already sold over a million copies of her series worldwide by 2015. It is important to note for this thesis that there is hardly previously written, peer reviewed, critical work on these authors. Discussions of these books have limited itself to reader reviews, conversations on fora, and the occasional Bachelor Thesis. Because of this, the close reading I will be doing will be largely dependent on previous theoretical sources and my own interpretation of the books rather than previous written discussions on the series. The hope is that my analysis will form a basis for new research, at least for these three authors who definitely deserve a closer look both within the field of fantasy studies and outside.

# Chapter 1 – Hero Teams Before Tolkien

Teams of heroes have existed long before Tolkien wrote stories about elves, hobbits, and dwarves, and decided to have his characters face the evil in his world together. This chapter will give a short overview of these earlier established teams in classical and medieval literature and will explore how these teams function. Most importantly it hopes to show how the stories surrounding these teams ultimately put the focus more on the prowess of an individual than on the unity or strength of the group, as we will see with Tolkien in the next chapter.

Before I will discuss the various stories that feature various groups of heroes, I find it important to dwell for a brief moment on the word 'hero' itself. The word, as Morton Bloomfield notes in "The Problem of the Hero in the Later Medieval Period", has changed significantly throughout the ages. Originating from the Greek word '*hērōs*' meaning protector or helper, hero quickly "came to mean a superhuman or semidivine being whose special powers were put forth to save or help all mankind or a favored part of it" (Bloomfield 27). As the word appeared in more European languages it started to indicate an "outstanding man, perhaps, first of all, because of Homer, in martial prowess" (28). Around the seventeenth century a hero could mean "any notable or great human being" while at the same time retaining its original meaning of martial warrior (Ibid.). Nowadays, "any admirable human being can be called a hero", after performing an admirable task (Ibid). Literature and literary criticism also uses a large range of different literary uses of the term hero. In this list we find such types as "the epic hero, the romantic hero, the dramatic hero, the tragic hero, the ironic hero, the realistic hero, and even the comic hero and anti-hero" which all align to different heroic types used in both fantasy and non-fantasy literature (29). These hero types all have different stories attributed to them. At the same time, the word hero has become synonymous

with the protagonist of a story. Since this is a thesis discussing works of fiction, I will make use of the different literary uses of the term.

In stories originating from the classical period we can differentiate between two kinds of tales when looking at the way the hero faces and overcomes various challenges. On the one hand, many, if not most, tales from this period feature a single, central hero. The famous tale of Perseus has Perseus fight Medusa by himself, Theseus battles the Minotaur alone, and Heracles has to complete twelve tasks that are so difficult that no one else but him could ever accomplish them. These are the tales of men with "outstanding martial prowess", to quote Bloomfield once more, who might need a little help to get started, but ultimately destroy their adversary on their own (28). The titles of plays such as *Oedipus Rex*, *Antigone*, *Iphigenia in Aulis*, and *Medea*, all written by famous classical playwrights, already indicate their focus on the individual.

On the other hand, there are a few tales that seem to suggest a collaboration between heroes. The *Iliad* clearly discusses many heroes that have become icons in and outside the literary field. Despite that, the cooperation we find within the story is considered in a negative light. Robert Rabel, in his study on the *Iliad*, writes: "Cooperative heroism is an expression of weakness and disadvantage. For the most part, heroes attribute great value to cooperation only when their survival is threatened" (quoted from Honegger 2). In the end, the *Iliad*, like the first line of the book suggests, is the tale of Achilles. It starts with his anger and ends with his death. The *Odyssey* could also be considered among these, since it features Odysseus and his crew trying to make their way home from Troy. However, much like the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* is focused primarily on Odysseus and his homecoming. While there is a certain focus on his crew and their actions within the framework of the story, Odysseus is the hero who tells about the actions of his crew after they have already perished. We have to turn to the *Argonautica* to find one of the first examples of an actual suggested collaboration between heroes.

The *Argonautica*, as narrated by Apollonius[4], starts with the following line: "Beginning with thee, O Phoebus, I will recount the famous *deeds of men of old*, who, at the behest of King Pelias, down through the mouth of Pontus and between the Cyanean rocks, sped well-benched Argo in quest of the golden fleece" (ll. 1-4, my emphasis). Though people in this day and age know the story under the name 'Jason and the Argonauts', the *Argonautica* has not such a distinct title. As such it proclaims to tell the story of the men that sailed on the Argo, and not of one man like the previous mentioned tales. To find the fleece and bring it back to Iolkos, Jason realises he needs the help of others and as such he enlists the help of fifty-two of Greece's greatest heroes. Among these names are the famous Orpheus and Heracles, who would have been familiar to the audience. The winning of the fleece is then, as James Clauss stresses in *The Best of the Argonauts: The Redefinition of the Epic Hero in Book 1 of Apollonius's* Argonautica, "a communal effort" (63) which depends on the "cooperation of the group" (33). After all, Jason cannot sail a ship to Colchis alone.

A group, however, needs a leader, and a ship needs a captain. At the end of the first book of the *Argonautica*, therefore, comes the question: who, of the Argonauts, is the best? Jason asks the group: "… now therefore with ungrudging heart choose *the bravest to be our leader*, who shall be careful for everything, to take upon him our quarrels and covenants with strangers" (ll. 332-340, my emphasis). This question forms the main narrative focus of the first of the four books and not without just cause (Clauss 4). Assembled here are fifty-two of Greece's finest men, most of whom have individual stories attached to them. They either already have or will later in their lives perform impressive feats (87). Heracles joins the group while he is still in the middle of his twelve tasks, having just delivered the Erymantian boar to Mycene. Orpheus' myth is well known and will, chronologically, happen after his adventure on the Argo. These are not individuals that are known to function within a group. This

[4] I am choosing this version of Jason and the Argonauts because of the profound impact it has had on literature as a whole including influencing both Ovid and Virgil.

becomes very evident when we realise that Heracles leaves the Argonauts before the first book is over. Not only is his might counterproductive to the story as a whole - he could have easily beaten most of the tasks that Jason would face later - but he simply does not function within the given parameters of the team. He opts to stay on the ship more often than not when the rest goes out exploring and, more importantly, refuses the position of leader when it is offered to him. He is not someone to lead a group, nor someone to be part of one.

By handing this group of individuals who are now the Argonauts, and by keeping the group together as their leader, Jason not only proves to be the best hero on the journey (Clauss 87), he also becomes the focus of the story. Now that Heracles has left there is no one that questions his orders or his decisions and as such the narrative, which had switched to Heracles several times, remains close to Jason. The way across the sea is perilous, as described in book two, and Orpheus is often needed to calm the waves, but that is it. Other characters have dialogue, but lack agency to make actual decisions or have actual impact. At the start of book three the narrative has seemingly forgotten the team: “Come now, Erato, stand by my side, and say next *how Jason brought back the fleece* to Iolcus aided by the love of Medea” (ll. 1-5). This line stands in stark contrast with the previous statement of Jason in book one: “But, friends, - for common to all is our return to Hellas hereafter, and common to all is our path to the land of Aeetes” (ll. 332-340). Whereas getting the ship to Colchis required the cooperation of the group, the tasks that are laid out before Jason when he has arrived in this city are to be performed by him alone, albeit with the help of Medea. It is Jason who goes to the palace of Aeetes to demand a trial for the fleece (ll. 167-193), Jason who fights the bulls (ll. 1278-1325), sows the teeth and faces the men that grow from them (ll. 1340-1407). It is Jason who will eventually make it home and become King, because this is his quest for the fleece. He needs the others to come home, the journey back is a clear indication of that, but the trials presented to get the fleece are his as is the reward in the end.

The *Argonautica* ends abruptly, but the message is clear: Jason is the hero of the story. We now know the story under the name of 'Jason and the Argonauts' which immediately reveals this focus. Jason summoned the other heroes to help him and proves he has the capabilities of leading them on a successful journey. Without him there would be no quest, but also without him the quest could never have been completed. This is not the tale of Jason and Heracles or any other combination of heroes. Jason is the one who builds the team, keeps the team together, and keeps the team functioning. By shifting the focus on one singular hero the adventure stays cohesive and focused on its ultimate goal: to bring the new hero Jason into the greater narrative that is Greek Mythology. His strengths are based on his capabilities of leading *other* heroes, but that does not make this narrative *about* these other heroes. Jason will forever remain the leader of the Argonauts and also, importantly, one of the few Argonauts that is actively remembered.

If we move to the Middle Ages there are many hero stories to consider. Early medieval times provide us with three famous literary heroes: Beowulf, Brythnoth, and Roland (Huppé 1).[5] These tales are tales of individuals fighting against monsters or against other men, resulting, eventually, in their deaths. Much like many of the Greek heroes, their stories are mostly of individual and not collective effort. Beowulf has his retinue behind him and there is a distinct unity between them, but he faces Grendel and Grendel's mother alone. The same can be said about the other legends and also about the famous Icelandic sagas such as *Egil's Saga*, which feature prominent family bonds, but narrate the story of a single hero whose name is often reflected in the titles of the sagas. The best example in medieval literature of heroes working together can be found in the tales of Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. Arthurian legends are an interesting case study in the light of this thesis as a whole. Not only because unity and a cooperation between the various knights is stressed in later tales,

[5] I am omitting saint's lives for the same reason Bernard Huppé does: "saints are too exemplary. He exists to give evidence of things unseen. He is a living miracle, not superhuman as the hero is, but supra-human" (2).

but also because the fantasy genre has been so largely inspired by them. T. H. White *The Once and Future King* (1939), a retelling of the classic Arthurian tale, "signalled important developments in high fantasy" (Sullivan III 441) and even to this day we find that many fantasy stories work with the legends to some degree.

Early stories of Arthur's knights such as the Welsh romances in the *Mabinogion,* and the works of Chrétien de Troyes are tales of individual knights going on quests. Owain, Peredur, and Geraint in the Welsh romances, Erec, Yvain, and Lancelot in Chrétien's work, to name a few. Arthur's court is the place where the knights usually start their adventure, but an actual sense of fellowship between the knights has not yet come into being. Further tales such as *Gawain and the Green Knight* have the same structure. A knight leaves Arthur's court on an adventure, faces challenges that he has to overcome and returns to court, usually after having completed the adventure successfully. If we wish to look at groups setting out for a quest, the early text *Culhwch and Olwen* is interesting because it features an extensive list of knights all setting out to complete the same goal. Most of these knights, however, never reappear in the narrative, giving the tale a similar feel to the *Argonautica* in terms of team up and character focus. It is Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* (1470) that puts a far greater emphasis on unity, fellowship, and the cooperation between knights as well as provides us with an interesting structure in which to present these adventures. The next section will therefore give a brief look into both these elements, starting with how Malory creates unity and a sense of fellowship between the knights and how their cooperation works, before talking about the structure of interlace.

Before delving into the text itself, a quick note on versions. Malory's original manuscript is lost and as such his story now survives in two versions. Caxton's version published in 1485 was the only version known until 1934. Because of this, Caxton's edition is the most known version. In 1934, however, W. F. Oakshott discovered an unknown

manuscript in Winchester College that is now dubbed the Winchester Manuscript. This version, which was used by Eugène Vinaver in his edition of Malory, revealed more about the way Caxton had edited the Malory's original story, adding "chapter divisions and making changes to Malory's English" as well as omitting large parts of the Roman War and abbreviating others (Field xii, "A Question of Texts" 93). The Winchester MS, which does not omits these parts nor abbreviates them, is therefore considered the more complete version of *Le Morte Darthur.* In 2013, Peter Field published a new edition of the Winchester MS with extensive notes and comments. Ever since, Field's work has become the standard edition for scholars. Problematic in the choice of which version to use is the fact that the Caxton version, despite being abbreviated, has been read more and was most certainly the inspiration for T.H. White's story which brought Arthurian legend into the world of fantasy literature. While Field's edition of the Winchester MS is far more extensive, the Winchester MS as a whole has been far less accessible to the public. For the purpose of this thesis, however, the differences between these versions might not be so important seeing as content wise we find the same sense of unity and cooperation between the knights. As such when quoting *Le Morte Darthur,* I will be quoting from Field's edition since it is the most complete, while recognising Caxton's influence on the genre of fantasy.

Elizabeth Archibald's article "Malory's Ideal of Fellowship" explores the exact nature of unity and sense of fellowship that exists between the Knights of the Round Table in Malory's work, a unity that has been noted by other critics such as Peter Field, D.S. Brewer, and Terence McCarthy (Archibald 311). Archibald explains that in Malory, knights identify each other as fellow members of the Round Table. Knights are described "both by themselves and by the narrator, as belonging to a collective body which is not to be identified with Arthur's household, the 'felyshyp' of the Round Table, a title which Malory seems to have invented" (313). During his adventures Lancelot comes upon a damsel who tells him Sir

Melyot the Logrys is wounded. Lancelot replies: "that me repentys … for he is a felow of the Table Rounde, and to his helpe I woll do my power" (Malory 214). Malory's quest for the Holy Grail starts with the line: "At the vigyl of pentecoste, whan all the felyship of the Table Rownde were com unto Camelot" (665) And when Lancelot, Bors and Lionel return to the castle we read: "Than the kynge and the quene were passynge glad of Sir Launcelot and Sir Bors and Sir Lyonel and so was all the felyshyp" (667). When looking at the mentions of 'felyshyp' it is interesting to see that the knights refer to each other as fellows and the whole group as the fellowship of the Round Table, but that they only rarely identify themselves, or are identified by others, as Arthur's knights or knights of Arthur's court (Archibald 313). Instead it is used to indicate "the bond between members of the Round Table" and also "the friendship between individual knights" which is incredibly powerful (Archibald 317). It is important to realise that in Arthurian legend, Arthur is not the hero. His knights perform most of the adventures, the knights form this unity.

The importance of the knights as a fellowship of the Round Table, but also as friends is further stressed in the fact that knights meet each other constantly during their quests even if they set out alone. Book three tells the story of Lancelot who leaves Camelot to "hymself to preve in straunge adventures" (Malory 190). During these adventures he meets with Gaherys, he fights Madore, Mordred, and Gahalantyne, 'thre knyghtes of Arthurs"[6] (199), and he saves a dozen knights among which Ector, Lionel, and Kay who had been taken captive by Tarquin. The Grail quest might be the best example. Since all hundred and fifty knights of Arthur set out to find this holy object, it is inevitable that they run into each other during the quest. Uwayne encounters Galahad. Galahad encounters Melias. Lancelot and Percival travel together, and Lancelot and Galahad spend almost half a year together on a boat. Percival, Galahad, and Bors make the final stretch to the Grail together. Not all meetings are friendly,

[6] Interestingly here 'knights of Arthur' is used instead of referring to these knights as 'fellows of the Round Table'.

however. During many occasions knights who know each other fight against each other, sometimes (nearly) killing each other by accident. This happens usually because one or both of the knights are riding in disguise. They do not recognise each other and engage in combat. Finding out later that they might have hurt a friend results in moments of sadness and despair, and is often avoided by the knights not wishing to know who they were fighting. It is better to not know, than to be confronted with a dying friend.

However, despite the camaraderie that exists between the knights, adventures are still mostly performed alone. In many cases the story forcefully breaks up the groups of knights that have set out together and narrates their individual tales one after the other. In Part V of Book I, Arthur, King Uryence, and Sir Accalon go out hunting. Following an animal they run far ahead of their hunting party and encounter a mysterious ship where ladies bring them to separate rooms. When they next wake up they find themselves in separate locations far from each other and have to have their own adventures to get back together again. The same happens to Uwayn, Marhaus, and Gawain who encounter three ladies by a fountain who tells them "eche one of you muste chose one of us; and whan ye have done so, we woll lede you unto thre hyghewayes, and there eche of you shall chose a way and his damesell with him" (127). Naturally, each knight picks a lady and sets out to complete his own task.

The reasons for knights to go off by themselves can be because people tell them to, like the ladies in the previous examples, but can also be created by more arbitrary circumstances. Lancelot leaves Camelot with Lionel in search of adventure, but is overcome by sleep the moment they leave. While Lancelot is asleep, Lionel sees a knight fight with three others: "Whan Sir Lyonell had sene hym do thus, he thought to assay hym, and made hym redy, and stylly and pryvaly he toke his horse and thought nat for to awake Sir Launcelot" (190). Lionel leaves Lancelot alone because he forgot the man was asleep as he rode away to face this mysterious knight. Iconic is also knights splitting up at a crossroad, as

seen for example during the quest of the Grail. When Melias and Galahad meet up during their search they travel together for a short distance until the following sign appears:

> Now ye knyghtes arraunte which goth to seke knyghtes adventurys, se here too wayes: that one way defendith the that though ne go that way, for he shall nat go oute of the way agayne but if he be a good man and a wrothy knyght. And if though go on the lyffte honde thou shall nat there lyghtly wynne prouesse, for thou shalt in thys way be sone assayde. (684)

Galahad choses to go to the left and so Melias goes to the right. As soon as Galahad has chosen a direction, Melias *has* to go the other way.

What Malory creates with *Le Morte Darthur* is a structure of narrative threads belonging to many different knights who all exist within the larger framework of the book. "Sections of narrative threads", Frank Brandsma explains in *The Interlace Structure of the Third Part of the Prose* Lancelot, "are presented one at the time, enabling the reader to reconstruct the narrative thread of a character by combining and connecting these sections" (35). This technique of interlace creates what can be called a "text-tapestry" consisting of "component-threads, which are visible at given points and invisible the rest of the time" (34). Brandsma denotes three methods of interlace that I will briefly mention since they are also vital to modern fantasy. Firstly, alternation, which is a formal switch in the narrative where one narrative thread is picked up or released. Secondly, combination, where knight A, whose adventures we are following, meets knight B which means knights B's thread is picked up without instigating a formal switch. And lastly, separation, which occurs when two knights who travel together decide to go separate ways, separating their narrative threads from each other (36).

Because of these narrative threads and the way they allow for switches between knights that exist within the same framework, the reader gets the strong sense that the knights are all working together despite the fact that the text states that they are apart. But surprisingly, we still only read about the story of Sir Lancelot, Sir Gawain, Sir Percival, and Sir Galahad, in different (sub)chapters of the book, but never about the tale of Lancelot *and* Galahad or any other combination of knights. We are very aware, as Archibald notes, that "at any given moment there are many knights roaming about in the forest of Logres who may be encountered by the current protagonist at any time" (316), but we are also aware that in the end only Galahad will see the Grail and that Bors will come home alone to tell Galahad's tale after both Galahad and Percival have departed from this world. The structure of interlace that Malory deploys then gives "the illusion of continuity" and of cohesion between the knights even if they are off on vastly different quests (Brandsma 35). In this Arthurian world the book as a whole represents the Knights of the Round Table, and the individual chapters the individual knights who despite their camaraderie still have to work alone to prove that they are good knights and to fulfil, in Galahad's case, their destiny.

To conclude, works created during the classical and medieval period do offer some heroes are brought together to face a problem, or, in Malory's case, set out together or meet each other on the way. Most notably are the *Argonautica* and *Le Morte Darthur*. When looking at these two texts however, we can see that they show two different ways of generating unity within a group based story. The *Argonautica* focus on a singular journey that keeps its adventurers together in one location. The journey has a clear focus and does not deviate from its set out goal. While the narrative is set up to present a multitude of heroes, it sets out to prove that Jason is the best. As a hero he shows that he is capable of defeating monsters, and as leader of the Argo he shows that he is capable of leading other heroes who have already performed (or will perform) remarkable feats, other heroes who until now had

only functioned as solo actors. Much like the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the *Argonautica* puts its focus on one individual who is surrounded by many impressive other heroes. The individual carries the group further, he is the most important despite the group. In a similar fashion, while the Knights of the Round Table identify each other as friends and comrades, there is always one that carries the focus. When knights travel in a group, the narrative makes sure to split them up as if the knight is hampered by the group and despite the friendships there are always a few things that keep being reaffirmed. There is always one knight the best, that knight is usually Lancelot, at least before Galahad comes along, and teamwork is not the knights' strong suit. In these tales, the individual will always outshine the group.

# Chapter 2 - Fantasy Theory, Tolkien, and Cooperative Heroism

The stories of Greek heroes and medieval knights discussed in the previous chapter are not considered to belong to the genre of fantasy. The reason for this is simple: the modern genre of fantasy did not yet exist. Stories that appeared in classical times and in the Middle Ages, be it stories of the heroes described earlier, saints lives, or the countless tales written about famous kings such as Alexander the Great and Charlemagne, all of them describe elements that would now be attributed as belonging to the genre of fantasy. In the eighteenth century, however, these fantasy elements were suddenly considered superstitious, "to be tolerated only if supported by evidence of actual belief or if supported by didactic or moral purpose" as Gary Wolfe explains in his article "Fantasy from Dryden to Dunsany" published as part of *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*. While the eighteenth century was marked by discussions on fancy versus imagination, as instigated by Coleridge in *Biographia Literaria* (1817), and proved to be an important period in the development of fantasy literature, the fantastic, at the same time, was considered "inappropriate for an age of science and morality, and [as such] the values of realism came to dominate literary discourse" (11). I would argue that the genre of fantasy is still suffering from this domination of realism that continues to have a firm hold over the field of contemporary literary studies.[7] Students of literature have, George Landow also argues, "devoted themselves largely to the Great Tradition while neglecting that stream which runs from the German *Märchen* through Carlyle, MacDonald, Carroll, Meredith, and Morris to Lewis, Lindsay, and Tolkien" (106).

This line that runs from German *Märchen* to Tolkien has been extensively explored by Wolfe and other authors in *The Cambridge Companion.* Wolfe notes that it is possible to trace

[7] While the Utrecht University offers courses on classical mythology, medieval tales, and Tolkien, there are no courses where the fantasy genre and its critical approaches are addressed. Fantasy literature is also often not considered as viable literature to discuss in papers in other courses.

particular elements of the fantasy genre to three important literary traditions: the imaginary 'private histories' such as Daniel Defoe's *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719), the increasing popularity of Gothic fiction such as Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho: A Romance* (1794), and the "renewal of interest in folk and fairy tales, leading to the literary or 'art' fairy tale (12). This last one is the most interesting for this discussion because it influenced authors such as George MacDonald (*Phantastes: A Fairie Romance for Men and Women* 1858), Lewis Caroll, and other writers in the Victorian period to start writing children's literature based on fairy tales. MacDonald was especially popular in this field and is widely regarded as a pioneer of fantasy literature. Both Lewis and Tolkien have been heavily influenced by this author.

Another important name that appears on every list when talking about pioneers of the genre is William Morris (1834-96), who is often placed at the beginning of modern fantasy literature. His most significant contribution, so argues Wolfe, "involved his efforts, late in his career, to revive the medieval romance through stories of his own invention, set in imagined psuedo-medieval fantasy environments and written in such archly contrived antique diction as to make them a challenge for modern readers" (16) Morris' literary works, such as *The Wood Beyond the World* (1894) and *The Well at the World's End* (1896), would be the start of what would become the modern genre of fantasy.

Tolkien, Lewis, but also authors such as H.P. Lovecraft were the generation of children that grew up with the works of MacDonald, Caroll, and Morris and as such

> were among the direct heirs of the traditions, conventions and ideas about fantasy that evolved during this most self-consciously rationalistic literary eras, and from these materials they arguably forged the lineaments of the contemporary genre. (James 19)

The importance of Morris' work for Tolkien was not just the way Morris generated the medieval environments that would also form the basis for *The Lord of the Rings*, but also in the fact that Morris made translations of Icelandic sagas that had a profound impact on Tolkien's own research interests later in his life (13). That fairy tales were important for the now famous English writer is clear from his, perhaps most influential, essay "On Fairy-Stories", first published in 1947, in which Tolkien provides a discussion of fairy-tales and fantasy literature that has gone unchallenged since its publication.

The critical study of fantasy literature owes much to this one article, if only because it forms the basis of most of the terminology that is still used today in contemporary fantasy criticism. Tolkien was the first to use the term Secondary World, the world in which the fantasy exists, in opposition to the Primary World, the world the reader resides in. To make what is happening in the Secondary World believable, he argued, the writer needs to command Secondary Belief which "will probably require labour and thought, and will certainly demand a special skill" but when it is attempted and when it is "in any degree accomplished then we have a rare achievement of Art: indeed narrative art, story making in its primary and most potent mode" (Tolkien "On Fairy-Stories" 140). What Tolkien stresses throughout the entirety of his article is the profound connection that fantasy has to the real world while at the same time standing separate from it. He notes that "Fantasy is made out of the Primary World, but a good craftsman loves his material, and has a knowledge and feeling for clay, stone and wood which only the art of making can give" (147). But not only is fantasy built out of elements of the primary world, it also serves, according to Tolkien, to bring us Recovery. This term, described as the "regaining of a clear view" (146), implies that after reading a good work of fantasy our own eyes have been cleansed. We can now look upon the Primary World more clearly and reflect upon it. In this way "Fantasy can thus be explained as a sudden glimpse of the underlying reality or truth" (155). He placed similar emphasis on the

way fantasy literature could get access to important things in life in his other highly influential article “Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics” (1936) in which he explained that “through the fantastic events of [Beowulf] … the poet could express real truths about courage, and loyalty, and duty” (James 69). To Tolkien then, writing and reading of fantasy was a much more effective way to get closer to the important things in life.

While I have already briefly touched upon this point in the introduction of this thesis, the idea that fantasy explores and enhances our experience of the primary world, providing new insights, should be emphasised once more. It is a statement that many critics in the field of contemporary fantasy studies after Tolkien have repeated. In his article “Fantasy Fiction and Related Genres” (1986), Dieter Petzold argues that fantasy fiction is a result of two different categories or, as he calls it, modes: the desiderative and the applicative mode. The desiderative mode is one of the four ways for a fantastic work to relate to reality, in this case fantasy fiction presents a secondary world that is better than the primary world. It provides “an imaginary escape from the dreary constraints of reality” (17). But as he continues to the applicative mode he states:

> Important though the element of wish-fulfilling escapism may be for fairy tales and ff [fantasy fiction], most texts of this kind offer more than just imaginary gratification of desires. Their secondary worlds may look radically different from everyday reality, but they are governed by rules or embody principles that (they implicitly claim) apply to reality as well. Such texts are informed by the *applicative* mode, which implies some kind of correspondence between the primary and the secondary world. … Their applicability rests in their expressing certain basic human experiences through the very structure of the narrative and the constellation of characters. (18)

Fantasy fiction "may (and often does) expand its scope to take up social, political, philosophical, and religious themes as well" (19). This argument is echoed and continued in Brian Attebery's essay "Fantasy as Mode, Genre, Formula" (1992) where he states:

> Fantastic literature is full of 'loaded' images, concrete emblems of problematic or valuable psychological and social phenomena. The combination of such images into a narrative order is an attempt to achieve iconic representation, so that the narrative can, like the city map, give us new insights into the phenomena it makes reference to. (299)

Of course, this reflection upon the primary world is not solely reserved for the fantasy genre. Hakemulder writes in his research on literature and ethical awareness, that "participating in the experiences of literary characters … gives us more food for reflection than our own experiences" (30). He argues that it is through literature that authors have always been able to criticise what they considered to be undesirable developments in the society they were a part of. "By 'making things strange,' literature produces an intense and immediate experience of the world" (31). No genre, however, is as good in making things strange as fantasy. As a genre that is known for creating entirely new worlds, it is continuously occupied with making the familiar strange, and the strange familiar (Swinfen 234). Since the genre is occupied with the marvellous, it is in a unique position to comment upon the primary world.

> The principle advantage for the writer of fantasy is that it engenders an extraordinarily enhanced perception of the nature of the primary world, which is so often only imperfectly grasped until a shock is given to the senses by the introduction of the marvelous. … modern fantasy … is a serious form of the modern novel, often characterized by notable literary merit, and concerned both with heightened awareness

> of the complex nature of primary reality and with the exploration beyond empirical experience into the transcendent reality, embodied in imaginative and spiritual other world. (Ibid.)

If writers of fantasy engage with issues that are at play in the primary world, then readers of fantasy can, through reading these works of fantasy literature, be made aware of these social issues. I will repeat Keyes: "the choice of which archetypes a society references in its literature reveals that society's values" (84). She offers the following example: "Religious belief in resurrection has become less popular in the twentieth and current centuries and there is a concurrent drop in the overt presence of such death and rebirth scenes in literature" (97). If we should assume this relation to be true, it should be possible to gauge certain values that are of importance to the author and thus are at play in society from a work of fantasy. If a work is, subsequently, a well-read work, the text must have contained something that struck a chord with its many readers. The explored values must have been values that readers agreed with, were engaged by, or were interested in. And in a context of an independent secondary world that is so highly aware of the complex nature of primary reality *new* sets of values may more easily be presented (Swinfen 93).

This, too, counts for the values and ideals that are represented in heroes in fantasy. Northrop Frye notes in "The Mythos of Summer: Romance" (1957):

> In every age the ruling social or intellectual class tends to project its ideals in some form of romance, where the virtuous heroes and beautiful heroines represent the ideals and the villains the threats to their ascendancy. This is the general character of chivalric romance in the Middle Ages, aristocratic romance in the Renaissance,

> bourgeois romance since the eighteenth century, and revolutionary romance in contemporary Russia. (108)

Heroes in fantasy are the logical follow up, being almost a direct successor of the epic heroes and the medieval knights (Swinfen 230). As such, heroes in fantasy logically also tend to represent ideals that the society from which they originate values. The reader has to be able to look up to the hero, regardless of the task the hero is performing. In this way, the definition of a hero is ever shifting because it has to stay relevant for the current time (Porter 3). What I am attempting to argue in the following sections is that Tolkien created a new of heroism based on the positive cooperation between heroes that fitted the time he came from, one that would be picked up by fantasy writers that followed him.

In many ways, *The Lord of the Rings* is a direct "realization of the principles [Tolkien] laid down in 'On Fairy-Stories'" (James 66). What "On Fairy-Stories" accomplishes in academic form, *The Lord of the Rings*[8] provides in the form of fiction. In his work, Tolkien created such strong Secondary Belief by providing copious amounts of historical and cultural background, that writing about a secondary world that existed entirely separate from the primary world would become the standard in fantasy fiction to follow[9]. This stands in opposition to earlier fictions such as portal fictions in which a secondary world is reached by going through a portal in the primary world. Middle-Earth has become such a standard that it is difficult for the modern reader to imagine opening a fantasy novel and not encountering a map of a new world on the first page, ready to be explored by yet unknown characters. In a way, as Edward James notes, "'LOTR marked the end of apology.' After 1955, fantasy writers no longer had to explain away their worlds by framing them as dreams, or travellers'

[8] In future citations referred to as LOTR.
[9] Tolkien did always state that Middle-Earth was a prehistoric earth, but it is widely considered to have no direct connection to this world.

tales, or by providing them within any fictional link to our own world at all" (65). Among the many things that LOTR achieved with its publication, the way it normalised fantasy and brought it into the public, this might be one of the most important things. Regardless whether LOTR is the best fantasy novel or not, with

> the publication and popular acceptance of Tolkien's version of the fantastic, a new coherence was given to the genre. … Tolkien is the most typical, not because of the imaginative scope and commitment with which he invested his tale, but also, and chiefly, because of the immense popularity that resulted. When *The Lord of the Rings* appeared, we had a core around which to group a number of storytellers who had hitherto been simply, as Northrop Frye suggests, 'other writers' belonging to no identified category of tradition. (Attebery 306)

LOTR has become such a standard that new works of fantasy are often classified as either resembling Tolkien or, on the other hand, trying to break away from Tolkien. Book reviews are often comparing the two both in structure, characters, secondary world, and plot, and well known authors that have had a similar impact on the fantasy genre, such as Tad Williams, are aptly named Tolkien's Heirs.

Because Tolkien has had such a profound impact on the world of fantasy, he and Lewis, whose works are almost of equal importance, are often considered the (grand)fathers of modern fantasy as we now know it. In a similar fashion, Tolkien scholarship has formed, and still forms, a major part of contemporary criticism of fantasy literature. As noted before, the field of Tolkien studies is enormous with new studies published every year. Within this field there is an area reserved for the study of the different heroes that Tolkien uses in his novels. Ever since LOTR grew in popularity, certainly after its success in the USA in the 60s,

there has been an ongoing discussion about Tolkien's heroes. Among all the articles that discuss this topic, Honegger's previously mentioned article stands at the end of a long discussion that undoubtedly started with Verlyn Flieger's persuasive paper titled 'Frodo and Aragorn: The Concept of the Hero'. In it "Flieger gives us an illuminating discussion of the functional interconnectedness and complementariness of the two rather dissimilar hero-figures of Aragorn (the epic/romance her) and Frodo (the everyday, low-mimetic hero)" (Honegger 1).

We need to make a quick side step to Northrop Frye, who has been mentioned already by Attebery and is extensively used by Flieger and Honegger. Frye (1912-1991) was a literary critic and theorist, who is now often used in fantasy studies because of his theories on the romance[10] and his restructuring of heroic archetypes. His most important work is undoubtedly the *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (1957) in which he presented his new literary theory to the public. The work is generally considered one of the most important works of literary theory of the twentieth century. In his first essay "Historical Criticism: Theory of Modes", Frye argues that fictions should be classified not morally, but "by the hero's power of action, which may be greater than ours, less, or roughly the same" (33). He denotes five modes of narrative in which the hero displays a different 'power of action,' creating a different line up for heroes than the ones we have seen described in the previous chap[11]ter. These five modes are as follows: (1) the *mythic* mode, in which the hero is both superior to other men and the environment. This hero is a divine being, a god or a demigod. Stories about him are myths. (2) The hero of *romance,* who is only in degree superior to other man and to his environment. His tales are legends or folktales taking place in a world where such things as enchanted weapons and monsters are natural to him. (3) The hero of the *high mimetic* mode. Superior in degree to

[10] His essay "The Mythos of Summer: Romance" has been included in Sandner's critical reader of fantasy literature.
[11] Frye's modes are not to be confused with Petzold's modes which refer to ways a secondary world can relate to reality.

other men but not to his natural environment, this hero rules over others as a leader. His tales are epics and tragedies in which he might rule over others but is still subject to social criticism and the laws of nature. (4) On the other hand, the hero of the *low mimetic* mode does not stand above other man or his environment. This hero is one of us, akin to the reader himself. His tales are comedies or realistic fiction in which the reader expects a sense of probability that he can find in his own experiences. (5) Lastly, the ironic mode in which the hero stands below the reader and below his environment. His tales are tales of frustration, and/or absurdity (33-34). Frye makes no mention of the anti-hero that has gained much popularity in recent years. We could assume the anti-hero can fall within these previously mentioned categories depending on his power of action.

Important to his discussion is the use of the word mimetic. Frye's use of the word - and as such my use of the word mimetic throughout the rest of this thesis - always refers to either the high or low mimetic mode in which high and low are "no connotations of comparative value, but are purely diagrammatic" (34). The terms are part of a scale. The lower down this scale of modes the less divine and the more human-like the protagonist of the story becomes. This scale also seems to denote style. The high mimetic mode is reserved for epics and tragedies, whereas the low-mimetic mode and ironic mode are used for comedies.[12] Whereas these modes seem inherently separate from each other Frye states that

> Once we have learned to distinguish the modes, however, we must then learn to recombine them. For while one mode constitutes the underlying tonality of a work of fiction, any or all of the other four may be simultaneously present. Much of our sense of the subtlety of great literature comes from this modal counter point. (50)

[12] Much like the concept called "Virgil's Wheel' that was popular in the Middle Ages, where each genre had its specific style and register. Epic was to be written in high style, didactic work in middle style, and pastoral in plain style (Boyle 6)

In a sense, this is exactly what, both Flieger and Honegger argue, makes Tolkien's work so great. The deployment of different heroic modes makes reading LOTR a distinct experience. Flieger notes:

> In *The Lord of the Rings* Tolkien has written a medieval story and given it both kinds of hero, the extraordinary man to give the epic sweep of great events, and the common man who has the immediate, poignant appeal of someone with whom the reader can identify. Aragorn is a traditional epic/romance hero who combines Northrop Frye's romance and high mimetic modes. He is above the common herd. We expect him to be equal to any situation. We are not like him and we know it. We admire him, but we do not identify with him. Frodo, on the other hand, is a fairy-tale hero. He is a little man, both literally and figuratively, and we recognize ourselves in him. He is utterly ordinary and this is his great value. He has the characteristics also of Frye's low mimetic hero, the hero of realistic fiction. … He is a low mimetic hero thrown by circumstances not of his making into high mimetic action. (124)

In Flieger's case, she thus argues that LOTR deploys two different kinds of heroes: one in Frodo and one in Aragorn. To her, these two characters form the centre of Tolkien's story. This is important to note because of the perpetual discussion that is going on about how we should read Tolkien in terms of heroic figures. Many critics, and I would assume many readers, have noticed "that Tolkien does not present us with a single, clearly identifiable hero in *The Lord of the Rings*. The full implicates of this seemingly banal observation become visibly only if one realises that *The Lord of the Rings* could be easily (re-)written as the tale of

the epic hero Aragorn" (Honegger 1). By combining the two narrative strands[13] of Frodo and Aragorn, Tolkien does not only create a more complex work, he also generated a more interesting experience for the reader and part of the LOTR's appeal might come from the fact that the story is written in this fashion. Flieger's discussion on the topic of heroes was not the first one to appear, but it is certainly one of the most influential texts about Tolkien's heroes, remaining unchallenged for almost two decades. George Clark challenged it by stating that Sam was the true hero in his article "J.R.R. Tolkien and the True Hero", turning away from Frodo and Aragorn all together in favour of focusing on who really made sure the quest for the Ring was brought to a good conclusion. Honegger works with both of these articles, but argues for a distinct, third approach: "there has been no one who, to my knowledge, has argued in favour of analysing the epic as a tale of 'cooperative heroism' - a new form of heroism that finds its supreme expression in the constitution of the Fellowship of the Ring" (2)

By using the term 'cooperative heroism', Honegger officially moves away from discussion pertaining only one single hero. His definition of the term is the following:

> I use the term 'cooperative heroism' with a positive meaning, denoting, on the one hand, the cooperation among different protagonists in order to achieve a common goal. On the other, the term also referrers to the perceived interconnectedness of individual heroic actions within the larger framework of Providence, as seen in *The Lord of the Rings*. (2)

In Honegger's view all nine characters that form the Fellowship are of equal importance for the completion of the story. Only because of this cooperation, regardless whether the

[13] Similarly to the medieval idea of interlace, which I will return to later.

characters' actions were coordinated or coincidental, can the LOTR eventually reach a satisfying and happy ending. This new form of heroism, as it emergences in LOTR, depends on a created tension between old heroic values that Tolkien gleaned from texts such as *Beowulf*, the *Battle of Maldon*, and the *Kalevala*, and new values that he introduced himself, much like the tension between Aragorn, the hero of the high mimetic mode, and Frodo, the hero of the low mimetic mode, that Flieger explores.

The Fellowship finds its strengths in having these two forms. Tolkien presents the reader with a hierarchical group structure. Gandalf commands respect from Aragorn, he is Tolkien's mythic hero and stands above all of the Fellowship in both wisdom and power. Aragorn, Boromir, Legolas and Gimli, all classify as heroes that fit within the high mimetic mode, though Aragorn takes precedence over all, being heir to the throne of Gondor. The hobbits, then, are representatives of the low mimetic mode, they are characters "with whom modern readers can identify" (4). They originate from a society that is post-heroic, preferring a life of peace over a life of adventure, and they feel ill at ease in the world of high-mimetic adventure that they arrive in when they leave the Shire. What is important here is that in this group of four, the relationship is, Honegger stresses,

> characterized not so much by hierarchy, but by friendship and love. On the one hand we have the peer-group friendship between Merry, Pippin and Frodo, who all belong to the Shire gentry and, on the other hand, a somewhat less egalitarian relationship defined by love and affection between Frodo and Sam. (Ibid.)

While the hierarchical structure exists within the Fellowship, Gandalf being the clear leader and Aragorn the clear second in command, sooner rather than later the emphasis on love, loyalty, and friendship moves past this hierarchical structure.

There is no oath that binds the Fellowship. Elrond, in his final words, says:

> The others go with him [Frodo] as free companions, to help him on his way. You may tarry, or come back, or turn aside into other paths, as chance allows. The further you go, the less easy will it be to withdraw; yet no oath or bond is laid on you to go further than you will. For you do not yet know the strength of your hearts, and you cannot foresee what each may meet upon the road. (LOTR 298)

The fact that the Fellowship sets out without having made an oath or promise might not seem significant for modern readers, but it is when considering it in the light of older texts. Heroic loyalty is typically expressed by oaths, such as Gawain's oath at the beginning of the Quest of the Grail in *Le Morte Darthur* which demands of him that he spends one year and one day searching for the Holy Grail and that will not return to Camelot unless he has found it. It also instigates all the other hundred and fifty knights to take the same oath. Oaths cannot be broken without bringing shame upon the oath-breaker. By rejecting the formula of taking an oath or making a promise at the beginning of a quest, Tolkien effectively opens the way for a new form of heroism to emerge (Honegger 5). A form based on love and affection. The characters that make up the Fellowship join the group voluntarily, and it are the bonds that grow between them over time because of hardship that they experienced together that makes the Fellowship strong and unique in comparison to the groups in older texts.

This bond becomes especially clear in the last chapter of *The Fellowship of the Ring* aptly titled "The Breaking of the Fellowship." The team stands at a crossroad and Aragorn remarks: "What shall now become of our Company that has travelled so far in fellowship? Shall we turn west with Boromir and go to the wars of Gondor; or turn east to Fear and Shadow; or shall we break our fellowship and go this way and that as each may choose?"

(LOTR 416). While each of the members have their own ideas, Aragorn especially feels the need to go to Minis Tirith as were his original plans, they also cannot find it in their hearts to leave Frodo. Gimli states:

> We, of course, were only sent to help the Bearer along the road, to go no further than we wished, and none of us is under any oath or command to seek Mount Doom. Hard was my parting from Lothlórien. Yet I have come so far, and I say this: now we have reached the last choice, it is clear to me that I cannot leave Frodo. I would choose Minas Tirith, but if he does not, then I follow him. (423)[14]

Aragorn replies: "It would indeed be a betrayal, if we all left him" (Ibid.). The affection the Fellowship feels for Frodo makes it so that if they would leave him alone it would feel like a betrayal towards their friend. Oaths can maybe be broken, but this feeling of affection that exists between the members makes the potential option of going separate ways, an option that was such a standard in *Le Morte Darthur*, one of the most crucial and difficult decisions of the team as a whole.

Despite their later separation, however, the team does not forget each other nor do they forget the goal they set out to complete. While each hero separately is experiencing their own trials, transformations and moments of growth, they all remain involved in the primary quest: to destroy the One Ring (Petty 268). Every action that a character of the Fellowship takes is informed by the fact that they are still, in their minds, part of the Fellowship of the Ring. This becomes extremely clear in chapter nine "The Last Debate" in *The Return of the King* where Gandalf counsels the people in Minas Tirith to march out to meet Sauron. Not to

[14] Interesting here too is the repetition that there is no oath that binds the group together.

defeat him, but to "give the Ring-bearer his only chance, frail though it be" to get to Mount Doom (LOTR 914).

What is interesting, and not explored in Honegger's article, is the way that the narrative structure of the LOTR facilitates this cooperative heroism. Traditionally what we see with Arthurian tales is that the knights, individuals with their own stories, all gather together at Arthur's court and then set off on separate journeys. While the narrative structure of interlace creates an illusion of cooperation by alternating between the different knights that are on a quest, the narrative threads will always separate in order for the knights to achieve their goal by themselves. This structure of diverging and converging story lines might have been taken over by Tolkien to some extent, but is certainly deployed different.

In Tolkien, we start with a single narrative thread that belongs to a single character. This individual thread slowly converges with others reminiscent of the combination structure seen in Malory in which two knights team up. The difference here is that the threads that converge do not diverge for a long time. We learn about Frodo, then Sam, then Merry and Pippin, then Strider. It is not until Rivendell that we are introduced to the idea of the Fellowship, but by then the reader is already aware of the bonds between the hobbits themselves and between the hobbits and Aragorn, who they now consider a friend evident from Frodo's reaction when he hears that Aragorn is joining him on the quest to destroy the Ring. Once together, the Fellowship spends a considerable amount of time with each other and faces challenges together that depend on the cooperation of the team to succeed. When the narrative threads eventually separate at the end of book one, it is a significant moment. The fact that the chapter is titled "The Breaking of the Fellowship" prepares the reader that a break is coming, but while reading this chapter the reader learns that bonds have formed between that team that are based on love, loyalty, and affection and that these bonds are

stronger than any oath. Throughout the rest of the novel we are constantly reminded that all these characters still fight for the same goal, despite their location.

Once the Fellowship is broken, Tolkien starts deploying a narrative structure more akin to the structure that we saw before in Malory. Each subsequent book alternates between, what we could call, Team Aragorn and Team Frodo. Especially within the sections describing Aragorn and the rest of the Fellowship we see a lot of alternation, combination and separation between the narrative threads of the members of the Fellowship. The sense of unity is created by alternating while giving clues to the locations of other characters. After the reader has just read a chapter about Pippin and we make a formal switch to Merry, the chapter starts as follows: “And even as Pippin stood at the Great Gate of the City and saw the Prince of Dol Amroth ride in with his banners, the King of Rohan came down out of the hills” (LOTR 822). But unity between the group is also formed in the way characters think back to each other: “[Pippin] wondered where Frodo was, and if he was already in Mordor, or if he was dead; and he did not know that Frodo far away looked on that same moon as it set beyond Gondor ere the coming of the day" (778). We keep being reminded that these characters started out together and are facing a threat together despite being apart.

What all of this has been trying to show is that Tolkien deploys a form of cooperative heroism not seen before in literature. While cooperation between heroes was present in earlier texts, the power of the individual usually triumphed over the power of the group. Fantasy literature had also featured primarily solo heroes. Morris’ Ralph from *The Well at the World’s End,* Howard’s Conan the Barbarian who is still immensely popular, are only a few examples. The heroism that is found within LOTR is not only dependent on the group, it is simultaneously based on new values. Honegger notes:

> Ironically, it is these low mimetic 'little people' who constitute the focus of the heroic endeavours of the rest of the Fellowship and it is the low mimetic heroism of Frodo and Sam that carries the day and, ultimately, endows all other acts of bravery and high mimetic heroism with meaning. (4)

Tolkien created a world in which characters that could belong to epics such as Aragorn could certainly have thrived by themselves. A "Chanson d'Elessar", which Elizabeth Stephen came close in describing in *Hobbit to Hero* (2012), would have been a great story. But Tolkien uses the high mimetic world in combination with low mimetic characters to present us with a dialectic between these two forms of mimesis. The courage of the little man saves the day, as Honegger says, but, I would argue, also the courage of the group as a whole. All the actions the characters take fall within a greater framework that is the destruction of the Ring. And all actions were needed. The courage of the Fellowship is not founded on an oath or a promise or on individual desires. It comes from a new type of heroism founded on these ideals of affection that were unknown to the high mimetic world. In this way, Tolkien perfectly presents a world in which this new heroism collides with the heroism found in older traditions. The former proves to be an "additional dimension and hallow[s] the valiant deeds of the latter" (8).

So what does all of this mean? If Tolkien professed a new type of heroism in his novel based on the love and affection that exists between members of a group, a form which had not been done so profoundly in a text before, we can wonder what this implies. Earlier I discussed how fantasy literature was engaged with the issues that are at play in the society in which the novel was written. I also argued that we, by reading these texts, could get an insight in some of these issues or ideas. In his article on Tolkien, James notes: "[Tolkien] once said that in the trenches of the First World War he saw far more courage from the ordinary soldiers than he

did from the officers" (68). Honegger echoed this statement in some way during his lecture in Leiden where he stated that he believes the camaraderie that existed between the soldiers in the trenches to be partly responsible for the way Tolkien devised the Fellowship in the LOTR. The state of society reflects how we define our stories and what ideals we wish to see in our heroes. Tolkien, who had experienced the horrors of the First World War and had observed that one man could no longer face the world alone, chose to define the new hero as a group of heroes. Neither Frodo, Sam, Aragorn, nor any other member of the Fellowship could have completed this quest by themselves. By creating them as a team based on the same loyalty, love and affection that soldiers would have experienced, Tolkien created a new form of heroism. This cooperative heroism found resonance in the world and has not left it since.

How cooperative heroism found resonance is something that I will try to address in the following three chapters in which will discuss three modern fantasy series written after Tolkien. Much of Tolkien's ways of writing fantasy novels has been taken over by fantasy writers after him and, I will argue, cooperative heroism is no exception.

# Chapter 3 - Raymond Feist′s *The Riftwar Saga*

The following three chapters will detail the analyses of three popular fantasy series that were written after Tolkien starting with the first trilogy in the one of the longest running modern high fantasy series of this age; Raymond Feist's *The Riftwar Saga*. This trilogy is part of the larger *The Riftwar Cycle*, a series of thirty books that are divided up in 10 mini-series or sagas. All these books tell stories that take place on the same two worlds: Midkemia and Kelewan. Alongside the books, Feist's world has generated two Roleplaying Games for PC published by Midkemia Press. The books have been translated in numerous languages and have sold over 20 million copies worldwide. For the purpose of this thesis the only series of books that will be analysed is *The Riftwar Saga*. This trilogy includes *Magician*[15] (1982), *Silverthorn* (1985), and *A Darkness at Sethanon*[16] (1986).

Since these fantasy series are so long it is not viable, and rather impossible, to provide a short summary in the main body of this thesis itself. As such, for those who might not have read *The Riftwar Saga* or any of the other fantasy series that I am going to discuss, or for those that just wish to be reminded of the basic plot of the three books and its characters can turn to the Appendix 1, which will describe the basic story of Feist's trilogy and will give a list of important names that will be used in the analysis below.

What becomes immediately clear upon reading *The Riftwar Saga* is that it does not have same clear quest structure as the *Lord of the Rings* nor does it have the same clear goal.

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[15] *Magician* saw a couple of re-releases throughout its days. The first one in 1986 when *Magician* was republished in the USA in two parts; *Magician: Apprentice* and *Magician: Master*. And a second time in 1992 when Feist released the "Author's Preferred Edition" which was a re-written version of the book with tweaks and added material that Feist had cut from his initial first edition. Considering that I am conducting a diachronic analysis I will not use either of these republished editions, but stick to the original version released in 1982.

[16] Referred to as *Sethanon* in further citations.

The Kingdom of Isles located on Midkemia, while peaceful at the start of *Magician*, is fighting to defend itself against multiple invaders that come from different dimensions. There is no magic ring to be destroyed or artefact to be found that will solve the crisis that the Kingdom finds itself in. The Lifestone found in *Sethanon* is the only item that can be said to carry such power as by destroying it, it becomes impossible to bring the Valheru back to Midkemia. However, this item is introduced so late in the series that it never becomes a classic quest item. Hardly anyone knows of its existence or what it really does, and those who do know exactly where it is. While Pug and Macros have difficulties destroying the item, they do carry enough power in themselves and do not need a lot of help. The Lifestone, thus, feels more like an added afterthought than an item that needs to be quested for.

Midkemia's position of reaction against invading enemies — first the Tsurani and then the armies of Murmandamus and the Valheru — instead of action is important, not only for the plot but also for the formation of 'good' characters to stand opposed to the 'bad'. Because the people of Midkemia are being attacked by unknown invaders twice in a relatively short period of time, there is no period of calmness to form a plan of attack. In many ways it feels similar to the sudden rush in which Frodo has to leave the Shire. His home is suddenly in danger and he teams up with Sam, Merry, and Pippin to leave the place behind. Pursued by enemies, he flees to Rivendell. The team-up with Strider comes from necessity, they need a guide to get to the elves and Gandalf has not shown up. Once in Rivendell, however, a clear goal is established. In *The Riftwar Saga*, the initial team-up feels the same. During the beginning of the invasions both the Tsurani and Murmandamus hold all the power. Characters band together out of necessity and form group based on hasty decisions and a synergy of required abilities. We see this in the hasty group that sets out for Krondor and Rillanon, the capital, in the beginning of *Magician*. Lord Borric sets out with his youngest son Arutha, his Huntmaster Martin, his magician Kulgan, and a dozen of guards, to see if he can ask the King

for more forces. The only reason Pug and Tomas, at this point not older than thirteen, are coming along is because they want to see adventure and Kulgan is nice enough to allow them.

> Pug and Tomas looked excited. Kulgan knew they both wanted to come along. To visit Krondor would be to greatest adventure of their young lives. …
> "Please, Kulgan, may I come too?"
> Kulgan feigned surprise. "You come? I never thought of that." He paused for a moment, while the suspense built. "Well … I guess it would be all right." (*Magician* 133).

It is not until it becomes clear that the war is going to take longer than a year that we see the set-up of actual war councils that start to make long term plans. The reactionary position becomes one of action.

The ultimate goal that the people of Midkemia wish to achieve is simple: fend off the attackers and bring peace back to the land. It is no coincidence that Feist, at the end of the summary he provides at the start of the second and third book, writes: "Peace returned to the Kingdom of the Isles, for almost a year…" (*Silverthorn* 15, *Sethanon* 19). Characters achieve this peace by fighting, be it overt or covert, but unlike the battles fought in *Lord of the Rings* where various members of the Fellowship fend off Sauron's forces with the hope that Frodo will be able to destroy the Ring and thus end the battle, most people in Feist's stories endure the sieges without having any idea of how to stop this invasion.

Each novel also has its own contained goal as well; in *Magician* the characters wish to drive the Tsurani away from their world, *Silverthorn* has Arutha search for the plant that can save his fiancée, and *Sethanon* narrates how the characters wish to defeat Murmandamus. In the end, however, the reader realises that everything lead up to one goal set out by Macros

since the beginning of *Magician*: to stop the Valheru from returning. Macros functions here much like Gandalf in *The Hobbit*. Mostly absent from the story except for key moments, Macros plans twenty steps ahead of everyone and seems to be aware of everything that is going on. He gave Kulgan his staff with the knowledge that the man would bring it to the final battle. He let Pug be taken by the Tsurani so that the boy could learn the Greater Path of magic, and he urged Tomas to raise up arms against the Tsurani during the peace treaty. In the last novel, it was Macros who knew where the Lifestone was located and how to shut it down and stop the Valheru's return, all to bring the world back to its original peaceful state.

Feist presents the reader with many characters that step-up to defend the people of Midkemia. As with almost all fantasy novels, the cast is rather extensive. Yet while there are many characters, we can see that there are five major story-lines for the reader to follow: those of Pug, Tomas, Arutha conDion, Martin Longbow, and Jimmy the Hand. At all times at least two of these characters are present at every key event that transpires in the series. The many other individuals that get attention such as Amos Trask, Prince/King Lyam, Kasumi of the Tsurani, all help to achieve the same ultimate goal, but get significantly less narrative time dedicated to them. Their roles in the story are similar to those of, for example, Eomer or Faramir in *Lord of the Rings*. They provide help to certain characters and the reader learns about their insights and their views on certain situations, but not more than that. We do not follow their journey.

To achieve this overarching goal of peace, the five previously named characters travel together and apart, performing and completing various objectives and/or duties. The series starts out with Pug, but his narrative thread soon combines with that of Tomas, Arutha, and Martin, who all start out together in Crydee. They are part of the initial team that sets out to find help against the Tsurani. Soon enough, however, the narrative threads of the characters separate. The mines take Tomas, the Tsurani take Pug, Arutha and Martin get stuck in the

Siege of Crydee. It will take a very long time for Pug, Tomas, Arutha, and Martin to all come together again in one location. But much like the *Lord of the Rings*, narrative threads do combine again during key events in the series. This set-up and this divergence and convergence of narrative threads is extremely similar to the interlaced structure of the *Lord of the Rings*. We start with Frodo, who allows us to meet the other hobbits who live together. But during the "Breaking of the Fellowship", these threads diverge. Merry and Pippin are taken from the Fellowship during their fight on Amon Hen, spend a lot of time away from the group with the ends, but eventually their actions and bring them back to Gandalf and later on Aragorn, Gimli, and Legolas, only to be separated again after the destruction of Ortanc and the Siege of Helmsdeep. Merry stays in Rohan with Aragorn and the rest, Pippin goes with Gandalf to Minas Tirith.

*The Riftwar Saga* has its own key events. After being split from the group for a long time Tomas meets Martin again in the elven capital Elvandar where the Huntsman stops the, now grown, man from killing innocent slaves. This moment is pivotal for Tomas because it shows off his battle with the Valheru soul inside of him. He then meets Pug again, after so many years, on the final battlefield against the Tsurani, a key moment in *Magician*.

> "Are you blind, boy? Can't you recognize your own boyhood company?"
>
> Tomas looked at Pug as the exhausted magician moved close. "Pug?" he said softly.
>
> Then he reached out and embraced his once lost foster brother. "Pug!"
>
> They stood together quietly, amid the clamour of armies on the move, both with tears on their faces. (*Magician* 772)

Arutha met Jimmy in the first novel, left him in Krondor, but meets him again in the second novel when the boy saves his life and becomes Arutha's Squire, an extremely important

moment in Jimmy's life. He develops the irritating habit of following Arutha even if the Prince tells him not to, but has to leave in the final battle where Arutha joins with Tomas and Pug to fight Murmandamus. Martin and Arutha have always been a duo that depended heavily on each other. At the end of the first book, however, they end up apart since both now govern a different city. *Silverthorn* mends this immediately by having the two of them and Jimmy go on an adventure together to save Arutha's fiancée. Pug meets with Arutha and Martin only occasionally, but the two princes come to him for aid and advice against Murmandamus in *Silverthorn* and *Sethanon*. Pug also seeks out Tomas for help in *Sethanon* to combat the Valheru, appearing outside the elven city with an urgent request:

> "You must come with me. Now. … I need you. *Your arts are alien to mine*. A rift to Kelewan I can manage, but to travel to other worlds I know only through millennia-old tomes…? Between the two of us we have a chance. Will you aid me?" (*Sethanon* 102, my emphasis).

This quote is important because it perfectly illustrates one fundamental difference between cooperative heroism in Tolkien's work and in that of Feist: the emphasis on individual skill. While both stories make use of the combination and separation of the narrative threads belonging to individual characters, Feist takes a more logical approach in building up various teams, if such a term can be applied to storytelling. The Fellowship is a group brought together by coincidence and, in the case of the hobbits, friendship (Honegger 4). This is not much different from the way the characters in *The Riftwar Saga* meet. However, the individuals of the *Lord of the Rings*, during later events, do not necessarily meet up because they are in need of the skills that certain characters possess. That Pippin joins the guard of Denetor has nothing to do with his skill, and it is doubtful that he will actively

contribute to the battle much since he has not received any battle training like that. Legolas is a good archer, as all elves are, but his skill with a bow is never the reason why he joined the journey, nor is the skill explicitly stressed. *The Riftwar Saga*, on the other hand, puts a tremendous importance on skill. That Pug, Tomas, Arutha, Martin, and Jimmy have met was coincidence, but now that they have, future team-ups are determined by the question whether a certain skill is needed. Pug goes to Tomas *because* Tomas has a set of skills that he is in need of (see previous quote). Tomas can call forth a dragon and help them travel to other worlds. Martin comes along on adventures not just because he is Arutha's brother, but mostly because he has proven himself to be an incredibly good hunter. Throughout the novels his skill in tracking and his skill with a bow are stressed. Chapter 17 of *Magician* narrates how Martin with only one of his companions defeats an entire army of Tsurani:

> Martin waited until the Tsurani were uncomfortably close, then he let [the arrow] fly, just as the first trailbreakers took notice of them. The first two men fell, and before they hit the ground, two more arrows were loosed. Martin and Garret pulled arrows from back quivers in fluid motions, set arrow to bowstring and let fly *with uncommon quickness and accuracy*. (*Magician* 354, my emphasis)

His skill is shown once again during a chase on sea. Amos Trask, captain of the ship Martin is on, urges the Huntsman to distract the helmsman of the pursuing ship by shooting an arrow next to his head, a ship that is 500 yards[17] away from them.

> [Martin] waited, shifting weight to compensate for the rolling of the ship, then let it fly. Like an angry bird, the arrow arced over the water and struck in the transom,

[17] 457 meters.

> quivering mere inches from the helmsman's head. … Martin said: "A little gusty for fine shooting," and sent another arrow to strike within inches of the first, keeping the tiller unmanned. (*Magician* 594-5)

The same stress is put on Jimmy's abilities. Since the boy has been a thief all of his life, Jimmy's strengths are stealth, agility, and stealing, and although he is young "about fifteen years of age, Jimmy was already counted among the most gifted members of the Mockers, the Guild of Thieves" (*Silverthorn* 42). Arutha, the reader is told time and time again, is a great tactician and has a very practical mind that allows for quick and good decision making. In the same vein, it is often mentioned how talented Pug is in the field of magic and Tomas in fighting with the Valheru blade.

The individual skills or talents that these characters possess are tailored in such a way that all characters have something unique to add to the story because of their skill. This is very much unlike Tolkien. Aragorn, for example, does have a lot of useful skills. He is good sword fighter, he knows how to handle a bow, how to heal, he is a leader, a tactician, and much more. While his skills are all very important for the story, there is not one that is specifically unique to him. Boromir was probably just as skilled with a blade and Legolas's skill with a bow probably far exceeds that of Aragorn himself. It is not the abilities that make him stand out, but rather his background that makes him unique, since it makes him the rightful King of Gondor. The fact that Frodo can carry the Ring has to do with the tenacity of hobbits, but there are four hobbits on the journey and Bilbo has also carried it before him. Frodo is in a unique position to destroy the Ring, but he has no specific skill set that was good for this task. It was thrust upon him. *The Riftwar Saga*, on the other hand, not only puts major emphasis on the abilities of its characters, it also makes it so that the rest of the group becomes *dependent* on these abilities. Without Jimmy, the mission to infiltrate Moraelin in

*Silverthorn* could not be successful. Without Martin, Arutha would certainly have perished on sea in *Magician*. Without Arutha, Murmandamus would have gotten to Pug and Macros in *Sethanon* and the world would probably have fallen to the Valheru. These actions taken by these specific characters are important because they could only be performed by these specific characters. There is no one else in the team who could have done them better, if at all.

Interestingly enough what we do see with Feist is that the stronger a character gets, the less the reader gets to read about them. Fantasy novels often narrate stories about growth (Wolfe 7). Characters usually start small. They are people that are unimportant in the large scale of the world, but through the adventures they become more. They grow up both physically and mentally. *The Riftwar Saga* is no different in this. Pug has always longed for adventure and gets it when Kulgan takes him with Lord Borric to Krondor. Pug's talent for magic makes him special, but it also makes him unreachable. As an orphan boy we are capable to feel for him. Just like Tomas in the beginning of the series, Pug is the 'low mimetic' hero that stands on the same level as the reader. He is the underdog. But as Pug is succeeding his story lines starts to disappear from the narrative. His time speny with Tsurani is told extensively, especially how he become a Great One. However, after returning and saving Midkemia, any narrative of Pug is pushed out of the way to give more room to Arutha, Martin, and Jimmy. The exact same happens to Tomas. As soon as he masters the Valheru armour and blade, his journey of growth has basically concluded. Pug wished to be a great magician, Tomas a great swordsman, and they both achieved their goals. There is no one in the world of Midkemia at the end of the novels who can rival them in power. Pug and Tomas, then, throughout the series experience a growth from 'low mimetic' to 'mythic' mode. These positions are so far apart that it starts to feel unfamiliar to the reader. The two boys the reader met in the beginning now feel like strangers. Their growth can be followed and understood, but the matters they now deal with stand so far above the reader and their powers are far too

big to comprehend. Now that Pug and Tomas have achieved their dreams and have become the most powerful they could be, the narrative shifts to Arutha and Martin, the two 'high mimetic' heroes, and Jimmy, the 'low mimetic' hero who, despite going to great amounts of change throughout the story, remain firmly rooted in their mode. By keeping the reader engaged with these characters, Feist effectively keeps this a story about people and not about gods.

What Feist does pick up from Tolkien's idea of cooperation between heroes, is the idea that a team is held together by loyalty and affection. It is undoubtedly true that the group starts out bound by duty. Pug and Tomas, and, in the beginning of the book, Martin, are subjects of Arutha. Their Lord is Arutha's father and so they follow the prince because it is their duty to do so. But much like with the Fellowship, the people in the group start forming bonds of friendship. In the case of Pug and Tomas this friendship can be compared to the way the hobbits in the Fellowship behave. They have a past, grew up together and consider themselves to be brothers rather than just friends. The friendship and affection that grows between these two makes them come back to each other, to trust each other, and to believe in the capabilities of the other. And this extends towards the other characters. Tomas does not say yes to aid Pug in *Sethanon* because he knows he can perform the task, but because it is his childhood friend who is asking. Jimmy reports to Arutha before he reports to the Mockers in *Silverthorn* because Arutha once saved his life. This makes Arutha grant the boy a place in his court. Not because his of skills, but because of his loyalty. Arutha extends a kind hand to Pug when he loses Tomas, and though the boy first was polite to Arutha because the man was his Lord's son, the way they speak together is more reminiscent of the talking of friends than the talking of servants to their lords. Jimmy, the boy who never cared for anyone, openly admits to himself that "the Prince and his family and friends had become the only people in Jimmy's life who meant something to [him]" ("Sethanon" 97). The trust he puts on Arutha is returned

by Arutha putting his faith in him, letting him go off by himself when Jimmy considers it necessary.

It becomes very clear, very quickly that these people care for each other. Trust and loyalty are keywords in this story and it is therefore also important to note that social standing in the formation of teams does not matter. Arutha is clearly of high birth and yet has no trouble becoming friends with Pug, the kitchen boy, nor with Jimmy, the thief. What matters to him is the fact that they have proven themselves trustworthy and have proven themselves good friends. The same counts for the others. Tomas becomes the Consort of the Elven Queen, but the title cannot change anything about the already formed friendships.[18] Loyalty, trust, and friendship let them move on even when the times get rough, because they have come to depend on each other's company.

> "Enough!" said Arutha. He took a step away, then turned. "I've been worrying this over and over. I've come this far and I'll continue, but… you may leave now if you wish, and I'll not object." He looked at Laurie and Jimmy, then Baru and Roald. He was answered by silence.
>
> Arutha looked from face to face, then nodded brusquely. "Very well. Tie up the horses and lighten your packs. We walk." ("Silverthorn" 345)

What we see in *The Riftwar Saga* is a combination of loyalty, trust, friendship and skill that allows these people to work together. Neither of these characters could have saved the world all by themselves because they would lack the right skills to do so. More importantly, I would argue, that the story depends on the team to be together for it to be told at all.

[18] Though, interestingly enough, throughout the novels when people prove themselves, they are rewarded with titles of nobility. Jimmy becomes a Senior Squire and will in later novels become the Duke of Krondor. Pug becomes an official member of House conDion and thus brother to Arutha. Social rank is not required to save the world or validate a position, but it is handed out regardless.

It is interesting to note that Feist only narrates very specific parts of the story. *The Riftwar Saga* takes place over quite a large span of time during which there are periods of time that the characters are alone. Or there are moment when the reader has to wonder why the characters are even bothering to take other people with them on a specific journey. This is particularly striking in one section in *Silverthorn*. Near the end of the novel Pug seeks to return to Kelewan in the hope of finding information about the enemy they are dealing with. At this point in the story Pug is already incredibly powerful and honestly needs no help whatsoever with whatever he is planning. However, his friends and most importantly his son urge that he takes someone along: "Papa, please take Meecham with you" (318). Giving to this plea, Pug takes two friends of his with him who immediately get captured, forcing Pug to capitulate as well. The reader is left to wonder, if Pug had gone alone, would it not have been much easier? While narratively it makes sense, as Pug needs to learn that he still has control over the Lesser Path of magic, it does not from a logical point of view since these people had no skills to contribute to this team and, as we have seen, Feist writes his teams in such a way that they are characters that are both loyal, good friends, and skilful. Situations that are trust upon the characters are always resolved by using the specific skills the characters have. However, I would argue that these other characters were there with Pug because Feist does not narrate parts of the story that the characters experience entirely alone. There seems to be an inherent need to only describe events where characters experience something together. This becomes very clear when *Sethanon* starts with Pug coming back from Kelewan, having experienced many adventures with the edhel[19] that the reader has not read a word about. Instead, Feist has Pug narrate the events to Tomas.

It seems important to question this. Why not show Pug's adventures with the edhel? There was a huge build-up to finding of this ancient race, but the reader gets no direct

[19] One of the four races of elves in Feist's world.

experience with them. In the same line, we can wonder why we did not learn more about Pug during the four lonely years he spend on Kelewan that he tells Laurie about. Or why we only see Martin when he is scouting with other people, but never alone. One of the reasons, I would argue, is the novel's connection to the popular game *Dungeons and Dragons*.

Published first in the 1974, *Dungeons and Dragons* is a Roleplaying Game stressing the nature of group based play. The game is heavily based on the *Lord of the Rings*, including the same races and monsters, and was initially considered a way for people to experience Middle-Earth by themselves. Feist has often stated that the origins of his novel series lay in this game which he used to play with his friends in high school where they created their own world to play in: Midkemia (Feist *De wereld van de Magïer* 11). While *The Riftwar Saga* takes place about 500 years before the events of his own home game, the influence of *DnD*, as it is commonly referred to, is still very apparent in the book. It is visible in the way the magic is explained, the choice of different races that inhabit the world, and mostly the way the characters are set up. *DnD* has players build their characters with a certain class in mind. For example, if the player wishes to be good at shooting a bow, he would chose to be a Ranger. Those that wish to fight with a sword would chose a Fighter, and those who are interesting in magic would pick the Magic User class. Each class has their own specific skills that are *unique to them* and that cannot be used by anyone else. As such, players feel like they all have their own part to play in the story that they create during their sessions.

We can easily fit the characters of *The Riftwar Saga* into the class system of First Edition *DnD*: Arutha is the Fighter, Martin the Ranger, Pug the Magic User, Jimmy the Thief, Tomas the Paladin. Not only does *DnD* explain the skill set that each of these characters has and the stress that the novel places on these skills, it also explains the need to have these characters featured as a team. *DnD* is a group game. It is played by groups of, usually, three to five players and a Dungeon Master. The Dungeon Master has set up a story for the players to

experience and will ask them to perform certain dice rolls at specific moments. Since *DnD* is usually played without anything else than dice, the players engage in what is called 'the theatre of the mind'. The story is entirely created in the imagination where players can have their characters do anything they wish as long as it fits within the rules of the game and the world that has been created. The Dungeon Master will set up the story by narrating an introduction and will usually then ask what the players wish to do. They can then perform numerous actions, some which can only be achieved by making a high enough dice roll. Lone exploits of characters rarely appear in these sessions. The player can narrate what their character has done in the past or in downtime, but the actual game only exists when players are in a group together. Of course, Feist's story does not feature this typical party all the time, but it is telling that he has Pug explain to Tomas what happened with the edhel instead of showing the reader himself as Pug experienced it. It is telling that we only get Pug's experiences on Kelewan when he truly has made a friend and is no longer alone. Feist's characters show the necessity of being in a group, being together with others and being unable to save the world and fulfil a destiny placed upon them by Macros. They might be separated for larger parts of the book and might gather information separately, but in the end Arutha wishes to consult Pug on the Murmandamus matter at hand, and Jimmy will return from his scouting mission to get Arutha even though he could possibly have gone in alone. There is an inherent need within these characters to come together, share information and create a plan with all of them. And without them working together, Midkemia would have fallen at least twice in one saga.

To conclude, cooperative heroism is an integral part of Feist's *The Riftwar Saga*. The way the characters work together in a large framework is reminiscent of both the *Lord of the Rings* as well as of the Roleplaying Game that the books were inspired by. The characters that are presented in *The Riftwar Saga* have to band together to prevent a hostile takeover of their

world. In this framework, they come together and diverge again either out of necessity or because it is considered the best option. Much like Tolkien's characters, these people might first have been bound by duty to their lord or by an oath that they wished to uphold themselves, but that soon changes into a bond forged my loyalty, trust and affection.

Notably different in Feist is the emphasis on skill. The characters are individuals not just because of their own personal histories, but also because of their unique capabilities. Pug's magic, Tomas' connection to the Valheru, Arutha's tactical mind and practicality, Martin's skill as a hunter, and Jimmy's skill as a thief, they are all equally important and equally stressed. The uniqueness of these characters makes it so that only they can save the team, only they can perform certain tasks, and only they can eventually save the world. Not one of these five characters has the same skills as another, making the characters not only interesting, but also very distinct for the reader, who knows exactly what to expect from certain characters by reviewing their capabilities. While Feist might have stated that he does not consider Tolkien his ultimate inspiration for the novels, the way his main characters work together and the interconnectedness of the individual heroic actions within the larger framework of fighting for peace, is certainly similar. Feist shows that each hero is equally important for the completion of the story.

# Chapter 4 - Tad Williams' *Memory, Sorrow & Thorn*

There are only a few other writers of fantasy fiction that can stand in the same line as Tad Williams when it comes to the title of Tolkien's Heir. Robert Jordan and David Eddings are often considered important successors of Tolkien, but it is Williams who is generally described as someone truly deserving of the name (Cesarano, Kaveney 170). His series *Memory, Sorrow & Thorn* has sold over more than 30 million copies as of 2015 and has been translated into twenty-five different languages. It is the series that inspired, among many others, George R.R. Martin to write his now famous *A Song of Ice and Fire* and Christopher Paolini to write *The Inheritance Cycle.* The series saw a renewed interest because of the recent publication of Williams' new books: *The Heart of What Was Lost* (January 2017) and *The Witchwood Crown* (April 2017) that make up the first two books of William's new series: *The Last King of Osten Ard* that takes place in the same secondary world as *Memory, Sorrow & Thorn*. The initial trilogy, comprising of *The Dragonbone Chair* (1988), *Stone of Farewell* (1990), and *To Green Angel Tower* (1993),[20] has received praise across the board and his books are still heavily discussed on fora with the occasional input of Williams himself.

That Tolkien was a big influence to Williams is unsurprising. In an interview with *My Bookish Ways* he notes that the "biggest single influence on me was reading the *Lord of the Rings* when I was about eleven". He states that what attracted him to fantasy in the first place was the "idea of Tolkienian secondary reality, making something that seems real, and (even better) people wish WAS real" (Kirsten). And we can indeed see Middle-Earth in Williams' Osten Ard though Williams' world feels very distinct from those created in Tolkien's, but also in Feist's work. As with Feist, the summary of this trilogy can be read in Appendix 2 for those that wish to read up on the 2700 pages in which Williams tells his story.

[20] In further citations quoted as DC, SoF, and TGAT.

Williams' start in *The Dragonbone Chair* will feel extremely familiar to readers of Feist. Simon, orphan with an unknown father, works as a scullion in The Hayholt, the home of the King of Erkynland and all of Osten Ard. And much like Feist and also Tolkien, Williams' narrative stays with Simon for a long period of time during which the boy becomes the apprentice of a doctor, who is said to know magic, frees Prince Josua from his prison, is forced to flee Hayholt because of a murder attempt on his life, and eventually arrives on the road to Naglimund alone. It is not until page 636 of the first novel when we first officially hear about our villain: The Storm King. Function wise, the Storm King behaves much like both Sauron and the Valheru. An entity of immense power whose history has seen him killed but not destroyed, his spirit continuing its existence on the Dream Road where it is contacted by Pryrates accidentally. The three swords, Memory, Sorrow and Thorn, when brought together in Hayholt can rewind time to a moment before the Storm King lost his physical body. The three swords can bring the Storm King back to life in the same way the Ring can restore Sauron and the Lifestone can bring back the Valheru from their prison.[21]

Of course, the characters in the novel that face off against the Storm King, and even some that are (often unknowingly) working with him, believe that they need to collect the swords and bring them to Hayholt in order to destroy the Storm King. It is their quest to find these blades before Elias can, before the world can come to an end. As such all actions that characters on the side of 'good' take are informed by the fact that something must be done to stop King Elias and the Storm King. For characters that were in Naglimund during Jarnauga's explanation of the Storm King' life - this includes Simon, Josua, Isgrimnur, Miriamele, and a multitude of side characters - this means fighting to keep the swords out of the hands of the enemy no matter what the cost. These characters form the centre of the story, but while Simon

[21] The swords have many other similarities to the Ring. The wielders of the swords note that the swords have minds of their own. "Thorn *used* me. It *wanted* to be saved" Simon says after killing the dragon in DC (910). The swords also call their wielders towards the Green Angel Tower in TGAT to complete their purpose: bring the Storm King back. It is a call that can't be resisted.

is clearly the main character, it is not just him who makes the defeat of the Storm King possible. It is the individual actions of many that lead to the succession of the story. As Simon puts it aptly:

> People and events seemed more clearly connected, each part of a much larger puzzle - just as Binabik and Sisqi were. They cared deeply for each other, but at the same time their world of two interlocked with many other worlds: with Simon's own, with their people's, with Prince Josua's, and Geloë's… It was really quite startling, Simon thought, how everything was part of something else! But though the world was vast beyond comprehension, still every mote of life in it fought for its own continued existence. And each mote *mattered*. (SoF 205)

Each character that gets a voice in the series matters, because their actions are set-ups to other actions that set in motion events necessary to bring everything to a good conclusion. "We all have to fight the Storm King!" Simon tells Jiriki and it becomes increasingly clear throughout the novel that this is indeed the case (SoF 847). This is not an enemy that can be defeated by one man with a sword.

Despite the clear understanding that many are needed to defeat the Storm King, each character has their own individual ideas on how to get things done and while these ideas might be wrongly informed or badly executed, they can lead to new insights, new allies, or defeated enemies. Miriamele's actions throughout the novels are good examples of this. Her determination to get to Nabban by herself to convince its ruler to join Josua in the siege at Naglimund is entirely unnecessary because said ruler is already on his way to help Josua. Her sudden departure, however, has Josua send Isgrimnur after her which, in turn, leads to him to Tiamak, an important member of the League of the Scroll, and to the famous knight Camaris.

Without Camaris much of what would later be accomplished would not have succeeded. The journey thus brought two important allies to Josua's side. In a similar fashion, Miriamele's decision to leave Josua once more and return to Hayholt to convince her father to stop this madness leads to Simon going with her and in the end to him finding the sword Memory.

The reader is in a unique position to understand how these individual actions are part of a larger framework that the characters themselves do not understand or cannot comprehend. This perceived interconnectedness that exists only for the reader is facilitated by the narrative structure of *Memory, Sorrow & Thorn,* an interlaced structure similar to Tolkien's, but more familiar to readers of Feist. Feist made use of many switches between characters as soon as narrative threads converged or diverged. The simple start Williams creates is similar to Tolkien's start with Frodo and Feist's focus on Pug. Pug's connection with Tomas and his meetings with Kulgan, Arutha, and Duke Borric shape the first part of *The Riftwar Saga*. For Simon these are the meetings with Binabik the troll and the Sitha Jiriki, whom he saves from almost certain death, putting Jiriki quite heavily in Simon's debt. This debt will remain important throughout the entirety of the series. Putting emphasis on these characters at the beginning of the story gives the reader a clear view on who Simon is and how he establishes friendships with characters over time.

Williams, however, shifts the focus away from Simon much earlier than the other two writers. While most chapters of *The Dragonbone Chair* do narrate events that happen around Simon, there is alternation within chapters to other characters that will play important roles in the series. Most of these narrative strands start clustered in specific locations within the story world and it takes a long time for all the threads to come together. Josua, Isgrimnur, and Towser, to name only a few names from Williams' extensive character list, all start with Simon in Hayholt and they set out for Naglimund, a path Simon would later follow. Character threads such as those of Maegwin and Tiamak, however, take a long time before connecting

with any of the other characters we have met before despite being introduce rather early on. By introducing characters long before the story threads are connected to each other, the reader becomes as familiar with the other characters as he is with Simon. Adding to that is the fact that it allows the reader to learn about information that Simon or others might not yet know about. The alternation, then, gives readers more insight in this larger framework and allows the reader to understand the effect that certain actions have upon the events that are transpiring. We understand that it is Amerasu who is speaking through the Master Witness to Eolair and Maegwin during their visit to the underground city of Mezutu'a, because the reader is already aware of the reason why Amerasu is reaching out, the reader understands her situation. Eolair and Maegwin, however, are unaware of even the existence of Amerasu and are naturally spooked by the whole occurrence.

Interestingly, Williams also provides narrative threads for some characters on the side of the enemy. Pryrates, Guthwulf and Elias are all given a voice. Such an perspective is entirely absent from *The Lord of the Rings* and is only used very sparsely in *The Riftwar Saga* where, occasionally, the enemy gets the beginning of a chapter dedicated to him to create a certain tension for the reader who is still unfamiliar with this entity. Williams' villains get far more explanation dedicated to them than the villain in the other series I have mentioned thus far and as the reader progresses through the story, even the Storm King's motivation becomes more a tale of sadness rather than a tale of evil.

*Stone of Farewell* proves to be extremely interesting when considering the narrative structure of the entirety of *Memory, Sorrow & Thorn*. Throughout the novel individual narrative threads converge and diverge much like they do in the other series, however, at the eventual conclusion of *Stone of Farewell* it turns out that situation at the end is remarkable similar to the situation at the beginning. Simon, who started out with Binabik and Sludig in the mountains of the north, meets Binabik and Sludig on the shores of the Stone of Farewell.

Miriamele and Cadrach, who have done nothing but fleeing since they have teamed up, are still trying to get away from their pursuers and Isgrimnur is still looking for them. Josua and the seven other survivors of Naglimund, who were chased through the land by the Norns, have manage to stick together despite their troubles and arrive relatively safely at the Stone of Farewell, but do not yet meet up with Simon, Binabik or Sludig. What *Stone of Farewell* does is not so much bring the characters forward, but rather it serves to establish stronger bonds between characters.

These bonds, as set up by Williams over the course of the series, follow a remarkable similar pattern for a large multitude of characters. *Memory, Sorrow & Thorn* does not have a Fellowship and it does not have Feist's teams built from skilled individuals. It happens only a few times that actual teams are send out to accomplish a certain task. Simon's quest to find Thorn is one such instance, but it is a rare one. What we do see a lot is people initially working together because it is their duty to do so. Williams' deploys a hierarchical structure that combines different heroic categories similar to the way Tolkien and Feist combine them. Josua, Isgrimnur, Eolair and characters such as Elias, clearly fall within the high mimetic hero mode. They are rulers or generals with servants and soldiers beneath them, advisers to guide them. Their names carry weight. Since Josua and Elias stand on opposite sides during the story, characters that were loyal to either of the brothers in the beginning of the story stand on opposite sides as well. This encompasses both other characters within the high mimetic mode as well as characters such as Simon, Binabik, and Rachel who belong to the low mimetic mode. Everyone has to choose a side within this conflict and most often the choice of whom to initially follow stems from which side they had been on before the conflict started.

The characters Deornoth and Guthwulf are good examples of this. They follow their respective lords because they feel it is their duty to do so. There is pride in this duty. "Deornoth wishes that the people of Hewenshire could see him now, see the way he fought

loyally for a great prince" (TGAT 244). Guthwulf has been at Elias' side for years, following the Prince's orders. Their positions are remarkably similar despite the fact that their social status might differ somewhat. Both follow their respective lords because they believe it is right to do and show extreme loyalty towards them. The loyalty the two men display leads to trust from their lords which in turn leads to genuine friendship. Deornoth struggles throughout the story with speaking up against Josua, but when he finally does, he feels the need to apologise afterwards as if he has been stepping across a line.

> "I wanted to beg your forgiveness, my prince, before… before whatever happens. You are the kindest lord a man could want. I had no right to speak to you as I did yesterday."
>
> Josua smiled sadly. "You have every right. I only wish I had more time to think about the things you said. I have indeed been far too self-absorbed of late. *It was an act of a friend to point that out*." (SoF 510, my emphasis)

Deornoth is too overcome with emotions to reply. Guthwulf is no different. Even though Elias lapses into madness, Guthwulf remains at the King's side, believing in their friendship. He is one of the few that is allowed to speak up, indicating the strong trust that still exists between the two. "You know I have always spoken to you as a friend, blunt when it was needed" Guthwulf remarks during one of the many discussions he has with the King, and Elias agrees (SoF 589). The same Elias warns Guthwulf that Pryrates wishes to murder him and urges him to get out now, a warning Guthwulf heads too late. The king turns on him and the friendship is broken. Guthwulf notes:

> Even the king hard turned on him at last … Now Guthwulf thought of the most previous thing he had. It was not his honor, for he knew he had given that up when he did not raise a hand to help Elias combat his growing madness; it was not his pride, for he had lost that with his sight… (TGAT 146)

These relations are exemplary for the rest of the characters in the series. We see it between Josua and the other seven that following in their escape from Naglimund, but also between Josua and Simon, between Josua and Isgrimnur, and between Maegwin and Eolair. For all, duty paves the way for friendship, and all feel betrayed when this friendship is betrayed or broken.

But even if the duty towards each other does not exist it is this experience of hardship that forges strong bonds and it is the affection between the characters that holds them together, not a duty they have sworn to uphold. Simon's relationships with various characters throughout the story serves as a good example of this. As Simon notes it he "has been lucky in his friends" (1045). Once befriended they come to his aid when he needs them most. Initially bound to Simon because of the fact that Simon saved his life, Jiriki hands the boy the White Arrow to signify a connection that now exists between the two of them. As Simon draws upon this connection, Jiriki is forced to break the law and bring a mortal into the Sithi city. "There is also a bond between you and me, Seoman. I have not forgotten that" (SoF 63). As Simon and Jiriki spend more time together this debt that Jiriki owes Simon is certainly repaid, but the Sithi does not leave Simon alone. It is because of this bond that exists between the two that Simon is allowed to live in the Sithi city, but it is also part of the reason Jiriki rides out to battle later on.

Binabik's relationship with Simon is even more telling. Though it turns out later that Binabik had been looking for Simon, the troll did save Simon from possible death after the

boy has saved Jiriki. It is a debt that Simon repays later on by saving Binabik's life. The friendship that develops between them is marked by the adventures they have survived together. "That is my companion of many journeys that speaks!" Binabik exclaims upon seeing Simon again (TGAT 20). When Binabik gets captured by the trolls, Simon does everything to get him out. When Simon is alone in the mountains, Binabik's name is the first he calls. He promises Binabik's fiancée: "that I will protect her intended - who is also my friend - to death and beyond" (SoF 305). And when Simon is off with Miriamele and Binabik finds the two of them, Binabik does not force them to come back to Josua. He states: "I cannot stop your journey. I can only accompany you to keep you from harm" (TGAT 680). Simon is extremely relieved when he hears these words.

We can question if it was Simon's luck that actually brought him these good friends, as he says himself. In most cases, it seems that he gets the support of his friends and his friends' allies because of the way he behaves around injustice. Simon could have left Jiriki to die, but he did not and this moment is telling for the rest of his life. Time and time again Simon will step in and help people that are treated unfairly, even if it is to the detriment of his own life or the fate of the world. This unselfish urge to help others creates openings for Simon where there would not have been any for other characters. The loyalty he shows to Binabik makes the Qanuc think so highly of him that they follow him to the Stone of Farewell where they will fight at Simon's side. Even when travelling alone with Miriamele at the end of *To Green Angel Tower,* Simon risks his own life to stop the Fire Dancers from killing two people. That these two people end up betraying him to underlings of Pryratus feels all the worse because of the kindness Simon has shown.

What is different from both Tolkien and Feist is the extensive amount or narration during which Williams' characters spend time by themselves and the extreme unhappiness they experience from this loneliness. During the first part of the first book Simon has to flee

the Hayholt. When he finally manages to make it out of the treacherous tunnels that run beneath the city, he finds himself alone in the world. "… he felt a deep sorrow welling up within him, and pity for himself. He was so alone! They had taken everything from him, and left him without home or friends" (DC 265). He continues on his journey but the unhappiness remains: "I am completely alone. No one will take care of me ever again" (284). When Simon gets separated from Binabik and Sludig in the next novel he exclaims again:

> He was all alone! … Worst of all, his friends were long gone. In the middle of the afternoon he had suddenly found himself in a fit of panicky shouting, repeating their names over and over again until his thread felt rough as a butcher's block. At the last, just before his voice gave out, he thought he had been screaming the names of the dead. (SoF 603-4)

These moments of loneliness are marked by an intense search for company as if without them Simon cannot continue his quest. When alone, Simon's thoughts return to Binabik, Sludig, and Miriamele repeatedly. He will wonder how they are doing and if he will ever see them again. It are these thoughts that truly make Simon feel desperate.

But Simon does not only experience loneliness when he is truly alone. After Aditu finds him in the mountains, she brings him to the Sithi city of Jao é-Tinukai'i. Because this city is closed off for mortals, Simon is told he can never leave again. He will have to grow old and die in Jao é-Tinukai'i. Only after a couple of days, Simon remarks: "Despite the unceasing loveliness of Jao é-Tinukai'i, or perhaps because of it, Simon was bored. He was also unutterably lonely" (821). With no friends and no hope of ever getting to see his friends again, Simon has no one to turn to. Jiriki has left the boy mostly alone, being busy with other

tasks, and the only other Sithi he knows is Aditu, who meets with him regularly. Without friends at his side Simon is scared and rather incapable of doing anything.

Simon is not the only character, however, to experience loneliness and feel lost because of it. Miriamele, having hated Cadrach since he started travelling with her, feels a sudden loneliness when the man finally leaves her. While she is surrounded by others, she cries.

> As *Eadne Cloud* rocket at anchor in Vinitta's harbor, she felt loneliness pressing down on her like a great weight. It was not so much Cadrach's betrayal … It was rather that he was her last link with her true self, with her past life. As if an anchor-rope had been cut, she felt herself suddenly adrift in a sea of strangers. (SoF 785)

Rachel, too, starts behaving strangely when faced with a prolonged period of being alone. She starts handing out food to a mystery man that seems that haunt Hayholt's halls. "Times had changed, and Rachel had changed, too. Or perhaps she was just lonely, she reflected" (TGAT 452). The longer she remains alone the more desperate she gets: "She had not found him, but he was alive. He knew where to come, and would come again. Perhaps next time he would stay and let her speak to him. But what would she say? *Anything, anything. It will be someone to talk to. Someone to talk to*" (806). Guthwulf, haunting the halls of Hayholt and below after he has been blinded by Pryrates, wishes "if there could be some end to this hideous loneliness" (146).

Being alone drives these characters to search for contact, reach out for their friends or anyone with whom they can interact and when this fails, desperation sets in. The profound emphasis on this feeling is stressed even more in, surprisingly, the villain of the story. The Storm King seems to be the embodiment of this connection between loneliness and despair. In

*To Green Angel Tower* Simon has a strange thought as he stands with Elias and Camaris on top of the Green Angel Tower and first lays eyes on the Storm King. "Simon felt not only the all-consuming hatred that had been the blood of the Storm King's deathly exile, but also Ineluki's terrible, mad loneliness. *He loves his people,* Simon thought. *He gave his life for them but did not die*" (1026). It is an interesting choice to connect the Storm King to loneliness, but unsurprising when we remember his background as told by Jarnauga in the first book. Ineluki, as his name was then, fought a dragon with his older brother Hakatri. While they won the fight, Hakatri was hurt so badly he was shipped off to the West[22], leaving Ineluki alone. Jarnauga's tale states that Ineluki blamed himself for his event and even though we are not explicitly told why, this blame and feelings of abandonment drove him towards the dark arts. When the Rimmersmen came upon his kingdom, Ineluki, out of desperation and anger, used the dark arts to protect the ones he loved. He failed and lost the people he loved again. It is this loneliness that Simon feels, and his loneliness that drove the Storm King to do the actions he set out to do. To turn back time to a moment when he was no longer alone and to preserve his own people at all costs (Kaveney 173).

We see the same despair reflected in King Elias who becomes increasingly bitter when his wife passed away. His desire to bring her back, to hear from her again, makes him contact Pryratus who reaches out to the Dream Road where he encounters the Storm King. Elias' loneliness is the start of all of the troubles. His desperation when he hears Miriamele is gone expresses this even more. Suddenly all his thoughts are focused on getting to Josua and bringing Miriamele home. Yet when she finally gets there it is too late.

What I wish to point out here is that this loneliness is characteristic for Williams' series. Characters who manage to deal with this loneliness, who find friends and comrades, get to be the victors. Simon is lonely and desperate by himself, but when he is together with

[22] Much like Tolkien's elves left for the West.

characters that he shares a strong bond of friendship with, he is capable of achieving great things. His selfless urge to protect others plays directly into this. One cannot protect others if there is no one else to protect after all. Loneliness is, however, a good motivator to go out in the world and find this companionship. Those who fail to find this are reflected in Williams' villains who cannot overcome the desperation and cannot seem to reconnect with people.

What Williams thus achieves in *Memory, Sorrow & Thorn* in relation to cooperative heroism is two sided. On the one hand, he shows that characters who work together do so because of duty, but more so because of a friendship that has been built up between characters over the course of shared hardship. Like Simon said, all characters are part of something else, they are a mote in the story that needs all of them before it can be completed. Characters find courage within each other or in the thought that they are helping out others. They simply perform better when they are together. This loyalty that Williams' characters show towards each other is reminiscent of the shared friendship between members of the Fellowship and of the camaraderie between Feist's many characters. Despite their differences in social position, rank or race, the characters can find friendship in those that are loyal to them. The reason for this sudden appearance of affection among characters is logical when we consider the world that these characters inhabit. In the classical hierarchical structure that Williams deploys we see that the high mimetic heroes rule over the low mimetic heroes, but the boundaries between these two start to fade when both these groups start coming into contact with something that stands outside their immediate understanding. Sithi, Norns, the Storm King, and magic, these are all things that, while present in the world, were largely considered to be myths or legends. The characters that do not belong to this magical world feel uncomfortable when encountering it in a similar fashion to the hobbits who feel uncomfortable when entering the high mimetic world that exists outside the Shire. Characters seem to be aware of the fact that magic is something that exists, but no one has actually seen it until suddenly the

swords are reappearing and the Sithi seem to come out of hiding. Jiriki, Aditu, the Storm King, Amerasu, these are all characters that belong to a mystic form of heroism and their world is different than that of Josua and Simon. Characters naturally band together to face an unknown threat and have to choose sides in this conflict.

On the other hand, Williams shows what happens to a man who does not have this companionship. For those that are alone, far away from friends, the world is a place of desperation. The Storm King is an evil entity and his actions cannot be placed solely on his abandonment, but it plays a large part in it. His desire to return to this world stems from the fact that he wishes to turn back time and see his people again, the people he has lost. By showing the loneliness as opposed to the companionship, Williams' effectively makes the statement that working as companions in a group triumphs over working alone. Cooperation brings happiness, loneliness destroys. This counts for everyone, not just the characters on the side of 'good', if such a statement can be made about Williams' characters. Roy Kaveney notes in "In the Tradition…" that Williams refuses "to deal in the moral absolutes of Tolkien" (173). The Storm King is not Sauron and he is not the Valheru, who seem to embody a more clearly distinct kind of evil that simply wishes to rule over all. It can be suggested that this new look towards the villain that Williams presents is a product of his time. Williams grew up during the Vietnam era and "one would assume that the non-'black and white', 'all is not what it seems' nature of the times influenced that tone in the MS&T series" (Ketchersid). Tolkien's World War was filled with propaganda aimed to make the opposing side appear as 'evil', we see this reflected in Sauron. Williams' villain has a far deeper story that is presented in the books than both Sauron and the Valheru, despite all being entities that wish to fully return to the world of the living.

Williams' heroes work together because they do not wish to be alone and because they know that alone they cannot beat the Storm King. The actions of many are needed, displayed

in a complicated narrative structure in which narrative threads converge and diverge on so many different occasions. Williams' heroes are not based on skill as Feist's characters. Simon has no actual defining qualities that can be attributed to his skills. Most of his strengths lay in his personality and his willingness to help out others in need. If Simon shows anything it is that you do not need specific skills to save the world. You need a common cause, loyalty, affection, plus a talent for friendship.

# Chapter 5 - Sarah J. Maas' *Throne of Glass*

Unlike Feist and Williams, who have been writing and publishing for over thirty years now, Sarah J. Maas published her first novel in the not so distant year of 2012. *Throne of Glass*, Maas' debut novel and the name of the entire series, was met with praise, but her work became especially popular with the release of *Crown of Midnight* in 2013 and subsequent sequels: *Heir of Fire* (2014), *Queen of Shadows* (2015), and *Empire of Storms* (2016). Fans of the series are currently awaiting *Tower of Dawn* which is set to be released in September 2017. In many ways Maas' works feel as a distinct product of our digital times. Her original story, then titled *Queen of Glass*, was posted more than 10 years ago on the popular website FictionPress.com as a new take on the classic Cinderella story. It gained an extremely large online following which helped Maas' popularity in the years after Bloomsbury had chosen to publish the novels and had ordered sequels (Page, webpage). Maas' popularity is seen on websites such as Goodreads where users voted *Empire of Storm* as the third best Young Adult Fantasy Novel of 2016 with 31.665 votes.[23] In many ways sites such as Goodreads are the new public spaces for novel reading, novel reviewing, and novel discussion (Naik 321) and Maas fits right into this framework as a child of the digital age.

Next to her roots in his digital age, Maas also takes position at the end of a long line of fantasy authors. During various interviews Maas mentions being a big fan of both Tolkien and Feist, while also stating that she has also enjoyed authors such as Terry Brooks and Ursula Le Guin ("Interview with Sarah Maas"). She is therefore an fascinating example of a fantasy author of the twenty-first century and should prove interesting for a diachronic discussion of

[23] Maas also took first place with her other novel *A Court of Mist and Fury* (2016).

cooperative heroism in the high fantasy genre.[24] A detailed summary of the texts used in this discussion can be found in Appendix 3.

*Throne of Glass* is the start of a story that leads to a predestined battle against the Dark King Erawan and his followers the Valg, a destiny of which both readers and characters are unaware until the end of *Empire of Storms.*[25] To make sure that this predestined battle happens it is mandatory that the two branches of offspring of the goddess Mala, meet: the Havilliard line, found in Dorian Havilliard, and the Galathynius line, found in Aelin. When these two bloodlines converge the final battle can take place and the Valg together with the gods can be sealed away from this world, never to return (EoS 606). And interestingly enough the first significant event that happens right in the first five pages of *Throne of Glass* is a meeting between Aelin, then under the guise of Celaena Sardothien[26], and Dorian. The two bloodlines that have been separated for nine years, ever since the murder of Aelin's parents, now converge and end up in one location: the castle of the enemy, Dorian's father.

Predestined events play a large role in the novels. Despite the fact that characters clearly have free will, manipulation by others who have seen glimpses of the future allows for characters to meet and events to transpire in such a fashion that it will lead to a desired future. We see this in Queen Maeve's explanation of how she planned to set up the meeting between Rowan, one of the six legendary Fae warriors of Maeve, and Aelin, who she knew to be mates:[27]

[24] Though listed as Young Adult fiction, Maas' series is also often referred to as 'epic' or 'high' fantasy. The lines between Young Adult fiction and adult fiction, especially for this series which seems to move more and more to adult fiction with each new instalment, is blurry and difficult to define. Since the purpose of this thesis is not to define genres or create boundaries, this is a discussion that will not be delved into.
[25] In citations the book titles will be abbreviated to ToG, CoM, HoF, QoS, and EoS.
[26] For the purpose of clarity, I will only make use of the name Aelin for the main character, despite the fact that in the first two books Aelin refers to herself consistently as Celaena.
[27] Maas uses the word 'mate' to indicate a special bond between people.

> "And I knew that whenever you were born, whenever you'd come of age… I'd ensure that your [Aelin and Rowan's] paths crossed, and you'd take on look at each other and I'd have you by the throat." (EoS 655)

In a similar fashion it was necessary for Aelin and Manon Blackbeak to meet so that Deanna's words "*Flame and iron, together bound, merge into silver to learn what must be found. A mere step is all it shall take"* could come true (587). Nehemia's life was similarly involved with Aelin's. Told by Elena that she had to go and find Aelin and offer her the help she would need to rise to great power, Nehemia's life did not only have a predestined path but also a predestined end. She was to sacrifice herself to allow Aelin to move forwards. The fact that Elena chose to give up her immortal life to Aelin when the girl drowned when she was nine, also shows that most of all Aelin needs to live for the predestined events to transpire.

Setting up this predestined plot that hangs over the characters might seem to suggest that the cooperation between the heroes to collect the Wyrdkeys, stop Erawan and the Valg, and banish them to another plane forever, does not depend on an established affection between the characters as we saw develop in the other series because of an outside threat. This is, however, not the case. The reasons for this can be observed in the way the narrative is structured and in the way the knowledge of this predestined plot is kept secret by having most of the characters be unaware of this plot as well.

Let me first talk about the way the books are structured and how this structure facilitates an understanding for the reader about what this story is about and how the relationships between characters are foregrounded instead of the events.

As already stated before the first significant event that transpires in *Throne of Glass* is Aelin's meeting with Dorian. Subsequently, the first formal switch in perspective that Maas uses is to go from Aelin to Dorian when the prince has a conversation with his father (ToG

47). The formal switch is used to show Dorian's dislike for his father, something that later alternations between Aelin and Dorian also put emphasis on. They are also used to show Dorian's boredom regarding the happenings at court:

> He *was* bored. Bored of these women, bored of these cavaliers who masqueraded as companions, bored of everything. He'd hoped his journey to Endovier would quell that boredom, and that he'd be glad to return home, but he found home to be the same. (128)

Dorian's boredom leads to his interactions with Aelin who is a new presence and does not follow the same etiquette as the rest of the court when talking to him. The formal alternation between their narrative threads indicates the interest that the two characters have in each other.

While the book also makes a few formal switches to Chaol, *Throne of Glass* is first and foremost the story of Aelin and Dorian, their relationship, and the difficulties they have with each other, which eventually lead to a good understanding between the two but no pursued romantic feelings. *Crown of Midnight*, then, puts far more emphasis on Chaol and as such the structure, the switches between Aelin and Chaol and Dorian, serves to show the growing relationship between these three characters. Interestingly Nehemia, who knows about the predestined plot, is never given a voice. Because of this, the reader, just like the main characters in the novels, remains unaware of larger events that are transpiring in the world. By not switching back and forth between Nehemia and the rest the narrative stays on the same level as Aelin, Dorian and Chaol. This allows for a very natural focus on the relationship progression between these characters while at the same time putting the predestined plot on the background.

*Heir of Fire* breaks up what the first two books had created. Similar to the "Breaking of the Fellowship", the narrative threads of the characters now diverge. Celaena leaves for Wendlyn where her narrative thread converges with that of Rowan whereas Dorian and Chaol stay behind in Adarlan. At the same time as these threads diverge, Maas' world opens up to the reader, allowing the reader insight in the mind of Manon Blackbeak who in *Heir of Fire* and *Queen of Shadows* functions much like Tiamak and Maegwin in *Memory, Sorrow & Thorn*. Her story line shows another perspective on the world, allowing the reader, for the first time, to gain insights in things that the other characters cannot yet know about. *Queen of Midnight* and *Empire of Storms* add even more perspectives until at the end the reader has to keep track of nine story-lines in total. These nine end up together at the end of *Empire of Storms*, but by then the reader is already extremely familiar with all the characters, because of the set-up that Maas created. By gently introducing different story-lines over the course of the novels instead of all at once, Maas is able to focus the attention of the reader on the relationships between certain characters. First the tale of Aelin and Dorian, then Celaena and Chaol, then Aelin and Rowan on the one hand and Dorian, Chaol and Aedion on the other. Manon is introduced who can later introduce us to Elide, who will introduce us to Lorcan. These narrative threads are set up in relation to each other, facilitating this cooperation that will later arise between them.

In many ways reading Maas' works feels more akin to Tolkien and Feist than it does to Williams. Both with Tolkien and Feist we gain a distinct understanding of the different narrative threads because we are capable of understanding the relationships between the characters to which these threads belong. They flow naturally from one into the other as more characters are introduced to the reader. A switch to Aragorn before he arrived in Bree would have given the reader a different reaction to this character by the time he met Frodo, but since we meet Strider first and allow him to team up with Frodo, the alternation towards him at the

end of *The Fellowship of the Ring* is easier and has more impact; Aragorn and Frodo are now officially separated. Similarly, by allowing Aelin to naturally meet certain characters and then instigate a narrative switch, the reader already has a clear understanding of this character's position within the story world and of his or her relationships towards Aelin. The new perspective can then bring new insights and deepen the understanding of the relationship between the two characters. The fact that Williams does deploy formal switches between characters that have no connection to Simon, makes these transitions more difficult as the new character has to be introduced entirely anew. Maas' structure, and thus that of Tolkien and Feist, allows for an easier understanding of why these characters work together and why they care for each other.

Since the characters are unaware of their predestined path in life, the relationships that they form and the bonds that are created between them feel genuine and have some interesting elements when considering them in the light of cooperative heroism.

First of all, the dichotomy between individuality and collectivity. Feist emphasised the individual skills that belonged to each character and Maas deploys a similar technique, hereby putting a large emphasis on the individuality of all the characters in the story. Each newly introduced character has his or her own set of special powers. Aelin has her fire, Rowan has air, and Dorian's raw magic often manifests itself as ice. Lorcan can create magical shields and Fenrys can teleport. Lysandra is a shapeshifter, Manon is a witch and all Fae can take on various animal forms.[28] Maas' diversity does not end there however. For characters that do not have special powers, there is are still specific individual traits that set them apart. Aedion is bisexual, Nesryn has a heritage that is distinctly Asian and Nehemia's skin is black. In contrast to all of this, Chaol feels strikingly normal and that might exactly be his purpose. He remains steadily normal in the face of so many supernatural occurrences and forms in this

[28] This is very reminiscent of *Culhwch and Olwen* mentioned before.

way an easy link to the reader. This, almost forced, diversity is striking. In an interview Maas stated that she wished to write a world

> as interesting and diverse as possible … There are new characters coming in and I want it to be reflective of our world, which is so diverse, even though it's a fantasy world. Because it's pretty boring when everyone looks the same, acts the same … And part of what's really great about writing this giant, sweeping fantasy world is that I can just create so many different cultures and have readers connect with different people and places. ("Interview: Sarah J Maas at Supanova, Part Two")

Maas seems to take up Petzold's applicative mode of fantasy most openly by very purposefully taking up the social and religious themes that come with a diversity in cast.

While Maas' characters take after those of Feist in terms of their individuality based on skill or traits, they differ from both Feist and Williams in terms of agency when their narrative threads are not intertwined with others. Feist's characters are hardly ever alone, his focus was on the story that occurred when the characters were together. Williams did present characters wandering alone, but his characters were generally miserable while doing so. A reader only has to read the beginning of *The Dragonbone Chair* to realise how unhappy Simon is after he leaves the Hayholt by himself. Maas' characters show a bit more strength when they are out alone. Celaena has obviously spent many years surrounded by individuals that she did not trust and her job as an assassin also demands a high level of individual acting. She is used to take care of herself and this is what she does. Even in later books when she has many friends that surround her, she keeps her plans secret. Similarly, other characters take their own fate in their own hands. Manon spends a large part of the story acting on her own. She has to fight the wyvern Titus by herself, chooses to find out the secret of Morath on her

own and keeps most of her plans hidden from her companions. Lorcan has been out by himself ever since Maeve send him to fetch the Wyrdkeys, before he met Elide he did not have any friends or family.

Even though these characters are extremely capable of handling things on their own because of their powers and their background, this does not mean that they wish to be by themselves nor does it imply that the characters do not need others to succeed. Quite the opposite. For many characters, a defining moment in the story is this realisation that they do not want to be alone and that they need help, that they cannot solve their problems alone. Aelin's unhappiness with the initial adventure is made clear when she states:

> She had often wished for adventure for old spells and wicked kings. But she hadn't realized it would be like this — a fight for her freedom. And she'd always imagined that there'd be someone to help her — a loyal friend or a one-armed soldier or something. She hadn't imagined she would be so… alone. (ToG 218-9)

Dorian notes that "were it not for Chaol, he would have felt immensely lonely" (129) despite the fact that he is surrounded by people all the time. Nehemia states to Aelin that she deceived her initially but that later she chose to hang out with Aelin "because I wanted a friend. Because I liked you" (378). In *Heir of Fire*, Aelin's immense relief when Rowan shows up to help her does not come from the fact that she was in mortal danger but from the fact "He hadn't left her alone. She hadn't been alone" (HoF 170). The same feeling emerges later in the same novel when Rowan and Aelin together stand against the army of Valg: "He had come for her" (473).

Throughout the novels the greatest insight that Aelin and many other characters experience is the fact that they need to admit to themselves that they need others. The

characters are simply stronger when they stand beside each other, fight harder when they know that there is something to lose. Dorian's powers start to come to fruition when he has to protect others. They appear when Aelin attacks Chaol, when a creature comes out of a portal and attacks Celaena, Chaol and Dorian, and they appear most powerfully when the King tries to kill Chaol. The desire to protect, we find it in Dorian but also in Aelin, in Rowan and Lorcan, in Lysandra and Aedion, and we find that characters who have others around them are more capable of standing up against characters that stand alone.

Secondly, returning to the initial starting point of characteristics that mark the relationships between characters in relation to cooperative heroism, Maas places a large emphasis on oaths that bind certain characters together and on acts of kindness that have lasting consequences. Much of this emphasis boils down to the question: why do characters like each other and why do they fight for each other?

The last section of *Empire of Storms* describes a battle between Aelin's court and that of Queen Maeve and one by one allies of Aelin start appearing on the battlefield. This entire section is incredibly interesting when considering it from the point of cooperation based on affection, loyalty and kindness. Maas creates a stark contrast between Aelin and Maeve which is based on the way how they have gained their supporters and how they treat the people that fight for them. At the start of the story Maeve has six legendary Fae warriors serving under her because of a bloodoath that binds them to her. The bloodoath is not just a claim of loyalty, it is a magically binding oath and enforces the will of the master on the subject whenever the master wishes. In this way Maeve can command her warriors to do anything she likes. "'Rowan belongs to me,' Maeve hissed. 'I can do what I wish with him'" (HoF 513) As Maas explores the reason these six warriors took this bloodoath, the reader gets in an increasingly negative image of this pact. Rowan took it after his mate died, something Maeve set in motion. Fenrys took it to protect his twin brother, as part of his oath he has to warm the bed of

the queen every night. Lorcan took it because of his love for Maeve, a love that was never returned and always abused. In none of these instances was the oath taken because of a positive emotion and it feels unsurprising that the Fae warriors end up attempting to betray the queen.

Aelin, interestingly enough, makes use of the same oath. It is an ancient tradition among the people of Terrasen to have one person bound to the Queen with this oath forged in blood. Aedion was predestined to fulfil this position, but circumstances made it so that she bound Rowan to herself. However, in this case the oath was not forced on by negative emotions or the fact that Aelin needed this to happen. In fact she is against him taking the oath, but Rowan insists:

> [Aelin] *I don't want you enslaved to me. I won't be that kind of queen.*
> [Rowan] *You have no court — you are defenseless, landless, and without allies. She might let you walk out of here today, but she could come after you tomorrow. She knows how powerful I am — how powerful we are together. It will make her hesitate. Please don't do this — I will give you anything else you ask, but not this.*
> *I claim you, Aelin. To whatever end.* (HoF 516, original italics)

As such, where Maeve's oath was based on negativity, Aelin's oath is based on positivity. It was based on previously gained affection and trust between the two. This affection is characteristic of the unity of Aelin's court, the official term that Maas uses for the group of direct friends that follow Aelin into battle. It is a court marked by the affection between the characters and the trust they put in each other. Unlike Maeve's court which seems to be ruled by Maeve's iron fist, Aelin's court is marked by an understanding for each other and a selfless need to protect the ones around you. What Maas shows time and time again is that ruling by

fear and by demanding obedience without allowing for conversation between members involved leads to defeat. We see this also with the King of Adarlan. Chaol notes: "Once, he might have protested that his loyalty to the crown was his greatest asset. But that blind loyalty and obedience had started this descent. And it had destroyed everything" (CoM 314). Similarly, Manon rebels against her grandmother and against Duke Perrington in Morath because she is excluded, because she does not have a say, and because she does not agree with the way the witches are now suddenly underlings for the King of Adarlan. Yet, she follows Aelin in *Empire of Storm* and proclaims loudly that she will "find the Crochans. And I am going to raise an army with them. For Aelin Galathynius, and her people. And for ours" (674).

Maas strongly enforces the idea that, as did Williams with Simon before her, good deeds will always have positive repercussions. Much of the affection that exists between the various characters, and much what drives Manon to proclaim that she will help Aelin, is based on acts of kindness and on, something that Maas tends to call, life debts. These acts of kindness are selfless actions that a character did not have to do but felt morally obliged to do so for some reason or another.[29] A good example of them is the three way interaction between Aelin, Manon, and Dorian, three characters that have no direct reasons to become allies in this battle. In *Queen of Shadows* Aelin battles Manon and manages to defeat her before the witch can plummet to her death in a ravine, however, Aelin saves her. She mentions she did this because "[Asterin] screamed Manon's name the way I screamed yours [Rowan's]… How can I take away somebody who means the world to someone else? Even if she's my enemy" (QoS 508). Manon now owes Aelin a life debt. Because of this Manon leaves a message for Aelin on the walls of Rifthold's castle. She tell Aelin, Dorian's spirit is still inside of him. She also chooses not to kill Dorian when she has the chance. Because Manon did not kill Dorian,

[29] This idea of performing selfless actions can also be seen in medieval romances such as in the tale of Yvain, the Knight of the Lion.

Dorian stops Aelin's court from killing her when she arrives on Aelin's ship, wounded and near death.

We see other acts of unselfish kindness in Aelin's gift to Lysandra, setting her free from being a courtesan, and in Manon's reasoning for saving the heir of the Yellowlegs clan. Many other life debts can also be found in the prequel novel to the Throne of Glass series *The Assassin's Blade* (2014) and they are the reason that Aelin's allies show up at the end of *Empire of Storms*. She did not kill Ansel who became queen of the Wastes and she helped out the Silent Assassins, who rule the desert. All come to her aid as she called upon those debts. Rowan too calls upon previous friendships when he requests his cousins to sail against Maeve. All comply because they see the genuine care Rowan has for Aelin and how this stands in stark contrast with Maeve's way of ruling.

To conclude, what we see then when we read Maas is a combination of several elements that we found in Tolkien, Feist and Williams. This combination creates a narrative in which cooperation is intrinsic. The *Throne of Glass* series sets up a narrative that revolves around a predestined path for the characters to take, but it is not a path they can achieve by themselves, which is something that the characters have to learn over the course of the novels. Understanding the way the actions of all the characters fit into the larger framework of the story, Maas makes use of the technique of interlace much like the other authors. And much like Tolkien and Feist, she introduces narrative threads gradually as characters come in contact with other characters. By doing this the reader understands the relationships between these characters before they understand the conflict they exist in. At no point do we get a perspective of a character that knows more about the predestined plot than the information the reader has already uncovered with Aelin or Manon. As the narrative threads separate and the structure of the novel takes the form that we are now familiar with from the other discussed

authors, the reader keeps an understanding of the relationships of the characters and the individual roles they play in the larger framework of this narrative.

A successful cooperation between heroes develops in Maas' series because of loyalty, affection and because characters look out for each other. Cooperation based on negativity and enforced commands leads to disloyalty and betrayal as we see with the witches and with Queen Maeve. The honest cooperation that emerges between the heroes of the tale is built on the idea of 'you do something for me and so I will do something for you' that is emphasised throughout the entire series.[30] "[Aelin] would go to war for him" Aedion realises in *Queen of Shadows* (246) and indeed she would because the bond between these two cousins has been growing since Aelin was born. Aedion has always been there to have her back and now it is Aelin's turn to return the favour. This whole idea that good actions only have good repercussions seems very much in line with Petzold's desiderative mode of fantasy in which: 'this (secondary) world is better than our familiar world' (17.). Indeed out of all the authors, Maas seems to put the most emphasis on this mode. There certainly is an element of wish fulfilment in the idea that whenever you do something good, this kindness will be repaid as happens time and time again in this series.

The strong emphasis on individuality needs to be stressed once more as I would argue that it is a distinct product of our current time. Diversity plays a big part in the development of recent books, TV series and movies as issues of racism and sexuality play a big role in the society of today. Maas is not the only one who attempts to include as many differences as possible. Her way of killing Nehemia, a black woman, to set Aelin, a white woman, on her path to victory has gained a lot of negative attention from the fans on sites such as Tumblr, where Maas was called out on the fact that she is using a black character's death for the benefit of a white character. She is not the only writer to face these issues. Rick Riordan,

[30] Reminiscent of the Latin: "Do ut des" or "I give that you may give" in use both in the Roman period and in the medieval feudal system.

creator of the *Percy Jackson* series, very obviously included characters from all kinds of ethnicities and sexualities in his second series, *Heroes of the Olympus,* whereas he had used only white straight Americans in the first one. The recent TV-series *Iron Fist* was met with a lot of aggression from its viewers because of the fact that its main character was a rich white American and not of Asian descent. Diversity is something that is demanded of authors these days and Maas seems very much aware of it.

> Often by default I'll find myself writing a random side character (like a shop owner) and by default I'll make this person in power a man. I will then actively stop and go 'You know what? I'm going to make this a woman. A woman owning her own business or a female member of the guard. So I always try and add different sorts of diversity into my books. (""Interview: Sarah J Maas at Supanova, Part Two")

I would argue that this inherent need to be diverse and to have this cast of characters with individually tailored abilities demands a structure of cooperative heroism. Not one character is capable of finishing the story by him or herself since not one character has the abilities to do so. This is much in the spirit of Feist's characters in *Riftwar Saga*. "It was so much easier being alone" Aelin complains (QoS 252), and indeed Aelin did not have any responsibility to anyone when she was by herself, but despite all the complaining we can see her depending on other characters' abilities more and more as the story goes on. She needs others to complete her plans. It is not easier to be alone, especially not in the world of Maas where diversity is so important. Many of the individual traits of these characters complement each other; Rowan's air can contain Aelin's fire, Dorian's magic can withstand the force of the Valg princes. Much like Simon concluded in *Memory, Sorrow & Thorn*, each mote matters especially now that the characters are so diverse. There is no one else who can take

over the position of a character might he or she disappear. Maas' novels truly embody the idea that this essence of diversity leads to a state of togetherness. You need to be open to everyone from all walks of live to succeed in your own.

# Conclusion

In this thesis I worked on the topic of cooperative heroism, as introduced by Thomas Honegger, in relation to Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, to find out how this concept has developed in high fantasy fiction after Tolkien and what this means for what heroes in fantasy fiction represent in our current society. In order to do this, I read 6502 pages of fantasy fiction, separated into three series written by fantasy authors after Tolkien. From the individual chapters that were dedicated to these authors much could already be gleaned, but in this final chapter I would like to draw some general conclusions.

First of all, the perhaps obvious statement is that this version of cooperative heroism, first presented by Tolkien, has certainly been picked up by authors that followed. Raymond Feist, Tad Williams, and Sarah J. Maas have each created their own secondary worlds (Midkemia, Osten Ard, and Erilea) that have their own threats to face, be it an invasion from outside forces as seen in *The Riftwar Saga* or the return of an evil entity as happens in both *Memory, Sorrow & Thorn* and *Throne of Glass*. Within these secondary worlds, the authors have created a plethora of heroes that have to face this threat and all authors choose to do this in a similar fashion, making use of the structure set-up by Tolkien more than 60 years ago. No hero can face the threat by him- or herself even if they might want to. All heroes have to rely on others to help them navigate through the world and eventually reach a successful ending.

The hero teams that these writers use are also all marked by a similar affection that we found between the members of Tolkien's Fellowship. Some relations between characters exist because they grew up together and are situated in the same heroic mode. We see this in Pug and Tomas, Simon and Jeremias, and Dorian and Chaol. Much like the friendship between the hobbits, the loyalty, friendship and affection that exists between these characters comes from

growing up together. These friendships will remain important for the rest of the story and are a large reason of why these characters are so capable of working together.

We also see that all of these books deploy characters that could fit in different heroic modes as given by Northrop Frye. Most often characters fit within either the high mimetic or low mimetic mode, with occasional steps towards the mythic mode. However, just as in Tolkien, we find that loyalty, friendship, and affection starts developing between characters belonging to different modes as they progress through the narrative. The friendship Arutha forms with Pug is one example, but more interesting is his friendship with Jimmy, which clearly indicates how friendship can overcome differences in social class and status. The fact that Jimmy goes from a nobody in the streets of Krondor to personal squire of Arutha and trusted friend of the prince, indicates that his background as a thief does not matter. Simon and Josua feel much the same, where Simon's choice to save Josua puts the scullery boy in a favourable light with the prince, who will later knight him to make him an official part of his army. The relationship that Dorian builds with Sorcha would be another good example.

Regardless in what fashion these characters relate to each other – be it because of a childhood friendship, a chance meeting, or a relation based in duty and oaths – all of these bonds of affection are formed or strengthened by shared hardship. By experiencing adventures *together* instead of by themselves, the characters learn to put faith in each other's capabilities. The adventures connect them in such a way that when the narrative breaks the hero teams apart, as inevitably happens in all of the stories that were discussed, the characters strive to come back together again. Simon searches endlessly for Binabik after he loses him in a snowstorm. Rowan admits that his ulterior motive for coming to Rifthold was because he missed Aelin. Pug thinks he can live happily on Kelewan, but finds that he cannot forget his own world, cannot forget his own friends. Characters might be on solo-exploits, but their hearts stay with their friends, family, lords, and lovers.

Secondly, there is the perhaps obvious conclusion that this form of cooperative heroism apparently seems to work in the sense that readers are clearly interested in reading about multiple heroes. I have already indicated how popular these works were and still are in the world of fantasy fiction. The fact that these series have such a large audience gives a clear indication that this type of heroism is successful. It is not only there three series which prove this. The argument can be extended to, for example, Robert Jordan's *Wheel of Time* and Terry Goodkind's *Sword of Truth* series. I would argue that part of their popularity, just as with the series I discussed in this thesis, comes from their carefully set up cooperation between various individuals.

Thirdly, as I have attempted to show in the last three chapters themselves, all the authors have picked up the structure of interlace, as used by Tolkien, to help the reader understand that these characters work together even when apart and that the individual actions that a character takes, take place in a larger framework. Different authors do make different use of this structure. Both Feist and Maas opt to introduce various story-lines as the reader encounters more characters. We start with Pug and switch to Tomas as soon as the two boys are forced to go separate ways. We read how Aelin meets Dorian and only after the reader has been better acquainted with Aelin, we switch to Dorian's perspective. This gradual opening up of perspectives allows for a gradual understanding of how characters relate to each other and how their relationships are defined. Williams chooses a different approach, he chooses to introduce a plethora of characters right at the beginning, some of which have a clear connection to each other, but also others who remain unaware of each other's existence for a long time. Simon, growing up in the Hayholt, has had contact with Josua, Towser and other people that live in the same castle. He is, however, unaware of the existence of Maegwin and Tiamak until the end of *To Green Angel Tower*. Williams manages to give a wider and more

inclusive perspective of the world and the events that transpire because of this structure, which even includes the perspectives of the bad guy that supposedly needs to be defeated.

In all cases, the structure used by these authors allows the reader to understand the importance of the cooperation between the various characters to bring the story to a good conclusion. By opening up the story to different perspectives, the reader is forced to realise that without the individual actions of each of these characters, the plot might not have come to a good conclusion. This stands in stark contrast with Malory's use of interlace, where this structure allows the reader to understand the importance of the individuality of each knight.

What should also be mentioned is that there are, of course, also many novels within the fantasy genre that do not use the interlace structure and rather opt to keep the narrative focused on one character, either because they are told in the first person or because of other narrative reasons. I am certainly not arguing that if a book does not make use of this interlaced structure that the book is not professing an idea of cooperative heroism. If we were to look at Maas' other series; *A Court of Thorns and Roses* (2015 - present day), which uses a strict first person perspective, we see that there too, Maas makes use of the same ideas that can be found in the *Throne of Glass* series, including the diversity, inclusivity and the need to have a group of people beside you to fight the enemy. Stepping outside the realm of pure secondary worlds fictions for a moment, we see the same thing with the *Harry Potter* series, where the idea that you cannot beat the bad guy by yourself, as it depends on the actions of many, is also very much present.

However, what I will argue is that a singular perspective does lead to a much more centralised focus on this main protagonist whereas a focus on multiple perspectives facilitates cooperative heroism because it immediately puts the focus on various different characters. Harry is the chosen one and in the end, he has to defeat Voldemort by himself as the prophesy foretold. *A Court of Thorns and Roses*'s main character Feyre feels much the same. She has to

break the ancient curse, she gets endowed with all the powers of the Fae, etcetera. Unfortunately, the discussion surrounding the differences between singular and multiple perspectives in relation to cooperative heroism will have to be postponed to a future research project.

Lastly, and most importantly, what was really striking in this research was the emphasis that these individual authors put on individuality and diversity that has to exist within their groups, something Tolkien did not do. This goes especially for Feist and Maas, who seem to be similar in many regards. Tolkien certainly created memorable and interesting characters with his Fellowship, but these characters are not extremely diverse. The hobbits do not have specific individual traits that make them stand out from each other. Feist, who based his works around a world created in the famous RPG *Dungeons and Dragons*, gives each of his main characters a personal skill based on the various classes found in the original game. Pug is a magician, Tomas has the powers of an ancient lost race, Arutha is a good fighter and leader, Martin's skills with a bow are unmatched, and Jimmy's affinity with sneaking and stealing make him unique. Maas, too, gives each character something individual, but moves beyond just specific skills. Aelin, Rowan, Dorian, and the other Fae might have specific magical capabilities, but Maas also creates differences based on sexuality and ethnicity, or by placing females in roles that are traditionally taken by male characters and vice versa. These individual capabilities are strengths that make these characters unique and it makes it so that the other characters come to depend on them. Pug needs Tomas to help him free Marcos. Arutha needed Martin's archery to escape during a boat chase. Rowan's air can be used to repress Aelin's fire and without Lysandra's shapeshifting capabilities all the characters would have no doubt drowned at sea.

We also see Williams use the differences of different characters as a strength, though Williams is far less focused on specific abilities of different characters. Still, Miriamele and

Isgrimnur are dependent on Tiamak because he is the only one who knows the way through the swamp. Simon and Sludig are dependent on Binabik because he is the only one that knows the language of the trolls. Camaris is the only one who can truly wield the sword Thorn.

In all these cases, the diversity in cast is the strength of the new fantasy novel, which stands in contrast to the earlier texts that I discussed. In Malory we see that all the knights are function-wise the exact same. They have similar combat skills, they all stand in a similar position in the world, being of noble birth, and they all generally act in a similar fashion. All knights fulfil the same role, even Lancelot, who is, in the end, just simply better at everything than anyone else, but still carries the same skills as all the other knights. Diversity is not a strength found in Malory, nor is it in the *Argonautica* where individual heroes with impressive powers such as Heracles and Orpheus are pushed aside.

The topics of individuality and diversity are also found in our society today. Nowadays, extra praise is given to movies, TV series, or books that have a large diversity in cast (Burt). There is a strong sense of wanting to be unique, but at the same time we wish to be part of a group. In *Socialnomics: How Social Media Transforms the Way We Live and Do Business,* Scott Monty explains:

> The great paradox is that this swat of society that is seemingly narcissistic and navel-gazing is also one of the most collaborative and community-minded when it comes to cause-related efforts. They want to be part of something bigger than themselves. They want to make a difference in this world, and they believe in the collective power of the crowd (quoted from Qualman xvi)

These ideas resonate with the ideas we found reflected in the heroes present in the fantasy literature that I have discussed.

It is important to note that in many ways this thesis is very limited in its research and it would be impossible to draw large overarching conclusions from just three examples. A close look at more examples would already give a broader insight, but there are also other areas into which research into cooperative heroism and the values that recent heroes in fantasy fiction represent could be expanded. In this thesis, I have limited myself to works of fantasy that take place within a pure secondary world, since it is easier for new values to be explored in worlds that have no immediate connection to the primary world of the reader. However, plenty of fantasy fiction is based on a direct connection to the primary world. *The Chronicles of Narnia,* Pullman's *His Dark Materials,* and works such as Riordan's *Percy Jackson* and *Harry Potter* could all serve as interesting case studies to see how authors use new values in fantasy that in some way depend on their direct connection to the primary world.

In my thesis I have limited myself to a more author driven research. I have looked at the inspirations authors took and their stances on points such as diversity and inclusively. A more reader-driven research on the topic of cooperative heroism would be interesting. The fact that these fantasy authors present the reader with such a diverse cast means that there is the hope that the reader can always identify with at least one. There will always be one character for each type of reader. For those that are a fan of characters adhering to the old ideal of a sword-fighting knight we have Arutha, Josua, and Aedion. Aedion, who is also bisexual, is an important addition to the recent character diversity. Those who enjoy characters with magic will find themselves eagerly reading about Pug, the members of the League of Scroll, and all the Fae with their individual powers. Aelin is also especially interesting for female readers who can find in her a strong female main character who stands up for herself. Attempts are made to represent characters of different ethnicities, something

also absent from Tolkien's work. Feist's people from Kelewan feel distinctly Japanese and Williams took inspiration from many different cultures in the world to shape the different countries in Osten Ard. Maas' desert characters feel Arabian and Nehemia is obviously modelled after a woman of African descent. It would be interesting to see how readers work with these diverse casts, if they prefer it and if so, why?

In the end, I have shown that cooperative heroism is something that these authors have either consciously or unconsciously picked up from Tolkien's writing. I have shown that they have changed the parameters Tolkien set for this cooperation to better fit their respective times and the ideals and values that they wish to portray. In many ways, the new hero professed in these novels beyond Tolkien is an individual that can only exist within a group and needs a group to function. The fantasy novels that I have discuss propagate an idea of inclusively, an understanding that everyone has unique capabilities and that all these capabilities are equally necessary. For the hero to succeed, he needs to be an individual, but he also needs others to be an individual with. Each hero has something unique, but without others to complement this uniqueness, he or she is not going to be able to achieve anything. In a society that is continuously occupied with issues of individuality, diversity and inclusivity and how difficult these issues can be, it is telling that the new hero is one who propagates both this uniqueness and the idea that together we stand stronger than alone.

# Appendix 1 – *The Riftwar Saga*

**Summary:**

*Magician*:

Young orphan boy Pug works as a kitchen boy in the castle of the Duke of Crydee, situated in the Kingdom of Isles on Midkemia, and spends most of his time with his best friend Tomas. It is tradition in Crydee that every year boys of the right age participate in 'the Choosing', in which masters choose their new apprentices from the line-up of boys. During the Choosing, Tomas gets chosen to be apprentice of the swordmaster Fannon. Pug is chosen by the magician of the Duke: Kulgan. His training with this new master, however, is abruptly interrupted by the arrival of a strange ship on the beaches of Crydee, a ship that brings a foreigner from an entirely different world to the city. Within months thousands and thousands of these foreigners, now known as the Tsurani, appear within the Kingdom attacking the local inhabitants. To combat this threat, the Duke of Crydee sets out to ask for help. His traveling party consists of the Duke; Lord Borric, his son Arutha, his Huntsmaster Martin, as well as Kulgan, Pug, who has become the Duke's squire, and Tomas. The party meets with much misfortune on the way. They are send into the mines by dark elves where they lose Tomas. They encounter the mad King who does not take their words serious, and during their way back Pug is lost to them in a raid. Whereas Tomas ends up with the dwarves and eventually the elves, Pug is captured by the enemy and taken to Kelewan. Being held captive for four years as a slave, Pug eventually gets the attention of those that the Tsurani call 'Great Ones', practisers of the Greater Path of magic. Pug spends years learning this craft, becoming the first Midkemian Great One. Meanwhile on Midkemia, Arutha, Martin, and Tomas have spent years fighting off the Tsurani army. Pug returns to his homeland to help Kasumi, who devised a secret plan to get the Emperor of the Tsurani to talk with the King of the Kingdom of Isles

in the hope of creating peace. Before any of this can definitely happen the King is slain and Lyam, Borric's eldest son is named Heir. He has a meeting with the Tsurani Emperor, but the truce dissolves into chaos when Tomas, under command of Macros the Black who has been playing a far longer game and has been working behind the scenes for a long time, attacks the Tsurani forces. Together with Pug, Macros closes the rift between Kelewan and Midkemia, leaving countless Tsurani forces among which Kasumi stranded on Midkemia. In the aftermath of the war, Lyam reveals to the public that Martin was Lord Borric's oldest son. He offers Martin the throne of the Kingdom, but Martin refuses and peace returns to Midkemia for a year.

*Silverthorn:*

After the crowning of Lyam, Martin has become Duke of Crydee and Arutha Duke of Krondor. Arutha is now engaged to Princess Anita. In the streets of Krondor, Jimmy the Hand finds that a Nighthawk, an assassin, is targeting the young Duke. The boy decides to dispatch of the assassin and reports the incident to the Duke. As a reward Arutha makes the boy his Squire. As he is performing his duties during Arutha's wedding, Jimmy spots another assassin. Incapable of stopping the guy completely, the assassin manages to shoot Anita, poisoning her. Upon interrogating the attacker they find out that an enemy with the name of Murmandamus has been granting life back to those who have died. He also explains that they need a plant called Silverthorn to cure Anita. Immediately Arutha sets out with Jimmy and Martin and a few others to find the antidote. Their quest leads them to Morealin, the black lake, where the weed is supposed to grow. They infiltrate the area and manage to take hold of the weed after an extensive fight. Arutha and his party return to Krondor safely where they cure Anita.

Meanwhile Pug has been facing servants of Murmandamus as well. Through a vision from a seer, he learns about the destruction that happened in the past of the Tsurani. Believing that the solution lies on Kelewan, Pug finds a way back to the other world where he meets with his friends. When he gets captures and tortured he finds out that he still has access to both the Greater as well as the Lesser path of magic. As such he escapes and travels to the north of the Tsurani lands to find the ones that are called the Watchers.

*A Darkness at Sethanon*:

Arutha has faked his own assassination in an attempt to get closer to Murmandamus who is still sending his men to pursue him and his family. In secret he, Jimmy, Martin, and a few others set out to kill him. On their way to the north, however, they get captured by the man of Guy du Bas-Trya, Arutha's cousin. They are taken to Guy's city and after coming to an understanding Arutha helps Guy defend his city against the armies of Murmandamus. Days of battle go by but the city is lost. Guy makes the decision to burn the place to the ground to stop the advancement of the army for awhile. The group decides to travel to Sethanon where they believe the next attack will be.

Pug and Tomas have been on a quest to find an Oracle. Upon finding the woman they are informed that they need to find Macros the Black, the man they thought dead, in order to defeat the enemy. With the help of a dragon they travel to the outskirts of space and time to find Macros caught in a trap. They managed to escape the trap and Tomas, through his connection to the Valheru can explain to the group who the Enemy is and how they need to destroy them. Murmandamus' plan is to bring the banished Valheru back to this world so that they can rule it once more. They rush to Sethanon to find an item called the Lifestone. This stone has the power to bring back the Valheru. As the armies clash outside, Pug, Macros, Tomas and Arutha rush to the interior of the city where the Lifestone is located. While Tomas

fights off the already appeared Valheru, Pug and Macros focus on the rift that is opening, and Arutha is forced to battle Murmandamus by himself. In the end, they all manage to defeat their enemy and make sure that no rift was opened to bring the Valheru in this world. The army that was left over is defeated and Macros exclaims that Pug and Tomas are now the official defenders of Midkemia. The sorcerer had seen the Valheru threat coming for a long time and had spent all his efforts until now to make sure this would not happen. Now that his task is done he leaves and the world is safe once again.

**Characters:**

Pug – An orphan boy at the Court of Crydee, Pug earns his keep by being a kitchen boy. In the general scope of the court he is entirely unremarkable. He does have an innate talent for magic which catches the eye of Kulgan, magician at the Court of Crydee. He is pushed towards a certain destiny by Macros.

Tomas – Close friend of Pug. Where as Pug had an inherent talent for magic, Tomas has a knack for fighting with a blade. Chosen by Fannon, the swordmaster, at a young age, he has always prepared to be a soldier. He wears the armour and sword of the Valheru Ashen-Shugar, giving him a unique connection to this ancient race.

Arutha conDoin – Youngest son of Duke Borric of Crydee, later Duke of Krondor. Arutha is a tactical commander and good fighter. His practicality and will to serve his people and protect the ones he care about make him a well-liked ruler among his people.

Martin Longbow – First son of Duke Borric of Crydee, Crydee's Huntmaster and later Duke of Crydee. Raised in a monastery with the elves, Martin Longbow's origins have been shrouded in mystery. He himself has always been aware of his origin, but has chosen to keep the fact that he is Duke Borric's first son a secret. Extremely skilled with a bow.

Jimmy the Hand – Former thief and squire of Prince Arutha. Starting out as part of the Mockers, the thieves in Krondor, Jimmy's faith is changed when he meets Arutha. Jimmy is exceptionally skilled as a thief.

Macros the Black – Magician. Cursed with an unnatural long life, Macros has foreseen the Tsurani invasion and the return of the Valheru to Midkemia. As such he has pushed both Pug and Tomas to a destiny that they have to make their own.

# Appendix 2 – *Memory, Sorrow & Thorn*

**Summary:**

*The Dragonbone Chair*

Simon, a fourteen year old scullery boy in castle Hayholt, becomes the apprentice of Doctor Morgenes, healer and wizard of the Hayholt. As he spends his time doing chores and learning how to read and writer, King John dies. His son Elias succeeds to the throne and shortly afterwards his younger brother Josua disappears. Simon manages to find Josua in the castle dungeons and he and Morgenes successfully free the prince, allowing the man to flee the castle. Simon and Morgenes, in turn, are attacked by Elias' soldiers under the guidance of Pryrates, an evil cleric who is corrupting Elias' mind. Morgenes is slain and Simon flees the castle with only the doctor's biography of King John. As he flees, Simon encounters Pryrates performing dark magic together with the Norns. He runs and heads north towards Naglimund. On the way there he saves a Sitha, elven like people, from certain death and meets Binabik, a troll. Simon and Binabik continue the road together and meet with Princess Miriamele, in disguise, and travel with her to Naglimund. When they arrive it is explained by Jarnauga, a member of the League of the Scroll, that there exist three legendary swords: Memory, Sorrow, and Thorn. Combining the magic in these swords will be the only way to beat the Storm King, an ancient Sitha who now strives to return to this land. Simon, Binabik, and a group of soldiers set out to recover Thorn, the legendary sword of Camaris. They are joined by Jiriki, the Sitha Simon saved, and together they managed to battle a dragon and reclaim the sword.

Meanwhile, Naglimund falls to the armies of King Elias. Josua escapes the castle with only 11 people, among which his wife and Deornoth, his sworn sword. Miriamele has set of to find help in Nabban together with the monk Cadrach. Duke Isgrimnur is send to fetch the girl and return her to Josua.

*Stone of Farewell*

After defeating the dragon, Binabik is caught and jailed by his tribe due to breaking one of their laws. Simon attempts to help Binabik escape so that can return Thorn to Josua and finds help in Binabik's fiancée Sisqi. Together they managed to exonerate Binabik and they are allowed to leave. On the way home, Simon, Binabik, and Sludig, the only soldier from the original group who is left, are attacked by a witch. In the confusion, Simon looses Binabik and Sludig. The latter two, after being unable to find Simon, take Thorn and continue their journey. Simon calls upon Jiriki using the mirror he got from him and is saved by the appearance of Jiriki's sister Aditu. She takes him to Jao é-Tinukai'i, the Sithi city, where Simon is told to remain forever. Amerasu, the Sithi leader, probes Simon's mind for information about the Storm King's plans. As she reveals these plans to the rest of the Sithi, a servant of the Storm King appears and murders Amerasu before she can reveal the Storm King's plans. Simon is released from the Sithi city and travels to the Stone of Farewell.

Meanwhile, Josua and his group of followers are wandering the Aldheorte Forest, chased by the Norns. He meets Geloë, the forest woman who saved Simon before, who tells them they should travel to the Stone of Farewell. Miriamele is still travelling with Cadrach, but gets captured by the Count of Perduin. He delivers her to Dinivan, a member of the League of the Scroll. But the enemy has followed them and murders Dinivan, forcing Cadrach and Miriamele to escape and hide on the ship of Aspitis Preves, ally of Elias. Not far behind them, Duke Isgrimnur is still searching for Miriamele and stumbles upon both Tiamak, another member of the League of Scrolls, and Sir Camaris, the greatest knight of this era who was thought to have died forty years ago.

*To Green Angel Tower*

Everyone has been gathered at the Stone of Farewell to make a stance against Elias' armies. The remaining members of the League of the Scroll are trying to unravel an ancient prophesy to help slay the Storm King. They come to the realisation that King John's famous sword Bright-Nail, the sword that was buried with him, is actually the sword Memory. To get it, however, they will have to return to the Hayholt which is impossible with the forces marching towards them. As the battle commences, Josua's armies, aided by the trolls and later also the Sithi, manage to defeat Elias' armies.

Miriamele and Cadrach manage to escape the ship and run into Duke Isgrimnur, Tiamak, and Camaris. Together they set out to travel back to Josua. To do so they have to embark on a perilous journey through the large swamp that Tiamak calls his home. After much hardship the group manages to make it to Josua. Miriamele wishes to talk to her father in an attempt to pursue him to stop this war. She leaves the Stone of Farewell together with Simon, who wishes to get Memory from King John's grave. They are joined by Binabik and together they make it to the Hayholt. Simon manages to find Memory, but the pull of the sword is taking control of him and leads him to the top of Green Angel Tower, where also Elias with Sorrow and Camaris with Thorn are gathered. The three swords are brought together and the Storm King starts to reform. The prophesy turns out to be fake, send by the Storm King himself, to bring the swords together so that he could revert time and bring himself back from the death. Simon, however, forgives the Storm King and manages to break away. Miriamele stabs her father and the ritual fails. The tower collapses and the Storm King disappears, bringing peace back to the world. Simon marries Miriamele and becomes King of Osten Ard.

**Characters:**

Simon Snowlock — Scullery boy in the Hayholt. He turns out to be the son of the previous lines of kings that sat on the throne of Osten Ard. He is called Snowlock because of the white chalk of hair that he got after he killed a dragon with Thorn.

Binabik — Troll and member of the League of Scroll. Binabik had been send out by his master to find Doctor Morgenes and Simon. By leaving his home up north, he broke their law and is thus a fugitive. He rides on a wolf named Quantaqa.

Miriamele — Daughter of Elias and Princess of the Osten Ard. Disguised as a boy, Miriamele has run into Simon several times in the Hayholt. As the story progresses she gradually falls in love with Simon and ends up becomes Queen at Simon's side.

Josua Lackhand — Second son of King John. He gained the name Lackhand because he lost his right hand in a unfortunate event that also killed his brother Elias' wife. The two have never reconciled after that.

Jiriki — Sitha Prince. Saved by Simon early in the books, Jiriki gives the boy a white arrow, meaning that he owes Simon a life debt.

Pryratus — Cleric and councillor of Elias. He first laid contact with the Storm King on accident on the Dream road when he attempted to connect to Elias' dead wife. He got enthralled by the power that the Storm King could offer and vowed to bring him back to life.

Elias — First son of King John, later King of Osten Ard. Elias grew mad after the death of his wife and turned to Pryratus in an attempt to get her back. As the power of the Storm King grows, Elias' body wanes, ready to be taken over by the Storm King.

Storm King / Ineluki — Sitha of old. Ineluki turned to the dark arts when his younger brother was injured after fighting a dragon. He died defending the Hayholt, then a Sithi city, with a couple of followers, but his spirit somehow lived on in the Dream Road.

# Appendix 3 – *Throne of Glass*

**Summary:**

*Throne of Glass*

Celaena Sardothien, Adarlan's Assassin, is released from the prisoner camp Endovier by Dorian Havilliard who wishes her to be his Champion in a contest devised by Dorian's father, the King of Adarlan. She has to face off against 23 other competitors to claim the title of King's Champion, who will take care of the King's less savoury business. During the contest Celaena becomes friends Dorian and Chaol, the captain of the guard who trains her. She also makes friends with Nehemia, princess of the recently conquered Eyllwe. As the competition progresses, it seems that something strange is afoot with champions dying off one by one, many of them seemingly clawed apart by an unknown animal. Celaena starts investigating the strange happenings and finds a strange tomb hidden behind a secret door in her room. It is the tomb of the first king and queen of Adarlan, Gavin and Elena. The ghost of Elena starts visiting Celaena in her dreams, explaining to Celaena that below the dark clock tower lays a portal that links this world to another dimension. Since magic was banished from the lands years ago this understandably confuses Celaena, but after being urged by Elena, who tells her that something evil has entered the castle, she sets out to stop the monster. She figures out that one of the champions has been summoning the monster from the portal and manages to beat him during her final fight in the competition. Celaena becomes the King's Champion with the King's final words that he will kill everyone she loves if she ends up not obeying him.

*Crown of Midnight*

Celaene is fulfilling her role as the King's Champion by performing assassinations on his orders. However, unbeknownst to the King, Celaena has actually been faking the deaths of her targets, giving these good people a way out of the city. Her next target is Archer Finn, a suspected rebel leader who is attempting to track down Aelin Galathynius, lost princess of Terassen. As Celaena spends the time trying to figure out what he knows and how to get him out of the city and fake his death, her relationship with Chaol blooms. Their happiness does not last long as Chaol is kidnapped by Archer. After Celaena murders her way through Archer's henchmen, Archer tells her that he has been working with Nehemia to assemble a rebel force against the king. For this reason the King is going interrogate Nehemia, something Chaol was aware of. Celaena rushes back to the castle, but finds Nehemia dead in her room. During her quest to find Nehemia's killer, Celaena meets a witch who helps her solve a riddle she found in Elena's tomb. The riddle turns out to be tied to the Wyrdkeys, three items that can be used to open the Wyrdgate. It turns out that the King owns potentially two keys, making it incredibly important that he does not get the third. In a moment of confusion and grief, Celaena summons Nehemia's spirit from another world, accidentally releasing an evil creature. To fight the beast, Dorian has to reveal his magic powers that have manifested during the course of the story and Celaena has to shift into her true form: Fae. With the knowledge that Celaena is Fae, Chaol tries to get her away from Adarlan and convinces the King to send her to Wendlyn. As she leaves, he finds out who Celaena really is: Aelin Galathynius.

*Heir of Fire*

In Wendlyn, Celaena runs into Rowan, Fae of the court of Maeve, Celaena's aunt. Maeve tells Celaena that she will tell her everything about the Wyrdkeys if Celaena shows off

her magic. To achieve this Celaena starts training with Rowan. Back in Adarlan, Chaol meets with Aedion Ashryver, Celaena's cousin and general of the King's army. Secretly however, Aedion has always remained loyal to Terassen. Together with several others, Aedion and Chaol figure out that magic was banished because of a triangulated spell between three towers in Rifthold, the Frozen Wastes, and the Deserted Peninsula. Dorian keeps expanding his powers with the help of Sorscha, a nurse in the castle.

We are introduced to three witch clans who have come together to fight for the King of Adarlan, who offered them wyvern mounts. Manon Blackbeak, leader of the Thirteen, finds her mount in Abraxos.

Celaena and Rowan investigate a couple of brutal murders and discovered that they have been committed by the creatures of another world named the Valg, the demon race who forged the Wyrdkeys long ago. The Valg army attacks the fort in which Celaena and Rowan were staying and they only narrowly survive the attack. Having decided that Celaena's training is done, she and Rowan travel to Maeve, who tells Celaena that the Wyrdkeys cannot be destroyed, only put back in the Wyrdgates. With some clever tactics, Celaena manages to trick Maeve into releasing Rowan from her service and the two leave together.

The King of Adarlan summons Dorian, Chaol, Sorscha, and Aedion to his throne room and confronts them about their intentions to overthrow him. Aedion tries to sacrifice himself and gets captured. Sorscha turns out to be the real spy and is executed on the spot. Dorian, devastated by her death, stops his father from killing Chaol with his magic. The King then forces a magical necklace on Dorian's neck, trapping a Valg prince in his body and leaving the prince under the King's control.

*Queen of Shadows*

Aelin returns to Rifthold and finds out that Aedion will be executed in three days' time. Aelin's old master, Arobynn, offers to help to set him free if she will bring him a Valg creature in return. Aelin sets up a plan with Chaol and Nesryn, another guard. Dorian has been unable to remember who he is ever since the Valg prince has taken over his body. During the escape, Aelin encounters Dorian and the two fight but Aelin does not kill him. With Aedion saved, Aelin has to find a Valg to deliver to Arobynn. As they hatch a plan to do this, Rowan turns up in Rifthold. He tells that he is here because Lorcan, another Fae warrior, has been send by Maeve to find the Wyrdkey. The two capture a Valg and present it to Arobynn. He hands over the third Wyrdkey to her. Nesryn informs the group that the King has been building an army of dark soldiers, witches, and wyverns in Morath.

Manon has been forced by Duke Perrington to choose one of the witches' covens for breeding with the Valg in the hope of creating new, stronger creatures. She chooses a group of Yellowlegs. Manon finds Elide, a servant girl, cleaning her room and finds out that Elide has witchblood in her veins. She asks Elide to find out what is really happening to the Yellowlegs and Elide finds out the witches are chained to tables, ready to give birth a second time, begging to be released. Despite pleas of her second in command, Asterin, Manon does not free the Yellowlegs. Meanwhile Elide plans to escape and meet up with Aelin.

Aelin and her allies meet up to rescue Lysandra who had been kidnapped and find themselves standing against Dorian and the witches. Aelin and Manon fight, but neither of them die. The team then sets out to destroy the clock tower in the hope of bringing magic back to the land so that they can properly face Erawan. Rowan and Aedion manage to blow up the tower, releasing magic back into the world. Dorian and Aelin fight, but Dorian manages to wrestle free from the Valg's control when the King informs him that he has killed Chaol. Aelin manages to kill the King but not before he informs them that he was not the

mastermind behind this plan. Erawan is already free in this world under the guise of Duke Perrington.

*Empire of Storms*

While Elide is tracking north, Aelin, Rowan, Aedion and Lysandra are attempting to convince the nobles of Terrasen to give Aelin the throne. They refuse. Meanwhile the witches are flying to attack Rifthold and Aelin sends Rowan to help out. Rowan and Dorian are unable to protect Rifthold and escape to the Skull's Bay where they meet with Captain Rolfe. They ask him to join, Rolfe refuses and brings in two Fae warriors: Gavriel and Fenrys who have been send to hunt Lorcan. They inform Rowan that Maeve is sailing towards Ellywe. Aelin arrives in Skull's Bay after having created ample disturbance by attacking a temple in Illiyum. She and Rolfe have a history and she convinces Rolfe to join them. In return she will make him a Lord. The Valg attack Skull's Bay and the group only barely survive the attack, Lysandra proving to be the most capable fighter by transforming into a sea dragon and fending off the water wyverns that attack the ships. During the fight Aelin transforms momentarily into the goddess Mala, by drawing power from the Wyrdkey. It is revealed that Mala is a distant relative of Aelin, which explains the abundance of power she has. They escape to the beach.

Manon, after having helped out Dorian in Rifthold, is accused of kinslaying and is sentenced to murder Asterin. Instead of murdering her second in command the witch pulls the blade on her own grandmother and she and the Thirteen escape, Manon heavily wounded. Abraxos brings her to the same beach where Aelin and Dorian are. Dorian urges the group to treat the witch. Manon reveals to Dorian that she is the last Crochan witch alive.

Meanwhile Elide has been travelling to Terrasen. Half way through she is found by Lorcan who has been trailing her because of the information she has about Morath. They

decide to travel together and eventually realise that Aelin is not going north. Instead they turn around and set out for the marshes. Aelin has been told by Elena to go to the marshes where she will find the lock. The two groups find each other just as an army of Valg attack. The lock turns out to be a mirror that can show the ones that step through it visions of the past. Aelin and Manon step through and come to realise that Elena is the cause of all of this. She was supposed to seal away Erawan with the other gods in another dimension, but failed to do so. Now Elena's offspring is forever cursed with this faith and it is up to Aelin and Dorian to give their life to seal the gods away. As Manon and Aelin return to the real world they see that Maeve has shown up. Through clever manipulation Maeve has been capable to get exactly what she wants, the three Wyrdkeys, and she forces Aelin to step into a personally made prison. Aelin, however, had slipped the Wyrdkeys in Manon's pockets earlier and so the witch runs away with Elide and Aelin remains in prison. Aelin's allies show up to honour their debts to Celaena and fight for her against Maeve and Erawan and while this organising starts, Rowan flies out to find Aelin, now his wife, and bring her back home.

**Characters**:

Celaena Sardothien/Aelin Ashryver Galathynius — Princess of Terrasen and Adarlan's Assassin. Aelin's parents were murdered when she was nine and in an attempt to escape the house she was rescued by Elena who gave up her immortal life to protect the child and place her in the hands of Arobynn. Ever since she has been trained to become Adarlan's best assassin until she was betrayed and send to Endovier where she survived for a year. She carries the blood of Brannon, giving her access to the capability to summon fire.

Dorian Havilliard — Prince of Adarlan. Gifted with enormous raw magic power, Dorian is probably as strong as Aelin. After the death of his father, he becomes King of Adarlan and allies himself with Aelin and Terassen to bring an end to Erawan.

Chaol Westfalen — Captain of the Guard in Rifthold. Chaol is Dorian's childhood friend who became captain of the guard when he was only 20. Ever since he took up the position the relation with his father has been strained, as Chaol forfeited his position as his father's heir.

Aedion Ashryver — General of the King of Adarlan and Wolf of the North. Aedion is Aelin's cousin, who has been fighting for Teressen ever since it was conquered. He thought Aelin had died nine years ago, but teams up with her again after she saves him from his execution. He was supposed to swear a bloodoath to her as part of his birthright.

Lysandra — Aelin's nemesis when she was young, Lysandra has served as a courtesan for Arobynn for about nine years. Actually a shapeshifter, Lysandra got stuck in a human form the moment that magic was banished from the kingdom. After Aelin helps her out, the two become friends and she teams up with Aelin to banish the Valg.

Rowan Whitethorn Galathynius — One of the six elite Fae warriors of Maeve. Rowan is over three-hundred years old and has been under Maeve's bloodoath for a long time before he meets Aelin. He is Aelin's mate and swears a new oath to her after she releases him from his original oath to Maeve. He marries Aelin to make sure that Terassen will have a Consort while Aelin is absent.

Lorcan - Gavriel - Fenrys — Three of the six elite Fae warriors of Maeve. They have been send by Maeve to kill Rowan and bring the Wyrdkeys back to Maeve. One by one they attempt to betray Maeve and stop the bloodoath that binds them to her. Gavriel is Aedion's father.

Manon Blackbeak — Half Ironteeth, half Crochan witch, former heir of the Blackbeak clan and Crochan Queen. Manon rides a wyvern named Abraxos as Wing Leader of the Thirteen who follow her command to a tee. Witches are descendants of the Valg with iron teeth, magic capabilities, and immortality.

Elide Lochan — Lady of Perranth and daughter of Marion Lochan, the woman who saved Aelin. Elide is brought to Morath by her uncle because of the witchblood that runs in her veins.

Elena Ashryver — First Queen of Terrasen. Because she failed to seal away the gods during her life time she is cursed with haunting this world and guide Aelin on her path.

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