



**THE WORLD IS CHANGING: ETHICS AND GENRE
DEVELOPMENT IN THREE TWENTIETH-CENTURY HIGH
FANTASIES**

Kerrie Anne Le Lievre

Thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the Discipline of English

University of Adelaide

December 2003

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title page	i
Table of contents.....	ii
Abstract	iii
Declaration.....	v
Acknowledgements.....	vi
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Key Concepts.....	2
1.2 Parameters	21
1.3 Theoretical Approaches	25
1.4 Overview.....	29
2 ‘The Structure of the World’:	
Narrative, Historiography and Ethics in Three High Fantasies	32
3 ‘The Shadow of the Past’:	
The Tragic Hero, the Transcendent Impulse and the Secondary World.....	69
4 ‘A Silver-Haired Stranger’:	
The Orchestrator and the Ethical Transition.....	101
5 ‘It Must Be So, When Things are in Danger’:	
Heroic Action and Cosmic Order in <i>The Lord of the Rings</i>	135
6 ‘Roke Guides, But it Can’t Rule’:	
Alternatives to Heroism in the <i>Earthsea</i> Cycle	171
7 ‘You, I Never Expected’:	
Action, Transformation and Balance in <i>The Riddle-Master’s Game</i>	208
8 Conclusion: ‘The World is Changing’	243
9 Bibliography	249
9.1 Works Cited	249
9.2 Works Consulted.....	257

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines three genre high fantasy texts published between 1954 and 2001: J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, Ursula K. Le Guin's *Earthsea* cycle and Patricia A. McKillip's *The Riddle-Master's Game*. The emphasis is on examining how the three texts use a common set of structures to articulate a developing argument about forms of human engagement with the physical world in the face of environmental crisis.

Using theories of literary ecology and narrative paradigm, I examine the common structure shared by the three high fantasies and the weight of ethical implications it carries. The texts position the transcendent impulse of the mode of tragedy, and the behaviour it generates, as the source of crisis, and posit as a solution to the problem the integrative ethic characteristic of the comedic mode. They argue that a transition between these two ethics is necessary for the continued survival of the Secondary World. This thesis examines each text's use of narrative paradigm to articulate methods by which this ethical transition may be achieved.

An argumentative trend is documented across the three fantasies through the representation of situation, problem and solution. In each text, as the Secondary World becomes more completely a closed physical system, the source of the solution to the problem caused by the transcendent presence and the achievement of ethical transition are both relocated within the control of human actors. The three fantasies express a gradual movement toward the acceptance of not only human responsibility for, but the necessity for action to remedy, the damaged state of the world.

I argue that the texts' dominant concern is with the human relationship with and to context. Indeed, I argue that the three fantasies reflect the developing understanding of the human

role in not only precipitating, but responding to, environmental crisis, and may function as both a reflection of and an intervention in that crisis.

DECLARATION

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being available for loan and photocopy.

DATE: 12.03.2004.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis was completed with the assistance of an Australian Postgraduate Award.

For intellectual and financial support in the preparation of this thesis, I thank the Discipline of English at the University of Adelaide.

For her support, guidance and many good suggestions throughout my candidature I owe special thanks to my supervisor, Dr Joy McEntee.

For beta-reading and backing-up of files I thank Maria Wolters. For her constant encouragement and support, and invaluable last-minute proofreading, I owe special thanks to my dear friend Lindley Walter-Smith.

For their constant emotional and practical support, and the financial assistance that allowed me to continue work on this thesis full-time after the end of my scholarship, I am especially indebted and grateful to my parents, Jen and John Le Lievre.

‘ “It is sad that we should meet only thus at the ending.

For the world is changing:

I feel it in the water, I feel it in the earth, and I smell it in the air.

I do not think we shall meet again.” ’

—Tolkien, III:229.

1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis traces genre development across three twentieth-century high fantasy texts: J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, Ursula K. Le Guin's *Earthsea* cycle and Patricia A. McKillip's *The Riddle-Master's Game*. I argue that *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game* are all stories about saving the world—about the necessity of doing so, and the methods by which it must be done. In each of these three fantasies, the imaginary world in which the narrative takes place is under threat. In each, the imaginary world is constructed differently. I argue that as the concept of the imagined world changes between the texts, so the response to the danger that threatens it also changes. As the world changes, responsibility for not only the threat to the imaginary world, but also the solution to that threat, is shifted to the characters within that world. In *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien positions his imaginary world of Middle-earth within a cosmic order. He constructs the threat to Middle-earth's integrity as the characters' need to control their situations in despite of the greater order surrounding them. The solution to this problem is for characters to actively promote the cosmic order in the world. Tolkien argues that the world can be saved by a combination of public action that prevents damage to the world itself, and private confrontation with the need for control. In the *Earthsea* cycle, Le Guin's imaginary world (Earthsea) has an inherent order: the Equilibrium. Le Guin constructs the threat to Earthsea's balanced state as her characters' need to escape death. She argues that the solution to this problem is for the characters to learn to accept the fact of mortality as part of the world's balance, and suggests that her characters can save Earthsea by consciously adapting both themselves and their societies to support that balance. In *The Riddle-Master's Game*, McKillip reduces her imaginary world, the High One's realm, to a closed physical system that is maintained by one character's conscious effort. She argues that the threat to this world is the individual's choice to act irresponsibly, and represents the solution to this problem as another, free decision to act

responsibly. McKillip argues that the imaginary world can be saved by a private transformation from an irresponsible to a responsible perspective, combined with public action to prevent damage to the landscape. In this thesis, I argue that *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *the Riddle-Master's Game* constitute a series of thought-experiments in the area of ethics (patterns of human interaction with the world). I contend that Le Guin and McKillip can be read as writing back to Tolkien's original theory of world-saving through their adoption, and adaptation, of the structuring motifs Tolkien develops in *The Lord of the Rings*: in their fantasies, they develop not only the form of the genre, but its argument.

1.1 Key Concepts

The word 'fantasy' has been used to mean so many different things, both in general use and in literary analysis, that it is necessary to take some time here to define how I use it in this thesis, and why. In 1947, Tolkien published the essay 'On Fairy-Stories' in an attempt to define the 'radical difference between the fairy story mode and all others' (Seeman 75). In the essay, Tolkien responds to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's Romantic theory of the imagination and the fancy (Seeman 75) by drawing a distinction between 'the mental power of image-making', which he calls Imagination (Tolkien, 'Fairy-Stories' 138) and the higher mental faculty of Fantasy. Tolkien defines Fantasy as an exercise of non-mimetic imagination, which is free from 'the domination of observed "fact"' and thus can encompass 'images of things that are not only "not actually present", but which are indeed not to be found in our primary world at all, or are generally believed not to be found there' (139). Imagination and Fantasy are the source of sub-creation; Tolkien constructs 'the operative link' between them and Sub-creation as Art (Tolkien, 'Fairy-Stories' 139), which is the specifically literary representation of what is imagined in such a convincing form as to inspire Secondary Belief—the reader's active acceptance of and co-operation with the

fantasy presented (Tolkien, 'Fairy-Stories' 132). Tolkien's essay constructs 'Fantasy' as 'a natural human activity', the impulse of the human mind to create and confront imperatives, impossibles and alternatives in forms other than the strictly mimetic (Tolkien, 'Fairy-Stories' 144). The type of literary text that presents Fantasy in a way that other minds can access is in Tolkien's vocabulary a 'fairy-story', or story about Faërie.

Kathryn Hume, in her study *Fantasy and Mimesis: Responses to Reality in Western Literature*, moves away from both Tolkien's hierarchy of mental faculties, and his somewhat essentialist treatment of them. In place of Tolkien's categories of mental process, Imagination and Fantasy, Hume suggests that there are two creative impulses that govern literature. These impulses are

mimesis, felt as the desire to imitate, to describe events, people, situations, and objects with such verisimilitude that others can share your experience; and *fantasy*, the desire to change givens and alter reality—out of boredom, play, vision, longing for something lacking, or need for metaphoric images that will bypass the audience's verbal defences.

(Hume 20)

The mimetic impulse can be roughly equated to Tolkien's Imagination, and the fantastic to Fantasy. But where Tolkien positions Fantasy as a higher process than Imagination, Hume constructs fantasy and mimesis as equal—and equally important—poles of a spectrum of literary method. She argues that all fictions contain some elements of mimesis and some elements of fantasy, because 'Mimesis without fantasy would be nothing but reporting one's perception of actual events. Fantasy without mimesis would be a purely artificial invention, without recognisable objects or actions' (Attebery, *Strategies* 3). In Hume's analysis, fantasy is a literary impulse, a way of telling stories to achieve a particular effect,

a method of speaking. A text in which the fantastic impulse is dominant can be said to be in the *fantastic mode*. Texts in the fantastic mode can take many forms, from Tzvetan Todorov's 'fantastic' literature with its characteristic 'hesitation' between real and supernatural explanations for events (Todorov 26), through science fiction, magic realism and fairy-tale, to detective fiction and pornography (Hume 55-8).

So 'fantasy' can mean both a form of mental activity, a way of exercising the imagination, and an impulse that influences the creation of a text. It can mean both the desire to imagine impossibilities and alternatives, and the artistic representation of what has been imagined—'an alternative vision, a critique, and the basis of opposition' to aspects of the 'real world' (Zanger 227). The mental activity of fantasy allows the generation of thought-experiments; the literary impulse and technique enable their representation. The ability to first produce imaginative alternatives to reality and then represent them in literature is what enables the discussion of world-saving that runs through *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game*.

However, 'fantasy' is also a label attached to some—but not all—texts in the fantastic mode, to group them into a category. Many scholars of the fantastic have attempted to isolate the specific characteristics that allow a fantastic text to be classified as a fantasy. The most common, and obvious, means of identifying a text as a fantasy has been content. Jane Mobley suggests that 'Magic is the key informing principle in fantasy and delineates both the focus . . . and the form . . . of the genre' (120). Similarly, but less specifically, C.N. Manlove in *Modern Fantasy: Five Studies* defines a fantasy text as one '*containing a substantial and irreducible element of the supernatural with which the mortal characters in the story or the readers become on at least partly familiar terms*' (1: original emphasis). 'Supernatural' in this instance is synonymous with 'impossible', and means 'of another

order of reality from that in which we exist and form our notions of possibility (Manlove, *Fantasy* 3). However, Hume and W.R. Irwin broaden these definitions considerably. For Irwin, any story ‘based on and controlled by an overt violation of what is generally accepted as possibility . . . the narrative result of transforming the condition contrary to fact into “fact” itself’ (4) is a fantasy. The violation of ‘fact’ need not be anything to do with ‘the supernatural’, although that is one of the five categories by which Irwin classifies fantasy texts in his study.¹ There only needs to be a difference of some sort. Hume’s analysis is concerned not with fantasy as such, but with fantastic literature, and it shows that the characteristic of ‘*any departure from consensus reality*, an impulse native to literature and manifested in innumerable variations, from monster to metaphor’ (21: original emphasis) can be found in any text in the fantastic mode. Any text influenced in any way by the fantastic impulse contains some violation of consensus reality. Therefore, the presence of such a variation on reality, of whatever sort, in a text—while it might be a characteristic of a fantasy text—is not enough, in and of itself, to define a text as a fantasy.

The second means by which texts have been defined as fantasy has been reader response. For a text to be a fantasy, it must not only incorporate a departure from consensus reality, but use it to produce (or at least, attempt to evoke) a particular quality of response in the reader. Hume states that all texts in the fantastic mode can activate, through their violations of consensus reality, ‘whatever it is in our minds that gives us the sense that something is meaningful’ (20). This suggests that reader response, like the presence of a violation of consensus reality, is not the factor that definitely identifies a text as fantasy. However, there is a specific quality of response that is arrogated to fantasy texts in particular. Tolkien asserts that a fantasy text has three purposes and three effects on

¹ The others are: ‘impossible personal change’, ‘incredible societies’, stories centring on an ‘unorthodox notion of innocence’, and ‘literary parody’ or ‘contravention of established ideas about historical fact’ (Irwin 100).

readers. The first of these is Recovery, which is the ‘regaining of a clear view’ of the world, so that we can see things ‘. . . as we are (or were) meant to see them’—as things apart from ourselves’ (Tolkien, ‘Fairy-Stories’ 146). The second is Escape, which is the empowering recognition of the ‘permanent and fundamental’ (Tolkien, ‘Fairy-Stories’ 149) that underlies the transient and superficial surface of the world. The third and most important is Consolation. Consolation is achieved through the text’s resolution in the *eucatastrophe*, or happy chance. Eucatastrophe is the change that saves the world and brings about the right (not necessarily happy) ending of a story; it ‘denies . . . universal final defeat’ (Tolkien, ‘Fairy-Stories’ 153), and by doing so produces a feeling of ‘joy’ in the reader:

it can give to the child or man that hears it, when the ‘turn’ comes, a catch of the breath, a beat and lifting of the heart, near to (or indeed accompanied by) tears, as keen as that given by any form of literary art, and having a peculiar quality.

(Tolkien, ‘Fairy-Stories’ 154)

Tolkien’s construction of eucatastrophe and the emotion it inspires is explicitly religious: he states that it offers readers an access to ‘*evangelium*, giving a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief’ (‘Fairy-Stories’ 153). Later critics have moved away from this specifically religious definition, but have retained the idea that the evocation of a specific, positive emotional response in the reader is one of the characteristics that defines a fantastic text as a fantasy. For Manlove, in order for a text to be a fantasy its ‘supernatural’ elements must be intended to evoke a response of ‘wonder’ in the reader (*Fantasy* 1). *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* offers a more cognitive explanation with the suggestion that a fantasy text is defined by its capacity to (in Tolkien’s phrase) ‘[rend] . . . the very web of story’ at the point of narrative resolution, and

make evident to the reader the full workings of narrative, thus enabling a complete, holistic understanding of the text at its moment of completion (Clute and Grant 323). However, the component of the reader's *positive and affirming* response to the text remains central: whether it is called joy, wonder or understanding, it is one of the factors that defines a text as not just fantastic, but a fantasy.

The final element that critics have considered to define a text as a fantasy—and the one least often discussed—is its structure. Fantasy 'is not a form—like horror—named solely after the affect it is intended to produce' (Clute and Grant 337). Fantasy texts also share a characteristic pattern of development. Brian Attebery points out that 'the characteristic structure of fantasy is comic. It begins with a problem and ends with resolution' (*Strategies* 15). Fantasy narratives are 'self-coherent', meaning that they are 'designed to be lived within' and to offer the reader an aware engagement with Story (Clute and Grant 338). And they follow a pattern of

an earned passage from bondage—via a central recognition of what has been revealed and of what is about to happen, and which may involve a profound metamorphosis of protagonist or world (or both)—into the eucatastrophe, where marriages may occur, just governance fertilize the barren land, and there is a healing.

(Clute and Grant 338-9)

Moreover, fantasy texts do this consciously. They reject the suspicion and subversion of the linear narrative form which are characteristic of Modernism and Postmodernism, and of fantastic literature in general, in favour of an aware engagement with, and conscious use of, Story, 'the "naïve" connective tissue that permits narrative consequences to *follow on* from narrative beginnings' (Clute and Grant 338: original emphasis).

So a fantasy narrative can be defined as one that develops an alternative vision to set against the ‘real world’—a vision that tells a story of movement from a state of bondage, through a moment of change, into the healing of the world, that uses that story to evoke an eucatastrophic response in its readers, and that uses an explicit violation of consensus reality in order to do so. This is the definition of ‘fantasy’ that I use in this thesis. I use it not only because it incorporates all of the factors that qualify texts as fantasies, but also because it privileges the element of the texts that is central to my analysis: their structure, with its explicit focus on transforming and saving the imaginary world.

The Lord of the Rings, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master’s Game* can all be considered fantasy texts by this definition. In each, the Secondary World begins in a state of bondage: in *The Lord of the Rings*, this is the threat of Mordor’s dominion; in the *Earthsea* cycle it is the fear of death; in *The Riddle-Master’s Game* it is the destructive illusions of Ghisteslwchlohm and the shape-changers. In each, the landscape moves, via narrative, into a moment of transformation and healing that is capable of evoking a response of ‘wonder’ from the reader: the destruction of Sauron, Tehanu’s flight into the west beyond the west, Morgon’s achievement of peace in the last line of *The Riddle-Master’s Game*. And each fantasy incorporates a clear violation of consensus reality, in that its narrative occurs within a discrete invented landscape incorporating magic, fantastic creatures and events, and impossible occurrences along with recognisably human characters.

Unfortunately, however technically accurate it might be, the definition of ‘fantasy’ set out above has very little in common with what readers tend to think of when they think of fantasy. The word is more likely to call to mind books about implausible nonexistent

worlds, or impossible variations on our own world; it carries overtones of magic, quests, unconvincing archaic language, pre-industrial societies, battles against Evil and landscapes comprising

a range of spiky Mountains in the distance, from which a tall Waterfall descends adorned with a rainbow at its crest . . . huge and intensely gnarled Trees in the foreground . . . [a] line of horsemen making its way across a misty green plain towards the Mountains. The sky is orange and purple.

(Jones, *Tough Guide* 113)

It has not escaped my notice that *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game* can all qualify as fantasy according to this definition also.

The above is the characteristic content, and presentation, of many of the texts that have been grouped together into the publishing category of 'fantasy'. It represents the formula end of the concept of fantasy literature. Formula fantasy tends to reflect the surface characteristics of the literature strongly, while failing to engage with the implications of those characteristics (or at least, to do so effectively). However, in *Strategies of Fantasy*, Attebery suggests that between the overarching mode of the fantastic and the formula of the publishing category are many texts that can be considered to belong to the *genre* of fantasy.

Attebery points out that although the fantastic mode is theoretically unlimited in its subject matter, 'The freedom it offers is offset by the need to be understood', and that in order to be understood, writers can choose to work within a vocabulary of pre-existent 'psychological and social', and literary, codes (*Strategies* 9). It is a too-close adherence to

this vocabulary of motifs, structures and codes without a simultaneous engagement with their implications that produces the formulaic fiction described above. But, as Attebery states, some fantasists ‘follow conventions but not slavishly’; they write in a full awareness of the implications of the vocabulary they use, and thus ‘remake the language as they speak it’ (*Strategies* 10). Such fantasists manipulate and stretch the vocabulary of codes and motifs to make it encompass, express or reveal new possibilities. Fantasy texts that operate in this fashion are genre fantasies.

The Lord of the Rings, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master’s Game* work through a set of shared conventions—the invented landscape, the imperilled world, the heroic quest—but each fantasy inflects those motifs in a unique way in order to speak a new meaning, a new argument about the nature of the imaginary world, what threatens it, and what must be done to save it from that threat. The ground of genre, marked by authorial awareness of and play with a common vocabulary of literary codes and structures, the inflection of known images to create new meanings, is where the three fantasies in my study fit within the mode of the fantastic and the category of fantasy.

However, this is not the limit of their similarity. Even within the category of genre fantasy, texts can be grouped according to the particular codes and motifs with which they work. *The Lord of the Rings* offers a clear model of structure, content and reader response that other authors have been able to both replicate and respond to more or less successfully (Attebery, *Strategies* 14); texts that reflect Tolkien’s model are often grouped into the category of ‘high fantasy’. While this term has been used somewhat elastically, high fantasies can be defined by two factors: setting (Zahorski and Boyer 58) and concern. They are ‘fantasies set in otherworlds, specifically Secondary Worlds . . . which deal with matters affecting the destiny of those worlds’ (Clute and Grant 466).

This definition may appear overly simple—even simplistic—as a way to classify texts. However, it makes a crucial point when it specifies that a high fantasy is set in the kind of invented landscape known as a Secondary World. Kenneth J. Zahorski and Robert H. Boyer suggest that a secondary world is any setting for a fantastic narrative that can offer explanations of the ‘nonrational happenings’ in that narrative ‘that are plausible in those other-world settings . . . that point to magical (faery tale) or supernatural (myth-based) causality’ (56). Modern fantasy features many different types of invented landscape, from Middle-earth and Narnia, through the deliberately hollow Land of Stephen Donaldson’s *Chronicles of Thomas Covenant the Unbeliever* and the mythologised England of Susan Cooper’s *The Dark is Rising* sequence, to the subtly magical alternate Europe of Caroline Stevermer’s *A College of Magics*. In Zahorski and Boyer’s analysis, these invented landscapes differ only in terms of how closely they resemble, and are attached to, Primary Reality (58-9). They are not Primary Reality; therefore they are secondary worlds. But the term Secondary World has a much more complex definition than that put forward by Zahorski and Boyer, and it is this definition to which John Clute refers when he distinguishes it from other invented landscapes in the *Encyclopedia of Fantasy* definition quoted above.

The term Secondary World was coined by Tolkien, following Coleridge’s model of Primary and Secondary Imagination in his *Biographia Literaria* (167), to articulate the relationship between the reader’s experiential world, or Primary Reality, and the fully constructed invented world of a fantasy. In Tolkien’s formulation of the concept, a Secondary World is an

autonomous world or venue which is not bound to mundane reality . . . which is impossible according to common sense and which is self-coherent as a venue for Story (i.e., the rules by which its reality are defined can be learned by living them, and are not arbitrary like those of a wonderland can be).

(Clute and Grant 847)

A Secondary World is a fantastic, but also discrete and coherent, textual reality that is, within the text, entirely distinct from the Primary Reality of the reader's everyday experience and existence—although as Jules Zanger points out, this does not prevent the fantasist from engaging with Primary Reality issues within the detached space she or he creates (227). A Secondary World 'creates an absolute reality which is not contingent upon everyday reality, but is instead self-sustaining' (Mobley 118), with which the reader can actively engage, and above all, in which the reader can trust (Tolkien, 'Fairy-Stories' 132).

The concept of the Secondary World developed by Tolkien draws on the fluid landscapes of medieval romances and the 'identifiably historical' (Miller 32) but technically inaccurate landscapes of epic. However, a Secondary World is not such a fluid landscape itself. The landscapes of epic and romance are always to some degree indeterminate, and are governed primarily by the requirements of narrative or allegory. They exist to be travelled through, and to illuminate the significance of the narrative's events. A Secondary World, in contrast, is a fixed landscape presented to the reader with scrupulous 'precision of detail' (Swinfen 75), which exists independently of the needs of the narrative, and in fact imposes conditions on the narrative told within its parameters.

Such a world now has a precise geography, often including maps, which is quite foreign to the shadowy and imprecise journeyings of Spenser's knights in the realm of Gloriana. The particular culture portrayed is not isolated, but set in a long context of mythology, legend and history. . . . The religion and beliefs of the inhabitants of the Secondary World are at least implicit, and frequently become explicit and central . . . The existence of a literature is established, and sometimes complex languages . . .

(Swinfen 75)

There exist in modern fantasy literature many detailed, coherent invented landscapes, from Dalemark, Tortall and Prydain, through the Discworld, to Valdemar, the Kingdoms of the Alorns and Angaraks, and Krynn. However, not all of these can be described as Secondary Worlds, because a Secondary World is not just a fixed and coherent theatre for story. It is also a part of the story told within it. The invented landscape of a fantasy narrative cannot be considered a Secondary World unless it is somehow involved in and affected by the narrative being played out within its parameters:

All fantasylands are forms of the [Secondary World]; the main distinction is that a fantasyland is a template venue inherently resistant to change, but no such repudiation of the possibility of metamorphosis, arguably essential to any definition of the fully structured fantasy, is implied by the use of the term [Secondary World].

(Clute and Grant 847)

A Secondary World has an impact on narrative through its fixed physical landscape. Likewise, and more importantly, in a Secondary World, narrative has an impact on the invented landscape within which it occurs—to be specific, it changes the nature of that landscape, and by transforming it, saves it. The nature of a Secondary World changes in response to the events of the story that is played out within it.

The Lord of the Rings, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game* are all high fantasies. Douglas Barbour asserts that

in the years since *The Lord of the Rings* became a runaway best-seller, many similar but inferior fantasies have appeared . . . lacking the historical and mythological depth [Tolkien] gave to Middle-earth. Only Ursula K Le Guin's *Earthsea Trilogy* [sic] and Patricia McKillip's *Quest of the Riddlemaster* are better than threadbare copies of his originals.

(Barbour 675)

While this may be an exaggerated claim, there are few other invented landscapes in modern fantasy that are as completely realised as Middle-earth, *Earthsea* and the High One's realm. These three landscapes are also discrete: Middle-earth might be an hypothetical pre-historic Earth, but it is comprehensively distanced from Primary Reality by being placed so far in the past that whole landmasses can be presumed to have altered their position and shape since its time; *Earthsea* and the High One's realm incorporate no awareness of the existence of Primary Reality at all. *Earthsea*, Middle-earth and the High One's realm are all fixed landscapes, which impose conditions of time, space and climate on the narratives told within them—they are presented to the reader visually, by means of maps, further inscribing their fixed quality on the reader's awareness. They are self-coherent: in each, unique laws of nature and physics obtain, but not randomly. In Middle-earth, Elves are immortal and trees have shepherds, and a ring can wear down a human being into an undead wraith. In *Earthsea*, some people can perform magic, dragons can fly beyond the physical limits of the world, and places can be inhabited by inimical nonhuman intelligences. In the High One's realm, some people can change their shapes and others can see through whatever they look at. Intelligence and awareness can persist past death;

some characters live for thousands of years as a matter of course; the land is magically connected to those who rule it. In each fantasy, these facts exert an influence on the narrative, and the stories told within the three invented landscapes make sense only when taken on the landscapes' own terms.

Finally, all three landscapes display the capacity for metamorphosis in response to narrative. In *The Lord of the Rings*, the landscape of Middle-earth is initially magical, the home of Elves. As a result of the combined efforts of Gandalf, Frodo and Aragorn, Sauron's Ruling Ring is destroyed: this saves Middle-earth from Sauron, but destroys the power of the three Elven-Rings to sustain the landscape. With the destruction of the Elven-rings, the Elves themselves must diminish and depart from Middle-earth (Tolkien, III:220).² This is not simply an alteration to the population or social organisation of Middle-earth. With the departure of the Elves, the landscape of Middle-earth changes its character, from magical to mundane: Treebeard the Ent makes this clear when he says to Galadriel after the destruction of the Ring, ‘ “. . . the world is changing: I feel it in the water, I feel it in the earth, and I smell it in the air. . . . ” ’ (Tolkien, III:229).

In Le Guin's *Earthsea* cycle the change in the nature of the Secondary World is not expressed directly. However, the landscape of Earthsea is initially established as fragmented, both literally (it is a mass of small and medium-sized islands) and in political, social and magical terms (Bailey 256). There are divisions between islands and hostilities between cultures. A wall—a constructed symbol of separation—stands between the world of the living and the Dry Land of the Dead (Le Guin, *Wizard* 95). Throughout the six books of the cycle, there is a consistent tendency toward re coherence of cultures and of the

² Although I use the MLA referencing system in this thesis, I have adopted the convention of referencing quotes from *The Lord of the Rings* by volume number and page number, rather than by title and page number, as is common among Tolkien scholars.

landscape, which culminates in *The Other Wind* with the dismantling of the barrier between the Dry Land of the Dead and the living world: ‘ “What was built is broken. What was broken is made whole” ’ (Le Guin, *Wind* 240). This is an alteration in the constitution of Equilibrium—a change in the nature of the world—that saves Earthsea from catastrophe (Le Guin, *Wind* 227).

The High One’s realm, the invented landscape of *The Riddle-Master’s Game*, also undergoes a change in its nature as a result of the narrative played out within it. It is established early in the trilogy that this landscape is trapped within a conflict between irreconcilable opposites, when the dead children of the Earth-Masters tell Morgon that ‘ “The war [of the Earth-Masters and shape-changers] is not finished, only silenced for the regathering. . . .” ’ (McKillip, *Game* 180). At the climax of the narrative, Morgon assumes the role of High One and imprisons the shape-changers in Erlenstar Mountain. As a result of his actions, the landscape becomes reoriented to peace:

[Morgon] tapped randomly into the continual stream of thoughts just beneath the surface of his awareness. He heard Tristan arguing placidly with Eliard as she set plates on the table at Akren. In Hel, Nun and Raith of Hel were watching a pig being born. In Lungold, Iff was salvaging books out of the burned wizards’ library. In the City of Circles, Lyra was talking to a young Herun lord, telling him things she had not told anyone else about the battle in Lungold. On Wind Plain, the broken pieces of a sword were being slowly buried under grass roots.

(McKillip, *Game* 614)

This is not a change in the landscape’s inhabitants, but an alteration to the state of the landscape. Danan Isig, the two-thousand-year-old King who is so closely identified with

the landscape of the High One's realm that he can hear stone and transform himself into a tree at will, can sense 'the ending' of the age of the High One 'deep in the earth' long before it occurs (McKillip, *Game* 191). By the end of the narrative, Morgon, as the new High One, is so completely identified with the landscape that its reorientation to peace can mitigate his personal grief: 'Peace, tremulous, unexpected, sent a taproot out of nowhere into Morgon's heart' (McKillip, *Game* 616).

In *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* trilogy and *The Riddle-Master's Game*, effecting this saving change in the nature of the Secondary World is in some sense the goal of the narrative. Frodo aims to destroy the One Ring knowing in advance the effect that doing so will have on Middle-earth (Tolkien, I:257). By destroying the Ring, he protects Middle-earth from Sauron. Ged, Tenar, Lebannen and Alder all act as they must to alter the nature of the Equilibrium in Earthsea, and by doing so, they preserve that Equilibrium, in increasingly pure forms. Morgon solves the High One's riddle-game and takes on the role of High One himself in order to protect the land from the shape-changers' desire for power; the transition to peace confirms the integrity of the land-law. In each case, inducing metamorphosis in the landscape saves that landscape, and confirms Middle-earth, Earthsea and the High One's realm as Secondary Worlds.

The Lord of the Rings and the *Earthsea* cycle have been the focus of a great deal of scholarly attention since their publication, both separately and as a pair. *The Riddle-Master's Game* has been the subject of only a handful of essays and theses. However, across the whole of works addressing the three texts, there exists a trend towards close readings that focus on the figure of the hero, or heroes. While such readings have covered territory as diverse as examinations of types of heroism and representations of masculinities and female archetypes, far more common are Formalist readings based in

schemata such as Vladimir Propp's folktale morphology, Jungian archetypal readings, and Structuralist readings based on Joseph Campbell's 'heroic monomyth'—the supposedly universal (Campbell 38) narrative structure that Campbell claims in *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* underlies all heroic myths and reveals their function as metaphors for psychological individuation.

It is not entirely clear why the trend for such readings has been either so persistent, or so influential. Possibly Structuralist readings of high fantasy texts are attractive because they offer a framework that can incorporate the elements of a fantasy text not easily accessible to the vocabulary of traditional literary criticism. Perhaps they are attractive because their point-by-point rigour lends to a marginalised genre, and field of study, an appearance of scientific validity and psychological applicability (Moorcock 17) that trumps the commonly-levelled charge of escapism. Or possibly it is precisely because high fantasy texts—rather like classic detective fictions—are so obviously constructed, and so evidently an abstract play of codes and motifs, that reducing the text to a 'real' meaning derived from that play of motifs seems a logical method of 'decoding' them.³ Whatever the reason for their popularity, such hero-centric readings of genre fantasy texts have been highly influential.

One way in which such readings have imposed their influence on critique of high fantasy texts is through the assumptions they make about the relationship between the protagonist and the Secondary World. The idea that the narrative of a fantasy is a metaphor for the process of psychological individuation—or at least that the protagonist represents the individual psyche—leads logically to the idea that the Secondary World and its inhabitants are metaphors for aspects of the protagonist's psyche:

³ I am grateful to my supervisor, Dr Joy McEntee, for this insight.

In a romance the ‘real’ world of the social novel is reversed; the protagonists are placed in landscapes directly reflecting the inner landscapes of their minds. A hero might range the terrain of his own psyche, encountering, as other characters, various aspects of himself.

(Moorcock 16)

In a reading that constructs both landscape and narrative as metaphors, the metamorphosis of the landscape that occurs as a result of the protagonist’s narrative serves only to signal the psychological transformation of the hero. In such a reading, the Secondary World exists in relation to the hero.

A case can be made for reading the high fantasy narrative as a metaphor for psychological development, and the Secondary World as an externalisation of the psyche. However, this is not the only possible way to read high fantasy texts, or the narratives of their protagonists. The explicit narrative focus in *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master’s Game* on saving the Secondary World from destruction suggests another possibility. It suggests that the protagonist’s narrative can be read as modelling the development of understanding about the individual’s place in the physical world; it suggests that the protagonist be read in relation to the Secondary World, not the other way around. High fantasy texts can be read as scenarios that explore and model human attitudes to and patterns of interaction with the closed physical system that is a world—that is, ethics.

In his essay ‘Tolkien and the Ethical Function of “Escape” Literature’, Lionel Basney suggests that in the current social climate, concepts of ethics, morality, good and evil are

both acutely needed, and increasingly ineffective in influencing the course of events to which they are applied. Basney argues that the Secondary Worlds of modern genre fantasy can function to restore to readers spaces in which ‘ethical meaning is of the essence, from which it is inalienable,’ and which ‘asserts the possibility of ethical action that initiates ethical results’ (‘Escape’ 27). In Basney’s reading, a Secondary World is a site within which ‘ethics have objective reference’, making it possible ‘to prescribe, or proscribe, actions’, and within which decisions about ethics ‘are urgent, because they are embodied in a story of crisis and apocalypse’ that reflects the sense of urgency attached to such decisions and their lack of impact in Primary Reality (Basney, ‘Escape’ 27). Basney hypothesises that the object of the genre high fantasy is ‘to assert the general possibility of ethics, of ethical action, in an imaginative world specifically designed to display them’ (‘Escape’ 27). High fantasy texts are ways of asserting that, despite the apparent ineffectiveness of ethical decisions in Primary Reality,

making ethical choices, whether deliberate or not, is central . . . actions do bear consequences not only for oneself but for society, and sometimes apparently insignificant actions can bring about momentous consequences . . .

(Molson 130)

This is the perspective from which I approach *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master’s Game* in this thesis. When I use the terms ‘ethic’ or ‘ethical transition’ in my discussion of the texts, I therefore do not use ‘ethic’ as it is most often used—as a synonym for ‘moral’. Rather, I use it to refer to ‘Rules of conduct recognised in certain associations or departments of human life’ (Simpson and Weiner 244). Ethical transition is not a moral change, but a change in patterns of behaviour within the Secondary World (although it is generally taken for granted in each of the three fantasies

that the change enacted *is* inherently moral, that meaning is not the one I access here). This is why, although I am aware of both the explicitly Catholic Christian framework and morality within which Tolkien wrote *The Lord of the Rings* (Tolkien, *Letters* 172) and the Taoist philosophy that informs Le Guin's work on the *Earthsea* cycle (Wytenbroek 173), I have chosen to exclude these factors from my study. While I acknowledge them as influences on the texts, I focus my reading on the authors' construction of the Secondary World, and the specific relationships that pertain between worlds, characters and actions, as the locus of ethical argument in each text.

1.2 Parameters

I have limited this study to *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game* for two reasons in addition to their common concern with ethics and the saving of the world. The first reason is order of publication. The three fantasies can be considered to form a roughly chronological sequence. *The Lord of the Rings* comprises three volumes: *The Fellowship of the Ring* and *The Two Towers*, both published in 1954, and *The Return of the King*, published in 1955. The publishing history of the *Earthsea* cycle is complex, being separated into two parts. The original trilogy, comprising *A Wizard of Earthsea*, *The Tombs of Atuan* and *The Farthest Shore*, was published between 1968 and 1973; of the more recent continuation volumes, *Tehanu* (optimistically subtitled *The Last Book of Earthsea*) was published in 1990, the novella 'Dragonfly' in 1998 and *The Other Wind* in 2001. The three volumes of *The Riddle-Master's Game* are *The Riddle-Master of Hed*, published in 1976, *Heir of Sea and Fire* (1977) and *Harpist in the Wind* (1979).⁴ Although McKillip's trilogy was published well before the *Earthsea*

⁴ McKillip's trilogy has been published and discussed under many titles—the *Riddle of Stars*, the *Riddle-Master* trilogy, the *Riddle-Master of Hed* trilogy, the Star-Bearer trilogy, *The Quest of the Riddlemaster*. *The Riddle-Master's Game* is the most recent title, derived from the Gollancz 'Fantasy Masterworks' series omnibus publication of the trilogy: as that is the edition from which I quote in this thesis, that is the overall title I use.

continuations, it is impossible to say for certain whether the *Earthsea* continuations have been influenced by it. That uncertainty, plus the continuation volumes' insistent referring-back to the original trilogy, makes it more logical to treat the *Earthsea* texts as one unit, and to examine the three fantasies as a rough sequence.

My second reason for limiting the study to these three texts was the specific relationship that pertains between them. *The Lord of the Rings* is, as Attebery states, the earliest text that can be classified as high fantasy according to the definitions given in the first part of this Introduction. Because of this, it stands at the centre of the genre of modern fantasy:

Tolkien is most typical, not just because of the imaginative scope and commitment with which he invested his tale but also, and chiefly, because of the immense popularity that resulted . . . Tolkien's form of fantasy, for readers in English, is our mental template, and will be until someone else achieves equal recognition with an alternative conception.

(Attebery, *Strategies* 14)

The *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game* both show a close structural similarity to *The Lord of the Rings*. However, in creating the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game*, Le Guin and McKillip can be read as not only replicating but responding to Tolkien's original. Le Guin's writings about the original *Earthsea* trilogy suggest that it is a response to an unexplored aspect of Tolkien's text: the genesis of the wizard figure. In the essay 'Dreams Must Explain Themselves', Le Guin states that she developed the story of *A Wizard of Earthsea* by wondering

about wizards. Wizards are usually elderly or ageless Gandalfs, quite rightly and archetypically. But what were they before they had white beards? How did they learn

what is obviously an erudite and dangerous art? Are there colleges for young wizards?

And so on.

(Le Guin, *Language* 41)

McKillip writes that after reading *The Lord of the Rings* as a teenager, ‘I wanted to go back to the place where I had been in those books, to that land, that richness, that mystery, that story’ (*Game v*), and that writing *The Riddle-Master’s Game* was her method of doing so:

Some twelve years . . . later, I finished the *Riddle-Master* trilogy. Even after so many years, I can find small jewels of inspiration mined from Tolkien’s novels . . . What I found in Tolkien inspired me to learn; what I learned I put into *The Riddle-Master of Hed, Heir of Sea and Fire*, and *Harpist in the Wind*.

(McKillip, *Game v-vi*)

However, the article ‘Three Ways of Looking at a Trilogy’ suggests that *The Riddle-Master’s Game* is a response to Tolkien founded partly on the things McKillip found to be lacking in *The Lord of the Rings*—in particular, female protagonists (5). There is no direct evidence that McKillip is similarly aware of, or responding to, the original *Earthsea* trilogy. However, there is a pattern of emphatic stresses in the worldbuilding of *The Riddle-Master’s Game* that suggests an engagement with the same issues with which the original *Earthsea* trilogy deals. For these reasons, *The Riddle-Master’s Game* is well placed to serve as the end point of my study.

One way in which Le Guin and McKillip write back to Tolkien is through their treatment of gender in their fantasies. The narrative tools Tolkien uses in *The Lord of the Rings*—the paradigms of tragic, epic and romance heroes—are heavily gendered, and construct

significant action in the Secondary World as a male domain and a male prerogative (although this is somewhat undercut by the extent to which his two protagonists are ‘codedly female’). By bringing into Tolkien’s structure different narrative paradigms such as the servant-heroine of romance and the female Gothic heroine, Le Guin and McKillip challenge Tolkien’s gendering of action and contribution to the Secondary World, and assert a feminist perspective that values female action and contribution. Various commentators including Attebery (in *Strategies of Fantasy*) and Charlotte Spivack (in *Merlin’s Daughters*) have examined Le Guin’s and McKillip’s fantasies from a gender perspective. Unfortunately, although I give considerable attention in this thesis to the innovations Le Guin and McKillip make on Tolkien’s structure, an analysis of these in gender as well as ethical terms is beyond the scope of my study.

Both Tolkien and Le Guin have produced other, significant texts set in the Secondary Worlds of Middle-earth and Earthsea—*The Hobbit* and *The Silmarillion*, and the *Earthsea* short stories. I occasionally use *The Silmarillion* to provide information about Tolkien’s cosmology in this thesis; however, I have chosen to exclude these other texts from the study proper. Neither *The Hobbit* nor *The Silmarillion* is high fantasy according to the criteria set out in the first part of this Introduction, and neither text has had the same influence on its field as *The Lord of the Rings* has had on genre fantasy. While *The Hobbit* fits firmly into a tradition of British children’s fantasy literature (Kuznets 150), it has not influenced that tradition to the same extent as *The Lord of the Rings* has influenced the genre of modern fantasy. *The Silmarillion* has had an effect on high fantasy in terms of its relationship to *The Lord of the Rings*, but has not made any substantial impact on the genre in its own right. Furthermore, *The Silmarillion* was published for the first time in 1977, four years after the publication of *The Farthest Shore* and in the same year as *Heir of Sea and Fire*. It therefore cannot be considered as an influence on either the early *Earthsea*

books or *The Riddle-Master's Game*. Finally, while Le Guin's *Earthsea* short stories share many of the same concerns, and even some of the same characters, as the *Earthsea* cycle proper, they neither fit the definition of high fantasy, nor form part of the *Earthsea* cycle's ongoing narrative. Nor do they show the relationship of response to Tolkien that the cycle does.

1.3 Theoretical Approaches

In order to analyse how the narratives of *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game* construct ethical arguments, I use the strategy of close reading informed by four theoretical approaches. These are genre theory, narrative theory, literary ecology and the concept of narrative paradigm. In his book *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, Fredric Jameson claims that genres are 'essentially literary institutions, or social contracts between a writer and a specific public, whose function is to specify the proper use of a particular cultural artifact' (106). In other words, genres are coded ways of speaking about the relationships that exist between the individual, society and the world. This is the understanding of genre texts that underpins and enables my thesis. Jameson also suggests that

in its emergent, strong form a genre is essentially a socio-symbolic message . . . an ideology in its own right. When such forms are reappropriated and refashioned in quite different social and cultural contexts, this message persists and must be functionally reckoned into the new form. . . . The ideology of the form itself . . . persists into the later, more complex structure as a generic message which coexists—either as a contradiction or, on the other hand, as a mediatory or harmonizing mechanism—with elements from later stages.

(Jameson 140-1)

This is the relationship that I theorise pertains between the three fantasies in my study. *The Lord of the Rings* can be considered the ‘emergent’ form of the high fantasy sub-genre, as, while it has precursors such as William Morris’ prose romances and the works of E.R. Eddison and Lord Dunsany, it has no direct sources. The *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master’s Game*, written later, by female American authors working from different perspectives and driven by different concerns, stand as refashionings of that form. While ‘the “proper use” [of the specific cultural artifacts] to which Jameson refers is presumably the socially sanctioned use’ (Cranny-Francis 18), or in other words the politically conservative use, as Anne Cranny-Francis points out, it is possible for politically aware authors to stage a ‘fundamental intervention in the relationship between reader and text, a disruption of the reader’s conventionalized understanding of the contract, the literary institution of the particular genre’ (18). They do this by taking up and reworking the conventions of the genre, to both expose their conventionality and deconstruct it, and to reveal alternative interpretations and possibilities by doing so. This is the process I suggest that Le Guin and McKillip undertake in the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master’s Game*: in effect, I read them as writing back to *The Lord of the Rings*.

Because of the fantasy genre’s emphasis on the form of Story, the means by which this intervention in the genre is achieved is narrative. In *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*, Peter Brooks constructs narrative as an engagement with ideology. He suggests that narrative patterning reflects political, social and ideological positioning; the plot of a story can be considered an exploration of ideology. Narrative, in Brooks’ formulation, is ‘a form of understanding motivated by our desire and narrative fictions [are] what trace the circuit and subterfuge of that desire working out its patterns of meaning’ (Brooks 323). Brooks’ theory has been challenged on the grounds that it is

somewhat essentialist. As Cranny-Francis shows, Brooks' Freudian formulation of the concept of 'desire'—the foundation of his analysis—is heavily gendered, and Brooks fails to acknowledge this in his analysis, or deconstruct its effect (Cranny-Francis 15).

However, it is possible to set this aspect of the analysis aside, and use only Brooks' idea of consciously constructed linear narrative as an exercise in problem-solving on the ideological level alone. This is how I read the narratives of *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* trilogy and *The Riddle-Master's Game*, and this is the aspect of Brooks' analysis I use in this thesis.

If narrative encodes ideology, Joseph Meeker suggests in *The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary Ecology* that the literary modes of tragedy and comedy encode two specific ideologies about the relationship between the individual and the world. He locates in the tragic mode a set of assumptions that 'nature exists for the benefit of mankind ... human morality transcends natural limitations', and the individual personality is of 'supreme importance' (Meeker 42). He considers the comedic mode to be informed by presuppositions about the inescapability of limitations imposed by the physical world (30), a focus on survival and a privileging of the pair or society over the individual. Meeker suggests that these two ideologies or ethics, and the degree of importance to which they are elevated by societies, are the source of the current environmental crisis (6). I employ Meeker's readings of tragedy and comedy to examine the kinds of relationship that pertain between different characters and the Secondary Worlds of *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game*, because those relationships are expressed through the narratives attached to the characters. Don D. Elgin has written a comprehensive literary-ecological analysis of *The Lord of the Rings* in his book *The Comedy of the Fantastic: Ecological Perspectives on the Fantasy Novel*; my thesis is not

an ecocritical reading *per se*, but I do develop some of Elgin's points, and apply them across the two later fantasies.

The primary tool I use in my analysis of *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game* is the concept of narrative paradigm. This is the idea that stories have shapes, and that those shapes encode the core ideology of a genre. The specific realisation of the paradigm in a text constitutes an engagement with that ideology, and with the history of the genre. A narrative paradigm is identifiable by a set of consistent markers that recur across texts (Leyerle 69); however, the concept does not assume a point-by-point match with an underlying 'real' meaning as Structuralist schemata such as Campbell's monomyth do. Rather, the theory of narrative paradigm posits a loose organisational framework within which narrative and meaning can be relatively freely constructed by the author, as a form of literary play:

Such literary games allow great scope for individual expression because they establish patterns that are widely understood and therefore allow great scope for individual variation . . . poetic play allows for great freedom within a given form and almost a limitless number of forms.

(Leyerle 68-9)

In my reading, I consider not only the narrative paradigm of the high fantasy narrative as a whole, but the way each text makes use of specific narrative paradigms within that larger pattern, the variations in usage in each text, and the way they function to express elements of the ethical argument.

Hero-centric readings such as those I discussed earlier tend to focus on only one narrative paradigm in a high fantasy text—the hero’s journey. In these readings, narratives attached to characters other than the protagonist or at most secondary protagonists tend to be ignored. Characters who are not heroes do not have stories; they are incorporated into the hero’s story, and serve as challenges, externalised aspects of the hero’s psyche or archetypes with which the hero interacts. However, when the focus of a reading is on the Secondary World rather than the protagonist, it becomes possible to acknowledge that characters other than the protagonist have narrative paradigms attached to them. These narratives articulate characters’ relationships to and interactions with the Secondary World; through them, the characters contribute to the text’s ethical argument.

1.4 Overview

In this thesis, I will examine five separate elements of the high fantasy scenario, and the narratives attached to them. I will of course analyse the protagonists, the traditional hero-figures, of *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master’s Game*, and the secondary protagonists and/or foils that surround them, because these are the crucial narratives that create the eucatastrophe and effect the preservation of the Secondary World. However, I will also examine the antagonists of the three fantasies, as figures independent of the protagonists. I will also discuss a category of character that has not to my knowledge previously been identified or analysed as a separate element of the text—the *orchestrators*, the characters who organise the narrative and create eucatastrophe in *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master’s Game*, and thus engineer the saving of the Secondary World. Above all, I will discuss the Secondary World itself and the story associated with it. Through these separate analyses, my thesis will map the three fantasies’ presentation of past, present and necessary future patterns of interaction with the closed physical system of a world. It will also demonstrate how constructions of

both the problem that threatens the integrity of the Secondary World, and the solution necessary to reverse its effects, have changed across the three fantasies.

Each chapter of my thesis focusses on one element of the high fantasy scenario, with internal discussion of each fantasy in chronological order. Chapter Two discusses the story of the Secondary World and the ideology it encodes, and the significance of how each author constructs the Secondary World. Chapter Three investigates the antagonist and secondary antagonists of each text, and analyses the changing interpretation of the transcendent impulse. Chapter Four focusses on the orchestrators or focal-narrative organisers: it offers a definition of this character type, and considers the development of the figure and its relationship to the Secondary World across the three texts. Chapter Five investigates the specific scenarios and narrative paradigms that Tolkien uses in *The Lord of the Rings* to construct an effective response to the transcendent presence within the Secondary World, and explores his use of those narrative tools, with particular reference to the characters of Boromir, Aragorn and Frodo. Chapter Six examines Le Guin's adaptation of Tolkien's narrative tools in the original *Earthsea* trilogy; it considers the process by which Le Guin constructs an alternative response to the transcendent impulse, and how this writes back to Tolkien. It then further investigates her interrogation and critique of her own initial vision in the continuation volumes. Chapter Seven examines how McKillip uses Tolkien's and Le Guin's tools in *The Riddle-Master's Game*; it investigates her insertion of additional elements into the base scenario, and the response to Tolkien's and Le Guin's solutions that she constructs thereby. In my Conclusion, I both summarise the conclusions arrived at in the body of my thesis, and discuss their possible implications. I will also note some ways in which the trend documented here has manifested in later fantasies.

The quotes I use as chapter titles are drawn from the three fantasies that are the subject of this study, with the exception of the title of Chapter Two, which is taken from *A College of Magics* by Caroline Stevermer.

2 'THE STRUCTURE OF THE WORLD': NARRATIVE, HISTORIOGRAPHY AND ETHICS IN THREE HIGH FANTASIES

In *The Lord of the Rings*, Sauron threatens to gain dominion over Middle-earth, to cover it in darkness and reduce it to a barren landscape as he has Mordor. In the *Earthsea* cycle, characters from Cob to the Master Summoner Thorion struggle to control their world and unbalance Equilibrium in the process. In *The Riddle-Master's Game*, Eriel and her shape-changer allies want to strip the landscape of power for their own use, and threaten to reduce it to a wasteland by doing so. In each of these three fantasies, in other words, there exists a direct threat to the physical integrity of the Secondary World; and the purpose driving the narrative in each is the preservation of the Secondary World. *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game* are stories about saving the world—about the need to do so, and the ways in which it must be done. In each fantasy, the process is represented as a confrontation between individuals or groups—Frodo against Sauron and the West against Mordor, Earth-Masters against shape-changers, Ged and Arren against Cob. At the same time, however, it is represented as a confrontation between systems of values.

In this chapter, I will examine the shared structure of *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game*; I will use narrative theory and the model of narrative historiography to interpret the three texts as ethical arguments, and the theory of literary ecology to elucidate the terms of that argument. I will argue that there is a consistent ethical argument at the core of the three texts. However, I will also examine each text's separate conceptualisation of the Secondary World, and discuss briefly how this changes the realisation of the core argument in each text.

In his discussion of narrative structure in *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*, Brooks suggests that narrative—especially the simple and apparently naïve linear narrative such as the hero’s quest structure—constitutes ‘a form of thinking, a way of reasoning about a situation’ that develops a solution to an initial problem ‘without explanation, through description of what needs to happen’ (9). Linear narrative is organised according to what Attebery calls ‘narrative necessity’ (*Strategies* 25). This means that the elements of a story are selected so that they lead apparently self-evidently to a logically, aesthetically and morally satisfying conclusion for both teller and audience: ‘Why does Cinderella’s mother die? So that her father can marry again, so that Cinderella may be mistreated by her stepmother and stepsisters, so that her fairy godmother can intervene, and so on’ (Attebery, *Strategies* 25-6). The techniques by which a linear narrative is shaped are not tools for revealing inherently meaningful links between events so much as they are tools for creating both links and meaning. When the end of a narrative is reached, a line of logic from beginning to conclusion is implicitly present: the conclusion can be understood as an element in ‘a single and concrete complex of relationships’ from which it derives its significance (Mink 551). In Brooks’ analysis, narrative is a rhetorical strategy employed to persuade an audience of the literal, moral and aesthetic fitness of the solution to a problem: it is an argument.

The Lord of the Rings, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master’s Game* are—or at a first glance appear to be—simple linear narratives structured on the model of the hero’s quest. *The Lord of the Rings* follows Frodo’s anti-quest and Aragon’s quest; the *Earthsea* cycle deals with Ged’s various quests and the other stories that develop around and after them; *The Riddle-Master’s Game* follows Morgan’s quest to solve the riddle of three stars and Raederle’s to solve the riddle of her self. The narratives can all be read as attempts to develop solutions to a problem. The conclusion of each is the eucatastrophe.

Eucatastrophe is, as discussed in the Introduction, a moment that evokes a particular emotional response from the reader of a fantasy; however, it is also an element of the text's structure. It is the qualified happy ending (Attebery, *Strategies* 15), the 'final "turn" of a plot' (Clute and Grant 323) that occurs as a 'sudden and miraculous grace, never to be counted on to recur' (Tolkien, 'Fairy-Stories' 153). Its effect is to metamorphose the imaginary landscape into its 'healed' or regenerated (Clute and Grant 459) state. The eucatastrophe is also a conclusion that 'confirms the generic principles behind [a] work, making the end, however it is brought about, a positive statement, indeed a celebration, of the work's social, moral or aesthetic vision' (Lenz 6). It is, in part, the recognition of this confirmation of the text's vision that prompts the crucial emotional response from the reader.

Middle-earth, Earthsea and the High One's realm all pass through the transforming moment of eucatastrophe: they all change in response to narrative. In *The Lord of the Rings*, as a result of the destruction of the One Ring, Middle-earth moves from the Elven to the human, the magical to the mundane (Tolkien, III:220). In the *Earthsea* cycle, the fragmented landscape of Earthsea undergoes a consistent movement toward coherence, starting with Ged's assimilation of his Shadow in *A Wizard of Earthsea* and finishing with the destruction of the wall between the living world and the Dry Land of the Dead in *The Other Wind*. In *The Riddle-Master's Game*, as a result of Morgon's riddle-solving, the landscape of the High One's realm reorients from war (McKillip, *Game* 180) to peace. The metamorphosis of the landscapes of Middle-earth, Earthsea and the High One's realm into their healed states occurs, in each case, as the result of a linear narrative inspired by a specific problem within the Secondary World. The eucatastrophe can therefore be understood as the solution to that problem. And because an examination of the structure of

the three fantasies shows that both problem and solution are, not the characters themselves, but the value systems they espouse, the eucatastrophe in each fantasy can be considered to articulate the text's—and the genre's—ethical stance.

The narrative of *The Lord of the Rings* develops a structure that is taken up by McKillip and Le Guin in their later works. It is constructed not as a story, but as a history. The narrative is preceded by a pseudo-anthropological introduction on the subject of hobbits, which treats hobbits as beings with an existence outside of the text. The narrative itself includes several references to events being recorded as or shortly after they occur by Bilbo and Frodo Baggins (Tolkien, I:265, III:271-2). It is followed by a series of appendices dealing with the historical context of the narrative's events (Appendices A and B), genealogies of several characters (Appendix C), the calendar and languages of Middle-earth and the process of translating them (Appendices D, E and F). The whole is accompanied by detailed maps of the landscape of Middle-earth (a map, as a representation of a landscape, presupposes the physical existence of the landscape it represents in Primary Reality). And the whole text is rendered randomly accessible by an index, textbook fashion, which gives page references for 'Songs and Verses' (by both title and first line, as is the convention in poetry anthologies), 'People, Beasts and Monsters', 'Places' and 'Things'.

These features are markers of a work of non-fiction. However, they do not disguise the fact that *The Lord of the Rings* is a fiction; nor are they intended to. Rather, Tolkien uses these addenda to the narrative to position the narrative as an historical document *relative to its Secondary World* (Basney, 'Time' 17). He uses them to construct the fiction that *The Lord of the Rings* is his translation of the 'Red Book of Westmarch' (Tolkien, I:13), which

has survived from the Third Age of Middle-earth into the present world, and which constitutes a record of

THE DOWNFALL OF THE LORD OF THE RINGS AND THE RETURN OF THE KING (as seen by the Little People; being the memoirs of Bilbo and Frodo of the Shire, supplemented by the accounts of their friends and the learning of the Wise.)

(Tolkien, III:271-2)

Furthermore, as the narrative history of Middle-earth, *The Lord of the Rings* is governed by the writing and reading conventions of narrative history; and it is through these conventions that Tolkien articulates his ethical argument.

A similar construction of the high fantasy narrative as history relative to the Secondary World is visible in Le Guin's *Earthsea* cycle. Le Guin does not reproduce all of the elaborate framing devices that Tolkien uses to position *The Lord of the Rings* as a narrative history. However, she does use some of them, in combination with other devices of her own, to create a similar effect. Each volume of the *Earthsea* cycle is accompanied by maps relevant to the specific narrative—*A Wizard of Earthsea* and *The Farthest Shore* have as frontispieces maps of the whole of Earthsea, for example, whereas *The Tombs of Atuan* has maps of the Place and the Labyrinth, and *Tehanu* a map of Gont. And the opening paragraphs of *A Wizard of Earthsea* establish the narrative as 'a retrospective view' (Barrow and Barrow 25). They are spoken by a narrative voice for which the events of the book constitute part of an already-known, mostly verifiable sequence of events, which has already occurred in the past of the Secondary World.

. . . some say the greatest [Gontishman], and surely the greatest voyager, was the man called Sparrowhawk, who in his day became both dragonlord and Archmage. His life is told of in the *Deed of Ged* and in many songs, but this is a tale of a time before his fame, before the songs were made.

(Le Guin, *Wizard* 11)

This authoritative narrative voice, which speaks out of the Secondary World to the reader to narrate much of *A Wizard of Earthsea* and *The Farthest Shore*, implicitly identifies the narrative as a transcribed or adapted oral history of the Archipelago.

Some of the volumes of the *Earthsea* cycle, notably *The Tombs of Atuan* and *Tehanu*, do not feature this authoritative narrative voice, or include any overt historical framing. This may be a deliberate acknowledgement of the fact that these volumes deal both with perspectives excluded from traditional narrative history (such as the lives and stories of women, children and the elderly) and with matters excluded from Tolkien's model of high fantasy, such as the consequences of eucatastrophe. Nevertheless, the presence of the authoritative voice framing the beginning and end of the original trilogy (Le Guin, *Shore* 213-14) implies that the initial *Earthsea* trilogy stands in the same relationship to *Earthsea* as *The Lord of the Rings* does to Middle-earth; the continuation volumes can be read as a continuation of that history that focusses on less conventional areas.

The Riddle-Master's Game incorporates neither an elaborate framing apparatus like *The Lord of the Rings*, nor an historicising narrative voice like the *Earthsea* cycle. However, it does display vestigial traces of both. The three volumes of the trilogy are accompanied by a frontispiece map and an appended list of the 'People and Places' that appear in the narrative. The summary that follows the text of each volume in the original, separate

publications defines the subject of the narrative as ‘Morgon, Raederle, the world they live in and the end of an age’ (McKillip, *Riddle-Master* 222)—that is, a story known in its entirety, the end of which is already fixed. Each volume opens with a scene-setting sentence from an detached, omniscient viewpoint, that implicitly positions the narrative as already complete, known to the narrator and open to comment and summary: ‘In spring, three things came invariably to the house of the King of An: the year’s first shipment of Herun wine, the lords of the Three Portions for the spring council, and an argument’ (McKillip, *Game* 205). While these devices constitute only a gesture toward the techniques used by Tolkien and Le Guin, they nevertheless imply that the narrative of *The Riddle-Master’s Game* shares the same relationship with its Secondary World as *The Lord of the Rings* shares with Middle-earth and the *Earthsea* cycle with the Archipelago. Relative to the High One’s realm, it is history rather than story. And like *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Earthsea* cycle, it is structured as a narrative history.

Narrative was the dominant historiographic mode in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Traditional narrative histories, whatever their subject or surface organisation, have a consistent structure. They appear to present one narrative to the reader, organising

historical material around particular people, actions, places and time, recounted with primarily chronological rather than thematic control . . . [and] informed by . . . ideas that order the material and draw the reader along.

(D. Potts 15)

In fact, as Robert J. Berkhofer Jr. shows in *Beyond the Great Story: History as Text and Discourse*, they present two. The first and most prominent of these is the focal narrative. This deals with the subject of the history, and is comparatively small-scale—it might be

the story of a life or a place, a political tendency, a scientific event, a philosophy or artistic movement or economic trend. However, this small-scale, usually linear narrative does not exist in isolation. It is sited, either explicitly or implicitly, within another, larger-scale narrative of a kind that Berkhofer calls a ‘Great Story’. The Great Story supplies the focal narrative with a context, and moreover a context that is deliberately selected by the historian to illuminate certain elements of the focal narrative which are seen as meaningful, interesting or important:

the Great Story need not be any well-known “master interpretive code”, “grand governing narrative”, or metanarrative . . . a, or the, Great Story can be the explicit or presumed larger contextual (hi)story behind the biography of a life, the history of a specific place or region, or the account of a year or a decade. On a broader scale, a, or the, Great Story can depict the rise and spread of capitalism or nationalism or imperialism across continents and centuries. The notion of a or the Great Story also embraces the macro-processes and grand transformations that historical sociologists see as shaping the modern world.

(Berkhofer 39)

The Great Story is the means by which the historian writing narrative history in effect creates the meaning of the focal narrative (Berkhofer 40). It is also the means by which an historian creates the end of a history narrative. Locating the end of a sequence of events in history is an impossible task—after all, there is always something that happens next. Traditional narrative histories therefore tend to site the close of a sequence of historical events not at a point of physical change or the ending of a sequence of events, but at a moment of transition between dominating social structures, value systems or paradigms of morality.

. . . we cannot say, surely, that any sequence of real events actually comes to an end, that reality itself disappears, that events *of the order of the real* have ceased to happen. Such events could only have seemed to have ceased to happen when meaning is shifted, and shifted by narrative means, from one physical or social space to another.

(H. White 22: original emphasis)

The Great Story sets up a dominant value system against which the focal narrative reacts; a traditional narrative history ends with a change in the tenor of the Great Story—a shift in values—that is brought about by the events of the focal narrative. The focal narrative is the means by which a narrative history writer expresses, among other things, a judgement regarding the value systems surrounding past events. A narrative history can be understood to tell a story of comparative value systems, of which the focal narrative is the concluding movement.

Both of these narrative history characteristics—the use of Great Story and focal narrative, and closure sited at a moment of transition between contrasting value systems—are visible in *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game*. In each of these fantasies, there is one narrative that is the focus of attention. This is the narrative that sets out the journeys, actions and transformations of the primary and secondary protagonists—the combined stories of Frodo and Aragorn in *The Lord of the Rings*, of Ged, Tenar and Arren, Therru, Irian and Alder in the *Earthsea* cycle, and of Morgon and Raederle in *The Riddle-Master's Game*. However, in each case this focal narrative occurs within the context of a second story, which deals with the past of the Secondary World.

This contextualising story is rarely recognised as a story in its own right; it is most often characterised by critics as a static literary device intended to support and give 'depth' or

‘texture’ to the ‘illusion’ of the Secondary World (Irwin 161). The contextualising story is not recounted as a linear narrative—even the extensive appendices of *The Lord of the Rings* supply only an outline of the extended history of Middle-earth, in the minimal, dates-and-events annal format (H. White 5). In each fantasy, information about the contextualising story is given at intervals, as and when it is needed during the focal narrative to allow understanding to develop. The linear progress of the focal narrative allows both protagonists and reader to amass that information and assemble it into a coherent narrative, and use it to both discover the context of, and judge the appropriateness of, the protagonists’ actions.

The contextualising story is realised differently in each text. In *The Lord of the Rings*, it is the story of Sauron’s attempts to rule Middle-earth, and the ‘long defeat’ (Tolkien, I:338) of the Elves. In the *Earthsea* cycle, it appears as the attempts of ancient wizards and more recent Kings to secure power and eternal life. In *The Riddle-Master’s Game*, it is the story of the war and the long riddle-game played by the High One and the shape-changers. It is the *world-story*, the context of past events within the Secondary World from which the characters, events and concerns of the focal narrative derive their significance, but which is not complete until the events of the focal narrative have been played out. The world-story is the high fantasy narrative’s equivalent of the Great Story of narrative history. And it is directly concerned with human value systems.

In the discipline of history, the format of traditional narrative historiography is recognised to be problematic. In a traditional narrative history, there is a ‘presumption of the singularity of a Great Story as context’ (Berkhofer 40): the format implies that there exists one master narrative of history, of which all other historical narratives are fragments, and from which they derive their meaning. The Great Story imposes interpretation and

judgement on the events of the focal narrative. In traditional narrative histories, it tends to function as an attempt to approach the 'master narrative' and to fit the focal narrative into a place within it; it imposes ideology on the focal narrative. Since the middle of the twentieth century, historiography has moved away from the model of Great Story and focal narrative (Stone 75-6), and under the influence of Marxism, modernism, postmodernism, poststructuralism and feminism has developed forms that both refuse assumptions about value systems, and admit multiple voices.

Writing between 1936 and 1949, Tolkien modelled *The Lord of the Rings* on the then still-current form of narrative history. By the time Le Guin and McKillip began to respond to *The Lord of the Rings*, historiographic practice had developed beyond this mode; but as Le Guin and McKillip write within the genre of fantasy rather than the discipline of history, their format reflects the model of *The Lord of the Rings* rather than recent historiographic practice. This means that in all three texts, the structure of focal narrative framed in Great Story clearly appears. However, it does not appear invisibly, as a convention taken for granted by the authors. Tolkien's elaborate construction of narratively 'unnecessary' supporting material such as genealogies and languages, Le Guin's directly-speaking narrative voice, and McKillip's deliberately literary gestures to both, serve to highlight the structure and direct attention toward it. Tolkien adopts the format of traditional narrative historiography deliberately in *The Lord of the Rings*, because it serves his purpose; Le Guin and McKillip adapt it from Tolkien's model in order to write back to his ideas effectively. In these three high fantasies, the world-story can be read not as a problematic expression of ideology imposing a meaning on the focal narrative, but as a means of articulating a problematic ideology to which the focal narrative constitutes a response. The world-story is the tool with which Tolkien, Le Guin and McKillip set up their 'problem'; the linear focal narrative is the tool with which they develop solutions to that problem.

Like the Great Story of a narrative history, the world-stories of *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game* are loaded with a weight of values, which are expressed through literary conventions. As the three fantasies share a common structure, so do their world-stories follow a common paradigm. In each, the world-story begins in the far past of the Secondary World (in *The Riddle-Master's Game*, literally its pre-history). Each world-story features the rise of a power in the Secondary World. This may be an individual or a culture (Sauron in *The Lord of the Rings*, the early mages of the Archipelago, the Grey Mage of Paln and more recently the Kargish Godkings in the *Earthsea* cycle, and the mysterious Earth-Masters in *The Riddle-Master's Game*). This power grows until it over-reaches itself. It then suffers a series of catastrophes affecting not only the physical, but also the social and political planes, and is greatly diminished as a result of them. In *The Lord of the Rings* this pattern of achievement followed by diminishment appears in the destruction of Númenor and the disembodiment of Sauron. The *Earthsea* cycle mentions various past disasters, including the sinking of Soléa and the loss of the Ring of Erreth-Akbe. In *The Riddle-Master's Game* there is the cataclysmic war between the Earth-Masters and shape-changers.

The past power, though diminished by catastrophe, is not entirely destroyed; it is exiled to the periphery of the Secondary World, and over a long period of time it rebuilds itself. It may be watched as it does so by an observer present at the moment of its downfall: Galadriel and Elrond, and later Gandalf, in *The Lord of the Rings*, and the High One in *The Riddle-Master's Game* fill this role (the Archmages of Roke, in the *Earthsea* cycle, do not consistently do so, but Ged as Archmage does in *The Farthest Shore*). Eventually, the power out of the past intrudes into the present of the Secondary World, and begins to act with the goal of regaining its former prominence. In doing so, it becomes the antagonist of

the focal narrative. Sauron builds up the armies of Mordor and launches his attack on Gondor. Cob attempts to rework and outdo the spells of the Grey Mage of Paln. Eriel and her shape-changer followers move out of their exile in the sea, and attack the Star-Bearer.

The re-emergence of the power out of the past creates the focal narrative: it prompts the observer character (Gandalf, Ged, the High One) to orchestrate the events of the focal narrative, which in each fantasy forms the closing movement of the world-story. The protagonist or protagonists⁵ leave home and take up the task of eradicating the relics of the past from the threatened present. Frodo undertakes to destroy Sauron's Ring; Ged and Arren search for the unraveller of Earthsea; Morgon of Hed sets out to solve the riddle of 'three stars'. In the course of their journeys, the protagonists are presented with a choice between the past and the present or future—the Ring or the Shire, Cob or Ged, the shape-changers or the High One. They choose the present over the past, and by doing so bring about both the final failure of the antagonist's bid for prominence, and the healing of the landscape.

Each element of the world-story—the antagonist's struggle for power, the observer's organisation of a response, the protagonists' journey—is associated with a set of values, and thus forms a part of the text's argument about value systems. The antagonist's narrative sets out for the reader a problematic ethic that threatens the integrity of the Secondary World. The orchestrator character's narrative models a response to that problematic ethic (and indicates the source of the solution). And the narratives of the protagonist and secondary protagonists model what action must be taken in the Secondary World for that solution to be effected.

⁵ There are always multiple protagonists in a high fantasy narrative, although they may not all be of equal importance. Even in the *Earthsea* cycle, while some volumes have lone protagonists, the series accumulates them, until they come together in *The Other Wind* to function as a group.

The narratives of antagonist and protagonists in *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game* reflect two diametrically opposed (Frye, *Anatomy* 162) literary modes: comedy and tragedy. In *The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary Ecology*, Meeker suggests that these literary modes express and model two opposing understandings of human relationship to the world, and inform human action in the world. Meeker theorises that the major concern of the tragic mode is the individual moving towards isolation, his or her potential for perfection, and the obsessive struggle to achieve that ideal of 'self-consummation' (Langer 85). The tragic mode is informed by the presuppositions that 'nature exists for the benefit of mankind', that 'human morality transcends natural limitations', and that the individual personality is of 'supreme importance' (Meeker 42). It expresses the belief that 'the universe cares about the lives of human beings . . . that some superior order exists, and that man will be punished if he transgresses against it' (Meeker 36), but also that such transgression is not only possible but desirable, even morally imperative: ' . . . it is a movement toward man's proper essence, which he comes to know as his own in the presence of his doom' (Jaspers 43).

This, as Raymond Williams points out in *Modern Tragedy*, is a reading of the tragic mode that has only become dominant in Western literary criticism since the nineteenth century. Williams suggests that tragedy began as a dramatic mode with a strong social dimension. Classical Greek tragedy, because of its choral form, embodies 'not an isolable metaphysical stance, rooted in individual experience, but a shared and indeed collective experience, at once and indistinguishably metaphysical and social' (Williams 18). Williams argues that as Western society has changed, so has its understanding of tragedy; particularly as a result of the Romantic movement and its focus on the importance of the individual, the social dimension of tragedy has been stripped away, and the form's 'moral

question, of the nature and therefore the effect of a tragic action' has become instead 'a question in abstracted human nature . . . an attempt to find reasons for an assumed general form of behaviour' (Williams 27). The tragic hero has become not only the focus, but the whole of tragedy.

Meeker's reading of the tragic mode can be seen as a partial restoration of this social dimension of tragedy, in that it focusses attention on the tragic hero's effect on his or her context, and on the crucially important aftermath of the tragic action (Williams 55).

However, the concept of tragedy on which Meeker bases his analysis is firmly in the modern tradition. This is not necessarily a drawback. As T.A. Shippey states in his discussion of *The Lord of the Rings* in *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*, Tolkien's fantasy is explicitly concerned with 'responding to the issues and anxieties' of the twentieth century (xxvii); so are texts such as the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game*, which both develop from *The Lord of the Rings* and respond to it. Such texts necessarily incorporate a twentieth-century understanding of tragedy. Meeker's reading of the tragic mode is well-adapted to examine *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game* make of that mode.

In contrast to the tragic mode's focus on the individual, Meeker considers that the major interest of the comedic mode is with individuals who are at first isolated, but who come together through narrative to form pairs, groups and communities (Frye, *Anatomy* 207). In Meeker's reading, the comedic mode is concerned with 'self-preservation' (Langer 85), and is informed by the presuppositions that 'Man is a part of nature and subject to all natural limitations and flaws. Morality is a matter of getting along with one's fellow creatures as well as possible . . . ' (Meeker 37). The comedic mode puts forward the perspective that individual transcendence of the world is not admirable, or even dangerous,

so much as rather ridiculous (Frye, *Anatomy* 167). Whereas tragic endings tend to feature the erasure of a corrupt old order and the establishment of a new, comedy emphasises the continuation of, or adaptation of, an existing society (Hoy 315). Comedy allows, even insists on, the solution that tragedy rejects (Myers 138), a compromise between extremes. As Meeker puts it, ‘the problem of comedy is always how to resolve conflict without destroying the participants. Comedy is the art of accommodation and reconciliation’ (38).

In Meeker’s reading, the tragic mode positions human beings—or more specifically, human *minds*—as both superior to, and exterior, to the environment within which they exist. The comedic mode positions human minds as part of human bodies; in other words, as part of the environment, able to be affected by it. Tragic and comedic narratives not only illustrate these perspectives, but model patterns of behaviour based on them. The literary modes of tragedy and comedy are not only expressions of systems of thought, but also structures that shape human judgement and behaviour in the world. They are expressions and performances of ‘values and beliefs’ that ‘help shape the character of the people in ... society, teaching them what is good and bad’ (Roth 283)—in short, they are representations of systems of ethics.

The tragic and comedic ethics do not just appear in the world-stories of *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master’s Game*; they do so in a consistent pattern. In each world-story, the transcendent ethic of tragedy is associated primarily with the past. In *The Lord of the Rings* it appears in two places. As Elgin shows (42), Sauron’s actions display a tragic disdain for physical context, and a commitment to transcendence of that context. Sauron can and does ‘torture and destroy the very hills’ (Tolkien, I:255), and reduce the entire landscape of Mordor to slagheaps, in pursuit of his goal of dominion

over Middle-earth. Sauron's followers, particularly Saruman, display a tendency to the same behaviour. And, as Elgin points out, so do the Elves and Gandalf, the other face of Middle-earth's history. Through the power of the three Elven-rings for 'understanding, making, and healing, to preserve all things unstained' (Tolkien, I:257), which they use to defend the landscape against Sauron's destructiveness, Elrond, Galadriel and Gandalf, like Sauron, 'manipulate nature to the ends that best serve' their purposes (Elgin 43)—though they do so in a conspicuously non-destructive fashion.

The transcendent worldview appears in many places in the past of the *Earthsea* cycle. It is gestured to in the political history of the Archipelago, in the tales of the Kings such as the story of Morred and Elfarran the Fair, and their Enemy. This story is not told in full in the cycle itself, but the outline provided in *Tales of Earthsea* links Morred's Enemy strongly with the transcendent ethic: '*If Elfarran will not be my own I will unsay Segoy's word, / I will unmake the islands, the white waves will overwhelm all*' (278). The Kargish version of the death of Erreth-Akbe also matches the tragic hero's pattern of striving and failure (Le Guin, *Tombs* 56). However, as the cycle progresses, the ethic of transcendence becomes increasingly associated with the practice of magic—particularly magic that dates from before the era of the Roke school and the understanding of the principle of Equilibrium. The assumption that the human mind is detached from the physical world, and of more importance than anything else, underlies Cob's attempt to defeat death (Le Guin, *Shore* 195), the Grey Mage of Paln's summoning of the dead (Le Guin, *Shore* 85), and indeed the whole practice of Archipeligan magic:

'The ancients saw that the dragons' realm was not of the body alone. That they could fly. . . outside of time, it may be. . . And envying that freedom, they followed the dragons' way into the west beyond the west. There they claimed part of that realm as their own. A

timeless realm, where the self might be forever. But not in the body, as the dragons were. Only in spirit could men be there. . . So they made a wall which no living body could cross, neither man nor dragon. For they feared the anger of the dragons. And their arts of naming laid a great net of spells upon all the western lands, so that when the people of the islands die, they would come to the west beyond the west and live there in the spirit forever. . . .’

(Le Guin, *Wind* 227-8)

The whole of Archipeligan culture and thought is linked to the practice of magic: the Hardic language is derived from the Old Speech in which magic is worked, and Hardic runic writing is derived from the True Runes which are spells in written form (Le Guin, *Tales* 271-2). True names are words of the Old Speech, and are part of the ancient wizards’ spells of eternal life. The transcendent worldview at some level informs the whole of Archipeligan culture.

The transcendent ethic is also present in the past of the High One’s realm in *The Riddle-Master’s Game*. It is strongly suggested to underlie the culture of the vanished Earth-Masters: the name ‘Earth-Masters’ points to a strong tendency to transcendence of their environment, which is supported by the fact that members of that society precipitated disaster by gathering power from the world for their own ends first without realising, and then without caring about, the implications of their actions (Mains 67). However, the transcendent worldview also appears in the historic past. There is the wizard Ghisteslwchlohm with his desire to become the High One—in other words, to become an Earth-Master—first in name, by usurping the High One’s place and political function, and then in fact by subsuming the power of the Star-Bearer (McKillip, *Game* 594). The history of the Three Portions of An also features many individuals who seek to transcend limitation. There is Awn of An, who ‘to discourage an army from Hel, . . . set fire to An,

sending flames billowing over half the land, burning harvests, orchards, shearing the hillsides and river-banks' (McKillip, *Game* 117), and Peven of Aum who 'killed seven of his sons with misused wizardry' (McKillip, *Game* 13). Above all, there is Oen of An, the King who walled his shape-changer son Ylon into a tower in a futile attempt to stop him inheriting the land-rule (McKillip, *Game* 212). This worldview is strong enough to affect the present: Oen's personal and political hatred for his enemy Farr of Hel is so great that when Raederle raises Farr's wraith in *Heir of Sea and Fire*, he rises out of his grave to put the world back the way he wants it to be:

Oen's face turned finally to Farr; their eyes met across the room for the first time outside of their dreams in six centuries. 'I swore that as long as the Kings ruled Anuin, Farr of Hel would rule the king's midden.'

'And I have sworn,' Farr rasped, 'that I would not close my eyes in my grave until those ruling Anuin were lying in theirs.'

(McKillip, *Game* 368)

Like Middle-earth and Earthsea, the history of the High One's realm is dominated by the transcendent ethic.

So a cycle of tragic striving after transcendence, failure, recovery and re-emergence dominates the history of each Secondary World. However, this pattern does not repeat unchanged through time. Each time it occurs, the antagonist's attempts to transcend the limitations that confine him or her result not in a development toward the ideal of individual empowerment, but in a diminishment away from it. The Sauron of *The Lord of the Rings*, the disembodied spirit trapped in a barren landscape, is a diminished version of

the manipulator who contrived the downfall of Númenor and persuaded the peoples of Middle-earth to accept his Rings in *The Silmarillion*. This Sauron is a diminished version of Sauron the Maia spirit, the servant of Morgoth. At all of these levels, Sauron is himself only a lesser version of Arda's original fallen angel, the Vala Morgoth (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 23). Likewise, in *The Farthest Shore*, Cob appears to outdo both the ancient wizards of the Archipelago and the Grey Mage of Palm, and achieve his goal of eternal life in his body, in the living world. However, what he actually achieves is the thing he fears most: eternal unlife trapped in a decaying body, and the loss of self (Le Guin, *Shore* 197), a fate even worse than the Grey Mage's namelessness, or entrapment in emotionless existence in the Dry Land of the Dead. In *The Riddle-Master's Game*, after the Earth-Masters' war, Eriel and the rebellious Earth-Masters are confined to the sea by the bindings the High One places on them (McKillip, *Game* 593), and lose their ability to access power from external sources. They diminish from Earth-Masters into shape-changers.

In addition to this, with each catastrophic failure of the antagonist's attempt at transcendence of the Secondary World, the damage done to the landscape increases. Sauron goes from occupying land to causing the drowning of the island of Númenor and the removal of the Undying Lands from 'the circles of the world' (Tolkien, III:281). Finally, in *The Lord of the Rings*, he poisons the landscape of Mordor, corrupts several cultures, and threatens to reduce the whole of Middle-earth to a barren waste. In Earthsea, the ancient wizards damage large parts of the lands in the west beyond the west in their attempt to create a haven for eternal life in the spirit:

' . . . as the wall was built and the spell laid, the wind ceased to blow, within the wall. The sea withdrew. The springs ceased to run. The mountains of sunrise became the mountains

of the night. Those that died came to a dark land, a dry land.’

(Le Guin, *Wind* 228)

In the physical world, the actions of the ancient wizards inspire the enmity of the dragons, and leave the people of the Archipelago the target of their anger for centuries. The Grey Mage of Paln ruins his homeland (Le Guin, *Shore* 85) by summoning the dead to advise the living. Cob, in his attempt to outdo the Grey Mage, begins to unravel the whole of Earthsea. In *The Riddle-Master's Game*, Eriel and her followers first destroy the Earth-Masters' cities, kill their own children and damage the landscape so badly that it takes thousands of years to recover from their first attempt to gain dominance (McKillip, *Game* 589). Their second attempt involves murder, the disruption of land-law and families, the destruction of a city, an attempt to drown an island and another to slaughter an army, and the devastation of an entire kingdom (McKillip, *Game* 607). The threat is that they will reduce the entire realm to a wasteland if they are not contained in time.

Through this pattern of repeated transcendent striving, diminishment and ever-increasing consequences, the world-stories of *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game* position the transcendent worldview as a problem to which the focal narrative must develop a solution. The solution the three fantasies present, through narrative, is the diametrically opposite ethic of comedy. Modern fantasy tends to be characterised by an expression of ‘delight in the independent life of created things’ (Manlove, *Impulse* xii); it is a largely comedic response to the world, and tends to be conservative of it and the things within it. *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game* all share the characteristic structure of comedy in their movement from bondage to healing. Furthermore, the focal narratives of the three texts are

informed by the integrative worldview expressed by the comedic mode, which appears in each text associated predominantly with the present, the protagonists and their origins.

As Elgin shows in his ecocritical analysis of *The Lord of the Rings* (51), the comedic ethic of existence within the limitations imposed by the physical world is coded into the lifestyle of the hobbits of the Shire. As a culture, the hobbits live within their environment rather than trying to dominate it with machinery and industry: 'they love peace and quiet and good tilled earth: a well-ordered and well-farmed countryside was their favourite haunt' (Tolkien, I:13). Hobbits understand the relationship between individual and contexts well enough that anything unusual or out of scale, such as Bilbo's and Frodo's well-preserved longevity, worries them (Elgin 51). The hobbit perspective on the relationship of individual to world is clear enough that it enables Sam to reject the influence of the Ring when he must carry it in Mordor after Frodo's apparent death:

. . . all the clouds rolled away, and the white sun shone, and at his command the vale of Gorgoroth became a garden of flowers and trees and brought forth fruit. He had only to put on the Ring and claim it for his own, and all this could be.

In that hour of trial it was the love of his master that helped most to hold him firm; but also deep down in him lived still unconquered his plain hobbit-sense . . . The one small garden of a free gardener was all his need and due, not a garden swollen to a realm; his own hands to use, not the hands of others to command.

'And anyway all these notions are only a trick,' he said to himself . . .

(Tolkien, III:155).

The secondary protagonist of *The Lord of the Rings*, Aragorn, is also associated with the integrative ethic through his double function as warrior and healer, and through his identity as the King of Gondor and Lord of the Western Lands (kingship is a healing function on the political and social planes: Monks 6).

In the *Earthsea* cycle the integrative worldview characteristic of comedy is expressed predominantly through the concept of Equilibrium, the guiding principle of the relatively recently established (Le Guin, *Tales* 293) school of Roke wizardry. The doctrine of Equilibrium constructs human beings and their actions as parts of a balanced system, and thus stresses the implications of action:

‘ . . . an act is not, as young men think, like a rock that one picks up and throws, and it hits or misses, and that’s the end of it. When that rock is lifted the earth is lighter, and the hand that bears it heavier. When it is thrown the circuits of the stars respond, and where it strikes or falls the universe is changed. On every act the balance of the whole depends. . . . ’

(Le Guin, *Shore* 76-7)

The doctrine of Equilibrium is a philosophical codification of a physical fact—that individuals exist as part of their environment. It explicitly teaches the acceptance of limitations, through the principle that just because something can be done does not mean it should be done: ‘ “ . . . do only that which you must do, and which you cannot do in any other way” ’ (Le Guin, *Shore* 77). The integrative ethic also finds expression in the day-to-day pragmatism of the nonwizardly protagonists of the *Earthsea* cycle, Tenar, Alder and Irian.

The integrative ethic is associated with Morgon of Hed, the protagonist of *The Riddle-Master's Game*, three times over. It is visible in the culture of Morgon's kingdom of Hed in *The Riddle-Master's Game*—a deliberate contrast to the history of the Three Portions of An. Hed, like the Shire, is a preindustrial farming landscape, with all the acceptance of inescapable physical limits that that implies (McKillip, *Game* 24). Hed is also unusual in the High One's realm for having an extremely peaceful past:

‘ . . . [Hed] had nothing anyone would have fought for: no wealth, no great stretches of land, no seat of power or mystery, just good farmland and good weather, in a land so small that not even the Kings of An in their years of conquering, were tempted by it. Men found the rulers they wanted to keep the peace, and their instinct for peace drove deep into the land . . . ’

(McKillip, *Game* 102)

The peaceful past of Hed is the one thing above all others that fits Morgon for the role of Star-Bearer (McKillip, *Game* 594).

Existence within and acceptance of the restrictions imposed by context is also a feature of the discipline of riddlery practiced by Morgon, Raederle and most of the other major characters in the trilogy. This discipline is never explained to the reader as Le Guin's philosophy of Equilibrium is. However, McKillip frequently shows it in operation, and through the formula of question, story-answer and derived stricture (moral rule) applied to immediate, real-world situations, she reveals riddlery to be concerned with the development of an holistic understanding of actions, their contexts and their effects (Schulyer 108). The riddles are drawn from ‘the very fabric of the realm, its settlement, histories, tales, wars, poetry, its riddles’ (McKillip, *Game* 333). It is a set of abstractions

derived from concrete examples, and its strictures—the lessons drawn from the solutions to riddles—operate as guides to action in the world, not only in abstract terms but in specific instances, as Morgon and Deth’s battle of riddles on the borders of Herun shows (McKillip, *Game* 91-2). To be a riddle-master is to be concerned with the issue of identifying and undertaking right action in the world.

Finally, Morgon is associated with the integrative ethic through his connection to the land-law of Hed. Land-law is an intense magical connection between a realm and the individual who rules it, which makes the land-ruler effectively a part of the landscape:

‘. . . I [Morgon] felt [my father] die. I didn’t know how or why or where; I simply knew, at that moment, that he was dying. And then that he was dead, and the land-rule had passed to me. For a moment I saw every leaf, every new-planted seed, every root in Hed...I was every leaf, every new-planted seed. . . .’

(McKillip, *Game* 77)

Morgon is literally, physically integrated with his environment, and for so long as he holds the land-law, is bound to act in its best interests.

The comedic ethic can be just as problematic as the tragic ethic. It can become, not just secure, but stagnant within its acceptance of limitations. The hobbits of the Shire are so secure in their vision of the world that they reject not just the truly unnatural, but the merely unfamiliar, right down to the simple practice of boating (Tolkien, I:31). This leaves them vulnerable to Saruman’s malice: ‘even though the hobbits recognize what is happening, they do not take action of any kind to stop it . . . because of their own unwillingness to recognize the difference between tragic revolt and comic survival’ (Elgin

46). The school of Roke is shown, particularly in the continuation volumes of the *Earthsea* cycle, to be unnecessarily limited in its interpretation of the principles of Equilibrium, particularly with regard to its own organisation. This is visible in its hierarchy and exclusivity, its exclusion of women from learning, and its inability to come to terms with the obsolescence of the office of Archmage. Likewise, within the culture of Hed there is no place for Morgon's enquiring mind. Morgon's farm overseer says to him after the revelation that he has won Peven's crown,

' . . . I told [your father] it was wrong to let you go away from Hed so long; it's never been done, no good would come of it. And I was right. No good has come. You running off to a strange land, playing riddle-games with—with a man who should have had the decency to stay put once he was dead and buried in the earth. It's not good. It's not—it's not the way a land-ruler of Hed should want to behave. It's not done.'

(McKillip, *Game 13*)

The simple presence of the integrative ethic in the Secondary World cannot effectively counter the damage the transcendent ethic does; it needs narrative expression to make it an effective presence.

The narrative paradigm of comedy, like that of tragedy, begins with a social situation that appears to be stable. This situation is disrupted—though not violently—by someone who is striving after a self-determined ideal state. However, in comedy, instead of this disruption being amplified, it is systematically evaded or avoided by the protagonists until it can be neutralised through the fulfilment of pre-existing social institutions such as inheritance or marriage (Hoy 17). The fulfilment of those institutions reconciles those who create the disruption with those against whom it was directed. In neither *The Lord of the*

Rings, the *Earthsea* cycle nor *The Riddle-Master's Game* does a protagonist's narrative follow this paradigm exactly, though Aragorn's, Morgon's and Raederle's stories come close. However, the overall focal narrative of each fantasy gestures to the comedic structure as well as promoting the comedic vision.

In *The Lord of the Rings*, both Frodo and Aragorn begin their stories in more or less marginalised states. Frodo, as a hobbit, is a member of a species and culture literally unknown to most of the world outside the Shire; Aragorn, as a Ranger, lives on the fringes of human society, and as unacknowledged King is out of his proper place in the world. Through Frodo's attempt to destroy the Ring and Aragorn's to defend Gondor, they (and their bathetic echoes, Sam, Merry and Pippin), neutralise the damage caused to their Secondary World by Sauron's attempt to transcend its limitations. In doing so, these characters achieve full integration into their own societies, and regenerate them into their healed states. Sam, Merry and Pippin scour and then regenerate the Shire, and Aragorn achieves the throne of Gondor. The only exception to this rule is Frodo, a discrepancy I will investigate more fully in Chapter Five.

Le Guin's protagonists follow the same trajectory. They all begin their narratives in marginalised states. Ged is a village bronzesmith's neglected youngest son; Tenar is the nameless Priestess of a politically disfavoured faith; Arren, though a Prince's son, is an adolescent and effectively powerless. Therru, in *Tehanu*, is a disfigured child in a society that rejects difference. Irian, the protagonist of 'Dragonfly', is provincial, uneducated and uncategorisable. In *The Other Wind*, Alder is a petty sorcerer, isolated from the power structures of his world. Nevertheless, each of these characters acts to neutralise a disruption caused by those who hold the transcendent worldview in their Secondary World—Ged, who must work to correct his own mistake, in *A Wizard of Earthsea*, the

Kargish Godking, Cob, Aspen, Thorion, the ancient wizards who built the wall between the Dry Land of the Dead and the living world. In succeeding, each protagonist regenerates and reintegrates with her or his society and landscape.

The pattern holds for McKillip's protagonists also. Morgon of Hed and Raederle of An each begin at the margins of their world, both literally and socially. Morgon is the farmer Prince of a tiny island widely held to have contributed nothing—not even a riddle (McKillip, *Game* 29)—to the world. As the designated prize of whichever man manages to win a riddle-game with a murderous ghost, Raederle is a political cipher who cannot even act for herself. However, through their efforts to solve the High One's riddle-game, Morgon and Raederle counteract the damaging effects of the shape-changers and the wizard Ghisteslwchlohm on their world, and achieve a complete integration with their societies and their environment. Morgon becomes the new High One, a Master of Earth and Air, and Raederle becomes the heir of sea and fire named in the title of the trilogy's second volume.

The comedic shape of the focal narrative is significant not just because it activates within the Secondary World a worldview that opposes the antagonist's, but because the comedic narrative paradigm *contains* the tragic paradigm—in both senses of the word. The potential for tragedy is always present within the comedic paradigm. It is what causes the initial disruption to the stagnant status quo. However, the comedic narrative develops in such a way as to block this tragic potential from achieving its full expression. This is what produces eucatastrophe in *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game*.

In each of these three fantasies, the tragic and comedic narratives of the antagonist and the protagonists share both a beginning and an end point. The disruption caused by the antagonist's re-emergence and attempt to achieve transcendence is also the disruption imposed on an apparently stable situation from without, which the protagonists must neutralise before they can achieve integration with their landscapes. Sauron's emergence from Mordor signals Frodo's departure from the Shire and Aragorn's movement towards Gondor; Cob's return from death prompts Ged's departure from Roke with Arren; the shape-changers' attempt to prevent the Star-Bearer's accession to power sends Morgon on his quest to answer the riddle of three stars. And in each text, the two paradigms—tragic and comedic—also end simultaneously. Gollum's destruction of the Ring, the climax of the focal narrative of *The Lord of the Rings*, diminishes Sauron to dust. Ged's closure of the rift between the Dry Land and the living world in *The Farthest Shore* confines Cob to death. Morgon's assumption of the role of High One and the power of the land-law checks the shape-changers' re-emergence in time for him to rebind them and preserve the Secondary World. When the protagonists of each fantasy negate the disruption to social and physical equilibrium caused by the antagonist, they stop short the development of the tragic narrative, and cause the final failure of the antagonist's attempt at transcendence. The transcendent ethic is erased from the Secondary World.

This is only to be expected. Tragedy characteristically closes with the erasure of the corrupt old order and the establishment of a new—though in the more cynical brand of tragedy this may be simply the old order *redux*, as is Fortinbras' assumption of the throne of Denmark at the end of *Hamlet*. But comedy, as previously discussed, ends with the affirmation and regeneration of a modified status quo. The fall of the antagonist in *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* trilogy and *The Riddle-Master's Game* signals the end of the old order and the erasure of the transcendent ethic that dominates the history of the

Secondary World. It also generates the expectation, based in the reader's familiarity with the tragic narrative paradigm, that a new order will appear to replace it. On the same principle, the simultaneous close of the protagonists' comedic narrative generates an expectation of the regeneration and perpetuation of the status quo.

And in each fantasy, this is precisely what happens. Aragorn becomes the King of Gondor and Lord of the Western Lands, and Sam goes home to literally regenerate the Shire, using Galadriel's gift of soil. Arren becomes Lebannen, the King of All the Isles, and binds the Archipelago into a stable political entity. Morgon and Raederle become the new High One and shape-changer, whose power maintains the High One's realm. Because this regeneration of the old order occurs simultaneously with a tragic paradigm closure, which leaves space open for a new order, the protagonists' establishment of the secure comedic future becomes the paradigmatically right ending of not only the comedic paradigm, but also the tragic. The regenerated comedic ethic becomes the new order that legitimately replaces the old in the tragic paradigm. The nature of the landscape changes, and eucatastrophe is achieved. The focal narrative moves the integrative ethic into the dominant position in the Secondary World and erases the transcendent; Hayden White's transition between value systems, the close of narrative history, is revealed as the point of the high fantasy narrative and the goal toward which it moves. If the transcendent ethic that threatens the integrity of the Secondary World is the problem, action that promotes the integrative ethic appears to be the solution.

The uniform pattern of ethical alignments that appears in *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game*, and the uniform construction of eucatastrophe in the three texts, suggests that the three fantasies advance a single, identical ethical argument. They argue that a transition from transcendent ways of thinking about,

relating to, and acting within the world, toward integrative ways of thinking and acting, is necessary to ensure the continued survival of the Secondary World. However, in each fantasy, there appears a different interpretation of the transcendent impulse, and a different construction of the ethical transition. In each, the method the focal narrative proposes for containing the transcendent problem differs also. These differences are the result of one factor: the way in which each author constructs the Secondary World.

Tolkien's construction of Middle-earth reflects the Christian vision of the physical world as part of a larger moral system, in which the divine plan is made manifest. In *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien presents Middle-earth as part of an open system—in fact, as the focal point of a system that includes not just a physical universe but a consciously-determined cosmic order. Although the narrative of *The Lord of the Rings* occurs entirely within the landscape of Middle-earth, reality extends beyond that landscape. Elven-ships sail from Middle-earth to the Undying Lands, which are no longer a part of Middle-earth's physical reality (Tolkien, III:281). In order to reach them, Frodo must cross a form of threshold:

. . . the ship went out onto the High Sea and passed on into the West, until at last on a night of rain Frodo smelled a sweet fragrance on the air and heard the sound of singing that came over the water. And then it seemed to him that as in his dream in the house of Bombadil, the grey rain-curtain turned all to silver glass and was rolled back, and he beheld white shores and beyond them a far green country under a swift sunrise.

(Tolkien, III:274-5)

There may be no gods in Middle-earth (Dowie 266), but as reality extends beyond the limits of the world, so do belief systems. The Valar are referenced as legendary figures, invocations of the Vala Elbereth frequently function as spells or answered prayers

(Tolkien, I:192), and her star inspires Sam with hope in Mordor (Tolkien, III:175). Entities from outside of Middle-earth can enter it at will: Gandalf suggests that Sauron has done so, and Treebeard states that Gandalf and the other wizards have also (Tolkien, II:66). Other presences existing outside Middle-earth are concerned with events within it. Gandalf states that Sauron is a ‘servant or emissary’ of other powers (Tolkien, III:137), while Elrond speaks of ‘other places and realms’ with an interest in the outcome of events in Middle-earth (Tolkien I:255-7). And as Paul Kocher states (35), there is a clear implication that events in Middle-earth, when not obstructed by transcendent actions, manifest the design of at least one of those external powers:

‘ . . . now, when [the Ring’s] master was awake once more and sending out his dark thought from Mirkwood, it abandoned Gollum. Only to be picked up by the most unlikely person imaginable: Bilbo from the Shire!

‘Behind that there was something else at work, beyond any design of the Ring-maker. I can put it no plainer than by saying that Bilbo was *meant* to find the Ring, and *not* by its maker. In which case you [Frodo] were also *meant* to have it. And that may be an encouraging thought.’

(Tolkien, I:61-2)

This power is most likely the creator figure called Eru or Ilúvatar in *The Silmarillion* (3), although that fact is never stated in *The Lord of the Rings*.

The progress of events in Middle-earth manifests the greater order of which the Secondary World is a part. The power that orders events in Middle-earth intervenes in the narrative directly only once, to send Faramir’s riddle-dream (Shippey, *Road* 137). However, its influence is constantly present. In Middle-earth, it is not just a truism but a matter of fact

that, as Théoden puts it, *Oft evil will shall evil mar* (Tolkien, II:177), and ‘the very qualities of evil are ... turned against themselves for other ends’ (Kocher 47). Bilbo Baggins, with his inbuilt hobbit’s resilience, finds the Ring in *The Hobbit* and prevents it from making its way back to Sauron. The Balrog’s destruction of Gandalf in Moria leads only to his return as the more powerful Gandalf the White (Kocher 46). The factional quarrelling of the Orcs in *The Two Towers* helps Merry and Pippin to escape and avoid being killed by the Rohirrim, and reach Fangorn Forest in time to stir up the Ents and bring about the fall of Isengard. Saruman is brought down by the Ents whose forests he has destroyed, and dies at the hands of his corrupted servant Gríma Wormtongue. The Ring is destroyed because it acts as it was made to, exerting an equal influence on Frodo and Gollum to make them want it for themselves at the Cracks of Doom, the one place and moment in the narrative in which it can be destroyed. Sauron is thus undone by his own transcendent ambition. The landscape of Middle-earth may be benevolent (Rivendell), amoral (Tom Bombadil) or malevolent in nature (Caradhras, Old Man Willow), but the events that take place within that landscape manifest the positive cosmic order of which it is a part.

The situation is rather different in the *Earthsea* cycle. Le Guin constructs Earthsea as more of a closed system than Middle-earth. Earthsea is part of a physical universe, but as Richard D. Erlich points out, its landscape exists more or less on a single plane: ‘For all practical purposes, Earthsea is covered with the dome of the sky; there is no Heaven above, but only the ancient starry heavens (450). The landscape of Earthsea extends into the realm of the nonphysical; the physical Secondary World is contiguous with the ‘west beyond the west’, the Dry Land of the Dead and the ‘other wind’ on which the dragons fly, which allows them to move beyond the limits of Earthsea (Le Guin, *Wind* 226). However, there is no implication that the west beyond the west imposes any form of order on the

physical Earthsea. Despite the Kargish belief in gods, no presences exist beyond Earthsea's limits, ordering or influencing it. Segoy, the maker of the landscape of Earthsea (ie the dragon Kalessin), is indigenous to the system.

Earthsea, and the universe it is part of, can adapt to the events that occur within them.

When the ancient wizards of the Archipelago create the Dry Land of the Dead, the Equilibrium adjusts to its presence to such an extent that later wizards come to regard the Dry Land's existence as the natural state of the world. Cob's door between the living and dead worlds will 'suck all the light out of the world in the end' if it is not closed (Le Guin *Shore*, 198); the ancient mages' attempt to ensure the survival of the spirit after death not only turns the west beyond the west into the barren Dry Land, but eventually threatens to have physical consequences that extend beyond Earthsea into the universe around it:

' "*Greed puts out the sun.* These are Kalessin's words" ' (Le Guin, *Wind* 227). However, that infinite physical universe cannot be overwhelmed, and nor, ultimately, can the Equilibrium of Earthsea. Before his final encounter with Cob, Ged says of himself and Arren,

' . . . we two must stand upon the balance-point, the very fulcrum of the world. And if I fall, you fall, and all the rest...For a while, for a while. No darkness lasts forever, after all. And even there, there are stars. . . '

(Le Guin, *Shore* 171)

Equilibrium will eventually reassert itself in Earthsea, no matter how badly Cob damages the landscape. The larger universe will continue to exist despite the acts of the ancient wizards. Le Guin's Secondary World manifests not a cosmic order, but an inherent, ecological one.

The situation is different again in *The Riddle-Master's Game*; in her construction of the High One's realm, McKillip goes one step further than even Le Guin, and creates a completely closed system. Like Earthsea, the High One's realm exists on a single plane. There are no belief systems in it, either truly or falsely founded, that extend beyond its limits: the High One is a source of order and a focus of belief, but he exists within the physical world, is associated with a specific, relatively accessible place (Erlenstar Mountain) and is integrated with the landscape through the land-law. The shape-changers who threaten the land-law come from outside its sphere of influence, but not from beyond the limits of the Secondary World. There is no indication anywhere in the text of a known, or believed-in, life after death in a different location. Consciousness can persist past death in the High One's realm, but it is tied to the body, and manifests in the physical world: the restless dead of the Three Portions of An have to be bound 'in their graves' (McKillip, *Game* 78), while the power of the Earth-Masters' dead remains in the places where they died (McKillip, *Game* 596). There is no awareness on the characters' part that the High One's realm is part of a greater physical system such as the universe that surrounds Earthsea.

This closed system manifests neither a cosmic nor an ecological order. Its original, inherent order has been disrupted by the shape-changers' use of the natural world as a source of power. The High One's realm is held in balance artificially and from within, by the High One and the land-law (McKillip, *Game* 594). While the land-law mimics Earthsea's inherent balance, it does not replicate it entirely; it does not have the capacity to adjust to inimical forces within the Secondary World as Earthsea and Middle-earth do. Its only response to a transcendent presence is to isolate it, to prevent it from doing more harm. This can be seen in the High One's imprisonment of the shape-changers in the sea,

the death of Eriel and Heureu Ymris' baby and the suicide of Ylon, and in the tale of Awn of An, who after setting fire to his land lost the land-rule, and was replaced by another, more effective caretaker (McKillip, *Game* 117).

Because the land-law is created and held by the High One, it is as vulnerable to destruction as the High One is to death. Unlike Middle-earth and Earthsea, the High One's realm can be destroyed purely by accident—a point made early in the narrative, when Morgon nearly kills himself and Deth by provoking an avalanche. Unlike Middle-earth and Earthsea, McKillip's Secondary World is very nearly absolutely vulnerable to the transcendent actions of the characters within it; the only way in which the land-law can actively defend itself is through the production of the Star-Bearer to oppose the shape-changers (McKillip, *Game* 594). The High One's realm manifests only an artificial order, created and maintained by conscious effort from within the Secondary World.

The construction of the Secondary World, whether as an open system manifesting cosmic order, a partially closed ecology, or a damaged closed system maintained by an artificial construct, is the single greatest influence on the problem-solving of *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game*. Although the overall argument outlined in this chapter remains the same, as the nature of the Secondary World changes, each author's presentation of the elements that make up the high fantasy paradigm changes also. The construction of the transcendent impulse changes; the representation of ethical transition, and its source, and the concept of what action is needed to preserve the Secondary World, change in response. And as the external apparatus endowing the Secondary World with meaning and order is stripped away, responsibility for the situation is increasingly moved onto the characters within the Secondary World.

Despite the differences between their stories, worldbuilding and characters, the narratives of *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game* follow a common paradigm, and present a common argument. In Middle-earth, Earthsea and the High One's realm, the past has been dominated, to the detriment of the landscape, by the ethic of transcendence expressed in the tragic mode. In each Secondary World, in order for the landscape to survive, the characters within it must effect a modal shift, so that the integrative ethic of comedy becomes dominant instead of the tragic ethic. However, the construction of the Secondary World changes in each fantasy. Middle-earth begins by presenting the world as invested with significance by its place within a cosmic order, but in the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game*, this apparatus of support is stripped away. The Secondary World becomes a closed physical system, and even its inherent, ecological order is lost, to be replaced by a simulacrum. As the construction of the Secondary World changes, so does each fantasy's interpretation of the generic argument. While the need for ethical transition is always present, through their handling of antagonist, orchestrator and protagonists—their representation of the transcendent impulse, the ethical transition and its implementation—Tolkien, Le Guin and McKillip present three different arguments for achieving it, each tailored to the environment in which it must be achieved.

3 'THE SHADOW OF THE PAST': THE TRAGIC HERO, THE TRANSCENDENT IMPULSE AND THE SECONDARY WORLD

In the high fantasy paradigm, one thing consistently disrupts and threatens the integrity of the Secondary World: the major antagonist, the power out of the past, making its second bid for ascendancy over the landscape and its limitations. As discussed in Chapter Two, in *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game*, the major antagonist is consistently associated with the worldview of tragedy—the worldview that constructs the human mind as superior to and isolated from its environment, and valorises the individual's attempt to transcend the limits imposed by that environment. In this chapter, I will examine the major antagonists of *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game*—Sauron, Cob and Eriel—and the minor antagonists that surround them. I will show how Tolkien, Le Guin and McKillip use these characters to discredit the transcendent ethic that has previously dominated the Secondary World, to construct the transcendent actor as a danger to the Secondary World, and to reveal why she or he is dangerous. I will investigate how the three authors present the source of transcendent behaviour through their antagonists, and show how their interpretations of that behaviour change from text to text, and why. Finally, I will discuss where each narrative locates the ultimate responsibility for the threat to the integrity of the Secondary World.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the major antagonist figures of *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game* all espouse the transcendent ethic associated with tragedy. Additionally, they all conform to the paradigm of the tragic hero. The narrative paradigm of tragedy deals with the violent disruption of a previously stable situation, focussed around a particular individual. This disruption grows greater and more widespread, often erupting destructively onto the physical plane (Meeker 51), until stability

can only be restored by the deaths of those implicated in causing the disruption. The focus of modern tragedy, and modern readings of tragedy, is the tragic hero, the individual who struggles to overcome the limits of his or her⁶ initial, uncongenial situation in order to achieve a subjective ideal state—‘avoiding or transcending the necessary in order to accomplish the impossible’ (Meeker 31). Inevitably, sooner or later, the struggling individual fails, because of the limitations imposed by the context within which he or she acts: ‘the nature of the universal is such that it must crush this human greatness which opposes it’ (Jaspers 49). The tragic hero is destroyed by her or his inability to let go of the struggle against impassable limits, despite the impossibility of attaining the ideal.

It is the tragic hero’s repeated attempts to transcend his or her initial state that first cause the disruption to stability, then amplify it to the point where stability can only be restored by the erasure of the source of disruption—that is, the destruction of the tragic hero (which is usually a self-destruction: Hoy 6). But in tragic literature, the tragic hero is usually presented, as far as is possible, from the inside. The tragic hero has the privilege of the soliloquy, the speech that reveals his or her state of mind and thought processes directly to the audience or reader, and establishes a bond of understanding and sympathy. Through the self-revelatory mechanism of the soliloquy, the tragic hero’s failure to achieve her or his ideal is constructed as a victory, because of what it reveals about the individual’s capacity to develop self-knowledge and move beyond the constraints set by nature. In tragedy ‘Victory,’ as Karl Jaspers puts it, ‘is not his who triumphs but his who fails in defeat’ (Jaspers 49).

Sauron, the major antagonist of *The Lord of the Rings*, can be identified as a tragic hero because of his repeated attempts to transcend his outcast and disembodied status by

⁶ Although the tragic hero is usually male, female characters have always had a certain degree of access to the tragic form. Medea and Antigone, for example, can both be read as tragic heroes.

becoming the ruler of Middle-earth. He reduces Mordor to a wasteland, and threatens to do the same to Gondor and the rest of the Western Lands beyond it—to bring Night to Middle-earth—in the course of his struggle to dominate it. Sauron destroys himself, by investing so much of himself in the Ring that he cannot survive its destruction (Kocher 58), and by his failure to consider the possibility that the Ring’s holder might choose not to claim it. His self-destruction is preceded by a moment of understanding of how he has brought about his own defeat (Tolkien, III:197). Cob, the antagonist of *The Farthest Shore*, fulfils the paradigm through his attempt to defeat mortality and achieve eternal life. The effects of his spell of immortality begin to break down the social and physical fabric of Earthsea. Cob literally kills himself, and worse: the spell intended to bring him back from death to immortal life in fact only traps him in an eternal unlife—a fact he fails to recognise until it is far too late (Le Guin, *Shore* 198). Eriel the shape-changer, the major antagonist of *The Riddle-Master’s Game*, aims to escape the High One’s bindings and his land-law and attain an ideal state of absolute empowerment and freedom from constraint. She and her shape-changer allies disrupt the land-law, the foundation of both physical survival and social structure in the High One’s realm, and threaten to strip the landscape to a barren waste if they are not stopped. Eriel brings about her own destruction, partly through her mistaken strategic choices, and partly because her own concern with power blinds her to the High One’s powerless disguises: her recognition of her role in her own downfall is registered in the expression of ‘astonishment and awe’ on her face when she finally confronts the High One at the climax of the narrative (McKillip, *Game* 600). Thus Eriel also fulfils the paradigm of the tragic hero.

The tragic form positions the tragic hero at the centre of the narrative, and the audience’s attention. It privileges the individual’s desire for transcendence, the rationale behind it and

the struggle to achieve it, and relegates awareness of the damage the tragic hero does during that struggle to the periphery:

The tragic figure may act vigorously in the world, as Oedipus and Macbeth do, but his [sic] public action is important mainly for its revelation of the private reality. . . . Tragedy, much as it may and does take note of social and political effects, is less concerned with them than with the truth for and of the individual.

(Heilman 97)

However, *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle, and *The Riddle-Master's Game* do not present their major antagonists in accordance with the conventions of tragedy. Instead, Tolkien, Le Guin and McKillip reverse those conventions, and shift their antagonists to the periphery of both the narrative and the Secondary World. Sauron, the great tragic hero of Middle-earth, is almost entirely absent from the narrative of *The Lord of the Rings* (Flieger 113). Sauron is not a character, but a name that serves as a focus of fear. He exists on the physical periphery of Middle-earth. He is encountered only as a disembodied Eye—he must use intermediary devices such as the palantíri or seeing-stones and the Seat of Seeing at Amon Hen, to interact with others. On the rare occasions when characters interact with Sauron, the contact is depersonalised and distanced. When Frodo encounters the Eye at Amon Hen, he neither sees Sauron nor hears him speak, but only feels the pressure of his awareness:

. . . suddenly he felt the Eye. There was an eye in the Dark Tower that did not sleep. He knew that it had become aware of his gaze. A fierce eager will was there. It leaped towards him; almost like a finger he felt it, searching for him. Very soon it would nail him down . . .

(Tolkien, I:379-80)

Pippin's encounter with Sauron in the palantír is even more distanced. It is reported rather than shown (Ellison 24), and reported in such a way as to emphasise the lack of physicality in the encounter: ‘ “. . . He did not speak so that I could hear words. He just looked, and I understood” ’ (Tolkien, II:176). Aragorn reports his encounter with Sauron in the palantír in even less detail (Tolkien, III:46). The narrative voice of *The Lord of the Rings* provides glimpses into Sauron's thoughts and intentions (‘ “. . . Sauron had already laid his plans, and he had a mind first to play these mice cruelly before he struck to kill’: Tolkien, III:145), but the fact that the narrative is Frodo's history of the War of the Ring means that these must be read as reconstructions made after the fact. Sauron himself appears in the narrative only once, at the moment of his destruction (Ellison 24), and even then he is not a character, but a distant inhuman image:

. . . as the Captains gazed south to the Land of Mordor, it seemed to them that, black against the pall of cloud, there rose a huge shape of shadow, impenetrable, lightning-crowned, filling all the sky. Enormous it reared above the world, and stretched out towards them a vast threatening hand, terrible but impotent: for even as it leaned over them, a great wind took it, and it was all blown away, and passed; and then a hush fell.

(Tolkien, III:200)

Although Sauron is a crucially important figure in the narrative of *The Lord of the Rings*, he remains at the periphery of that narrative.

Le Guin uses the same device to present her major antagonist in the original *Earthsea* trilogy. The *Earthsea* books feature multiple antagonist figures: Ged in *A Wizard of Earthsea*; the Kargish Godking; Cob; Aspen and the Master Summoner Thorion in *Tehanu*

and ‘Dragonfly’. The most prominent of these is Cob. Throughout *The Farthest Shore*, Cob is a distanced figure, although not quite as distanced as Sauron is. Cob exists on the edges of his Secondary World—he is confined to the island of Selidor, the westernmost point in the Archipelago, and to the Dry Land of the Dead in the west beyond the west. Although Cob appears several times in the narrative of *The Farthest Shore*, each time he does so he is in some way distanced. His first appearance is in Arren’s dream, as a nameless and undescribed ‘tall lord of shadows’ carrying a flame of life in his hand, who calls on Arren to follow him into the Dry Land of the Dead (Le Guin, *Shore* 65). This image gestures to the glamour and importance with which Romantic literature has invested the figure of the tragic hero. However, Cob’s later appearances undercut this glamour sharply. He is reduced to an ordinary human being when Ged tells Arren about their confrontation on Havnor. Then he becomes an abstract concept: the ‘Anti-King’ (Le Guin, *Shore* 149). His first appearance on the island of Selidor is, as Ged explains to Arren,

‘ . . . a sending. A presentiment or image of the man . . . there’s no power in it . . . nor is it even true in seeming, unless the sender so wishes. We have not seen what he now looks like, I guess.’

(Le Guin, *Shore* 177)

Only Cob’s final encounter with Ged and Arren is physical; and at this point even his appearance of individual humanity is stripped away by dragonfire. Cob is reduced to an impersonal image of human ruin:

The face lifted up towards them. There was no comeliness left in it, only ruin, old age that had outlived old age. The mouth was withered. The sockets of the eyes were empty, and

had long been empty. So Ged and Arren saw at last the living face of their enemy.

(Le Guin, *Shore* 186)

When Ged and Arren follow Cob into the Dry Land of the Dead, it becomes evident that in his attempt to achieve eternal life, Cob has lost or sacrificed his true name (Attebery, ‘Shore’ 272). By Archipeligan standards, he is no longer quite real. Like Sauron, although Cob is a key figure in the narrative of *the Farthest Shore*, he remains at the periphery, and is only seen from outside.

McKillip presents the shape-changer Eriel, the major antagonist of *The Riddle-Master’s Game*, in the same fashion. McKillip goes further than Le Guin and Tolkien in that Eriel, unlike Sauron and Cob, is a presence in the narrative of *The Riddle-Master’s Game*—she appears at least five times, and each time is physically present and able to interact with other characters. However, as a shape-changer, she is recognisable only when she chooses to take the shape of Eriel Meremont—the woman she murdered and replaced in order to gain access to the land-law of Ymris. Her true nature and identity lie beyond the limits of human knowledge: ‘ “. . . Go back as far as your mind will take you, to the earliest riddle that was asked, and I am older than that,” ’ she tells Morgon at their first meeting (McKillip, *Game* 65). Her original name is unknown. Her assumed face is described in terms that resist visualisation: ‘quiet’, ‘delicate’, ‘shy’. Once Eriel reveals herself as the narrative’s major antagonist, she is replaced in the active role either by other masks—she attempts to kill Morgon for the second time wearing Astrin Ymris’ face, and puts out Astrin’s eye in the shape of a white bird—or by other characters. Eriel does not appear among the shape-changers who confront Ghisteslwchlohm in *Harpist in the Wind*, or take an active part in the destruction of Lungold; and it is the wizard Ghisteslwchlohm, breaking free of Eriel’s bindings on his mind, who kills the High One at the climax of the

narrative (McKillip, *Game* 600-1). Despite her frequent appearances in the narrative, and her importance to it, Eriel is still a distanced figure and, like Sauron and Cob, a peripheral one.

As shown in Chapter Two, the history of the Secondary World in each fantasy has been dominated by the ethic of transcendence. Reversing the presentation of the tragic hero and exiling him or her to the periphery of narrative and world allows Tolkien, Le Guin and McKillip to do three things. Firstly, by reversing the tragic paradigm, Tolkien, Le Guin and McKillip deny the tragic hero the soliloquy, and confine him or her to speaking in the presence of others (usually the orchestrator). Secondly, reversing the tragic paradigm foregrounds what tragedy, with its close focus on the individual's development toward perfection, tends to obscure: that is, the damage the tragic hero does to the world in the course of his or her attempt to transcend it. Finally, each author makes explicit what the tragic form only implies, and certainly obscures: the reason why the tragic actor is a danger to the world. By using this strategy, *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game* all discredit the transcendent rhetoric of their antagonists, reveal them as dangerous, and reveal why they are dangerous to the Secondary World.

Tolkien, Le Guin and McKillip revision the transcendent endeavour by means of a common strategy of allowing the antagonist to speak and then the orchestrator to reveal the distance between her or his rhetoric and the reality it conceals. Because Sauron is exiled to the margins of landscape and narrative in *The Lord of the Rings*, he is, as John Ellison points out, denied the tragic hero's privilege of speech (24). Sauron never speaks for himself; Tolkien's orchestrator characters, Gandalf, Elrond and Galadriel, speak for him in order to spell out his thought processes and decisions when necessary, as, for example, when Gandalf tells the Council of Elrond that

‘ . . . the only measure that [Sauron] knows is desire, desire for power; and so he judges all hearts. Into his heart the thought will not enter that any will refuse it, that having the Ring we may seek to destroy it. If we seek this, we shall put him out of reckoning.’

(Tolkien, I:258)

This constructs Sauron’s transcendent behaviour negatively from the outset. However, because Sauron does not speak, he cannot offer the tragic hero’s justification for his actions at any point. The rhetoric of transcendence is displaced onto one of the minor antagonists, the corrupt wizard Saruman the White. Saruman advances the rhetoric of transcendence when he proclaims, during the conversation reported by Gandalf to the Council of Elrond:

‘ . . . I am Saruman, the Wise, Saruman Ring-Maker, Saruman of Many Colours! . . . [White] serves as a beginning. White cloth may be dyed. The white page can be overwritten; and the white light can be broken.’

(Tolkien, I:248)

Gandalf undercuts this by reducing it to a logical fallacy: ‘ “In which case it is no longer white” ’ (Tolkien, I:248). Shortly afterward, Saruman advances a justification for his transcendent endeavour—he suggests that he and Gandalf claim the ring and use it to bring ‘Knowledge, Rule, Order’ to Middle-earth. Gandalf’s reply this time constructs the transcendent worldview as not only a logical fallacy, but one deliberately used by the transcendent actor to further his or her self-serving ends: ‘ “ . . . only one hand at a time can wield the One, and you know that well, so do not trouble to say *we!* . . . ” ’ (Tolkien, I:149).

The conversation then ends with Gandalf's imprisonment; neither Saruman nor any other antagonist is allowed to rebut Gandalf's characterisation of the transcendent ethic, and so it is maintained throughout the whole of the narrative.

Le Guin's tactics in *The Farthest Shore* are slightly different from Tolkien's: she allows her antagonist to speak directly, and to partially discredit himself. When Cob enters the narrative properly, on Selidor, he is able to speak for himself, and he advances the fundamental premises of the transcendent worldview—human superiority to and isolation from the physical environment—as justification for his actions:

‘I was in Paln . . . after you [Ged] in your wisdom thought you had humbled me and taught me a lesson . . . There I said to myself: I have seen death now, and I will not accept it. Let all stupid nature go its stupid course, but I am a man, better than nature, above nature. I will not go that way, I will not cease to be myself! . . . ’

(Le Guin, *Shore* 195)

Le Guin undermines and discredits Cob's argument in three ways. Firstly, throughout the narrative that precedes Cob's speech, Ged speaks for Cob as Gandalf does for Sauron, slowly building up a clinical explanation for his actions. By the time Cob advances his self-justification, not only have his actions already been explained, but their consequences have been made clear:

‘ . . . this blight upon the lands. The arts of man forgotten. The singer tongueless. The eye blind. . . . A false king ruling. Ruling forever. And over the same subjects forever. No births, no new lives. No children . . . ’

(Le Guin, *Shore* 151)

This makes it clear in advance that Cob's argument is self-serving and limited in its vision. Secondly, when Cob speaks, it is as a dead man, trapped in the Dry Land, with even the appearance of humanity stripped from him. His situation reveals what his speech refuses to acknowledge, that he has not achieved the immortality he claims, but rather its inverse, eternal unlife. Finally, as soon as Cob speaks, Ged, who as Archmage and orchestrator is the narrative's voice of authority, refutes his argument by stating outright the gap between Cob's rhetoric and the reality his situation reveals:

‘ . . . You sold the green earth and the sun and the stars to save yourself. But you have no self. All that which you sold, that is yourself. You have given everything for nothing. And so now you seek to draw the world to you, all that light and life you lost, to fill up your emptiness. But it cannot be filled. Not all the songs of earth, nor all the stars of heaven, could fill your emptiness.’

(Le Guin, *Shore* 197-8)

Through this speech, Ged characterises the transcendent worldview as a self-serving self-deception. Like Saruman, Cob cannot reply to the orchestrator's deconstruction of his transcendent rhetoric; in fact, Ged's statement forces on him the tragic hero's moment of full self-knowledge, in which he comes to understand (or at least, admit for the first time) his role in his own destruction. Ged's reinterpretation of the transcendent ethic is left to stand, and indeed is confirmed in the continuation volumes by the actions of Aspen and Thorion, and the ancient wizards of the Archipelago.

McKillip uses a different tactic again to achieve the same end in *The Riddle-Master's Game*. Eriel, unlike Cob, speaks for herself well in advance of the High One doing so.

When she visits Raederle at Isig in *Heir of Sea and Fire*, in an attempt to convince Raederle to take up her shape-changer's power she represents her transcendent endeavour as a Romantic ideal of freedom and 'immersion into a nature where all is holy' (Nicholls 1819). She tells Raederle,

'You can know it: the essence of fire. You have the power. To recognize it, to hold it, shape it, even to become fire, to melt into its great beauty, bound to no man's laws. . . .'

(McKillip, *Game* 300-1)

However, this attractive construction of the transcendent ethic is undercut by Raederle's fear and rejection of the consequences of her powers; and while it is never entirely denied as part of Eriel's motivation, it is discredited as a justification for Eriel's actions by the High One's authoritative statement that Eriel is motivated by the desire to use power derived from the natural world as she chooses, without restriction, despite the fact that doing so will destroy the source of her power (McKillip, *Game* 593). The High One's statement clarifies what Raederle's engagement with her shape-changer's abilities implies: in *The Riddle-Master's Game*, the transcendent ethic is a self-serving half-truth.

Having discredited the transcendent ethic, Tolkien, Le Guin and McKillip go on to reveal the individual who adheres to it as a danger to the Secondary World. In each fantasy, because the major antagonist is exiled to the periphery of the narrative, his or her place in the focal narrative must be filled by other things. Disembodied and confined to the tower of Barad-dûr, Sauron cannot act against Frodo or Aragorn (Spivack, 'Images' 30); his role in the narrative is filled by other characters. These include the Nazgûl, the human Kings reduced to shadows or wraiths by the influence of the Rings they wear, and the Orcs made 'in mockery of Elves' (Tolkien, II:77). They include the corrupt counsellor Gríma

Wormtongue, whose influence reduces the warrior King Théoden of Rohan to ‘a man so bent with age that he [seems] almost a dwarf’ (Tolkien, II:102), paralysed by bitterness and grief to the point that he is unable to contribute to the defence of the Western Lands. They include Saruman with his corruption and treachery, the mad and despairing Denethor, the degraded and barren landscape of Mordor, and Frodo’s increasing mental and physical deterioration. Above all, there is Gollum, the degraded hobbit, the character who, as a close and constant threat to Frodo and Sam for two books, most consistently plays the antagonist’s role in the narrative. What all of these minor antagonists have in common is that their current state is either a direct or an indirect product of Sauron’s attempt to gain dominion over Middle-earth; they have all been corrupted, degraded or destroyed to serve Sauron’s ends. Their presence in the narrative focusses attention on Sauron’s effect on the world—the damage he has already done, and the greater damage he will do if not checked.

Le Guin uses the same tactic in *The Farthest Shore*. Cob’s place in the narrative, left empty by his exile to the periphery of the Secondary World, is taken by images of the effect his return from death has had on Earthsea; these function as clues leading Ged and Arren to the ‘Anti-King’. These images begin in the large scale and narrow down to individuals, and become more detailed and revelatory as the narrative progresses. The first such image occurs when Arren, arriving on Roke, tells Ged about the failure of magic in Enlad and the sudden, inexplicable inability of public figures, including his father the Prince, to do their jobs (Le Guin, *Shore* 11-12). This initial, vague picture of failure and disorder develops, later in the narrative, into two strong ones. The first is of Hort Town and its hazia addicts:

There was no centre left to the city. The people, for all their restless activity, seemed purposeless. Craftsmen seemed to lack the will to work well; even the robbers robbed

because it was all they knew how to do. All the brawl and bustle of a great port-city was there, on the surface, but all about the edges of it sat the hazia-eaters, motionless. And under the surface things did not seem quite real . . .

(Le Guin, *Shore* 60)

Later again, there are the silk-weavers of Lorbanery, who have lost their ability and no longer care about their craft, leaving the silkworms to die on the trees (Le Guin, *Shore* 94). After this point the images of the damage done by the ‘Anti-King’ become focussed and specific. There is Akaren, the old woman who loses her name and her sanity in an attempt to gain eternal life; her son Soplì, the dyer who ‘can’t dye’ (Le Guin, *Shore* 160) and who commits suicide to escape his fear of death; the singer of the raft-people, who forgets the words of a chant as he sings it. Finally, there is the image of the dragon Orm Embar stripped of speech—in a world in which ‘the dragon and the speech of the dragon are one’ (Le Guin, *Tales* 271)—by Cob’s spells. All of these instances of loss of purpose and loss of self occur as a direct result of Cob’s opening the door between the living world and the Dry Land; they foreground the consequences of Cob’s attempt to prevent his own death, and thus construct him as a threat to the Secondary World.

Even before Eriel appears in *The Riddle-Master of Hed* and reveals herself as the major antagonist of *The Riddle-Master’s Game*, her presence in the world is indicated by images of inexplicable destruction. These include the grief of Morgon and his brother and sister for their drowned parents (McKillip, *Game* 10), the inexplicably crewless ship that breaks apart around Morgon and Deth as they sail to Anuin (McKillip, *Game* 36), and the ancient ruined city in Ymris, inhabited by an exile (Astrin Ymris) and an amnesiac (Morgon). Later appear the dead children of the Earth-Masters, turned to stone and buried under Isig Mountain (McKillip, *Game* 178-80). By the end of the narrative, all of these riddles of

destruction are answered, and all of them can be traced to Eriel's agency. Athol and Spring of Hed are drowned to stop them taking Yrth's three-starred harp to its intended owner, Morgon. The crewless ship is intended to kill Morgon before he can come into his power, thus leaving the High One without a land-heir. The city is ruined because of the shape-changers' past attempts to access the power of the Earth-Masters who died there (McKillip, *Game* 607); the children, including the High One's son and possibly Eriel's daughter, were killed for the power they possessed. After Eriel appears, she is surrounded by even more images of destruction: her attempts on Morgon's life, the destruction of the city of Lungold, the attempted drowning of Hed, the battle on Wind Plain in Ymris, the death of the High One. By removing Eriel from the centre of the narrative, McKillip focusses attention on the destruction she perpetrates in pursuit of her goal; thus, like Tolkien and Le Guin, she positions the tragic actor as a danger to the Secondary World.

In tragedy, the devastation that surrounds the tragic hero is constructed as an unavoidable, but also unintended, by-product of the struggle for transcendence: 'Fire may destroy or cleanse; no matter. Tragedy must play with it. The possible must be investigated' (Kerr 126). The tragic hero is so focussed on attaining the ideal that she or he fails to register the consequences that her or his actions have for others; she or he is absolved of responsibility for the destruction caused by the transcendent struggle precisely because that destruction is unintentional. But *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game* all suggest an alternative interpretation of the tragic hero's destructiveness, and by doing so reveal why the transcendent actor is a danger to the Secondary World. Sauron, Eriel and Cob are all not only aware of their capacity to do damage to their Secondary Worlds, but are prepared to do whatever damage they must to achieve their ends. Sauron is directly responsible for the destruction of Mordor's landscape: it is a wasteland because he has made it into one in order to provide for his armies. Although Cob does not set out

to destroy Earthsea, having opened the door between the living world and the Dry Land he takes a malicious pleasure in exercising the power it gives him over both the living and the dead:

‘ . . . The door I opened is not only here, but in the minds of the living, in the depths and unknown places of their being, where we are all one in the darkness. They know it, and they come to me. And the dead too must come to me . . . they must climb over the wall of stones when I bid them, all the souls, the lords, the mages, the proud women; back and forth from life to death, at my command . . . ’

(Le Guin, *Shore* 195-6)

Eriel is, from the beginning of *The Riddle-Master's Game*, both quite aware of and entirely in control of her destructive capacity. She acts as she must in order to achieve her goals, and openly states to Raederle her indifference to the damage she causes: ‘ “Your lives mean nothing to me . . . The Star-Bearer and I are looking for answers to the same questions: he kills when he needs to; our methods are no different. . . .” ’ (McKillip, *Game* 299). Sauron, Cob and Eriel all privilege their own desire for transcendence above the well-being of the world of which they are part: in pursuit of a goal that cannot be achieved, they act without regard for the consequences of their actions for others. This is why they are a danger to the Secondary World.

Through their common handling of their major antagonists—their reversal of the conventions of tragedy to remove the transcendent actor from the focus of attention—Tolkien, Le Guin and McKillip systematically discredit the transcendent worldview that has dominated the history of the Secondary World, and reveal it as an immediate danger to that world. They also offer an explanation for why the individual who adheres to the

tragedic worldview is a danger to the Secondary World. However, in each fantasy, the treatment of the antagonist figure itself is different. The danger posed to Middle-earth, Earthsea and the High One's realm by the antagonists has two aspects. Not only is there the evident danger of the physical damage that results from the antagonist's tragic struggle; there is also the source of that danger, the impulse that drives the antagonist to undertake her or his transcendent struggle in the first place, and to ignore the effects of that struggle on the world around them. *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game* not only use their antagonist figures to construct the transcendent actor as a danger to the Secondary World, but also to expose the source of that danger, the transcendent impulse.

The tragic form considers the source of transcendent behaviour to be the individual's desire for 'a state of affairs more perfect than any that now exists' (Kerr 107). Through their construction of Eriel, Cob and Sauron, and the minor antagonists that surround them, McKillip, Le Guin and Tolkien all reject the idea that transcendent behaviour stems from a desire for perfection *per se*. However, *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game* put forward three different interpretations of the source of the antagonist's transcendent ambition; in each fantasy, the representation of the transcendent impulse is dependent on the author's construction of the Secondary World the antagonist is trying to transcend.

In *The Lord of the Rings*, as discussed in Chapter One, Tolkien presents the Secondary World of Middle-earth as the focal point of an open system, in which a beneficent external presence invests the landscape with a cosmic order. Within this framework, Tolkien explicates the source of transcendent behaviour using two devices: Sauron and the Ring.

Many commentators, aware of the influence of Tolkien's Catholic faith upon his work, identify Sauron as the Devil of Middle-earth, or as a figure intended to represent the Devil:

J. R. R. Tolkien (1892-1973) cast the struggle between transcendent good and evil in the fantasy world of Middle Earth [sic]. *The Lord of the Rings* is, like *Beowulf*, implicitly Christian . . . Tolkien's Sauron, the dark lord of Mordor, is associated with the Devil through the serpent or dragon (Greek Sauros) . . .

(Russell, *Mephistopheles* 271)

Tolkien certainly draws on historical concepts of the Devil to create the figure of Sauron in *The Lord of the Rings*. Sauron is an intruder in Middle-earth as the Devil is on the earth. He is initially—as shown in *The Silmarillion* and the Appendices of *The Lord of the Rings*—an embodied individual, able to move physically within the world. He is vulnerable to capture, imprisonment and injury, but is also able to directly tempt individuals such as the Numenoréan King Ar-Pharazôn into transcendent acts (Tolkien, III:280). This reflects the medieval concept of the Devil as a physical entity able to interact with individuals in the world personally, and on equal terms (Oldridge 16). As he appears in *The Lord of the Rings* proper, however, Sauron recalls a more modern concept of the Devil as a nonhuman, nonphysical entity or force whose effects are mental rather than physical and whose main tool is deception (Oldridge 26). Sauron is a bodiless 'Dark Power', located in a separate place (Mordor). He affects the world through mental assault and deception, as when he manipulates Denethor's visions in the palantír and provokes Denethor's 'pessimistic conclusions, despair and eventual suicide' (Kocher 79). For anything else, he must rely on those he has corrupted: the Nazgûl, his Orcs and his armies. Characters who have contact with Sauron—Denethor, Saruman, Wormtongue—are corrupted. The obvious conclusion to draw is that transcendent behaviour in Middle-earth

occurs because individuals are either manipulated or tempted into it by a malevolent entity that is using them to serve its own ends.

However, this is not borne out by the text. Sauron's passivity extends beyond his physical confinement in Barad-dûr to encompass his interactions with the main characters. At no point in the narrative does Sauron tempt or influence any character toward transcendent action. The most he does is pressure Frodo to claim the Ring, and the choice of whether to do so, or whether to take it off, remains with Frodo:

Suddenly he was aware of himself again: Frodo, neither the Voice nor the Eye: free to choose and with one remaining instant in which to do so. He took the Ring off his finger.

(Tolkien, I:380)

Boromir talks himself into trying to steal the Ring from Frodo. Saruman slides into desire for the Ring and service of Mordor entirely of his own accord: as Rose A. Zimbardo puts it, he is 'self-tempted' (103). Frodo chooses to use the Ring to manipulate Gollum.

Sauron does not even manipulate Denethor directly. It is Denethor's tragic action (his use of the palantír to see beyond his range, 'locking wills with the indomitable Eye of Sauron, which no Man may best': *Chance, Power* 103) that brings him into contact with Sauron in the first place, and while Sauron's manipulation is certainly intended to have a demoralising effect, Denethor's reactions at all times remain within his own control.

Sauron exploits resources that come within his range in order to achieve his ends, but he does not inspire transcendent action in any character. External malevolent influence is not the source of transcendent behaviour in Middle-earth.

The Ring appears to be the opposite of Sauron. It is a thing rather than an entity, a tool not an agent; it offers characters access to power rather than being a power itself. It both represents and offers ‘a power over nature so immense that even the desire to use it will inevitably corrupt [the] soul’ (Helms 67). But it is not a neutral power source, or a passive one. The Ring is literally infused with Sauron’s self: Gandalf states that Sauron ‘ “ . . . made that Ring himself, it is his, and he let a great deal of his own former power pass into it, so that he could rule all the others. . . . ” ’ (Tolkien, I:58). Because of this, the Ring is an extension of Sauron, and the power it offers is inherently evil. Like all the Great Rings, it is designed to bring those who use it under Sauron’s control (Tolkien, I:53). It manipulates characters by making them want to take it for themselves and use it. This seems to suggest that transcendent behaviour stems from the individual having access to the power to change the world—and that such power is evil by nature.

However, this reading is once again not supported by the narrative. Because the Ring offers power to its user, it offers the means for an individual to impose his or her subjective ideal on the world. The Ring makes it possible for Galadriel to rule Middle-earth, for Boromir to save Minas Tirith and become a King of Gondor rather than a Steward, for Saruman to supplant Sauron. Sauron needs the Ring and its power of command to achieve dominion over Middle-earth: ‘ “ . . . He only needs the One . . . If he recovers it, then he will command them [all of the Rings] again, even the Three . . . and he will be stronger than ever” ’ (Tolkien, I:58). The Ring offers these characters a temptation to indulge the desire to transcend the world’s limitations; and it is shown repeatedly to have this effect. Gollum murders Déagol to obtain the Ring (Tolkien, I:59). Saruman betrays Gandalf and the White Council, and even Sauron, for the power over the world that it offers (Tolkien, I:249). Boromir attempts to steal the Ring so he can to use it to defend, and then rule, Gondor. But as Shippey points out, the narrative also shows that it is possible for

characters to reject the Ring's influence (*Road* 125). Legolas, Gimli and Celeborn, Merry, Pippin and Sam all appear to be entirely unaffected by it. Gandalf, Elrond, Aragorn and Galadriel turn it away. Faramir refuses to take it by force. Sam refuses to put it on at all. Furthermore, the Ring does not at any point prompt uncharacteristic actions from any character it influences. Rather, it acts to exacerbate certain defining aspects of their characters, whether negative or positive: Gollum's greed, Boromir's pride and patriotism (Shippey, *Road* 129), Saruman's desire for order and knowledge (Kocher 68), Frodo's commitment and determination. Through this fact, Tolkien reveals the true source of the transcendent impulse in Middle-earth: the desire for control.

Although all of the characters who respond to the Ring do so differently, their responses contain one common element. Craig Clark suggests that it is 'the desire to wield power' (16), but power is only part of it, a means to an end. What all the transcendent actors of *The Lord of the Rings* have in common is a desire or need to control their immediate situation. Sauron wants 'to order all things' in Middle-earth 'according to his wisdom' (Tolkien, *Letters* 243). Denethor needs knowledge to defend Gondor against Sauron's armies (Kocher 68). Saruman wants 'Knowledge, Rule, Order' in Middle-earth (Tolkien, I:249). Boromir needs to turn back Sauron and save Minas Tirith. Frodo needs to destroy the Ring. Gollum wants the security he lost along with the Ring, and revenge for past ill-treatment. All of these characters attempt to exert a measure of control over events in Middle-earth, either because they want to or because circumstances seem to demand it. This desire is problematic because Middle-earth is already ordered in accordance with the much wider vision of the external power, and events are interlinked so that they will lead to a right end. Tolkien's construction of the source of transcendent behaviour reflects orthodox Christian theology, in which evil in the world comes about because the individual resists or rejects God's will (Olszański 298). The characters' attempts to assert control

over their immediate circumstances work against the pre-existent order with which Middle-earth is invested, and in doing so they endanger the right outcome of events, and thus the Secondary World (Olszański 300).

In Le Guin's *Earthsea* cycle, there is no external force ordering Earthsea against which the antagonist figures can wilfully oppose themselves. The only order is the Equilibrium, the balance inherent in the landscape itself. The *Earthsea* cycle is an expanded and reoriented retake on the structure of *The Lord of the Rings*. *A Wizard of Earthsea* and *The Tombs of Atuan* deal with, among other things, the formation of *Earthsea's* orchestrator character, the wizard Ged; *The Farthest Shore* presents Le Guin's version of the high fantasy focal narrative, the story of the defeat of a power out of the past and the healing of the Secondary World. The continuation volumes, *Tehanu*, 'Dragonfly' and *The Other Wind*, write past the ending of Tolkien's structure, and explore the problems and consequences obscured by the formal eucatastrophe of *The Farthest Shore*. In these books, Le Guin takes up the construction of the transcendent impulse that Tolkien uses in *The Lord of the Rings*, and reconfigures it to suggest an alternative source for tragic action: psychology.

In *A Wizard of Earthsea*, Ged is both protagonist and antagonist, and in the early part of his narrative he plays out the paradigm of the tragic hero almost exactly. He displays a distinct tendency toward transcendent acts motivated by pride and the desire to manipulate the world. Ged learns magic from his aunt to gain 'power over beast and bird' (Le Guin, *Wizard* 16). To impress Serret, he tries to work a spell that is beyond his ability (Molson 136). And in an attempt to outdo a rival student of magic, he deliberately breaches the barrier that separates the living world from the Dry Land of the Dead and summons the spirit of Elfarran the Fair to Roke Knoll (Le Guin, *Wizard* 73-4). Ged is only saved from

the unintentional self-destruction of the tragic hero at this point by the intervention of the Archmage Nemmerle.

Ged's actions cause considerable damage to the Secondary World. He creates a tear in the fabric of the living world that the Archmage must give up his life to repair. He also releases into Earthsea his Shadow, which has the capacity to turn him and others into *gebbeths* (soulless puppets). Ged's attempt to manipulate his environment for his own satisfaction is constructed as inevitable, a manifestation of his pride and his tendency to overreach himself (Slusser 35). Through Ged's actions in *A Wizard of Earthsea*, Le Guin introduces Tolkien's theory that tragic behaviour stems from the individual's desire to control the world for his or her own benefit.

In *The Tombs of Atuan*, however, Le Guin develops away from Tolkien's idea, through the story of the Kargish Godkings and the house of Hupun. The Nameless Ones, the Old Powers of the Earth worshipped in the Kargish Empire as gods of 'the dark, of ruin, of madness' (Le Guin, *Tombs* 114), are presented as the book's major antagonists, forces of evil from which their Priestess Arha must escape. But the Nameless Ones are part of the natural order, a necessary element of the environment:

' . . . The earth is beautiful, and bright, and kindly, but that is not all. The earth is also terrible, and dark, and cruel. The rabbit shrieks dying in the green meadows. The mountains clench their great hands full of hidden fire. There are sharks in the sea, and there is cruelty in men's eyes . . . '

(Le Guin, *Tombs* 113)

The Nameless Ones are what Jeffrey Burton Russell calls a *natural evil*—an element of the natural world which, when experienced by human individuals, causes suffering and harm (*Prince* 1). They do not encourage transcendence of the world; rather, they deny change, and encourage limitation to the point of stagnation (Spivack, *Le Guin* 33). When the transcendent ethic appears in *The Tomb of Atuan*, it is associated with other, minor figures: the Godkings of the Kargish Empire.

The title ‘Godking’ in itself suggests a desire to transcend the limitations of humanity both literally (by becoming a god), and by exerting power over the physical and social environment (as king): Manan and Thar’s brief comments on how the descendents of the High Priest Intathin became Priest-Kings and then Godkings implicitly confirm this reading. The story of one Godking in particular revolves around an attempt to deny fact in order to achieve a desired ideal. Faced with a prophecy that ‘one of the descendents of Thoreg of Hupun would bring about the fall of the Empire in the end’ (Le Guin, *Tombs* 151), the Godking attempts to circumvent the inevitable. He destroys the family that threatens him (Le Guin, *Tombs* 57), and exiles its last members, two young children, to a tiny deserted islet. The Godking’s attempt to outwit prophecy fails: in *A Wizard of Earthsea*, Ged lands on the islet while chasing his Shadow, and one of the exiled children, now an old woman, gives him half of the Ring of Erreth-Akbe as a gift; Ged and Arha rejoin the ring in *The Tombs of Atuan* and return it to Havnor. A tentative peace develops between the Archipelago and the Kargish Empire. Eventually, the last of the Godkings is overthrown (Le Guin, *Wind* 66-7). But that is not the point.

Despite the apparent difference between the Nameless Ones’ passivity and the Godkings’ transcendent action, the two evils of *The Tombs of Atuan* have one thing in common.

Whereas Ged in *A Wizard of Earthsea* simply attempts to control the world because he can,

the Godking attempts to control it to achieve a particular end. Like the Nameless Ones, when the Godking tries to prevent the fulfilment of the prophecy, he is attempting to prevent change in the world—specifically, a personally disempowering change. The source of his desire to prevent change is not unpacked in *The Tombs of Atuan*, however. That occurs in *The Farthest Shore*.

The Farthest Shore is the only volume of the original *Earthsea* trilogy to feature a traditional antagonist. Cob performs in full the tragic hero's paradigm gestured to by Ged and the Kargish Godking in the earlier narratives; through Cob's story, Le Guin constructs her final explanation of the transcendent impulse, the source of the need to deny change. Ged forces Cob to journey into the Dry Land of the Dead as a punishment for raising the dead for profit. Cob's response to that punishment reveals the motive that drives his transcendent action. Cob is afraid of death—both death in the abstract, and specifically his own death. He uses the spells of the Grey Mage of Paln to attain what he believes is eternal life as a defence against the death he fears (Le Guin, *Shore* 195). Death is both the greatest limitation and the greatest change the world imposes on the individual; Cob's transcendent struggle is an absolute denial of this change. However, Cob's desire to transcend his mortality is not presented as unique to him, as incomprehensible or unnatural. Rather, it is constructed as universal, and normal. Ged, the narrative's voice of authority, says of it, ‘“Life without end . . . Life without death. Immortality. Every soul desires it, and its health is the strength of its desire. . . .”’ (Le Guin, *Shore* 150). Only when Cob takes action to achieve the endless life he desires does the desire itself become a problem. Through Cob, Le Guin suggests that the transcendent impulse is grounded in the individual consciousness; it is the product of human awareness of the ultimate limitation—imminent death—and the fear that awareness generates (Crow and Erlich 207).

The continuation volumes of the *Earthsea* cycle, *Tehanu*, 'Dragonfly' and *The Other Wind*, reiterate this construction of the transcendent impulse. In these volumes, the desire to overcome death and the desire to prevent change are linked, and manifest simultaneously. Aspen (the antagonist of *Tehanu*) and the Master Summoner Thorion (the antagonist of 'Dragonfly') display both a desire to deny change and a refusal to accept death. Aspen uses his wizardry to hold off the old Lord of Re Albi's death, and uses the status that gives him to oppose a change in the power structure of the Archipelago (i.e. the restoration of the Crown: Le Guin, *Tehanu* 241). Thorion summons himself out of the Dry Land into the living world to oppose the power shift from Roke to Havnor that occurs in the aftermath of the eucatastrophe of *The Farthest Shore* (Le Guin, *Tales* 260). The individual's need to deny change and death is what drives the ancient mages to create the Dry Land of the Dead and ensure the eternal survival of the spirit:

'Men fear death as dragons do not. Men want to own life, possess it, as if it were a jewel in a box. Those ancient mages craved everlasting life. They learned to use true names to keep men from dying. . . .'

(Le Guin, *Wind* 225-6)

In the *Earthsea* cycle, Le Guin remodels Tolkien's presentation of the transcendent impulse, and transforms it from a personal flaw that manifests under the stress of circumstances, into an aspect of her characters' psychology. In *Earthsea*, the antagonist's transcendent desire is the inevitable result of human consciousness: this reflects the Taoist philosophy of yin/yang which informs Le Guin's work, in which 'all opposites are presented as part of a continuum or circle and therefore not really opposite' and in which each thing contains its opposite as an integral part of itself (Wytenbroek 174). In *Earthsea*, each individual consciousness contains the possibility of its own self-destruction.

McKillip's theory of the source of danger to the Secondary World in *The Riddle-Master's Game* is different from both Tolkien's and Le Guin's. McKillip strips away even the inherent order that maintains Earthsea's Equilibrium, and presents the Secondary World as a completely closed system, impervious to outside influence and unconnected to anything beyond its limits, which is held in balance only by an artificial order constructed by a character within it. Through her antagonist, and her two protagonists, McKillip explicitly rejects both Tolkien's and Le Guin's constructions of transcendent behaviour in the world, and constructs an alternative explanation.

McKillip's primary antagonist, the shape-changer Eriel, initially appears to be an external malevolent power, somewhat like Sauron. Although she first appears in disguise, as the wife of the Ymris King, Astrin Ymris reveals her false face when he tells Morgon and Deth the story of Eriel Meremont's death. Immediately afterward, Eriel reveals herself to be the narrative's primary antagonist when she tries to kill Morgon for unspecified reasons:

'. . . you shouldn't have left your land to begin weaving riddles at Caithnard. The wise man knows his own name. You don't know my name; you don't know your own. It's better for me if you die that way, in ignorance.'

(McKillip, *Game* 65)

Through Astrin's revelations and her own, Eriel is positioned as a malevolent force intruding from beyond the limits of the natural. She comes from the sea, she can change her shape, she appears in no riddles and she cannot be named: she is outside the limits of human knowledge (McKillip, *Game* 65). Like Sauron, Eriel threatens the integrity of the High One's realm both magically, through her attempt to disrupt the land-rule of Ymris,

and physically through the shape-changers' influence on the politics of the realm (McKillip, *Game* 62). But as the narrative progresses, Eriel is revealed to be not an external, unknowable force, but a renegade Earth-Master—part of the history of the High One's realm. Unlike Sauron, Eriel has no apparent desire for dominion, and no need to control her environment. Christine Mains suggests that Eriel wants to gain 'power-over ... mastery over all things' (67). However, while it is clear that Eriel wants power, it is never clearly stated what for. Her conversation with Raederle in *Heir of Sea and Fire* suggests that she wants power simply so that she can be as much herself as possible.

This is also the case with Ghisteslwchlohm, whose aim is to control the Star-Bearer (Morgon) and thus gain the power of an Earth-Master upon the death of the High One (McKillip, *Game* 594). Like Eriel, Ghisteslwchlohm begins his narrative in disguise as Master Ohm of the college of Riddle-Masters; in that role, he destroys any information that might give Morgon explanations of the three stars on his face. Despite the similarity of their methods, however, there is no connection between Ghisteslwchlohm and Eriel, or any of the shape-changers. Ghisteslwchlohm knows nothing about the shape-changers: confronted by them in *Harpist in the Wind*, he unwisely dismisses them as irrelevancies ('... You take your shapes out of dead men and seaweed, you breathe, you harp and you die—that is all I know or care to know about you ...' McKillip, *Game* 451-2).

Ghisteslwchlohm's desire for the Star-Bearer's power is self-generated, and in fact poses a threat to Eriel's plans, so that she eventually binds his mind to prevent him from interfering in them further. As a wizard, Ghisteslwchlohm already has many of the same powers as the shape-changers. He does not seem particularly interested in using that power, only in having it: during his time as the false High One, he does not attempt to expand the High One's temporal power, the only aspect of the role he has access to. As the High One eventually explains, Ghisteslwchlohm's usurpation of the High One's role is a means to an

end, not an end in itself: ‘ “ He thought that if he controlled the Star-Bearer, he could assimilate the power the Star-Bearer would inherit and become the High One in more than name” ’ (McKillip, *Game* 594). Ghisteslwchlohm, like Eriel, seems simply to want to be as powerful as possible—to exist in an empowered state. McKillip thus rejects Tolkien’s construction of the transcendent impulse as the individual’s need to control a situation.

McKillip also uses Eriel and Ghisteslwchlohm to reject, obliquely, Le Guin’s idea that the source of the transcendent impulse is the fear of death. In contrast to Cob, who before his tragic action has an ordinary human lifespan, neither Ghisteslwchlohm nor Eriel appears to face the human limitation of certain mortality. Ghisteslwchlohm, as a wizard, has the longevity of all wizards in McKillip’s Secondary World: he is something over a thousand years old. Eriel, like the High One, has a lifespan of several millennia, but unlike the High One, there is no suggestion that she is nearing the end of her lifespan. Furthermore, their lifespans are natural, not artificially extended: a long life seems to be an automatic consequence of holding power in the High One’s realm, for as soon as Morgon and Raederle recognise their true natures as High One and shape-changer, they take it for granted that they will also live for several millennia, without having to do anything to ensure it (McKillip, *Game* 614). Because of this, neither Eriel’s desire for power drawn from the landscape, nor Ghisteslwchlohm’s desire for the power of land-law, can be reduced to the desire to escape death. It must be taken at face value. Eriel, in the pre-history of the High One’s realm, chooses to gather power because she can do so and wants to do so (McKillip, *Game* 593). Ghisteslwchlohm takes on the name and temporal power of the High One because he can, and because it will get him what he wants: when Morgon asks him, ‘ “ . . . Where did you find the courage to assume the name of the High One?” ’ his answer is simply that ‘ “No one else claimed it” ’ (McKillip, *Game* 491). In McKillip’s Secondary World, the source of the tragic behaviour that endangers the Secondary

World is not a need for control or a response to inescapable fear, but the antagonist's deliberate choice of a course of action, to achieve a particular end.

McKillip reinforces this reading of the source of transcendent behaviour through the narrative of her protagonists, Morgon and Raederle. Morgon is exposed to the tragic worldview during his year-long imprisonment in Erlenstar Mountain between the end of *The Riddle-Master of Hed* and the beginning of *Heir of Sea and Fire*. However, he is not tempted or corrupted into taking up tragic action by Ghisteslwchlohm. Rather, he chooses to do so, deliberately taking on Ghisteslwchlohm's power of wizardry first to free himself (McKillip, *Game* 292), and then to pursue his course of vengeance against Deth. Raederle is exposed to the tragic worldview through her knowledge of the history of An and her conversation with Eriel. However, she is not tempted into transcendent behaviour any more than Morgon is. Nor does she slide into it unaware. Although she rejects Eriel's mentorship (Hauert 149), Raederle later makes a conscious choice to take up her inherited shape-changer's power: “. . . No one forced me. I simply reached out and gathered [the fire] in my hand. I knew I could do it, so I did it” (McKillip, *Game* 319). She chooses to act transcendentally when she raises the wraiths of the Kings of Hel to protect Morgon, and again when she faces down the wraith of Oen of An in her father's house (McKillip, *Game* 369). Both Morgon and Raederle then make another choice *not* to continue in the transcendent course of action. Morgon drops his three-starred sword and lets Deth walk away from Anuin unharmed. Raederle chooses not to destroy Oen:

. . . she was bound, as Oen had bound Ylon, by hatred, by compassionlessness, and by misunderstanding. She realized, before she destroyed Oen, before she loosed something alien to the very land-law of An into the house of its kings, that she had to force the wraith

of Ylon, roused in her, to see clearly for the first time, the heritage they both shared and the King who had simply been a man bound to its patterns.

(McKillip, *Game* 370)

In the High One's realm, the danger to the landscape's integrity comes from neither the need to control circumstances nor the awareness and fear of death. It comes, quite simply, from the individual's choice to act irresponsibly with regard to her or his context.

As the construction of the Secondary World changes, from *The Lord of the Rings* to the *Earthsea* cycle to *The Riddle-Master's Game*, the construction of the source of the threat to its integrity changes in response, from the need to control immediate circumstances, to the fear of death, to simple irresponsible choice. However, one element of transcendent behaviour and the danger it poses stays the same in all three cases. That is the element of responsibility. Tolkien argues that as the Secondary World is already ordered in accordance with a greater wisdom, the individuals who attempt to control their particular circumstances disrupt that order and imperil its fulfilment. Whether these characters have full knowledge of the order they reject (as Sauron and Saruman do), partial knowledge (Denethor and Boromir) or none at all (Gollum), they act in despite of it. Being in control of their actions, characters within the Secondary World are entirely responsible for any damage they do to it. In *Earthsea*, the desire to escape death is not in itself problematic; in fact, it is part of the Equilibrium, harmless until it is acted on. However, when an individual acts on that desire, the result is damage to the self and to the world. Responsibility lies with the individual who chooses to act. And in the High One's realm, as the threat to the Secondary World springs directly from characters' choice to disregard the wellbeing of the landscape in their quest for power, responsibility for damage to the landscape lies with those who choose to act so.

No matter what the nature of the world, and no matter what the source of the threat to its integrity, in the end, responsibility for that threat rests firmly with those characters within the Secondary Worlds who choose to disregard its limits. The solutions Tolkien, Le Guin and McKillip generate to the problem caused by the antagonist's actions must take account of not only the damage or potential damage to the Secondary World, but the cause of that damage. They must involve not only action in the public sphere, that will negate the damage inflicted on the landscape, but also action in the private sphere, to negate the transcendent impulse itself—the source of the threat to the Secondary World.

Through their major and minor antagonists, and even their protagonists, *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game* examine the threat to the integrity of the Secondary World. They explore its nature, its source, and who is responsible for it. In each case, Tolkien, Le Guin and McKillip argue that what endangers the Secondary World is the major antagonist's self-serving determination to overcome the limits imposed by his or her environment, and achieve an ideal state—whether that state is dominion, immortality or empowerment. The antagonist's commitment to transcendence endangers the Secondary World because it leads him or her to act without care for any consequences. As the construction of the Secondary World changes, from cosmically-ordered system to balanced ecology to artificially-sustained landscape, so each fantasy's interpretation of the source of transcendent behaviour also alters, from the desire or need to control the world, to the fear of change and death, to conscious choice. However, no matter what the source of transcendent behaviour, within their Secondary Worlds Tolkien, Le Guin and McKillip consistently locate responsibility for the threat to the landscape's wellbeing with the individual who ignores limitation and consequences in pursuit of a self-serving goal.

4 'A SILVER-HAIRED STRANGER': THE ORCHESTRATOR AND THE ETHICAL TRANSITION

In the penultimate paragraph of *The Riddle-Master's Game*, McKillip describes the movement of dusk across the landscape of the High One's realm as 'a silver-haired stranger with night at his back, his face always toward the dawn' (616). The phrase recalls her early description of one of the most important characters in the trilogy, the High One's harpist Deth:

He was quietly dressed; the fine cloth and color of his blue-black tunic, the heavy chain of linked, stamped squares of silver on his breast were bewildering. His face was lean, fine-boned, neither young nor old; his hair was a loose cap of silver.

(McKillip, *Game* 15)

The image of dusk also encapsulates the role that Deth plays in the narrative: he brings about the end of the age of the High One, the age characterised by war between the High One and the shape-changers (the night at his back), and the beginning of the age of peace with Morgon's accession to the role (the dawn). Deth is part of the old order of the High One's realm—indeed, he *is* the old order—but he is also instrumental in creating the new (Spivack, *Daughters* 123).

Deth (properly, the High One) is not a character type unique to McKillip's trilogy. There is a character who is part of the old ethical order, but who brings about the creation and success of the new—who both models, and creates, the transition between ethical systems necessary to save the world—in *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Earthsea* cycle also. In this chapter I will identify these characters and examine how each author constructs them relative to the antagonists, to elucidate the solution they model to the problem of the

transcendent presence in the Secondary World. I will also examine how these characters are presented in the narratives, and what source for the idea of ethical transition is revealed through them: that is, where, in each fantasy, responsibility for generating the solution to the threat of the transcendent actor lies.

In each of the Secondary Worlds of *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game*, there is a character who is responsible for the integrity of that Secondary World. In *The Lord of the Rings* this character is Gandalf, who describes himself to Denethor as the caretaker of Middle-earth:

‘ . . . I will say this: the rule of no realm is mine, neither of Gondor nor any other, great or small. But all worthy things that are in peril as the world now stands, those are my care. And for my part, I shall not wholly fail of my task, though Gondor should perish, if anything passes through this night that can still grow fair or bear fruit or flower again in days to come. For I also am a steward. Did you not know?’

(Tolkien, III:25)

Gandalf is supported in this role by Elrond and Galadriel, the other bearers of the Elven-rings (the function of which is to preserve the landscape). In the *Earthsea* cycle, the ‘steward’ character is not a constant presence; however, in *The Farthest Shore*, Ged fulfils the role (Crowe 74). As the Archmage of the Archipelago, Ged’s job is to ‘sit on Roke and watch the Equilibrium’ (Le Guin, *Shore* 23)—that is, to protect the balance of nature in Earthsea. In *The Riddle-Master's Game*, the High One fills the role of caretaker. He is the creator and holder of the land-law, the physical awareness of the nature and needs of the landscape that binds rulers to their realms:

[The High One's] sole law was land-law, the law that passed like a breath of life from land-heir to land-heir; if the High One died, or withdrew his immense and intricate power, he could turn his realm into a wasteland . . . His one concern was the land; his one law, the law instilled deeper than thought, deeper than dreaming, in his land-rulers.

(McKillip, *Game* 117)

Through the land-law, the High One is also the protector of the land. As protectors of their Secondary Worlds, Gandalf, Ged and the High One all have the same purpose—to prevent the antagonist's transcendent striving from harming the landscape. Gandalf describes himself as the 'Enemy of Sauron' (Tolkien, III:220) and states that his task in Middle-earth is " . . . to set things to rights, [and] . . . to help folk to do so . . ." (Tolkien, III:242). In the original *Earthsea* trilogy, Ged, as proxy for the absent King of All the Isles, has an obligation to the Archipelago to act against the Anti-King Cob. In *The Riddle-Master's Game*, the High One's understanding of 'the implications of power' obliges him to oppose Eriel's destructive search for power (593).

Each of these characters goes about achieving his purpose in the same way. In none of the three fantasies do the primary protagonists act against the antagonist of their own accord (with the exception of the later *Earthsea* books, which have no orchestrator). Rather, the 'caretaker' character responds to the antagonist's bid for transcendence by organising the protagonists to act against the antagonist. Sauron's rise to prominence prompts Gandalf to investigate the nature of Bilbo's ring, and then to send Frodo to Rivendell. Cob's disruption of magic in *Earthsea* sends Ged out from Roke with Arren in tow, to search him out. When the shape-changers drown Morgon's parents to stop them from giving him Yrth's three-starred harp and thus waking his power as Star-Bearer, the High One (in the shape of the harpist Deth) begins to manipulate Morgon into solving the riddle of three

stars. Because they deliberately construct the many layers of response to the primary antagonist's transcendent striving, these caretaker characters can be described as the *orchestrators* of the focal narratives of *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* trilogy and *The Riddle-Master's Game*. This is the term I use to refer to them collectively in this thesis.

Gandalf, Ged and the High One have more in common than the fact that they are all responsible for their Secondary Worlds and opposed to their antagonists. Each character also models the change he is attempting to effect in the Secondary World. The nature of that change is visible in the relationship of orchestrators to antagonists. In each text, the orchestrator is constructed as not only the antagonist's opponent, but also her or his complement; William Senior comments of Gandalf that 'he has no equals or peers except in his enemies' (39), and this is true of Ged and the High One also. In *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game*, orchestrator and antagonist are both opposite and equal.

In *The Lord of the Rings*, the oppositional relationship between Gandalf and Sauron is signalled by imagery of darkness and light. Sauron, the primary antagonist of *The Lord of the Rings*, is associated with cloud and darkness (Spivack, 'Images' 28). The Nazgûl are shadowy figures that first appear at night; the landscape of Mordor is smothered in polluted clouds; when Sauron besieges Minas Tirith, he sends cloud to cover Gondor in darkness. Sauron is nonphysical, disembodied; his sole appearance in the narrative is as 'a huge shape of shadow' (Tolkien, III:200). In contrast, Gandalf is associated with fire, through the fireworks he makes for hobbit parties, his ability to conjure fire and his use of it as a weapon. After his fall to the Balrog and return as the more powerful Gandalf the White, he is also associated with white light (Zimbardo 101), which he can use as both a weapon and a tool (Tolkien, II:104). In contrast to Sauron, Gandalf is tied firmly into a physical body;

even after his return from death in Moria he remains incarnate. However, there is also a similarity linking Gandalf and Sauron. Gandalf describes Sauron as being a ‘servant or emissary’ of a greater evil located beyond the borders of Middle-earth (Tolkien, III:137). He also implies, though does not state outright, that he too is an emissary of a similar, external power (Kocher 46).⁷

In the *Earthsea* cycle, Ged displays a similar equal-and-opposite relationship to Cob, the antagonist of *The Farthest Shore*, although Le Guin does not use clear contrasting imagery to make the point as Tolkien does. Cob is a sorcerer who uses the Pelnish Lore rejected by the wizards of Roke (Le Guin, *Shore* 85-6). During his life Cob moves from the literal centre of his world, Havnor, to its margins: after his return from death he is trapped at the westernmost edge of the Archipelago, the island of Selidor, and the Dry Land of the Dead in the west beyond the west. Cob is the ‘Anti-King’ who breaks down the natural balance of Earthsea (Esmonde 33); and he is dead. Ged, in contrast, moves from the margins of the Secondary World (his home island of Gont is toward the outer edge of the Archipelago) toward the centre. Ged is a wizard of Roke, and as the Archmage he functions magically and socially as proxy for the absent centre of authority in the Archipelago, the King in Havnor.⁸ Despite his spirit journeys into the Dry Land throughout the original trilogy, Ged is quite alive. Yet in some ways Ged and Cob are very similar. They are both men and mages of the Archipelago, products of the same culture and time. Cob has the same traits of pride and power in *The Farthest Shore* as Ged does when he first arrives at the school of Roke in *A Wizard of Earthsea* (Crow and Erlich 213). And, like Cob, Ged has

⁷ In the wider scheme of Tolkien’s cosmology Gandalf and Sauron are precisely equal; they are of course both Maia spirits, and servants of the Valar (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 22-3). This, however, is not stated at any point in *The Lord of the Rings*.

⁸ This is shown by the fact that his staff of office is marked with ‘the Lost Rune of the Kings’, the sign of dominion and peace (Le Guin, *Shore* 16).

experimented with the Pelnish Lore and the summoning of the dead, for much the same reasons as Cob does (Galbreath 263).

The antagonist and orchestrator of *The Riddle-Master's Game*, Eriel and the High One, also display a clear equal-and-opposite relationship. The shape-changer Eriel appears throughout the narrative as a woman, and the High One eventually confirms that this is her original sex (McKillip, *Game* 593). Eriel is initially associated with water: Astrin Ymris' story of the death of Eriel Meremont establishes that Eriel, like the other shape-changers, comes out of the sea (McKillip, *Game* 62). In *Heir of Sea and Fire*, she also reveals an affinity with fire when she handles it during her conversation with Raederle (McKillip, *Game* 300). She is repeatedly described as lawless. Her original name remains unknown. In contrast, the High One is throughout the narrative referred to as male, and evidence scattered throughout the text confirms that this is his original sex (McKillip, *Game* 179, 590). As the holder of the land-law, the High One is associated with earth (the opposite of fire in the neopagan circular schema of the elements), and when he is revealed to be the 'Master of the Winds' mentioned in the stone children's riddle, he is also associated with air, the opposite of water (Greenwood 84-5). While the High One's original name is never stated, it can be reconstructed from clues within the text.⁹ Finally, the High One is identified with the land-law. Despite their differences, however, the narrative eventually reveals that Eriel and the High One are fundamentally the same. As Eriel wears the face of a dead woman, for most of the narrative the High One wears the face of a dead man, 'a harpist who died during the destruction' of Lungold (McKillip, *Game* 594). And they are both Earth-Masters (Mains 67).

⁹ The stone child Tirnon, who gives Morgon his three-starred sword, gives the name of his father, the 'Master of Earth and Wind', as Tir; the High One later implies that Tirnon was his son (McKillip, *Game* 590). The full form of the Herun name Deth, the High One's alias for most of the text, is Tirunedeth (McKillip, *Game* 21). The implication of this is that 'Tir' and 'Deth' are 'one'.

Gandalf, Ged and the High One share not only their origins, but a perspective and a mode of action, with Sauron, Cob and Eriel. As mentioned in Chapter Two, in each fantasy the orchestrator character knows the antagonist's mind and character so completely that he speaks for the silenced antagonist. Gandalf knows Sauron's habits of thoughts and his weaknesses, and can accurately predict his actions (Tolkien, I:258). Ged identifies the Anti-King's motivation as the fear of death before he knows that the Anti-King is Cob, the man who feared dying (Le Guin, *Shore* 150). The High One can explain Eriel's desire for limitless power to Morgon despite the lack of any contact between them in the narrative to explain his knowledge (McKillip, *Game* 593). This implies that the orchestrator character can access the antagonist's tragic patterns of thought.

This suggestion is supported by the fact that throughout their narratives, the actions of Gandalf, Ged and the High One are remarkably similar in kind to those of the antagonists. In *The Lord of the Rings* Gandalf has three main functions: he is a giver of information and advice (Brooke-Rose 237), an organiser of events (Curry, 'Noise' 131) and a leader of warriors (Burns 222). Gandalf organises Frodo's journey to Rivendell and beyond, musters the Rohirrim, commands the defence of Minas Tirith and oversees the restoration of its King, and finally commands the assault upon the Black Gate that distracts Sauron's attention at the crucial moment of Frodo's journey (Tolkien, III:122). As Elgin states, although Gandalf actively opposes 'the destruction of nature and nature's creatures', in order to achieve his goals he, Elrond and Galadriel must nevertheless 'seek to bend all things to their will' (43)—the defining characteristic of a tragic hero.

The same is true of Ged in *The Farthest Shore*. Ged's manipulation of events works on two levels, one positive and one less so. Like every wizard and student at the school on Roke, Ged is aware of the prophecy of Maharion, the last Archipeligan King, regarding his

eventual successor: ‘ “ . . . *He shall inherit my throne who has crossed the dark land living and come to the far shores of the day*” ’ (Le Guin, *Shore* 25: original emphasis). As Edith L. Crowe points out (74), Ged asks Arren to accompany him on his journey to discover the cause of magic’s failure because, as his language shows, he has already recognised Arren’s potential to fulfil that prophecy:

‘ . . . To deny the past is to deny the future. A man does not make his destiny: he accepts it, or denies it. If the rowan’s roots are shallow it bears no crown.’ At this, Arren looked up startled, for his true name, Lebannen, meant the rowan tree.

(Le Guin, *Shore* 36)

Ged uses the journey to Selidor to shape Arren into the King he knows the Archipelago needs (Crowe 74-5), both by modelling the doctrine of Equilibrium in his own actions (or lack thereof) and by explicitly teaching it (Le Guin, *Shore* 150). At the same time, however, Ged uses Arren and his fear of dying, without Arren’s knowledge, to first discover the nature of the ‘Anti-King’, and then locate him.

When the High One finally reveals his identity to Morgon, just before the climax of *The Riddle-Master’s Game*, it becomes evident that as the *magister ludi* of the riddle-game of three stars, he shares with Ged and Gandalf a distinct tendency to use others to serve his ends and the interests of his Secondary World. The High One uses the wizard Ghisteslwchlohm, his apparent usurper, to shield himself from the shape-changers’ notice. He uses Ghisteslwchlohm’s hunger for power to develop Morgon’s capacity for wizardry, literally arranging for Morgon to be tortured into learning wizardry.

‘ . . . I found you in Hed, innocent, ignorant, oblivious of your own destiny. You couldn’t even harp. Who in this realm was there to wake you to power? . . . You wanted a choice. I gave it to you. You could have taken the shape of power you learned from Ghisteslwchlohm: lawless, destructive, loveless. Or you could have swallowed darkness until you shaped it, understood it, and still cried out for something more . . . ’

(McKillip, *Game* 589-90)

The High One manipulates Morgon into taking up the challenge of the riddle of three stars, then uses Morgon’s quest to hide himself from the shape-changers who are hunting him after Ghisteslwchlohm’s illusion is destroyed (McKillip, *Game* 592). The only consideration that shapes the High One’s decisions is necessity. Despite his love for Morgon, he is prepared to harm him as much as is necessary to achieve his goals: ‘ “ . . . I wanted no harm to come to you without my consent. . . . ” ’ (McKillip, *Game* 594). The High One also reveals that in the prehistory of his realm, before the establishment of the land-law, he was as irresponsible in his use of power as Eriel (Mains 67).

While antagonist and orchestrator share their origins and a pattern of behaviour, however, Gandalf’s actions, Ged’s and the High One’s are the product of a different guiding ethic from Sauron’s, Cob’s and Eriel’s. As discussed in Chapter Two, tragic heroes develop self-awareness over the course of their narratives, a development that becomes complete just before their self-destruction. But Gandalf, Ged and the High One begin their narratives already self-aware: as Basney says of Elrond and Galadriel, the secondary orchestrators of *The Lord of the Rings*, ‘the “action” of these characters is really the gesture of a pre-established ethical identity’ (‘Escape’ 34). Each orchestrator is well aware of his own capacity to act on the transcendent impulse. Gandalf knows without needing to test it what quality makes him vulnerable to the Ring:

‘ . . . the way of the Ring to my heart is pity, pity for weakness and the desire of strength to do good. Do not tempt me! I dare not take it . . . The wish to wield it would be too great for my strength . . . ’

(Tolkien, I:67)

By the time Cob makes his attempt at immortality in *The Farthest Shore*, Ged knows, thanks to his experiences in *A Wizard of Earthsea* and *The Tombs of Atuan*, exactly which trait could lead him to act as Cob does: ‘ “I know how much evil one man can do . . . I know it because I have done it. I have done the same evil, moved by the same pride . . . ” ’ (Le Guin, *Shore* 151). In *The Farthest Shore* Ged is noticeably careful not to let his pride control his actions. The High One is equally well aware of his own potential to turn ‘into stone’—that is, to become as compassionless and disengaged from the world he lives in as the shape-changers are (McKillip, *Game* 592). However, the orchestrator characters choose not to indulge their transcendent potential. In other words, they consciously limit their own actions and prominence within the Secondary World in order to promote its survival: they live by one of the defining characteristics of the comedic ethic.

This can be seen in two ways. In each fantasy, there are factors that prevent the orchestrator from opposing the antagonist directly. Gandalf’s ability to oppose Sauron is limited by his incarnation within a physical body, his inability to use the Elven-ring he carries, and the fact that he is ‘forbidden’ to confront Sauron directly (Tolkien, III:332). As Archmage, Ged must act in accordance with the central principle of Roke wizardry, which is, ‘ “ . . . *Do what is needful*. And no more!” ’ (Le Guin, *Shore* 147). The High One is unable to oppose Eriel because he is no longer strong enough to maintain his bindings over the shape-changers (McKillip, *Game* 594), and because if he confronts Eriel

before his land-heir Morgon is prepared to take on the land-law, his own premature death will destroy the realm. None of the three orchestrators makes any attempt to defy these limitations. Instead, each works within them to find other ways to block the antagonist's threat.

More significantly, because the orchestrator's purpose is to oppose the antagonist, his presence within the Secondary World is dependent on the antagonist's presence there; in organising the downfall of the antagonist, Gandalf, Ged and the High One also organise their own irrelevance to the Secondary Worlds they protect. Each of the three characters not only accepts this fact, but actively works to further his own obsolescence, and accepts it when it finally occurs. In *The Lord of the Rings*, after the fall of Sauron, Gandalf tells Aragorn, “ . . . The Third Age was my age. I was the Enemy of Sauron: and my work is finished. I shall go soon . . . ” (Tolkien, III:220). Gandalf withdraws from the politics and organisation of Middle-earth at the moment of eucatastrophe (Tolkien, III:200), and his coronation of Aragorn signals a formal transfer of authority from himself to the King; although after it Gandalf remains in Middle-earth for two and a half years, he is no longer an active force in the shaping of the world. Eventually he ‘retires from the world’ (Crowe 76), literally, when he sails to the Undying Lands with his fellow Ring-Bearers.

Ged enters his confrontation with Cob having already reached the understanding that once this task is finished it will be time for him “ . . . to be done with power . . . ” (Le Guin, *Shore* 171) and for Arren to take it up instead. As soon as the damage Cob has inflicted on the world is repaired and the conditions of Maharion's prophecy are met, Ged, like Gandalf, formally and publicly transfers his authority in the Archipelago to Arren:

In the sight of them all there Ged knelt to [Arren], down on both knees, and bowed his grey head.

Then he stood up and kissed the young man on the cheek, saying, ‘When you come to your throne in Havnor, my lord and dear companion, rule long, and well.’

(Le Guin, *Shore* 213)

As Crowe states (73), Ged then retires from not only the role of Archmage but also the whole of public life in the Archipelago, by returning to live in deliberate obscurity on Gont (Le Guin, *Wind* 78).

The High One’s case is slightly different. In *The Riddle-Master’s Game*, land-rule passes from holder to heir upon the death of the holder; thus, in order to secure the eucatastrophe, the High One must therefore organise not just his own irrelevance, but his own destruction. Unlike the tragic hero, however, the High One goes to considerable lengths to ensure that his self-destruction has no negative consequences for the landscape for which he is responsible. While the chain of connections is never fully unpacked in the narrative, there are several clues that suggest that when the High One (in the shape of the wizard Yrth) forges the sword marked with three stars, he means the Star-Bearer to use it to kill him, under controlled circumstances, after he has developed the ability to hold the land-law. The stone children, describing the sword as being for ‘death’ (McKillip, *Game* 179), invoke the death/Deth pun emphasised by various riddles and stories throughout the narrative; Deth himself tells Morgon, earlier in the narrative, ‘ “. . . If you finish this harsh journey to Erlenstar Mountain, I will give you anything you ask of me. I will give you my life . . . Because you bear three stars” ’ (McKillip, *Game* 92). While it is eventually Ghisteslwchlohm who uses the sword to kill the High One, under circumstances that are

not controlled at all, the High One's death nevertheless enables the transfer of power and authority from himself to Morgon. The act is witnessed as it occurs by the land-rulers and wizards, through their awareness of changes in the land-law (McKillip, *Game* 609). The High One's death serves the same narrative function as Gandalf's and Ged's withdrawal from their public roles.

Because it is anticipated and planned for, the orchestrator's movement into obsolescence causes comparatively little damage to the Secondary World within which it occurs.

Gandalf's departure from Middle-earth forms part of the landscape's change from magical to mundane, but causes no harm. Ged's withdrawal from the position of Archmage leads to some political and magical disruption in *Tehanu* and 'Dragonfly', as the wizards who remain are forced to adjust to the new sociopolitical configuration of the Archipelago. The High One's self-destruction, because it does not occur under the controlled circumstances he planned for, is followed by a period of chaos and damage to the Secondary World.

However, it also permits Morgon to re-establish the land-law and rebind the shape-changers in Erlenstar Mountain. In each case, the ability to accept limitation that differentiates the orchestrator character from the antagonist allows him to achieve his goal of preserving the integrity of the Secondary World.

Through their similarities to Sauron, Cob and Eriel in their origins and their behaviour, and their differences from them in the orientation of their actions, their recognition of limitation, their ends and the results they achieve, Gandalf, Ged and the High One model a general solution to the problem of the transcendent presence in the Secondary World. This is the conscious adoption of and adherence to the integrative ethic of comedy as a guide to responsible action in the world. Gandalf, Ged and the High One function as bridges between the transcendent worldview of the antagonist and the integrative action necessary

in the present: by inspiring others to act, they create the ethical transition and bring about the eucatastrophe, the metamorphosis that saves the Secondary World.

As the orchestrator's function is to both model and bring about the transition from transcendent to integrative ethical dominance within the Secondary World, each author's treatment of the orchestrator figure reveals her or his interpretation of that ethical transition. As with the antagonists, the common presence of an orchestrator figure in the three fantasies does not mean that each fantasy presents the same construction of the ethical transition. Rather, the construction of the orchestrator figure and thus of the ethical transition—and the allocation of responsibility for the development of the solution to the transcendent problem—change from *The Lord of the Rings* to the *Earthsea* cycle to *The Riddle-Master's Game*.

As discussed in Chapter Three, Tolkien constructs the transcendent impulse as the individual's desire or need to control her or his immediate environment, in despite of the cosmic design that orders events in Middle-earth. Tolkien's version of the ethical transition is designed to block this specific problem; he articulates his interpretation of the ethical transition through Gandalf. Senior, in his comparison of Tolkien's Secondary World with Stephen Donaldson's in the *First Chronicles of Thomas Covenant the Unbeliever*, states that 'Gandalf, despite his easy laughter and flashing anger, remains a distant figure whose comings and goings are suspect to many and whose nature and purpose are hidden' (38). This statement is partially accurate; Gandalf is always presented as somewhat distanced from both the reader and the Secondary World he inhabits (Mathews 901). However, the degree to which Gandalf is distanced, and the reasons why he is distanced, change across the course of the narrative. At the beginning of *The Lord of the Rings*, Gandalf the Grey appears to be both human and indigenous to the Secondary

World. He is slightly distanced even at the outset; he is seen from a Hobbit viewpoint, which, as the authoritative narrative voice immediately informs us, is limited:

. . . the old man was Gandalf the Wizard, whose fame in the Shire was due mainly to his skill with fires, smokes, and lights. His real business was far more difficult and dangerous, but the Shire-folk knew nothing about it.

(Tolkien, I:33)

While the hobbit perspective may be limited, it is also very *close*. Although little is actually known about him, Gandalf appears in the Shire as a relatively knowable figure. Hobbit children chase after his cart hoping for fireworks; he plots jokes with Bilbo and supplies entertainment at his party, expresses affection and loses his temper. The distance comes only from the fact that he is one of the Big People, and therefore knows more about the Secondary World and Bilbo's ring than the reader and the hobbits do, and is more involved with both Ring and world.

When the narrative moves out of the Shire and into the wider world, Gandalf gains in stature. He is revealed to be a friend of the Ranger Strider and the equal of the half-elven loremaster Elrond; he is not just a wandering conjuror, but a scholar, a wizard and a member of the powerful White Council. The Council of Elrond reveals Gandalf to be a voice of authority on matters within the world, and at the same time, he begins to show a knowledge of things that lie beyond the limits of Middle-earth. There is a suggestion that Gandalf has a specific role to fulfil in Middle-earth: ‘ “There are many powers in the world, for good or for evil. Some are greater than I am. Against some I have not yet been measured. But my time is coming . . . ” ’ (Tolkien, I:212).

However, Gandalf remains a human figure. He is subject to the human limitations of physicality and mortality. He gets cold, hungry, tired and grumpy, forgets things, and has a tobacco addiction (Tolkien, I:299). As Ellison points out, in the early parts of *The Lord of the Rings* Gandalf makes frequent mistakes: he delays researching the Ring; he lets Gollum go after meeting him in Mirkwood, allowing Gollum to make his way to Mordor and Sauron to learn the location of the Ring; he is deceived and trapped by Saruman (Ellison 27). Gandalf attempts to avoid Moria and the possibility of danger, and endangers the whole Fellowship by doing so. And despite his first real display of power against the Balrog in Moria, Gandalf dies, largely because of a combination of weariness, inattention and bad luck on his part (Tolkien, I:314).

Gandalf's apparent humanity, and the emphasis placed on his knowledge and scholarship, initially imply that the ethical transition toward which he works is an informed human response to the threat of the transcendent ethic, which is generated within the Secondary World, by the limited resources available there. The secondary orchestrators Elrond and Galadriel, supporting Gandalf's endeavours, suggest that there is a larger context within which that informed human action fits, but that context is not articulated. Elrond supplies history and Galadriel direction; both suggest that larger forces approve of the direction in which events are going, but nothing more (Kocher 44). However, Gandalf's death in Moria and his subsequent return as Gandalf the White reveal that this interpretation is inaccurate, and that even an informed human response to the threat posed by the transcendent presence is an inadequate one.

Before Gandalf returns to Middle-earth in *The Two Towers*, Treebeard establishes that the wizard originally came into Middle-earth from beyond its limits (Tolkien, II:66).

Gandalf's return from Moria intensifies this suggestion that he is not human: his

description of his return implies that his literal humanity has been burned away and that now his true nature is revealed (Senior 39). Furthermore, in the immediate wake of his return, Gandalf states openly for the first time that he has a purpose to accomplish in and for Middle-earth, and one that is impressed on him by an external power: ‘ “Naked I was sent back, for a brief time—until my task is done . . . ” ’ (Tolkien, II:92).

After his return, Gandalf loses the human limitations that characterise Gandalf the Grey. He makes no more mistakes that imperil the achievement of eucatastrophe. He is not vulnerable to Saruman’s voice (Tolkien, II:165) or Sauron’s deceptions (Tolkien, III:148). He is not infected by Denethor’s despair, or the terror brought by the Nazgûl at Minas Tirith. And his physical limitations vanish after his return. There is no reference to Gandalf the White smoking (or needing to smoke), or to his being weary, cold or hungry, after his return from Moria. He walks and rides great distances without apparent discomfort or fatigue. His general irritability becomes precisely directed anger, that achieves physical results, as in his confrontation with Gríma Wormtongue (Tolkien, II:104). And he is capable of acts that belie the apparent age and frailty of his body:

. . . they found Faramir, still dreaming in his fever, lying upon the table. Wood was piled under it, and high all about it, and all was drenched with oil . . . Then Gandalf revealed the strength that lay hid in him, even as the light of his power was hidden under his grey mantle. He leaped up on to the faggots, and raising the sick man lightly he sprang down again, and bore him towards the door.

(Tolkien, III:113)

As Merry notes in *The Two Towers* (173), Gandalf the White has more power than Gandalf the Grey. He also uses it more freely—to throw down Gríma Wormtongue and restore

Théoden's strength, to fight off the Nazgûl at the siege of Gondor (Lakowski 33) and to drive back the Mouth of Sauron at the Morannon. And Gandalf the White has more knowledge than Gandalf the Grey. But as he becomes more powerful and more knowledgeable, Gandalf also becomes 'closer than ever' (Tolkien, II:173)—that is, more close-mouthed. Thus he is even more of a distanced figure than before; by the time he confronts Denethor in *Return of the King*, this distance and difference are so great as to make it plain that Gandalf is not human, and not of Middle-earth:

Denethor looked indeed much more like a great wizard than Gandalf did . . . Yet by a sense other than sight Pippin perceived that Gandalf had the greater power and the deeper wisdom, and a majesty that was veiled. And he was older, far older . . . What was Gandalf? In what far time and place did he come into the world, and when would he leave it?

(Tolkien, III:24)

Immediately after the idea that Gandalf is a power from outside Middle-earth is explicitly introduced, Gandalf reveals his specific relationship to the landscape of Middle-earth, and his task, when he describes himself as Middle-earth's 'steward' in the speech to Denethor quoted at the beginning of this chapter. This statement confirms the earlier suggestion that Gandalf's task is laid on him by an external power analogous to a ruler. After this revelation, Gandalf goes from merely organising events to actively commanding them.

At no point, however, does Gandalf become completely distanced from the Secondary World. As Senior points out, Tolkien regularly reveals an 'intimate' side of Gandalf through 'glimpses of [his] friendships with the hobbits and Aragorn' (38), and this leads to the revelation of Gandalf's larger affection for the whole Secondary World. Immediately after the confrontation with Denethor in which he reveals his true role in the world, for

example, Gandalf takes the time to reassure Pippin that he did right to offer Denethor his service in reparation for Boromir's death. In doing so, he reveals the nature of his attachment to the whole of Middle-earth:

[Gandalf] came and stood beside Pippin, putting his arm around the hobbit's shoulders, and gazing out of the window. Pippin glanced in some wonder at the face now close beside his own, for, [sic] the sound of that laugh had been gay and merry. Yet in the wizard's face he saw at first only lines of care and sorrow; though as he looked more intently he perceived that under all there was a great joy: a fountain of mirth enough to set a kingdom laughing, were it to gush forth.

(Tolkien, III:26)

Despite his distance from the Secondary World, Gandalf has a loving connection to it. This, combined with the slow revelation of his true nature and role after his return from Moria, makes clear the source of the ethical transition he is engaged in effecting. Gandalf is a 'messenger' (Tolkien, *Letters* 202) of the beneficent external power that invests Middle-earth with order and cosmic significance; he is the conscious enactor of this benign power's design for the world. Gandalf's presence in the narrative constructs the ethical transition as the fulfilment of the cosmic order. This interpretation is confirmed by his final appearance in the narrative, waiting for the other ring-bearers at the Grey Havens (Tolkien, III:274) to sail with them to the Undying Lands, as their guide. Throughout the narrative, Gandalf performs the role of guide, shaping the world in accordance with the imperatives of the external power's design; his presence constructs the ethical transition as a solution generated outside the Secondary World, a movement towards a predetermined right end.

Le Guin's construction of the ethical transition is very different from Tolkien's. The three separate but linked narratives of the original *Earthsea* trilogy can be read as charting Ged's development toward, and eventual fulfilment of, the role of orchestrator for his Secondary World. The continuation volumes deal with the aftermath of the eucatastrophe, and lack an orchestrator figure; it is through Ged, and particularly through Ged's actions in *The Farthest Shore*, that Le Guin articulates her construction of the ethical transition.

Le Guin constructs the transcendent impulse as a reaction to the awareness and fear of mortality, as discussed in Chapter Three. There is no external power or force ordering events in the *Earthsea* cycle, against which this impulse works; but there is a physical imperative that governs both the Secondary World and the actions of individuals within it. This is the Equilibrium, the balance of the world (Le Guin, *Wizard* 56) that must be maintained above all other considerations. The principle of Equilibrium is not just an intellectual construct developed to explain the workings of the world; it is a physical and magical fact, as the consequences of Ged's and Cob's disruption of the boundary between life and death prove.

A Wizard of Earthsea focusses on Ged's education in the art magic—on his learning to first understand, and then internalise, the doctrine of Equilibrium. The story turns on Ged's attempt to prove his superiority to another student wizard, to prove that he is 'stronger than death itself' (Le Guin, *Shore* 151), by summoning the spirit of Elfarran the Fair out of the Dry Land of the Dead into the living world. Ged's transcendent act has a dangerous consequence: it releases into the world Ged's Shadow, a malevolent force that can devour minds and turn people into *gebbeths*, puppets without souls. The narrative follows Ged's slow development of understanding that in order to neutralise the threat the Shadow presents to the world, he must not defeat it, but assimilate it (Spivack, *Le Guin*

30); Ged's dealings with his Shadow constitute his informal, true education in the reality and nature of Equilibrium. *A Wizard of Earthsea* is, as George Slusser states, a narrative about Ged taking on responsibility for his actions and their consequences in the world (36). Ged is a 'sorcerer's apprentice' type of character—'he does before he learns, and his first deed is misbegotten' (Slusser 36-7)—and his narrative in *A Wizard of Earthsea* is not so much one of learning as one of learning *better*, of rejecting the easiest course of action and consciously adapting his worldview and behaviour to align with the pre-existing fact of Equilibrium.

The theme of learning better recurs in the second volume of the cycle, *The Tombs of Atuan*. The narrative of *The Tombs of Atuan* focusses not on Ged, but on Arha, the Kargish priestess of the Nameless Ones; Ged's story is inset into hers. However, his actions in this inset story can be seen to follow the same pattern as in *A Wizard of Earthsea*. Ged enters the narrative as a thief and an intruder into a place where he has no right to be, and is trapped in the Labyrinth by Arha and the Nameless Ones whose territory he has encroached upon. In order to first survive, and then escape, Ged must let go of his desire to manipulate the world (by stealing the lost half of the Ring of Erreth-Akbe from the Labyrinth), accept his powerlessness (Le Guin, *Revised* 9), and wait for Arha to give him her half of the Ring as a free gift—as the first half of the Ring was given to him in *A Wizard of Earthsea*. This is another movement closer to a full acceptance of the principle of Equilibrium (Slusser 41).

The Farthest Shore is the only book of the cycle in which Ged functions as orchestrator for Earthsea. At the beginning of *The Farthest Shore*, which occurs approximately twenty

years after *The Tombs of Atuan*,¹⁰ Ged is the Archmage, the highest extant authority in the Archipelago. He stands in the place of the absent King, as ‘a strong centralising, normalising, pacific element in Archipeligan society’ (Le Guin, *Tales* 294). Despite the opinion of one of his students (Le Guin, *Shore* 23), Ged is not Archmage because of the things he has done; he is Archmage because through doing, he has developed a clear understanding of the nature, function and consequences of action in the world, and has brought himself and his actions as closely as possible into line with the principle of Equilibrium. The narrative voice shows Ged from the perspective of the young prince Arren, which initially positions Ged as an icon of authority, ability and wisdom. Ged recognises the cause of the failure of magic in Earthsea where the nine Masters of Roke do not (Le Guin, *Shore* 31), and where they can only see part of the solution (the restoration of the true king), he is aware of the whole. He is ‘not vulnerable to temptation’ (Cummins 61). Ged appears to have grown beyond making mistakes—to have learned better. At this point of the narrative, Ged in fact appears much as Gandalf does at the close of *The Lord of the Rings*. He is the voice of a principle that dictates the way events should go for the good of the Secondary World, but despite his care for that world he is detached from it, isolated and inactive on Roke Island.

Having set up this Gandalf-like image, Le Guin immediately proceeds to deconstruct it. When Ged leaves Roke to find the source of the disruption to the Secondary World, Arren learns that he must rely on luck, chance and his own efforts to find out what he needs to know. Despite his adherence to the doctrine of Equilibrium, Ged is still capable of making mistakes, on both small and large scales, as he does after Arren is kidnapped by slave-traders (Le Guin, *Shore* 73). Where Gandalf grows more distanced as the narrative of *The Lord of the Rings* progresses, Ged becomes closer to the reader during his journey with

¹⁰ *The Farthest Shore* suggests eighteen (24), *Tehanu* about twenty-five (211); the difference is never resolved.

Arren, shifting from icon to back to the character of the previous volumes, complete with a sense of humour, a bad temper, and a capacity to make serious mistakes which is shown most clearly through the story of his humiliation of the sorcerer Cob:

‘ . . . I saw [Cob] summon from the Dry Land my own old master who was Archmage in my youth, Nemmerle . . . I was angry, and challenged him. I was not Archmage then. I said, “You compel the dead to come into your house. Will you come with me to theirs?” And I made him come . . . He was afraid. He who summoned up the dead so easily was more afraid of death—his own death—than any man I ever knew . . . His fear made me sick and angry. I should have known by that that I did wrong. He was strong, and I was eager to prove that I was stronger.’

(Le Guin, *Shore* 86)

The narrative eventually reveals that Ged’s past mistake is, as Slusser (42) and Cob both point out, partially responsible for the threat to Earthsea’s integrity. Cob’s response to Ged’s punishment is to attempt to defeat the death that he fears (Galbreath 265). His efforts create a breach between the living world and the Dry Land of the Dead, and magic and life begin to bleed out of Earthsea through it—which is the trouble that sends Arren to Roke in the first place. When Ged undertakes his journey to discover the source of the trouble and restore the integrity of his Secondary World, he is acting to correct his own mistake. Once again, he is learning better.

Ged’s closure of the door between the worlds opened by Cob, and Arren’s simultaneous journey to kingship, between them effect the transition from transcendent to integrative ethical dominance in Earthsea—symbolically, at least. Both of these narratives are equally necessary for the preservation of Equilibrium; they restore not only physical and magical,

but political and social, balance to Earthsea. Through them, Le Guin constructs the ethical transition itself as a process of learning better—of recognising a pre-existent fact about the relationship between individual and context and adjusting the self to take account of it.

This construction of the ethical transition goes on to form one of the fundamental principles underpinning the radically different continuation volumes, especially *The Other Wind*, where it manifests as the recognition that Equilibrium itself as presented in the previous five volumes of the cycle is a distortion of the natural which can only be corrected by, once more, learning better. If the transcendent impulse is a danger that arises out of the subconscious mind, it must be opposed by the recognition of the Equilibrium it threatens and the conscious adoption of behaviour that promotes the Equilibrium.

McKillip's treatment of the orchestrator figure in *The Riddle-Master's Game* is more complex than Le Guin's or Tolkien's. McKillip's narrative both engages with and rejects Tolkien's and Le Guin's constructions of the ethical transition, and states her own contrasting interpretation of it, through the concepts of land-law and riddlery, and the characters of the High One and Deth.

McKillip constructs the transcendent impulse as a deliberate choice to behave irresponsibly in order to gratify the self. In the High One's realm, there are two systems of thought that guide individuals' interactions with the world away from such behaviour: land-law and riddlery. However, neither of these is a physical imperative as the doctrine of Equilibrium is in Earthsea, or a manifestation of cosmic order against which the transcendent actor opposes her- or him- self. Land-law is not an inherent part of the Secondary World, but a magical construct created by the High One to preserve its integrity from within (McKillip, *Game* 611). Riddlery is an epistemology (Schuyler 111) and a philosophy; it is history, literature and a framework that determines what is appropriate action in the world

(Nicholls 1814). It deals solely with codifying human patterns of interaction with the world: ‘ “. . . Is there a riddle on the master lists that permits the wise man to revenge?” ’ (McKillip, *Game* 332). Riddlery is a cultural construct, developed out of a previous discipline (wizardry). In McKillip’s Secondary World, the action necessary to bring about the ethical transition is not revealed by the system itself. It is not a process of learning better.

Nor is it revealed by an external force. Within McKillip’s closed Secondary World, her construction of the High One and Deth gestures to Tolkien’s benign ordering power and orchestrator. The High One is defined as the ‘sustainer of the land-law of the realm’ (McKillip, *Game* 619). He is a distant and indistinct figure (Mains 61); his nature and role are never fully defined; he is isolated from the realm he protects, and his dealings with others take place at one remove, ‘generally through his harpist’ (McKillip, *Game* 117). Deth is the High One’s representative in the Secondary World, and performs a parallel function to the High One within the Secondary World: where the High One provides physical, ecological stability, Deth, who has been his harpist for six hundred years (McKillip, *Game* 77) provides political and social stability. And, like the High One, Deth is considered absolutely trustworthy: ‘ “. . . There wasn’t a man, woman or child in the realm who didn’t trust you . . . ” ’ (McKillip, *Game* 311). Through her handling of these two figures, however, McKillip rejects Tolkien’s construction of the ethical transition, and advances an alternative vision.

Mains characterises the High One as ‘a hidden, transcendent figure who imposes order from above’ (68); but despite his distance from his realm, the way in which various characters think and speak of him at the start of *The Riddle-Master’s Game* constructs the High One as benign, humane and essentially human. Individuals can come ‘face to face’

(McKillip, *Game* 257) with the High One, and can speak with him. He has a ‘court’ (McKillip, *Game* 82), implying both physical presence and social and political interaction with others. He appears to feel responsibility for and involvement with the people who inhabit his realm (McKillip, *Game* 15). And he has, in the past, taken direct action to ensure the safety of the both the people and the landscape of his realm.

However, as the narrative of *The Riddle-Master of Hed* progresses, the High One begins to appear not benign, but indifferent. He is revealed to be derelict in his duty of protecting the realm. The narrative emphasises his failure to act to prevent the shape-changers’ murder of Morgon’s parents, and Eriel’s two attempts on Morgon’s life. It reveals his failure to stop both the shape-changers’ attempts to disrupt the land-law of Ymris and An, and the gathering of an army of shape-changers on the Ymris coast. It uncovers the High One’s failure to stop Ghisteslwchlohm’s destruction of the school of wizards at Lungold, his imprisonment of the surviving wizards and his erasure of all information about the Star-Bearer from the realm’s common store of knowledge. These failures reconstruct the High One as a dubious presence in the Secondary World. When Deth brings Morgon to Erlenstar Mountain at the end of *The Riddle-Master of Hed*, the human, physical High One directing events in the Secondary World who Morgon meets there is an usurper, the power-hungry wizard Ghisteslwchlohm (McKillip, *Game* 201). The concept of a benign, humane organising power with the good of the Secondary World as its prime concern is reconstructed as a dangerous illusion.

The High One is known still to exist, because the land-law of the various realms remains intact and functioning (McKillip, *Game* 310); however, in *Heir of Sea and Fire* and *Harpist in the Wind*, the High One’s presumed human characteristics are systematically stripped away. In these volumes, the High One lacks location and physicality: he is

‘ “ . . . nowhere in evidence except in the evidence of his existence . . . ” ’, as the riddler King Har of Osterland puts it (McKillip, *Game* 332). With Deth’s involvement in Ghisteslwchlohm’s imposture revealed, the High One lacks even the ability to communicate. His failure to aid Morgon during his year-long torture at Ghisteslwchlohm’s hands is taken to mean that he lacks both compassion and a sense of justice. This repositions the High One as untrustworthy; eventually, even his presence in the Secondary World begins to be doubted (McKillip, *Game* 433).

The High One’s apparent indifference to the events that threaten the integrity of the Secondary World and the lives of its inhabitants constructs him in the end as entirely unhuman. Morgon says to the wizard Yrth,

‘[The High One] hasn’t asked for help. Does a mountain ask for help? Or a river? They simply exist . . . I don’t speak the language of stone. To him, I simply exist. He sees nothing but three stars rising out of countless centuries of darkness, during which powerless shapes called men touched the earth a little, hardly enough to disturb him.’

(McKillip, *Game* 524)

With this speech, Morgon erases the possibility of a benign power as the source of the ethical transition from McKillip’s Secondary World; the rejection is made, as Morgon’s comment makes clear, because the behaviour of such an external power matches too closely the behaviour of the antagonists—compassionless manipulation of the world and its inhabitants to serve its own ends.

At the beginning of *The Riddle-Master of Hed*, Deth is the exact opposite of the High One. Where the High One is the ultimate power within the Secondary World, Deth represents

himself as almost entirely powerless. As the High One's servant, he cannot determine where he travels or why, and cannot act or speak in accordance with his own wishes or judgement. He has, by his own admission, ‘ “. . . no land-instinct and no gifts for wizardry . . . ” ’ (McKillip, *Game 21*), the two markers of power within McKillip's Secondary World. The High One is physically distant and impossible to visualise, but seems involved with the life of his realm. Deth is physically close, and described in precise terms (McKillip, *Game 15*), but he is emotionally distant, so detached from the world through which he moves as to seem entirely imperturbable. Deth is positioned, by his detachment, his age and his unknown origins, as somewhat inhuman: ‘ “I was born,” the harpist said tranquilly, “not long after the founding of Lungold, a thousand years ago . . . I gave up long ago trying to guess who my father was” ’ (McKillip, *Game 21*). Despite the fact that he fills a role analogous to Gandalf's in the narrative, Deth is the opposite of Gandalf.

As the narrative of *The Riddle-Master of Hed* develops, however, Deth, like Ged in *The Farthest Shore*, becomes more accessible. His journey with Morgon reveals him to be a person as well as a functionary, a serious musician who loves his craft, the Morgol's lover and her land-heir Lyra's friend, and a friend who cares about Morgon. But where Ged's self-revelation builds trust, Deth's increasing accessibility allows Morgon to notice contradictions in Deth's self-representation. Speaking of Morgon's three-starred harp, Deth tells Morgon, ‘ “I was there when Yrth made this harp. I heard the first song it ever played. . .” ’ (McKillip, *Game 74*). Later, however, the tree-king Danan Isig, who witnessed the making of the harp, states that Deth was not present when it was made: ‘ “How could he have been? Yrth made the harp about a hundred years before the founding of Lungold, and Lungold is where Deth was born” ’ (McKillip, *Game 191*).

These contradictions begin to reconstruct the orchestrator under the command of a guiding power, into a figure as dubious as that power itself.

Deth's betrayal of Morgon at the close of *The Riddle-Master of Hed* rejects Tolkien's construction of the orchestrator by breaking the link between Deth and the concept of the High One. It casts the orchestrator as an inimical force, a self-interested figure who is unwilling to take on responsibility for his actions: ‘ “. . . I needed a master, and no king deluded by [Ghisteslwchlohm's] lies would suffice. We suited one another. He created an illusion; I upheld it” ’ (McKillip, *Game* 443-4). But breaking the connection between Deth and the High One also strips Deth of his invulnerability. After Morgon escapes from Erlenstar Mountain, Deth becomes an outcast, lacking home, friends, protector and even his trade: ‘ “I've played and lost to a Master; he'll take his vengeance. But I regret the loss of my harp” ’ (McKillip, *Game* 308).

Once Tolkien's model of benign external power and messenger-orchestrator is broken down, McKillip's narrative builds up an alternative construction of the ethical transition through her treatment of Deth. At the close of *Heir of Sea and Fire*, Deth averts Morgon's attempt to kill him with an apparent non sequitur: ‘ “They were promised a man of peace” ’ (McKillip, *Game* 374). The comment refers to the stone children of the Earth-Masters, who give Morgon his three-starred sword in *The Riddle-Master of Hed*, and to Morgon's heritage and identity as Prince of Hed. By making the comment, Deth announces himself to be concerned with the events and problems of the High One's realm, despite the fact that he is not a representative of an ordering power. The incident forces the other characters to reassess Deth: Morgon says of him to Raederle, ‘ “I don't know [who he is]. But I do know this: I want him named” ’ (McKillip, *Game* 375). In the wake of this partial self-revelation, Deth's formal position in the realm becomes increasingly

unimportant, and his personality—assumed after the revelation of Ghisteslwchlohm’s imposture to be the deceit—is given more weight. It becomes the most important fact about the character when he seemingly dies to protect two people he loves (Raederle and the Morgol) from Ghisteslwchlohm in *Harpist in the Wind* (McKillip, *Game* 450).

After Ghisteslwchlohm (apparently) kills Deth, the harpist’s narrative functions are taken over by a new character, Yrth, the wizard known as the Harpist of Lungold. Yrth appears to be a completely separate person from Deth. He is physically different—‘a tall old man, with short grey hair and a battered, craggy face,’ who is blind, and who speaks the language of crows (McKillip, *Game* 483). Yrth is both more powerful than Deth and more autonomous: he rescues Morgon and Raederle from thieves on Trader’s Road (McKillip, *Game* 473) and fights to defend the traders of Lungold when the shape-changers attack the city (McKillip, *Game* 488). Furthermore, Yrth and Deth seem to have co-existed during the realm’s history; the wizard Nun comments to Morgon that ‘ “. . . Yrth taught [the harpist] harp songs once . . . ” ’ (McKillip, *Game* 473). However, it is not long before Raederle, hearing Yrth play the harp, recognises the possibility that Deth might have been Yrth in disguise (McKillip, *Game* 518).

Raederle’s recognition that Yrth is Deth has several effects. It reconfigures the orchestrator as a power in the Secondary World in his own right, isolated from any validating authority. It reconstructs the orchestrator as a positive figure, by revealing Deth’s supposed lies to be truths (for example, if Deth was Yrth in disguise, he self-evidently was present during the making of Morgon’s harp—as its maker). Above all it positions the orchestrator as a potential *magister ludi*, the controlling figure at the centre of a godgame:

‘ . . . if he was a harpist named Deth who travelled with you, as Yrth did, down Trader’s Road, then he spun riddles so secretly, so skilfully, that he blinded even Ghisteslwchlohm . . . I think maybe you should name him. Because he is playing his own silent, deadly game, and he may be the only one in this realm who knows exactly what he is doing.’

(McKillip, *Game* 519)

The recognition that Yrth is Deth implies that there is a discoverable order underlying the apparent chaos overwhelming the Secondary World—an order shaped by this single individual, whose true nature is as yet unknown.

The true nature of Yrth/Deth is the key to McKillip’s construction of the ethical transition. It is revealed in the last part of *Harpist in the Wind*. When Morgon comes out of the wastelands to take up the riddle-game again, before he begins to learn the various land-laws that make up the High One’s realm, Yrth asks him the question that allows McKillip’s final construction of the orchestrator and the ethical transition to cohere. Immediately after Morgon identifies the High One with the indifferent landscape, Yrth says to him: ‘ “The Earth-Masters have taken all shapes. What makes you so certain the High One has shaped himself to everything but the shape and language of men?” ’ (McKillip, *Game* 525). This question erases the inhuman construction of the High One built up over the three books, and replaces it in Morgon’s mind with an image of the High One as ‘something pursued, vulnerable, in danger, whose silence was the single weapon he possessed’ (McKillip, *Game* 525)—an image, in fact, very like that of Deth in *Heir of Sea and Fire* and *Harpist in the Wind*. The ideas of the separate external power and orchestrator are thus collapsed into one figure and combined with the overtones of the *magister ludi* surrounding Yrth. In the wake of this recognition, the multiple images surrounding the orchestrator figure—High One, Earth-Master, Yrth, Deth and falcon—finally resolve, literally, into one:

The High One stood before [Morgon]. He had the wizard's scarred hands, and the harpist's fine, worn face. But his eyes were neither the harpist's nor the wizard's. They were the falcon's eyes, fierce, vulnerable, frighteningly powerful.

(McKillip, *Game* 588)

This recognition reconstructs the High One as, not a force, but an individual—the person first revealed to Morgon and the reader in *The Riddle-Master of Hed*. Once he is recognised as a person rather than a concept, the High One is able to speak for himself, for the first time in the narrative. In doing so, he reveals his actions as solely the product of his own conscience, prompted by witnessing the consequences of his own transcendent actions and those of others.

‘We did not realize, until it was too late, that the power inherent in every stone, every movement of water, holds both existence and destruction . . . I was the first to see the implications of power. . .that paradox that tempers wizardry and compelled the study of riddlery. So, *I made a choice*, and began binding all earth-shapes to me by their own laws, permitting nothing to disturb that law. . . .’

(McKillip, *Game* 593: my emphasis)

Through the narrative of *The Riddle-Master's Game*, McKillip returns to the position rejected by Tolkien with Gandalf's death in Moria. She constructs the ethical transition as an informed human response to the effect of the transcendent impulse on the Secondary World, generated from within the world by the limited resources available there. Despite his power, the High One is limited; his orchestration of events is vulnerable in ways that Gandalf and Ged, and their actions, are not. The High One makes mistakes: he is unable to stop Morgon from abandoning the riddle-game in favour of revenge until it is nearly too

late; he fails to realise the significance of Raederle's heritage or the importance of her contribution to the eucatastrophe; he is unable to control the critically important moment of his own death, a failure that jeopardises the safety of the entire Secondary World. Unlike Ged's mistakes, however, the High One's do not create a threat to the Secondary World. Unlike Gandalf's early mistakes in *The Lord of the Rings*, the High One's mistakes do not, in the end, call his actions into question or imply that they are inadequate; they do not invalidate the individual's capacity to create and implement an informed response to the transcendent presence in the world. Rather, once the High One's full motivation is revealed, it retrospectively validates even his failed efforts. If the transcendent impulse is a deliberate choice, the only possible way to contain its effects is by making another choice, in the full understanding of the problems created by the first, damaging one.

It can be clearly seen that as the construction of the Secondary World changes from *The Lord of the Rings* to the *Earthsea* cycle to *The Riddle-Master's Game*, and the construction of the ethical transition changes, so the degree of responsibility for that ethical transition which is attached to characters within the Secondary World changes also. In the cosmically-ordered landscape of *The Lord of the Rings*, whereas responsibility for damage to the world rests firmly with those characters who attempt to control their situations, the responsibility for generating a response to the problem the antagonists cause lies outside the damaged landscape. It is the province of the power or entity that invests the landscape with order in the first place. In the inherently-ordered landscape of the *Earthsea* cycle, no such power exists to offer a solution to the problem of the transcendent presence.

However, the Equilibrium itself offers a model from which characters can learn. In *Earthsea*, Le Guin's characters bear a degree of responsibility for solving the problem: they must recognise and adopt the solution modelled by the Secondary World. In the artificially-sustained environment of *The Riddle-Master's Game*, however, there is neither

ordering power nor model to assist the characters in responding to the damage caused by Eriel's transcendent striving. As responsibility for damage to the world lies with characters within that world, so does the responsibility for generating an effective response to it—for making another choice.

The Lord of the Rings, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game* all argue that what is needed to protect the Secondary World from the damaging effects of the antagonist's transcendent action is a cultural shift: the tragic outlook of the past must be replaced by an integrative, comedic perspective that enables characters to act effectively in the world without harming it. This modal shift is modelled by the orchestrator character, who uses tragic methods but applies them to comedic ends. However, each fantasy presents a different construction of the ethical transition that the orchestrators promote. Their different interpretations of it are predicated on their constructions of the Secondary World and the transcendent impulse. As the Secondary World changes from open to closed system, and the transcendent impulse from a need for control to an irresponsible choice, the ethical transition changes also, from an externally-determined right end, to a physical imperative that must be accepted, to a decision of conscience by an individual. And as the construction of the Secondary World changes, responsibility for all aspects of the ethical transition shifts onto the characters within the system.

5 'IT MUST BE SO, WHEN THINGS ARE IN DANGER': HEROIC ACTION AND COSMIC ORDER IN *THE LORD OF THE RINGS*

In *The Lord of the Rings*, the Secondary World of Middle-earth is invested with order from without, by a beneficent force or entity. Within the parameters of Middle-earth everything, even the aftermath of transcendent action, can be incorporated into that order, and used to promote the world's integrity. This does not, however, negate the need for action against Sauron's transcendent presence and the effect his acts have on the landscape. It is established early in the narrative that if no action is taken against Sauron, the system will be overwhelmed and will fail:

'. . . to send the Ring to [Tom Bombadil] would only postpone the day of evil . . . soon or late the Lord of the Rings would learn of its hiding place and would bend all his power towards it. Could that power be defied by Bombadil alone? I think not. I think that in the end, if all else is conquered, Bombadil will fall, Last as he was First; and then Night will come.'

(Tolkien, I:254-5)

The existence of the benevolent external presence that orders events in Middle-earth does not relieve the characters of the obligation to act to preserve the Secondary World. Rather, characters *must* act to the limits of their ability, and contribute to the preservation of that order, in order for the system to work at all (Kocher 54).

In this chapter, I will examine the actions undertaken by three key characters in *The Lord of the Rings*: Boromir, Aragorn and Frodo. I will discuss the nature of the action each character undertakes, the specific narrative paradigm Tolkien uses to construct their narratives and the contribution each character makes to the ethical transition. I will then

discuss the theory of how to implement ethical transition in the Secondary World that Tolkien articulates through the focal narrative as a whole. Finally, I will consider where Tolkien's narrative locates responsibility for implementing the solution to the problem of transcendent behaviour, and for saving the world.

The focal narrative of *The Lord of the Rings*, the final movement of the world-story of Middle-earth, can be regarded as Tolkien's construction of a response to the transcendent ethic and its effect on the Secondary World. As I argue in Chapter Four, Tolkien constructs the ethical transition as the deliberate restoration of the right order determined for the Secondary World by the benign external power. The narrative of *The Lord of the Rings* is informed by this idea: in it, Tolkien argues that the ethical transition can be achieved by a combination of two forms of action, one of which responds to transcendent behaviour in the world, and the other to the transcendent impulse that produces it.

The focal narrative of *The Lord of the Rings* as a whole reflects the traditional comedic movement of a group of protagonists from isolation to integration with and regeneration of their social context. However, its component narratives follow a different narrative paradigm. Tolkien drew on many sources to create both the Secondary World of Middle-earth and the narrative of *The Lord of the Rings*; the sources he relied on most heavily were the Anglo-Saxon and Norse epics (St Clair 63) and medieval romances (Chance, *Power* 16) that were his area of professional expertise. These sources supplied elements from creatures such as dragons and dwarfs, to cultures and customs, names and character types (St Clair 64-5). They supplied the idea of the long defeat, the motif of lady and knight (Brewer 251) and the theme of the individual's relationship to authority (Jackson 3). They also supplied the crucial narrative device that Tolkien uses to construct his argument of how the ethical transition can be effected: the narrative paradigm of the hero.

In *The Hero and the King: An Epic Theme*, W.T.H. Jackson isolates a central element of the epic form: the scenario of the king and the hero, of authority and its active representative in the world, and the ambiguous, often antagonistic relationship between them (134). The scenario of the king and the hero also appears in *chanson de geste* and romance, although in these genres the tensions between hero and king may be muted or transformed (Jackson viii). And it appears in *The Lord of the Rings*. There are three heroic scenarios of the epic/romance type contained within the landscape of Middle-earth, and it is through these scenarios that Tolkien sets out his argument for how to achieve ethical transition in the Secondary World.

In epic, *chanson de geste* and romance, the opposite of evil is not good so much as heroism. The active opposition of evil in these genres is the prerogative of the hero. And in these genres, the hero is not simply the protagonist of a narrative, but a character who performs a particular role within that narrative—so that an epic or a romance may include many heroes even if it has only one protagonist. In his essay ‘The Game and Play of Hero’, John Leyerle suggests that a character in epic or romance can be considered to perform the paradigm of the hero if his narrative displays certain markers. According to Leyerle, any male character (71) who is relatively detached from his social context (Miller 163), but who nevertheless stands in some degree of formal relationship to ‘a relatively passive figure of authority, often a king, who tends to be aloof from the action or even ineffective in controlling it’ (Leyerle 69), has the potential to take on the role of hero if disorder or evil intrudes on the king’s space. Such a character becomes a hero in the paradigmatic sense when he ‘makes a formal commitment to accomplish a notable feat,’ often in response to a challenge issued by a force of evil or disorder, ‘and thereby takes upon himself the playing of a role’ (Leyerle 69). The character’s objective in taking on the

role of hero is, in epic, to secure or increase his personal fame (Jackson 12), and, in romance, to increase both his own fame and that of the king as whose proxy he acts.

Once a character has taken on the role of hero, he travels outward from the stable point of civilisation represented by the king, into a more or less fluid landscape (Miller 133) in which he finds and physically opposes evil (the hero's confrontation with this force of evil or disorder is usually stylised into a single combat: Leyerle 70). However, the hero's success at, and survival of, his chosen feat is not determined by his ability, the 'courage . . . sense of purpose, and strength' (Leyerle 70) he displays in the pursuit of his goal, or even his personal morality. It is determined by luck, accident (whether positive or negative), and the character's own degree of investment in the role he plays (Leyerle 70).

Across epic, *chanson de geste* and romance, there are two standard conclusions to the hero paradigm (Leyerle 71). In epic and *chanson de geste*, the stakes attached to a hero's successful completion of the heroic role tend to be high—for example, the defence of a nation or a faith. The hero's potential reward of fame is correspondingly great. In this scenario, the character who takes on the hero role tends to be heavily invested in playing the part of hero and in achieving fame for doing so (Leyerle 71). Such a character under all circumstances 'holds to his commitment and keeps to what he regards as his high destiny—forgetting that he usually has chosen the role himself . . . [—and as a consequence] is destroyed' (Leyerle 71). While the epic hero's actions usually achieve their goal in the short term, his accidental self-destruction also has widespread negative consequences for the society he serves. It can involve, or cause, 'the destruction of his followers, or even of his society' (Leyerle 71). While this ending is characteristic of epic, and common in *chanson de geste*, it does not often occur in romance.

In romance the stakes attached to the successful completion of an heroic feat tend to be comparatively low—for example, the upholding of a king’s reputation. The potential reward is also smaller. In romance, the character who takes on the role of hero tends to show less investment in maintaining the heroic façade. He is able to ‘[accept] limitations, even a partial failure in his performance’, and thus he ‘calls off the quest or hunt and abandons his role’ (Leyerle 71) in order to both succeed at his task, and survive it as the epic hero does not. Having done this, the romance hero is able to return to the passive authority figure on whose behalf he acts, and reintegrate himself with the social context his actions have protected: ‘he goes home, marries, does penance, learns humility . . . lives on and tends to regenerate his society’ (Leyerle 71).

The narrative paradigm of the hero appears to privilege a particular form of response to a problem—that is, public, physical action that either destroys or neutralises that problem. However, as Leyerle points out, in narratives of heroism ‘The aesthetics of conduct, how the hero acts, are almost as important as what he does’ (71). The hero paradigm focusses attention on the spirit or state of mind in which the hero undertakes action. Given that Tolkien constructs the transcendent impulse as the individual’s attempt to assert control over his or her situation in despite of the cosmic order the Secondary World manifests, the hero paradigm is particularly well-adapted to constructing a response to the transcendent presence in Middle-earth.

In Middle-earth, the active opposition of the tragicomic ethic is the responsibility of the hero figure. There are three heroic scenarios in *The Lord of the Rings*: the scenarios of Gondor, the Western Lands and Middle-earth. The first to clearly emerge as such is the Gondor scenario. Denethor, the Steward of Gondor, is a *roi fainéant*, or inactive king, of a type common to epic (Jackson 111). As Christine Scull points out, Denethor ‘equates himself

with Minas Tirith' (155) and his outlook is limited to Gondor alone. In explicit contrast to both Aragorn and Théoden, Denethor is physically immobile, held in place at Minas Tirith not just by his role as the city's protector, but by his interpretation of that role:

' . . . [The Dark Lord] will not come save only to triumph over me when all is won. He uses others as his weapons. So do all great lords, if they are wise, Master Halfling. Or why should I sit here in my tower and think, and watch, and wait, spending even my sons? For I can still wield a brand.'

(Tolkien, III:80)

As the narrative progresses, Denethor also becomes mentally immobilised, by foreknowledge and despair.

Denethor has failed in his duty to keep his realm peaceful and prosperous. Minas Tirith is 'falling year by year into decay; and already it [lacks] half the men that could have dwelt at ease there' (Tolkien, III:20). During his term as Steward, the culture of Minas Tirith has become unbalanced, oriented toward conflict: the guardsman Beregond comments that 'in these days men are slow to believe that a captain can be wise and learned in the scrolls of lore and song . . . and yet be a man of hardihood and swift judgement in the field' (Tolkien, III:33). This appears to have come about not only because Minas Tirith is under threat from Mordor, but because Denethor perceives governance as a conflict with the rest of the world, rather than as a process of accommodating differences, building alliances and resisting genuine evils (Ellison 28).

Denethor's two sons, Boromir and Faramir, both have the potential to take on the role of hero. Each stands in a responsible relationship to Denethor, the ineffective authority figure

at the centre of the scenario. Boromir is part of the military hierarchy of Minas Tirith, the High Warden of the White Tower and the Captain-General of the Gondorian army (Tolkien, II:234); Faramir is a Captain in that army. Each brother also holds a somewhat tenuous position in the society he serves. Boromir is his father's favourite son (Tolkien, III:26), but is not like the rest of his family. Whereas Denethor and Faramir are, in different ways, scholars and leaders, Boromir is a soldier—moreover, one his fellow soldier and subordinate Beregon describes ambiguously as 'reckless and eager' in combat (Tolkien, III:83)—and unlike them, he does not entirely accept his family's status as Stewards of Gondor (Tolkien, II:245). Boromir also has an eye to his own reputation: Faramir describes him as '“ . . . proud and fearless, often rash, ever anxious for the victory of Minas Tirith (and his own glory therein) . . . ”' (Tolkien, II:247). Faramir is viewed favourably by the soldiers he commands, but is set apart from his father more than Boromir is because Denethor distrusts his motives:

' . . . Your bearing is lowly in my presence, yet it is long now since you turned from your own way at my counsel. See, you have spoken skilfully, as ever; but I, have I not seen your eye fixed on Mithrandir, seeking whether you said well or too much? He has long had your heart in his keeping.'

(Tolkien, III:75)

Jackson suggests that in epic 'The conflict between ruler and hero is often as much a conflict of values as of personality' (4). Although they express them differently, Boromir and his father share the same values, privileging Minas Tirith and their own achievement above everything; but although Faramir has the same capacity for perception and strength of will as his father (Tolkien, III:26), he has adopted the different, integrative values modelled by Gandalf. This is the cause of his estrangement from Denethor.

Of the two potential heroes in the Gondor scenario, it is Boromir who takes on the role, when he makes a formal commitment to accomplish a necessary heroic task for Minas Tirith—that is, to undertake the journey to Rivendell to learn the answer to the riddle of Faramir’s dream (Tolkien, I:236).

The second heroic scenario of *The Lord of the Rings* is greater in scope but less traditional in realisation than the Gondor scenario. This is the scenario of the Western Lands. There is no literal king or authority figure at the centre of this scenario. However, there is an ideal of authority: the Kings of Old, Elendil and Isildur and their descendants, function as ‘the silent wardens of a long-vanished kingdom’ (Tolkien, I:371-2), as memories or ideals of authority that hold a place open for it in the present. The Kings of Old represent a time in the past when authority was present and effective in keeping the land whole and safe—hobbits indicate that people are uncivilised or untrustworthy, or just plain strange, by saying that they have never heard of the King (Tolkien, I:20). The influence of the Kings of Old endures through its effect on current laws and customs (Tolkien, I:20). But as historical figures, they cannot directly influence the scenario they are central to. Furthermore, the Kings of Old are compromised ideals; the narrative reveals that they repeatedly failed in their role as protectors. Isildur succumbed to the influence of the Ring (Tolkien, I:243); the last King, Eärnur of Gondor, answered the Witch-King’s challenge and vanished, leaving Gondor to be ruled by the Stewards (Tolkien, III:297). In the absence of the Kings, the Western Lands have become fragmented, isolated and endangered.

Nevertheless, these absent authorities do possess an active representative in the world. Aragorn is the descendent of Elendil and Isildur, and the hereditary King of the Western

Lands; as such, his job is to protect the remnants of the North-kingdom from danger. Like Boromir, Aragorn fulfils Leyerle's prerequisites for heroism. As a Ranger, he holds a rather awkward position somewhat outside of, and scorned by, the society he protects:

' . . . Travellers scowl at us, and countrymen give us scornful names. "Strider" I am to one fat man who lives within a day's march of foes that would freeze his heart, or lay his little town in ruin, if he were not guarded ceaselessly. Yet we would not have it otherwise. If simple folk are free from care and fear, simple they will be, and we [the Dúnedain] must be secret to keep them so. . . . '

(Tolkien, I:239)

Aragorn's connection to the Kings whose job he does in the world is tenuous. He knows his own identity as the heir of the Kings of Old, as do the Dúnedain and the Wise; and he is the leader of the Dúnedain, the last remnants of the Numenoréan rulers of Arnor (Kocher 132). However, neither Aragorn's true identity nor his work as the Kings' proxy in the present day is acknowledged by the society he protects. There is also something of a difference between Aragorn and the Kings of Old in that, while Aragorn values the same things as they, he is aware of the mistakes they made and is determined not to repeat them (Kocher 139). Aragorn assumes the hero role on behalf of the Kings of Old when, during the Council of Elrond, he reveals to Boromir his identity as their descendent, and takes on the task of halting Sauron's advance across Gondor: ' " . . . the world is changing once again. A new hour comes. Isildur's Bane is found. Battle is at hand. The Sword shall be reforged. I will come to Minas Tirith" ' (Tolkien, I:239).

The third heroic scenario in *The Lord of the Rings* is both the largest, and the least traditional in its realisation. This is the Middle-earth scenario, which encompasses

Gondor, the Western Lands, and the rest of Middle-earth, including Mordor. It centres on the narrative's voice of authority—the primary orchestrator Gandalf, the representative in Middle-earth of the external power that orders the outcome of events in the Secondary World. Gandalf, like the secondary orchestrators Elrond and Galadriel, is positioned as an authority figure who gives other characters direction, assistance and information. It is he who organises the defence of Middle-earth against Sauron and takes charge of the muster of Rohan and defence of Gondor. Along with Elrond and Galadriel, Gandalf preserves the landscape of Middle-earth by virtue of the Elven-ring he protects. However, as an orchestrator, he is predominantly a passive figure: like Elrond and Galadriel, he advises characters and shapes events, but does not participate fully in the narrative. Despite his mobility, and his involvement with events, Gandalf is confined by the limits of his human body, the choices of other people, and his inability to directly confront Sauron. Additionally, Gandalf is to all intents and purposes dead to Frodo from after his fall in Moria until Frodo's return from Orodruin. As a memory, Gandalf becomes in Frodo's strand of the focal narrative the ultimate passive authority figure.

However, like Denethor and the Kings of Old, Gandalf has an active representative in Middle-earth: Frodo. Like Boromir and Aragorn, Frodo answers the prerequisites for heroism. He holds an ambiguous position in his society: within the Shire, he is considered to be more than a little strange (Tolkien, I:49-50), and outside of it he is set apart simply by being a hobbit, a member of a species and a culture that most of the other inhabitants of Middle-earth do not even know exists. Frodo's relationship to Gandalf is the very informal one of friendship. And no conflict of values exists between Frodo and Gandalf at all: Gandalf wants to protect Middle-earth, or as much of it as possible, and Frodo wants to save first the Shire, and then the rest of Middle-earth also. Frodo takes on the role of hero on Gandalf's behalf—first informally, when he makes a reluctant

commitment to carry the Ring to Rivendell for Gandalf, and then formally, when he offers to take the Ring to Orodruin and destroy it (Tolkien, I:259).

Tolkien uses these three heroic scenarios to test how effectively the traditional patterns of public action against disorder contribute to ethical transition. The three heroic scenarios do not carry equal weight within the narrative. The Gondor scenario, the most traditional of the three in terms of its similarity to Tolkien's source materials, is also the most limited in terms of how much of Middle-earth it encompasses, and what it seeks to achieve. It encompasses the well-being of Gondor, and nothing else. It is the last of the three to enter the narrative—Boromir's story is enclosed within both Aragorn's and Frodo's—and the first to be concluded. Of the three king figures, Denethor holds the least authority. As Steward for a vanished King, he is a substitute for authority rather than the thing itself. The Western Lands scenario encompasses the Gondor scenario, incorporating Gondor into the Western Lands as part of a wider responsibility; it is the second of the three to enter the narrative, as Aragorn is the second hero figure to appear. The Kings of Old are greater authority figures than Denethor not just because they are Kings, but because of their Númenorean origins and their status as legends. But the Middle-earth scenario encompasses the Western Lands scenario as the Western Lands scenario does Gondor. It incorporates the Western Lands scenario and its predominantly human concerns into Gandalf's wider responsibility for the entire landscape. This is the first of the three heroic scenarios to enter the narrative, as Frodo and Gandalf are the first hero and authority figures to be introduced. And Gandalf, as the direct representative of the power that orders events in the Secondary World, is the highest authority figure in Middle-earth. As the heroic scenarios stand in a hierarchy of importance, so the performances of the hero role linked to them stand in a hierarchy of effectiveness and importance in terms of their contribution to the ethical transition.

Although the Gondor scenario is the least of the three, and the last to be introduced, the first heroic journey Tolkien examines in *The Lord of the Rings* is Boromir's. Boromir's heroic journey, as such, is not shown: Boromir enters the narrative not at the beginning of his journey, but at its end, Rivendell. However, during the Council of Elrond Boromir tells the story of his journey from Minas Tirith to Rivendell, and his narration of his own performance of the hero role reveals two things. The first is that the medieval Gondor scenario (Curry, *Middle-earth* 17) seems to require a romance hero to represent it (answering a riddle, accepting aid and becoming part of a group are heroic tasks more characteristic of the self-conscious literary game of romance than of the semi-oral epic genre). The second is that Boromir displays both a marked degree of investment in his own admirable performance of the role of hero, and a desire for fame as a result of his actions. These are characteristics of the epic hero.

It is possible to argue that that the role of hero for Minas Tirith in fact belongs to Faramir, as Faramir is the primary recipient of the riddle dream and the dream is the sole certain instance of the external ordering power intervening directly in events in Middle-earth (Shippey, *Road* 137). Boromir usurps the role of hero from Faramir because he believes he can do it better:

‘ . . . on the eve of the sudden assault [on Osgiliath] a dream came to my brother in a troubled sleep; and afterwards a like dream came oft to him again, and once to me . . . my brother, seeing how desperate was our need, was eager to heed the dream and seek for Imladris; but since the way was full of doubt and danger, I took the journey upon myself. . . . ’

(Tolkien, I:236-7)

This interpretation of Boromir's behaviour is reinforced retrospectively when Faramir discusses the incident with Frodo. Faramir states that ‘ “. . . I should have been chosen by my father and the elders, but [Boromir] put himself forward . . . and would not be stayed . . . ” ’ (Tolkien, II:247). This suggests that Boromir values performing the role of hero as much as he does gaining the object of his journey—the answer to the riddle that might save Minas Tirith.

By taking on the role of hero for Minas Tirith, Boromir takes on a public responsibility. However, even at his first appearance in *The Lord of the Rings* it is clear that Boromir's sense of responsibility to his society is accompanied by a strong private investment in his performance of the role of hero. When Boromir speaks to the Council of Elrond on behalf of Minas Tirith, he emphasises his own exemplary performance under difficult physical conditions: ‘ “. . . In this evil hour I have come on an errand over many dangerous leagues to Elrond: a hundred and ten days I have journeyed all alone. . . . ” ’ (Tolkien, I:236). He also complains about the lack of recognition that Minas Tirith has had for its work in holding back Sauron's advance. This emphasis on his own physical ability and his society's later develops into a persistent endorsement of the use of the Ring in a direct, military response to Sauron, which ignores Gandalf and Elrond's repeated warnings about the dangers of doing so:

‘ . . . Why do you speak ever of hiding and destroying? Why should we not think that the Great Ring has come into our hands to serve us in the very hour of our need? Wielding it the Free Lords of the Free may surely defeat the Enemy . . . Valour needs first strength, and

then a weapon. Let the Ring be your weapon, if it has such power as you say. Take it and go forth to victory!’

(Tolkien, I:256)

Both of these characteristics suggest that Boromir not only believes in, but takes pride in, his own capacity to overcome the constraints imposed by his Secondary World, and achieve great things—and his society’s capacity to do so. Because of this belief, Boromir interprets the caution of the Elves and Gandalf regarding the Ring as an insult (Tolkien, I:377). All of these traits associate Boromir with the type of the epic hero.

Boromir achieves the goal of his heroic journey at the Council of Elrond: he learns the answer to the dream-riddle, which is that Sauron’s Ring has been found, the ‘Sword that was broken’ is to be reforged and ‘the House of Elendil [shall] return to the Land of Gondor’ (Tolkien, I:237). In fact, Boromir achieves more than he set out to. In addition to gaining knowledge, he gains Aragorn’s aid for Minas Tirith. The focal narrative then follows Boromir’s return, with the Fellowship, toward Minas Tirith. But at this point Boromir displays the third and most conclusive marker of the epic hero. He proves unable to accept an unheroic resolution to his hero act.

After leaving Rivendell, despite the fact that his heroic goal has been accomplished, Boromir insists on maintaining his heroic persona. His behaviour is marked by pride (Ellison 28) and a concern with maintaining his own self-image. When the Fellowship leaves Rivendell, Boromir insists on blowing a blast on his war-horn despite the need for secrecy. When Elrond rebukes him for it, he replies, ‘ “ . . . always I have let my horn cry at setting forth, and though thereafter we may walk in the shadows, I will not go forth as a thief in the night” ’ (Tolkien, I:267). As Shippey points out, this is a show of bravado in

the face of danger in line with the theory of courage expressed in the Norse epics and sagas (*Road* 194). It is a positive aspect of Boromir's character, but it is also a manifestation of his pride.

Boromir's pride manifests itself in another way also: his rejection of the informed decision of the Wise to oppose Sauron with stealth rather than strength. Boromir repeatedly puts forward his own preferred course of action, the use of force and the Ring to defeat Sauron's armies and save Minas Tirith (Tolkien, I:350). This course of action would not only save Minas Tirith, but also—as his self-talk at Amon Hen reveals—elevate Boromir to the status of hero in the eyes of the city (Tolkien, I:377). While Boromir never loses sight of his public responsibility, his concern with his own performance of the hero role eventually overwhelms it.

This is the point at which Boromir attempts to achieve the perfect resolution to his hero role, by taking the Ring from Frodo by force. His act separates the members of the Fellowship at a crucial moment, and leads to its fragmentation. Boromir is killed; Frodo and Sam travel alone toward Mordor; Merry and Pippin are abducted by Saruman's Orcs; Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli abandon Minas Tirith for an attempt to save the missing hobbits. Boromir thus meets the epic hero's end—a qualified achievement of his goal, followed by an isolated death that has negative consequences for those who depend on him, but leaves him with a degree of posthumous fame for those things he did achieve (*Chance, Power* 96).

Shippey points out in *J. R. R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* that the narrative of *The Lord of the Rings* places a strong emphasis on the virtues of the epic form, in particular the Old Norse 'theory of courage' that is a feature of the Norse sagas and epics (149). Tolkien

described this in his essay 'Beowulf: the Monster and the Critics' as the maintenance of 'unyielding will' in the face of certain defeat (21), and the dissociation of the idea of 'right action' from the consequences of 'victory and reward' (Shippey, *Author* 150). The narrative of *The Lord of the Rings* reflects this theory of courage in that it is a narrative of inevitable failure. Even if Sauron is defeated, many of the aspects of Middle-earth's landscape that the protagonists value the most will fade from it, as a direct consequence of the eucatastrophe.

The destruction of the Ring, says Galadriel, will mean that her ring and Gandalf's and Elrond's will all lose their power, so that Lothlórien 'fades' and the elves 'dwindle'. Along with them will go the ents [sic] and the dwarves, indeed the whole of Middle-earth, to be replaced by modernity and the rule of men; all the characters and their story will shrink to misunderstood words in poems here and there . . .

(Shippey, *Author* 148-9)

Tolkien's characters accept the inevitability of failure, and act anyway (Mathews 902).

Characters who display this epic courage are viewed positively in *The Lord of the Rings*, despite the limited effectiveness of their actions. Théoden's charge on the Pelennor Fields and Éowyn's defeat of the Nazgûl are both positive moments, although they contribute comparatively little to the achievement of eucatastrophe (Elgin 49). Boromir's futile defence of Merry and Pippin is also viewed positively. However, as Clark states, the tone of *The Lord of the Rings* is strongly elegiac (19), and one of the things it laments is the fading of the epic worldview from the Secondary World. However attractive the Norse theory of courage may be, Tolkien argues that it must be allowed to fade from Middle-

earth—in its original form at least—because it cannot contribute to the needed change in dominant ethics (Elgin 48).

This is what Boromir's hero journey reveals. The narrative highlights several instances of unusual behaviour from Boromir leading up to his assault on Frodo. It implies, through a slight evocation of Gollum's and Bilbo's mannerisms in these moments, that this behaviour is the result of the Ring's influence:

Boromir sat muttering to himself, sometimes biting his nails, as if some restlessness or doubt consumed him, sometimes seizing a paddle and driving the boat close behind Aragorn's. Then Pippin, who sat in the bow looking back, caught a queer gleam in his eye as he peered forward, gazing at Frodo.

(Tolkien, I:362)

Thus the narrative also constructs Boromir's final attempt to seize the Ring as a product of the Ring's influence. The implication is confirmed by Boromir's reaction after he is left outside the Ring's field of influence: he both rejects his own actions (‘ ‘What have I said? . . . What have I done? Frodo, Frodo! . . . Come back! A madness took me, but it has passed. Come back!’ ’ Tolkien, I:378), and reasserts his initial, positive persona in his defence of Merry and Pippin immediately afterwards. However, as Tom Shippey points out, Boromir's response to the Ring is an unusual one. Although the Ring is characterised by the Wise as an equal danger to all, many characters, including Gimli and Legolas, Merry and Pippin, Sam, Faramir and Celeborn, do not react to its presence at all. Only a few, highly significant characters respond to the Ring—Frodo and Gollum, Gandalf, Elrond and Galadriel, Saruman, and Boromir (Shippey, *Road* 126).

As discussed in Chapter Three, Gandalf, Elrond and Galadriel, as orchestrators, act predominantly in the tragic mode, along with Sauron. Because they already act in the way the Ring needs its bearers to act, they are predisposed to be vulnerable to its influence. Leyerle suggests that epic heroism, with its commitment to the transcendence of limitation and the perfect performance of a role, and its focus on the self, falls within the tragic mode (71). As an epic hero, despite his positive characteristics of courage and determination, Boromir acts squarely within the same mode as Sauron and the Ring do. It is the very virtues that define the epic hero that make Boromir vulnerable to the Ring where Aragorn, Legolas, Gimli, Merry, Pippin, Sam and above all Faramir are not (Ellison 28). When the Ring enhances those characteristics to the point where they dominate his character, they threaten the success of the quest—thus the salvation of the Secondary World.

The point is reinforced in *The Two Towers* with the appearance of Faramir, the primary recipient of the riddle-dream, and the character to whom the role of hero for Minas Tirith properly belongs. Faramir and Boromir have exactly the same motivation—they want to save Minas Tirith and Gondor from Sauron's advancing forces (Tolkien, II:247).

However, in most other things Faramir is Boromir's opposite. Boromir enjoys warfare for its own sake; Faramir treats it as an unpleasant necessity (Kocher 126). Where Boromir appears alone, Faramir appears as part of a group—when he meets Frodo, Sam and Gollum in Ithilien, he is the leader of a company of Gondorian soldiers, and later in the narrative takes his place as part of the ruling elite of Minas Tirith. Boromir rejects the insights of the Wise; Faramir values both Gandalf's perspective, and knowledge in general, not just for its utility but for its own sake (Kocher 125). And Faramir recognises the fact of limitation and the possibility of failure, as his discussion of tactics with Denethor and Prince Imrahil shows (Tolkien, III:78). Despite the fact that he shares his brother's

motivation, Faramir is Boromir's modal opposite; he models the qualities of community, limitation and survival that are characteristic of the integrative ethic. And it is precisely because of his recognition of limitations that Faramir is not vulnerable to the desire for, or influence of, the Ring. This is shown when he says to Frodo,

‘ . . . *Not if I found it on the highway would I take it* I said. Even if I were such a man as to desire this thing, and even though I knew not clearly what this thing was when I spoke, still I should take those words as a vow, and be held by them.

‘But I am not such a man. Or I am wise enough to know that there are some perils from which a man must flee. . . .’

(Tolkien, II:256: original emphasis)

Thus it is not simply a matter of Boromir being the ‘evil’ brother and Faramir the ‘good’, as Jane Chance characterises them (*Art* 46). Faramir's encounter with Frodo in *The Two Towers* makes it clear that it is the *mode* in which Boromir acts—the transcendent ethic of the epic hero—that makes him vulnerable to the Ring. Through Boromir's fall to the influence of the Ring and his consequent early death—and the fact that his abandoned heroic task is subsequently taken up, expanded and completed in a different mode by Aragorn—Tolkien implies that the epic method of response to a problem that threatens the integrity of the world is an inadequate one. It does not counter the transcendent impulse or its effect on the world; rather, it reproduces and even reinforces them. Because the epic hero's actions are directed toward his private interest when they should be directed at his public responsibility, and the epic hero's focus is on the self and not society—on controlling the world to conform to the individual's wishes—action in the epic style defaults on the individual's responsibility toward the rest of the world. Boromir's actions

cannot themselves contribute to ethical transition except by default; only their aftermath can be incorporated into the inherent order of the Secondary World.¹¹

Having exposed the epic hero's inability to contribute directly to ethical transition through Boromir, Tolkien tests the alternative—the romance hero—through the character of Aragorn. Elgin argues that Aragorn, as one of the Captains of the West allied with the Wise, moves within the tragic mode just as Boromir, Sauron and the Wise do (43). However, this is not borne out by the text: as Basney comments ('Escape' 34), Aragorn has a 'pre-established ethical identity' that is distinctly comedic. Throughout the narrative, Aragorn is surrounded by markers that link him with the integrative ethos. After his initial appearance on the fringes of human society, in the inn at Bree, Aragorn is consistently associated with community. He is Elrond's foster-son and an inhabitant of Rivendell, the leader of the Dúnedain and one of the Nine Walkers. Even after the Fellowship is broken, he retains two companions (Legolas and Gimli), who serve no other narrative function than to be his companions and thus illustrate the unity of Middle-earth against Sauron. Aragorn is frequently shown participating in social activities such as conversation and story-swapping, verse-making and pipe-smoking. His entire hero narrative can be read as an element of a larger romance narrative which echoes a standard New Comedy plot (Frye, 'Argument' 58)—the story of Aragorn and Arwen Undómiel. This story follows the pattern of love between members of the younger generation, blocked by a ban imposed from above (' . . . though I love you, I say to you: Arwen Undómiel . . . shall not be the bride of any man less than the King of both Gondor and Arnor" ' Tolkien, III:307), which the hero defeats or evades so that the narrative ends in marriage (Kocher 137).

¹¹ Boromir's actions split the Fellowship, but this ultimately proves beneficial. It gives Sam and Frodo the chance to enter Mordor unseen, brings Merry and Pippin to Fangorn Forest in time to rouse the Ents against Saruman, and brings Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli together with the returned Gandalf in time to achieve the muster of Rohan. The aftermath of Boromir's transcendent action thus forwards the right end of events in the Secondary World as his actions themselves do not.

Above all, Aragorn is a healer, in both the literal sense (Crowe 77) and the metaphorical. Through the narrative, every instance in which Aragorn acts as a warrior is followed almost immediately by one in which he acts as a healer. It is his ability to heal physical illness and injury that sees him recognised as King by the people of Minas Tirith after the end of the Siege of Gondor: ‘ . . . soon the word had gone out from the House [of Healing] that the king was indeed come among them, and after war he brought healing; and the news ran through the City’ (Tolkien, III:125). Healing is also a function of kingship (Monks 6); it extends beyond the physical into the political and social realms, because a king’s job is to bring the disparate elements of society into an harmonious and ordered whole (Crowe 73). Aragorn displays this capacity several times. He prods Legolas and Gimli toward overcoming the rift between Elves and Dwarves (Tolkien, I:329-30). He heals an ancient breach of trust when he summons the Dead to his assistance against Sauron under the terms of Isildur’s curse (Tolkien, III:135). His coronation remakes the old map of Arnor that underlies the fragmented north, and binds the Western Lands into a whole again. And he makes peace with the Easterlings and Haradrim who surrender after the fall of Sauron (Tolkien, III:218), thereby connecting the Western Lands to the whole of Middle-earth.

Aragorn’s performance of the hero paradigm reflects his comedic identity. It is not told, as Boromir’s is, but shown. Aragorn enters the narrative before the beginning of his hero journey, and leaves it after its formal closure with his coronation as King of Gondor and Lord of the Western Lands. Although Aragorn enacts the same paradigm as Boromir does, he displays none of the behavioural characteristics of the epic hero. He does not insist on his own heroism when narrating his past actions to the Council of Elrond. In fact, he actively downplays it; when Gandalf comments on the ‘perils’ Aragorn encountered during

his hunt for Gollum, he replies only, ‘ “There is little need to tell of them . . . If a man must needs walk in sight of the Black Gate, or tread the deadly flowers of Morgul Vale, then perils he will have. . . .” ’ (Tolkien, I:243). The contrast with Boromir’s emphasis on his own physical endurance is marked. Aragorn displays no particular reluctance to assume the hero role when he is called on to do so, but neither does he display any noticeable desire for fame or the status that will be the reward for the correct performance of his role. Rather, he takes on the job of kingship, because it is his responsibility to do so. Only after his heroic task is complete does he display any anxiousness for a ‘reward’—and the reward in question is marriage to Arwen Undómiel (Tolkien, III:220), at once a personal goal, and a social one in that it reunites the last remnants of the Numenoréans with their former allies the Elves, and begins the process of regenerating the society of Gondor. Aragorn’s heroic action may have private dimensions, but it is predominantly public in nature and in focus.

Aragorn’s relationship to the hero role is the opposite of Boromir’s at every point. Where Boromir usurps the hero role from Faramir, Aragorn is called out of anonymity into performance of the hero role by other people’s need (Kocher 142). After Boromir tells the Council of Elrond about Minas Tirith’s situation, Aragorn asks him, ‘ “. . . Do you wish for the House of Elendil to return to the Land of Gondor?” ’ and waits for his somewhat ungracious acceptance before formally taking on the hero’s role and responsibility with the statement ‘ “. . . I will come to Minas Tirith” ’ (Tolkien, I:237-9). And Aragorn does not assume an heroic persona when he takes on the hero role. When the Fellowship is about to leave Rivendell on the journey that may not only save Middle-earth, but also secure for Aragorn his identity, his kingdom and his marriage to Arwen Undómiel, Boromir blows that contentious blast on his war-horn, but Aragorn sits alone ‘with his head bowed to his knees: only Elrond knew fully what this hour meant to him’ (Tolkien, I:267). During the journey itself, he consistently positions himself as a support to the other hero figures,

Frodo and Boromir, rather than as their equal (Kocher 143)—even when, after Gandalf's death, he becomes default leader of the Fellowship.

Further, as Kocher's analysis of the character shows, Aragorn's actions after he becomes leader of the Fellowship are not determined by what will best support his own heroic image—or benefit him the most. Rather, Aragorn bases his decisions on what will be best for the Fellowship, and for his greater task of opposing Sauron. He suggests travelling with Frodo into Mordor, and after Boromir's death temporarily abandons Minas Tirith for an attempt to rescue Merry and Pippin from Saruman's Orcs, despite the fact that his personal advantage lies in Minas Tirith. Rather than disrupting the established hierarchy of the Rohirrim to establish his personal status and importance, as an epic hero would do (Jackson 15), Aragorn stays in a subordinate role in the military action at Helm's Deep and Isengard (Kocher 151). He takes back control of the palantír from Sauron, not to prove his own strength or regain something that belongs to him, so much as to contribute to the defence of the Western Lands by giving Sauron one more thing to worry about:

' . . . I am the lawful master of the Stone, and I had both the right and the strength to use it, or so I judged . . . I spoke no word to [Sauron], and in the end I wrenched the Stone to my own will. That alone will he find hard to endure. And he beheld me . . . but in other guise than you see me here. If that will aid him, then I have done ill. But I do not think so. To know that I lived and walked the earth was a blow to his heart, I deem; for he knew it not till now. . . . '

(Tolkien, III:46)

Likewise, Aragorn rides the Paths of the Dead because it is the only way to gain both the soldiery and the time he needs to break the Siege of Gondor (Tolkien, III:49), and because he is the only person who can do it.

Aragorn completes his heroic act when he breaks the Siege of Gondor and saves Minas Tirith; after this, he is recognised as King (Tolkien, III:120). But because he is not motivated by a desire for fame or the reward of kingship per se, he is able to accept that his heroic act, although technically completed, has only partially achieved its aim: ‘When [the battle] is over, the enemy is still working on Denethor and Mordor is not destroyed’ (Jones, ‘Narrative’ 104). Therefore Aragorn defers receiving his reward:

‘ . . . this City and realm has rested in the charge of the Stewards for many long years, and I fear that if I enter it unbidden, then doubt and debate may arise, which should not be while this war is fought. I will not enter in, nor make any claim, until it be seen whether we or Mordor shall prevail. Men shall pitch my tents upon the field, and here I will await the welcome of the Lord of the City.’

(Tolkien, III:120-1)

Because he does this, he is able to continue doing his job—protecting the society for which he is responsible—by leading the assault on the Morannon to aid Frodo’s quest from a distance (Kocher 157). It is only once his job is completed and Sauron is destroyed that Aragorn accesses the narrative end he has already earned. He returns to Minas Tirith, and is reintegrated with his society when he is recognised and crowned King: he then goes on to regenerate that society through his marriage to Arwen Undómiel, as the symbolism of the withered tree of Minas Tirith and the sapling on Mount Mindolluin (Tolkien, III:219)

suggests. Aragorn matches the type of the romance hero as Boromir does the type of the epic hero.

As Leyerle identifies the epic inflection of the hero paradigm with the tragic mode, he also identifies the romance inflection with the comedic mode (71). Because Aragorn moves in the opposite mode to Sauron and the Ring, he is not vulnerable either to the Ring, as Boromir is, or to Sauron's deceptions, as Denethor is (Shippey, *Road* 126). In his first meeting with Frodo, Merry, Pippin and Sam, Aragorn rejects the Ring and its influence outright:

‘ . . . If I had killed the real Strider, I could kill *you*. And I should have killed you already without so much talk. If I was after the Ring, I could have it—NOW!’

He stood up, and seemed suddenly to grow taller. In his eyes gleamed a light, keen and commanding. Throwing back his cloak, he laid his hand on the hilt of a sword that had hung concealed by his side. [The hobbits] did not dare to move . . .

‘But I *am* the real Strider, fortunately . . .’

(Tolkien, I:169-70)

Furthermore, he does this without any sense of struggle. The moment is, like much of Aragorn's behaviour at this point in the narrative, a performance designed to impress upon the hobbits how dangerous their situation is. At no point afterwards does the Ring present

any problem for him. As Kocher states, he treats it as something that ‘belongs to nobody’ (139).¹²

It is notable that after the epic hero Boromir’s death, the romance hero Aragorn does not merely take up his abandoned heroic task, but (at Gandalf’s urging) expands it to encompass not just Gondor but the whole of the Western Lands. Effectively, he overwrites Gondor’s failed epic scenario with the romance Western Lands one. Aragorn’s heroic journey brings together Gondor, Rohan and the Dúnedain, and is supported by events at Isengard, Lothlórien and Mirkwood; his heroic act achieves the salvation of Minas Tirith and its people, and the whole of Gondor, and therefore of the lands that lie beyond it. Through the success of Aragorn’s expanded heroic act, Tolkien suggests that comedic action in the world is an effective response to transcendent behaviour whereas tragic action is not, and can contribute to the ethical transition where it cannot. More notable still, however, is the fact that Aragorn does not at any point claim that his heroic act is responsible for the salvation of Middle-earth. As Stephen Potts points out (7), at the moment of his coronation, Aragorn publicly hands back his victory to Gandalf and Frodo, and thus to the external ordering power they represent:

. . . Aragorn did not put the crown upon his head, but gave it back to Faramir, and said: ‘By the labour and valour of many have I come into my inheritance. In token of this I would have the Ring-bearer bring the crown to me, and let Mithrandir set it upon my head, if he will; for he has been the mover of all that has been accomplished, and this is his victory.’

(Tolkien, III:217)

¹² The resemblance of Faramir’s later performance for Frodo in *The Two Towers* to this moment is not coincidental. Faramir not only reinforces the point of Boromir’s narrative by difference; he also reinforces the point of Aragorn’s by repetition.

Through Aragorn's coronation, Tolkien articulates explicitly what Aragorn's narrative implies: that public action in the integrative mode can contribute to the ethical transition, but cannot achieve it alone. Aragorn's story is only half of the focal narrative of *The Lord of the Rings*. Aragorn's job is to confront Sauron—to oppose the transcendent presence in the world. However, Aragorn does not engage with the Ring. He does not at any point confront the impulse to control the world that drives transcendent behaviour. A comedic protagonist does not challenge or confront the disruption to her or his society, but negates it by evasion or strategy. The integrative ethic does not engage with the transcendent impulse, but only contains it. In order to act effectively against the root of the problem—the transcendent impulse—an additional form of action is necessary. Tolkien uses the third and largest heroic scenario of *The Lord of the Rings*—Frodo's journey to Orodruin to destroy the Ring—to explore what this might be.

Frodo's heroic journey, like Aragorn's, is not told but shown. Frodo's strand of the focal narrative encompasses the informal beginning of his hero journey, in the Shire, his formal adoption of the hero role at Rivendell and the formal end of his task at Orodruin, and its actual conclusion with Frodo's departure from Middle-earth. However, Frodo's performance of the role of hero does not conform exactly to either the epic or the romance inflection of the paradigm.

Frodo's initial modal orientation is, like Aragorn's, comedic. As a hobbit, he is a part of a culture that values connection with others and with the landscape within which it exists. Although he is considered rather strange by much of that society, he does have strong connections to it, including family and 'a good many friends, especially among the young [sic] hobbits . . . who had as children been fond of Bilbo and often in and out of Bag End' (Tolkien, I:49). Frodo's motivation for taking action is to preserve the Shire from Sauron's

destructive malice, and his first action—taking the Ring to Rivendell before Sauron can look for it in the Shire—is evasive rather than confrontational. However, Frodo’s engagement with the hero role itself is more ambiguous. When Frodo takes on the role of hero formally, he does not do so either over-eagerly as Boromir does, or willingly as Aragorn does. He only commits himself when it becomes plain to him that there is no other alternative:

A great dread fell on [Frodo], as if he was awaiting the pronouncement of some doom that he had long foreseen and vainly hoped might never after all be spoken. An overwhelming longing to rest and remain at peace by Bilbo’s side in Rivendell filled all his heart. At last with an effort he spoke, and wondered to hear his own words, as if some other will was using his small voice.

‘I will take the Ring,’ he said, ‘though I do not know the way.’

(Tolkien, I:259)

Frodo shows no investment in the hero role at all. He rejects it repeatedly, to the point of trying to give the Ring away (to Galadriel: Tolkien, I:346) *after* he has formally taken on responsibility for it. Frodo rejects his position as focus of and decision-maker for the Fellowship, and in fact deserts the group altogether rather than take up these public responsibilities (Tolkien, I:382). He displays no desire to gain fame, status or reward from his heroic act. As Frodo and Sam travel toward Mordor, Sam suggests that in the future Frodo will be considered ‘ “. . . the famousest of the hobbits, and that’s saying a lot” ’; Frodo’s response to this is that ‘ “It’s saying a lot too much” ’ (Tolkien, II:285). Frodo insists on his lack of heroism: ‘ “. . . I know what I should do, but I am afraid of doing it, Boromir: afraid” ’ (Tolkien, I:376). And his actions are determined not by what will gain

him fame, but by what will achieve his goal, as when he leaves the Fellowship in order to have the best chance of getting into Mordor undetected (Tolkien, I:384). Frodo's heroic journey has public dimensions just as Aragorn's and Boromir's have, but he goes about it in such a way as to make it a private act.

Frodo may reject the heroic persona, but through his actions he displays the defining characteristic of an epic hero: the inability to allow any failure, total or partial, in the achievement of his goal. However, this inability does not stem from the epic hero's desire to gain fame from a perfect performance of the role. It is imposed by the nature of Frodo's task. The One Ring cannot be allowed to remain in Middle-earth under any circumstances, because if it does, Sauron will eventually find it, and Middle-earth will be destroyed (Tolkien, I:254-5). Frodo does not have the option of rejecting the hero role, or of accepting partial failure as a romance hero does. He therefore intentionally plays out the role he has taken on to its close, in full awareness of what he is doing: he tells Sam, " . . . I must carry the burden to the end. It can't be altered. You can't come between me and this doom" (Tolkien, III:165). Because of this commitment to his task, despite his initial ethical alignment, Frodo's performance of the hero paradigm ultimately takes on an epic cast.

This means that—as Shippey points out—Frodo is one of those few highly significant characters who are vulnerable to the Ring (*Road* 126). As Frodo progresses in his heroic journey, the Ring becomes a tool he can use to get his job done, particularly in his interactions with Gollum. Frodo may not put the Ring on after he leaves the Fellowship, but he uses it repeatedly, nevertheless, to compel Gollum to aid and obey him:

‘In the last need, Sméagol, I should put on the Precious, and the Precious mastered you long ago. If I, wearing it, were to command you, you would obey, even if it were to leap from a precipice or to cast yourself into the fire. And such would be my command. So have a care, Sméagol!’

(Tolkien, II:218)

When Frodo first uses the Ring to compel Gollum, Sam not only sees him somewhat ambiguously as ‘a tall stern shadow, a mighty lord who hid his brightness in grey cloud’ but recognises that Frodo and Gollum are ‘in some way akin and not alien: they [can] reach one another’s minds’ (Tolkien, II:197). This has been read as a positive moment. Attebery suggests that it offers a ‘brief glimpse . . . of an underlying reality’ about Frodo’s transformation: ‘Tolkien’s heroic figures are invariably tall and bright’ (*Strategies* 72). However, the language seems ambivalent. In *The Lord of the Rings* the term ‘shadow’ is most often associated with Sauron, the Nazgûl and Mordor; the other characters who hide brightness under grey cloaks are Gandalf and the Elves, who are, as discussed in Chapter Four, modally ambiguous. The underlying reality that the image reveals is Frodo’s movement toward the tragic mode. He can reach Gollum’s mind because he now moves in the same mode as Gollum does.

And as Diana Wynne Jones states, like all epic heroes, Frodo fails in the achievement of his heroic task (‘Narrative’ 105). When he arrives at Orodruin, he cannot destroy the Ring; instead he gives in to it, and puts it on. His heroic feat is successfully completed only because of the inherent order governing events in Middle-earth. Once the tragic act of claiming the Ring is done, its aftermath is incorporated into the preserving pattern. The Ring is destroyed by its effect on Frodo and its effect on Gollum playing out without

hindrance at the Cracks of Doom; thus Sauron is destroyed as a direct result of his own malice and ambition. The integrity of Middle-earth is preserved.

Unlike a traditional epic hero, Frodo survives his formal heroic act and returns to the Shire. Despite his original comedic orientation, however, he does not achieve a romance hero's reintegration with his social context. He is given praise and recognition in Gondor (Tolkien, III:204), but when he returns to the Shire he becomes even more isolated from his community than he was before he left:

Frodo dropped quietly out of all the doings of the Shire, and Sam was pained to notice how little honour he had in his own country. Few people knew or wanted to know about his deeds and adventures; their admiration and respect was given to Mr Meriadoc and Mr Peregrin and (if Sam had known it) to himself.

(Tolkien, III:270)

Frodo cannot regain the 'old sense of safety and security' associated with the Shire (Milos 21). The end of his narrative is actually a deferred, muted version of the epic hero's isolated death: he is so badly damaged in so many ways by his heroic journey that in order to gain peace he chooses to leave Middle-earth, and go to the Undying Lands in the West (Milos 17). All the evidence suggests that Frodo performs an act of epic heroism, but with one important difference. He is an epic hero in whom the defining epic (and transcendent) characteristic of pride is not present. And because no pride in his own achievement obstructs his judgement, Frodo is aware of what the Ring is doing to him, even as he becomes more dependent on it. He says to Sam, ' . . . It is my burden, and no one else can bear it. . . . I am almost in its power now. I could not give it up, and if you tried to take it I should go mad' ' (Tolkien, III:189). His self-destruction is therefore not wilful, as the

epic hero's is, but intentional. It is a self-sacrifice (Mathews 904) both on the literal, physical level, and on the level of the psyche. By carrying his heroic act to completion, Frodo deliberately destroys his own ability to live in Middle-earth, in order that others may continue to do so: ‘ “. . . I have been too deeply hurt . . . It must often be so, Sam, when things are in danger: some one has to give them up, lose them, so that others may keep them . . . ” ’ (Tolkien, III:273).

By carrying out his self-sacrifice, Frodo does what Aragorn cannot. He engages with the transcendent impulse—the desire to control events, manifested in his own need to destroy the Ring. Through Frodo's story, Tolkien suggests that to defeat the tragic impulse requires the individual's private, aware engagement with it. The Norse theory of courage, although ineffective in the public sphere (as Boromir's narrative shows), becomes valid when it is brought to bear in the individual's struggle with the transcendent impulse: it is only Frodo's epic courage in the face of his inevitable fall to the Ring that allows him, the Ring and Gollum to come to the Cracks of Doom, the one place in Middle-earth where the order of the Secondary World can incorporate them all into itself, and transform them into conservative forces. Frodo's self-sacrifice is the one act in the narrative of *The Lord of the Rings* that ensures the survival of the Secondary World.

The crucial importance of Frodo's private, modified act of epic heroism is underlined by Tolkien's treatment of Frodo's companions. Sam, as Elgin points out, is associated with the comedic mode (51), and Gollum with the tragic. Sam is the character who takes care of Frodo, who can keep him moving and get around obstacles, who is aware of both his own limitations and the imperatives of the situation he is in and thus is able to reject the Ring's influence (Tolkien, III:155). Sam enables Frodo to undertake his self-sacrifice, just

as Aragorn does from further away when he brings the armies of Gondor and Rohan to the Morannon. However, Sam cannot bear the Ring to the end (Tolkien, III:164).

Gollum wants to gain the Ring for himself and make the world conform to his desires:

‘ . . . if we has it, then we can escape, even from Him, eh? Perhaps we grows very strong, stronger than Wraiths. Lord Sméagol? Gollum the Great? *The* Gollum! Eat fish every day, three times a day, fresh from the sea. Most Precious Gollum! Must have it. We wants it, we wants it, we wants it!’

(Tolkien, II:211)

When he gives Frodo to Shelob in hopes of stealing the Ring, he almost prevents Frodo’s self-sacrifice, and thus the salvation of Middle-earth. Neither the integrative ethic nor the unreconstructed transcendent ethic can confront or contain the transcendent impulse. Through the story of Frodo, Sam and Gollum, Tolkien argues that only epic heroism, stripped of the epic hero’s defining characteristic and flaw of pride, can counter the impulse to act transcendently. He argues that the epic hero’s courage to knowingly fight evil in the face of inevitable failure, once reapplied to the private realm of the individual’s relationship to the world, is the key factor that saves the Secondary World, because it negates the self and leaves the way open for the beneficent power that orders Middle-earth to act without interference, for the good of the world.

Through his juxtaposition of Boromir’s, Aragorn’s and Frodo’s performances of the hero paradigm in *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien suggests that two types of action are needed to achieve the ethical transition within the Secondary World. The epic model of action against evil—the public but ultimately self-serving tragicomic action of the epic hero—is

shown, through Boromir, to be an extension of the transcendent ethic rather than a response to it. It opposes the predetermined pattern of events in the Secondary World, and therefore reinforces rather than counters the antagonist's transcendent actions. However, the apparent logical alternative of comedic, publicly-oriented action is also shown, through Aragorn, to be ineffective in isolation. While it can counter the effects of transcendent action in the world, it cannot neutralise the source of that action. Thus Aragorn's hero act depends on Frodo's for its validity and its success (Mathews 910). In this way, Tolkien implies that the ethical transition depends upon two elements. The first, modelled by Aragorn, is public, conservative action that negates the effect of transcendent action upon the physical system within which it occurs. The second, modelled by Frodo, is a private confrontation with the transcendent impulse that drives damaging action. And this, although it is bound to fail, is the more important of the two elements, because it negates the self and in doing so opens the way for the underlying order in Middle-earth to assert itself.

This reading is reinforced by the Scouring of the Shire, which functions as what Jones calls a 'coda', a short segment of narrative that 'reflects partly back on the movement just completed, and partly forwards to what is to come' ('Narrative' 88). It shows in miniature what the hobbits have been, in Gandalf's phrase, 'trained' to do to protect the integrity of the Secondary World (Tolkien, III:242). Throughout the focal narrative, Merry and Pippin function as Aragorn's bathetic echoes, and undergo journeys into integrative identity and ability comparable to Aragorn's through their interactions with Théoden and Denethor (Langford 5). During the Scouring of the Shire, they undertake public, physical action against Saruman's wilful destruction of the Shire and the hobbit community. They organise an insurrection against the Chief's Men, which is notable for its drawing-together of the scattered Hobbit community and its use of the comedic methods of strategy and

speech as a first option (the hobbits resort to force only when these methods fail: Tolkien, III:260). After this is over, Frodo acts to prevent the re-emergence of the transcendent ethic: he forbids revenge on the Chief's Men, and extends mercy to Saruman (Tolkien, III:263-4). By doing so, he once again permits the underlying order of his Secondary World to assert itself and incorporate transcendent action into its self-preserving pattern. Wormtongue murders his corruptor Saruman, and is executed by the hobbits. The aftermath of the battle becomes part of the healing of the landscape: Saruman's malice is contained, if not totally blocked (Milos 19), and the Shire, like the rest of the Western Lands, is cleared of transcendent contamination. It can then regenerate and make its necessary transition into the mundane.

Between them, Aragorn and Frodo's narratives make a clear statement about where the responsibility for saving the Secondary World lies. Middle-earth is invested with a cosmic order; events within it manifest the intention of a greater, beneficent power. While characters within the Secondary World have a clear responsibility to co-operate with that order, and implement the externally-generated solution to the limits of their ability, neither Aragorn's public, conservative action nor Frodo's private confrontation with the transcendent impulse to control, in and of themselves, save Middle-earth. It is the greater order with which Middle-earth is invested, manifesting in the aftermath of Frodo's fall to the Ring, that ultimately brings about the destruction of Sauron and saves the Secondary World.

Tolkien's Secondary World in *The Lord of the Rings* reflects the Christian vision of a world in which events are invested with order and significance by their relationship to a benign external power. Tolkien's argument for how to achieve the ethical transition and save the Secondary World likewise echoes the Christian doctrine of the salvation of the

soul through individual action, though it applies it on a larger scale. In *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien argues that in order to save the world from the effects of Sauron's transcendent action, it is necessary to act heroically on two levels, and in two ways. To save the world requires both the public integrative action of the romance hero (good practice in the world), and private action in the form of transformed epic heroism—aware self-sacrifice without need for reward. This last is the crucial factor that allows the inherent order of the Secondary World to assert itself against the antagonist. However, it is not Frodo's self-sacrifice that ultimately saves Middle-earth, but the order that manifests itself in the wake of his fall, turning his transcendent action to comedic ends. Aragorn and Frodo may be partially—in fact, mostly—responsible for implementing the solution given to them by the beneficent power that oversees Middle-earth, but in the end Middle-earth, and the greater order of which it is a part, saves itself.

6 ‘ROKE GUIDES, BUT IT CAN’T RULE’: ALTERNATIVES TO HEROISM IN THE *EARTHSEA* CYCLE

The Secondary World of Ursula Le Guin’s *Earthsea* cycle is of a type more closely associated with epic and epic heroism than Tolkien’s medieval Middle-earth. As Ann Swinfen states, the Archipelago ‘is a Bronze Age civilization, with a mainly village economy . . . Homeric in concept—a civilized, sea-faring, Bronze Age culture’ (83). However, the cycle displays a distinct movement away from heroic action as a solution to the problem posed by the transcendent presence in the world. In the original *Earthsea* trilogy, Le Guin picks up and elaborates on Tolkien’s structure, using several motifs drawn from the epic and romance genres, to articulate her construction of how ethical transition can be achieved. However, she does not replicate Tolkien’s solution to the problem of the transcendent presence in the Secondary World; rather, she uses the structure to write back to Tolkien’s ideas, and advance her own theory of how ethical transition can be achieved. In the continuation volumes, she writes back to her own use of Tolkien’s model in the original trilogy, moving away from epic and romance motifs altogether as she both responds to and develops her own conclusions. In this chapter, I will examine the use Le Guin makes of the hero paradigm in the original trilogy, the way she surrounds it with other narratives, and what this technique implies about how ethical transition is to be achieved in the Secondary World of *Earthsea*. I will also consider the non-paradigmatic narratives of the continuation volumes, the ways in which they connect to and move on from the conclusions of the original trilogy, and the insights they offer into achieving the ethical transition. Finally, I will consider where Le Guin’s narratives locate responsibility for saving the Secondary World.

As Francis J. Molson points out in his essay ‘The *Earthsea* Trilogy: Ethical Fantasy for Children’, the *Earthsea* cycle is explicitly concerned with constructing an ethics of

existence within the physical system of a world (135). Le Guin's construction of the ethical transition as a process of 'learning better', of discovering and internalising an appropriate conscious response to the innate impulse to prevent change, informs her theory of how transition from the transcendent worldview to the integrative can be brought about. This premise informs the series of responses to the transcendent ethic presented in Le Guin's narratives. The problem-solving of the *Earthsea* cycle reflects the idea of 'learning better' by working through a process of incremental repetition, moving the Secondary World constantly closer to a solution to the problem created by the transcendent impulse. Unlike Tolkien, Le Guin does not focus solely on the hero paradigm as the means of achieving ethical transition.

The hero paradigm (with its three prerequisites of a character's masculinity, detachment from society, and responsible relationship to a passive authority figure: Leyerle 69-71), occurs three times in the original *Earthsea* trilogy. The first is in *A Wizard of Earthsea*. When Ged finishes his schooling in magic on Roke Island, he goes to work for the Isle-Men of Low Torning, whose township is under threat from a nearby colony of dragons. This positions him as the active representative of a passive authority, and he takes on the role of hero when he makes a formal commitment to face the dragons in defence of the township (Le Guin, *Wizard* 98-100). Ged's second performance of the hero paradigm occurs in *The Tombs of Atuan*. Ged learns from the dragon Orm Embar that he possesses half of the Ring of Erreth-Akbe—and therefore half of the lost Bond-Rune, ‘ “. . . the sign of dominion, the sign of peace . . . ” ’ that will bind the lands of the Archipelago into a peaceful unity (Le Guin, *Tombs* 117). He goes to the city of Havnor and makes a commitment to undertake another heroic journey: ‘ “. . . if they liked, I would go and seek the rest of the ring in the Tombs of Atuan, in order to find the Lost Rune, the key to peace. For we need peace sorely in the world . . . ” ’ (Le Guin, *Tombs* 119). By doing this, Ged

positions himself as the active representative of the ‘merchants and the princes and the lords of the ancient domains’ at Havnor (Le Guin, *Tombs* 119). He then assumes the role of hero on behalf of that authority. Ged’s final performance of the hero paradigm occurs in *The Farthest Shore*, when, as Archmage, he commits himself to discover and remedy the cause of the slow failure of magic throughout the Archipelago, on behalf of its absent authority, the prophesied King of all the Isles (Le Guin, *Shore* 32).

Ged’s performances of the hero paradigm in the original trilogy establish a premise that achievement of ethical transition requires some public action in the comedic mode. Ged’s first performance of the hero paradigm, in *A Wizard of Earthsea*, establishes this through Ged’s use of both epic and romance methods to achieve his goals. In the performance of his heroic feat, Ged initially acts in the epic mode: he issues an insulting challenge to the old Dragon of Pendor (Miller 234), and engages in a series of physical battles against the animal-like younger dragons, using his magical skill and strength to defeat them (Le Guin, *Wizard* 102). This sets up the proposition, in contrast to Tolkien’s rejection of unreconstructed tragic action, that epic heroism can be a positive force when applied against strictly physical threats. However, Ged’s final opponent, the old dragon Yevaud, is both physically and magically more powerful than Ged. Yevaud is intelligent, and whereas use of the Old Speech, the dragon’s language, binds Ged to speak truth, Yevaud is able to lie (Le Guin, *Wizard* 104). Yevaud also displays a transcendent disregard for limitations and a lack of concern for the rest of its Secondary World when it tells Ged, ‘“I strike no bargain. I take. What have you to offer that I cannot take from you when I like?”’ (Le Guin, *Wizard* 105).

In order to defeat this dragon and fulfil his goal of protecting Low Torning, Ged changes his method. He abandons the use of force, and instead uses his knowledge of the old

dragon's name to induce it to strike a deal: ‘ “We are matched, Yevaud. You have your strength: I have your name. Will you bargain?” ’ (Le Guin, *Wizard* 106). This strategic change of mode is a gamble, based on an educated guess, and its success recalls the good luck that assists the romance hero to complete his task. But it is also a gamble planned in advance.

[Ged] had staked this venture and his life on a guess drawn from old histories of dragon-lore studied on Roke, a guess that this Dragon of Pendor was the same that had spoiled the west of Osskil in the days of Elfarran and Morred, and had been driven from Osskil by a wizard, Elt, wise in names. The guess had held.

(Le Guin, *Wizard* 106)

Because of this strategic shift in his mode of action, Ged is able to achieve a partial romance resolution to his hero act. He and Yevaud both survive their confrontation, and Ged also achieves his goal of protecting Low Torning from the dragons: Yevaud swears by its name that it will not fly to the Archipelago to find food for its remaining offspring (Le Guin, *Wizard* 107). Ged is then able to return to his starting point at Low Torning (Le Guin, *Wizard* 108). The episode suggests that the transcendent presence in the world can be contained by public action in the integrative mode.

The point is restated in *The Tombs of Atuan*. In this volume, Ged's hero act, the theft of half of the Ring of Erreth-Akbe from the Labyrinth of the Nameless Ones, again begins ambiguously. His own interpretation of his action is comedic (Le Guin, *Tombs* 87): he intends to regain something that has been lost to his culture, and use it to restore peace in the world. However, theft can also be read as a transcendent act, as it reorganises the world in line with the individual's subjectively-defined ideal. From the point of view of

the Kargish priestesses who inhabit the Place of the Tombs and whose perspective the book privileges, Ged's heroic act is experienced as a violation (Spivack, *Le Guin* 34). Ged uses guile to enter a sacred space illicitly. This supports a tragic reading of his actions.

In the performance of this heroic act, Ged again encounters powers greater than his. The Nameless Ones, the malevolent Old Powers of the Earth that inhabit the Labyrinth, outmatch Ged's magical and physical strength (Le Guin, *Tombs* 113), and through their priestess Arha, they imprison Ged in their Labyrinth. The imprisonment of an epic hero for any length of time is 'an extraordinary epic event' (Miller 146) which can only be accomplished by powers superior to the hero's—sovereignty, sorcery or the Otherworld. An epic hero can only escape imprisonment through sorcerous intervention. However, in romance, there is an alternative way to gain freedom. As in the stories of Sir Launcelot (Malory, I:199-200) and Alisander le Orphelin (Malory, II:74) in *Le Morte d'Arthur*, the imprisoned hero can cede agency to the female servant of his sorcerous captor, and allow her to release him. In order to survive and succeed at his task, Ged must win the trust of the Nameless Ones' female servant, the priestess Arha, and cede to her not only the object of his heroic journey, the Ring of Erreth-Akbe, but also his true name and the power to decide his future and her own:

'You [Arha] must make a choice. Either you must leave me, lock the door, go up to your altars and give me to your Masters; then go to the Priestess Kossil and make your peace with her . . . or, you must unlock the door, and go out of it, with me . . . '

(Le Guin, *Tombs* 121)

Again, Ged's heroic act comes to a partial romance conclusion. He survives and succeeds, returning with the recreated Ring of Erreth-Akbe to the society on behalf of which he

undertook the act (Le Guin, *Tombs* 154). However, he does not reintegrate with that society.

The Farthest Shore restates the premise a third time. Here, Ged's heroic act is modally unambiguous—it is comedically inflected from the outset. And during his journey, Ged is shown systematically detaching himself from the role of hero. He releases his last investment in his own performance of the role and its reward of fame altogether, shortly before his final encounter with Cob:

‘A goatherd to set the heir of Morred on his throne! Will I never learn? . . . Not in Havnor would I be, and not in Roke. It is time to be done with power. To drop the old toys, and go on. It is time that I went home ... And maybe there I would learn at last what no act or power can teach me, what I have never learned.’

(Le Guin, *Shore* 171)

This release of personal investment in the performance of the hero role permits the completion of Ged's final heroic act. Having done it, he is able to heal the breach Cob has made between the living world and the Dry Land of the Dead, even though doing so requires him to give up the factor that enables his heroic actions—his wizardry (Le Guin, *Shore* 200). By ceding responsibility for their return to the living world to Arren, Ged survives his heroic feat. He can then achieve the romance conclusion of reintegration with society through his return to Roke and Gont.

Ged is the only character to appear in all three books of the original trilogy, and can be considered its central character; his three hero acts all appear to support the theory that heroic action in the integrative style is necessary to neutralise the effects of the

transcendent impulse, and bring about ethical transition. However, as discussed in Chapter Three, the role Ged plays in relation to his Secondary World is not protagonist, but orchestrator. In the original *Earthsea* trilogy, public action in the integrative mode is undertaken only by the orchestrator—the character whose job it is to model ethical transition for others to follow. Public activity is not the means by which the ethical transition is achieved, but only the means by which it is facilitated. It is the actions of the other characters surrounding Ged that actually bring about the world-change. Like Tolkien, Le Guin privileges the private dimension of response to the transcendent impulse over the public dimension of response to the damage done by transcendent action; in fact, she grants it even more importance than he does. In the *Earthsea* cycle, private action is ultimately the *only* thing that can create the ethical transition.

None of Ged's performances of the hero paradigm is a complete narrative—or the focus of the narrative in which it appears. In *A Wizard of Earthsea*, the heroic journey Ged undertakes does not constitute the whole of the narrative. It is an inset episode, integrated with the primary coming-of-age narrative mostly by Yevaud's offer to tell Ged the Shadow's name (Esmonde 19), and interpolated into a specific interval in the main narrative. This is the period between Ged's completion of his formal education in the principle of Equilibrium at Roke, and the point at which the consequences of his past tragic action—the emergence of his Shadow from the Dry Land—force him to take action in the world.

In epic, the heroic journey can form part of a 'maturational' sequence in which 'the hero is required to "go and find" something as an essential part of his growth into and self-identification within the "matured" state of hero-hood' (Miller 166). In *A Wizard of Earthsea*, however, the placement of the heroic journey as an inset narrative means that it

functions less as a part of the coming-of-age narrative than as a commentary on why that coming of age is necessary. Ged's deployment of tragicomic and comedic strategies in his encounter with Yevaud suggests that at this point he acts from a sound theoretical understanding of the principle of Equilibrium: he balances the transcendent principle by deploying its inverse to contain its effect on the world. However, he does not reach the conclusion of the romance hero's narrative. While he succeeds in his heroic feat, survives it and returns from it, Ged cannot reintegrate with the society he returns to:

The next day . . . Ged felt afresh the unease and impatience that had driven him to Pendor, and drove him now from Low Torning . . . though they would have kept him gladly the rest of his life to praise and boast of, he left . . .

(Le Guin, *Wizard* 109)

Ged is prevented from reintegrating with the community he returns to by his Shadow, which is the unfaced consequence of his own transcendent action—and is also, as Slusser points out, the death he defies when he calls up the spirit of Elfarran during his duel with Jasper (37).

Ged's response to his Shadow's presence in the world is very different from his response to the dragons of Pendor. His first reaction is an attempt to escape from the consequences of his actions by returning to the protected space of Roke Island (Barrow and Barrow 29). However, the Roke-wind will not let him land (Le Guin, *Wizard* 111): denial is not an option. Ged then tries to run away from the Shadow, despite knowing that it will be useless (Le Guin, *Wizard* 113-4). Finally, he tries to gain 'a sword to fight shadows with' (Le Guin, *Wizard* 115) at the Court of the Terrenon in Osskil—in other words, he looks for a way to gain mastery over the Shadow, to defeat a transcendent act with a transcendent

act. However, this also is ineffective. The Terrenon, which is one of the Old Powers of the Earth, can (like Yevaud) tell Ged the name of his Shadow. But because Ged's Shadow shares Ged's name, this will lead to Ged's being consumed by the Shadow in the end:

Once his will was captured by the power of the Stone, then [Serret and Benderesk] would let the Shadow into the walls, for a gebbeth was a better slave than a man. If he had once touched the Stone, or spoken to it, he would have been utterly lost.

(Le Guin, *Wizard* 135)

In the attempt to defeat the transcendent presence in the world, transcendent action in the private sphere is a trap that leads only to the individual's destruction. When Ged realises this, his only recourse is to run away again, and find temporary sanctuary with Ogion.

Ged's responses to the presence of his Shadow in the world imply that his understanding of the principle of Equilibrium is limited. He understands it as a system guiding public actions in the world, such as his dealings with Yevaud (Crow and Erlich 204), but not as a model for the relationship between the individual self and the world (Molson 137). The turning point, literally, of the primary narrative of *A Wizard of Earthsea* is the moment at which Ged leaves his refuge with Ogion, and goes out to face the consequences of his actions rather than trying to evade them. When he begins to hunt his Shadow, Ged applies the principle of Equilibrium to himself for the first time. Because this might well result in his own death or destruction, as Slusser points out, making the decision to hunt the Shadow is an 'act of mind which necessarily denies [Ged's] exceptional nature, and places him on a level with all the rest—the acceptance of his common mortality' (37). In accepting the possibility of his own death, Ged begins to move towards a comedic state of being. Having done this, Ged is able to neutralise the effects of his own transcendent actions on

the world, by incorporating his Shadow into himself. He subordinates his impulse to transcend his environment to his acquired understanding of the Equilibrium and his own part in it. He is thus able to achieve a temporary reintegration with his society, through his return to the Archipelago and his friend Vetch's family (Le Guin, *Wizard* 200-1). Ged's narrative in *A Wizard of Earthsea* implies public integrative action in the world is less important to the achievement of ethical transition than is the individual's private acceptance of the principle of existence within limitations, and nonheroic action in line with this principle. However, this is not in itself enough to achieve the saving world-change. Ethical transition may be forwarded in *A Wizard of Earthsea*, but it is not achieved.

Le Guin elaborates on this idea in the second volume of the original trilogy, *The Tombs of Atuan*. Ged and his heroic deeds are not the focus of *The Tombs of Atuan*. The narrative focusses on the coming of age of Arha, the One Priestess of the Nameless Ones (Cummins 39); Ged's hero narrative forms an element of Arha's story, and as Le Guin points out in *Earthsea Revisioned*, Ged's success at and survival of his hero act are dependent on Arha's narrative (9). Unlike Ged in *A Wizard of Earthsea*, Arha is well aware of how to live within limitations, up to and including the fact of mortality—in fact, too aware. The first four chapters of *The Tombs of Atuan* depict the transformation of the child Tenar into Arha, the Priestess of the Nameless Ones. This is a symbolic transformation—Tenar goes through a ritual, the Remaking of the Priestess, after which she loses her own name and is called by the title of Arha, the Eaten One, instead (Le Guin, *Tombs* 15). But it is also a literal transformation. After the ritual, Arha is educated in the knowledge and actions prescribed for a Priestess by her society. This, as Spivack points out, is an education in passivity: after she becomes the Eaten One 'Arha has no opportunity for either personal choice or voluntary actions' (Le Guin 33). Arha's knowledge of her duties and of the

world outside the Place of the Tombs is learnt by rote. The only public action she is required to perform during her tenure as the One Priestess (the execution of a group of political prisoners) is in fact an inaction. Pressured away from direct action by the Priestess of the Godking, Arha orders that the prisoners be starved to death—a withholding from action rather than an action undertaken. Arha lacks the capacity to act that complements and validates integrative understanding.

By the point at which Ged enters the narrative, Arha understands her world by means of a set of received wisdoms that encompass every aspect of it—physical, political, philosophical, religious and metaphysical. This official education is undermined somewhat by Arha’s informal exposure to the different opinions of her guardian Manan and her friend Penthe. Manan tells Arha about the history of the Godkings and the marginalisation of the religion of the Nameless Ones (Le Guin, *Tombs* 48); Penthe’s matter-of-fact disbelief in the divinity of the Godking she is consecrated to serve teaches Arha about ‘unfaith’ (Le Guin, *Tombs* 48). These subversive viewpoints have some effect. Arha comes to view the Godkings as ‘upstarts, false gods trying to filch the worship due to the true and everlasting Powers’ (Le Guin, *Tombs* 47). However, Manan and Penthe do not offer alternatives strong enough to challenge Arha’s indoctrinated worldview, because they are founded on the same premises that underlie Arha’s formal education—that gods exist in the Secondary World of Earthsea, that the Nameless Ones are those gods, and that the inactive state in which Arha exists is the right one. Penthe is afraid of ‘the dark’ and the Nameless Ones that inhabit it (Le Guin, *Tombs* 48); Manan agrees with Arha that the Place is ‘the centre of things’ (Le Guin, *Tombs* 32).

The physical domain of the One Priestess is the underground Labyrinth inhabited by the Nameless Ones. This is what R. Rawdon Wilson calls a weak or mimic labyrinth, a

‘construction in words of walls, corridors, passageways and rooms . . . [that] merely represent[s] details of exterior appearances, specific constructions’ (153) and that exists to serve plot purposes. The Labyrinth is presented to the reader of *The Tombs of Atuan* as an image before the story of *The Tombs of Atuan* begins: the book contains two frontispiece maps, the first of the aboveground Place of the Tombs and the second of the Labyrinth. As the order of the maps indicates, the Labyrinth physically underlies the Place, though few of the Priestesses who live there know of its existence (Le Guin, *Tombs* 51). Arha learns to navigate the Labyrinth exactly as she learns to navigate her public role—by rote, memorising lists of directions before ever setting foot in it (Le Guin, *Tombs* 50). The physical Labyrinth signals the presence of the other labyrinth within which Arha is trapped: her falsely-founded worldview, which forms what Wilson calls a strong or conceptual labyrinth, a ‘purely conceptual’ maze which is ‘constructed out of alternatives, choices, a series of decisions, symmetrically opposed sets of criteria’ (153-4). Arha’s role comprises her conceptual labyrinth, her intellectual domain, as the Labyrinth does her physical domain (Cummins 42).

But labyrinths, as Wilson states, are traps out of which characters must ‘play’ their way (160). Ged’s arrival within the enclosed space of the physical Labyrinth immediately introduces potential alternatives into Arha’s intellectual space: obedience or autonomy, Priestess or person (Molson 143). Arha’s interaction with Ged makes her increasingly aware of her own ignorance, although she attempts to deny that awareness:

‘You are lying,’ the girl said fiercely, ‘you are making it all up . . . All I know is the dark, the night underground. And that’s all there really is. That’s all there is to know, in the end . . . You know everything, wizard. But I know one thing—the one true thing!’

(Le Guin, *Tombs* 93)

These alternatives open up for Arha the possibility—and eventually, because of the political pressures brought to bear on her, the requirement—that she take action. While Arha’s understanding of her social and cultural context is accurate and acute, her understanding of the physical reality within which she exists is distorted. Her interaction with Ged allows her to amass an alternative, and more accurate, understanding of her Secondary World.¹³ The alternatives Ged represents allow Arha to discover, slowly and privately, a way out of her conceptual labyrinth. She becomes able to recognise the false foundation upon which her worldview has been built, that is, the belief in gods that are not gods (Le Guin, *Tombs* 112).

Having recognised that fact, Arha is able to reject her imprisoning worldview and take integrative action in the world. But she does not take heroic action; as Le Guin states in *Earthsea Revisioned*, her actions are those of a heroine (9). She releases Ged from the Labyrinth and gives him the Ring of Erreth-Akbe, and leaves the Place of the Tombs with him (Le Guin, *Tombs* 122). Arha’s exit from the Labyrinth with Ged signals her conscious rejection of the conceptual labyrinth of her indoctrinated worldview. She still has some way to go before she is entirely free of her indoctrinated habits of thought, as is shown when, in anger and confusion, she decides to murder Ged, just before making the final break with her old life. However, after leaving the Labyrinth she is called by her birth name of Tenar again, not only by Ged but by the impersonal narrative voice which relates her story. Once Tenar has moved out of her passive state and accepted both her ability and her responsibility to act (shown by her guilt over the death of Manan and the political prisoners she executed), she achieves a comedic integration with society. She goes to live with Ogion on Gont, marries, and becomes part of a community.

¹³ The reader is expected to recognise that Ged’s answers to Arha’s questions are more accurate than her statements because of how closely they accord with what is presented in *A Wizard of Earthsea*.

Arha may be dependent on Ged to supply the information she needs to play her way out of her conceptual labyrinth, but Ged's survival and achievement of his goal are equally dependent on Arha's success at working her way through her conceptual labyrinth (Le Guin, *Revisioned* 9). It is her action, not Ged's, that furthers ethical transition in *The Tombs of Atuan*. This implies that achievement of ethical transition in the Secondary World depends on the individual's acceptance of, not just limitations, but the responsibility to act integratively within those limitations. To bring about the metamorphosis that saves the Secondary World, the individual must reject the state that permits the transcendent presence to dominate the world—that is, ethical passivity.

However, the narrative of *The Tombs of Atuan* does not bring about the ethical transition any more than that of *A Wizard of Earthsea* does. Even though the ring of Erreth-Akbe is whole again, Cob is able to undertake his attempt to transcend mortality. The social landscape of the Archipelago is still fragmented: one of the students of Roke comments at the beginning of *The Farthest Shore*,

‘ . . . How long has it been, seventeen years, or eighteen, since the Ring of the King's Rune was returned to the Tower of the Kings in Havnor? Things were better for a while then, but now they're worse than ever. It's time there was a king again on the throne of Earthsea, to wield the Sign of Peace . . . Roke guides, but it can't rule. The Balance lies here, but the Power should lie in the king's hands.’

(Le Guin, *Shore* 24)

Thus in *The Farthest Shore*, Le Guin develops her argument to its logical conclusion.

Once again, Ged's performance of the hero paradigm is enclosed within another narrative,

this time the coming-of-age narrative of the young prince Arren. Ged's and Arren's stories, seen together, recall a common epic motif—the dyad of interdependent hero and companion. There are many variations on this motif in epic literature; the best-known is that in which ‘the heroic dyads are identified, flower as part of the dynamic of the drama, and then—usually—die’ (Miller 103). Such heroic dyads famously include Roland and Olivier, and Achilles and Patrocles. They usually comprise a young man whose strength is action and whose goal is fame, and another man who may be ‘older and presumably more experienced’ than the hero, but who nevertheless ‘projects an insufficiently heroic force and excellence’ to undertake heroic action himself (Miller 103). The hero's companion usually predeceases the hero, and his death either pushes the hero toward the completion of his heroic feat (Achilles), or else strips him of his strength and brings about his death (Roland).

In *The Farthest Shore*, Ged and Arren resemble such an heroic dyad, with Ged as the older, wiser companion and Arren as the young hero. Arren has the potential to take on the hero role himself. However, he does not perform the hero paradigm. He begins his narrative as his father's messenger: messengers are neutral in mode because they do not act independently (Miller 334). And although Arren carries markers that could link him to either the tragic mode or the comedic, neither is dominant. Arren carries a sword, the symbol of action in the world (Slusser 46); but it is a sword that ‘never had been drawn, nor ever could be drawn, except in the service of life. For no purpose of bloodlust or revenge or greed, in no war of gain, would it let itself be wielded’ (Le Guin, *Shore* 38). Arren has an heroic ancestry; he is the descendent of the hero Morred, but also of ‘ “ . . . Serriadh who was born beyond despair, the gentle king” ’ (Le Guin, *Shore* 84), and the sword he carries is Serriadh's. This suggests that Arren has the potential to develop into either a transcendent or an integrative figure.

Furthermore, as previously discussed, in the *Earthsea* trilogy heroic action is the province of the orchestrator. In *The Farthest Shore*, therefore, the older and more experienced member of the dyad does possess sufficient force to complete the heroic act. Ged closes the breach between worlds created by Cob, and also heals the damage Cob has done to himself (by renaming him in death: Crow and Erlich 214).¹⁴ The focus of the narrative is therefore on a coming of age that is not dependent on heroic action—that is, Arren’s development into the role of King.

At the beginning of *The Farthest Shore* the narrative voice positions Arren as a child within his culture. Like Arha before Ged enters the Labyrinth in *The Tombs of Atuan*, Arren is ‘not yet used to thinking widely’ (Le Guin, *Shore* 13), to considering either his Secondary World as a system, or himself as part of that system:

[Arren] did not like to think that he feared the Archmage’s gaze, but he could not meet it.

It seemed to enlarge the world yet again around him, and now not only Enlad sank into

¹⁴ This part of the narrative has not, to my knowledge, been unpacked in any study of *The Farthest Shore*. The narrative voice describes Ged’s final act after healing the breach between worlds:

. . . bending over the blind man, who was crouched on his knees, Ged whispered in his ear, under the white tangled hair.

Cob stood up. He looked about him slowly, with seeing eyes . . . There was no anger in his face, no hate, no grief. Slowly he turned, and went off down the course of the Dry River, and soon was gone from sight.

(Le Guin, *Shore* 202)

What Ged does at this point is never specified. However, the description closely parallels Ged’s earlier renaming of Akaren, the Dyer of Lorbanery, and may be intended to recall it:

. . . with his lips close to her ear he spoke a little in the Old Speech, and once more kissed her, and let her go.

She opened her eyes, and looked at him a while with a brooding, wondering gaze . . . She turned slowly and went to her door, and entered it, and closed it behind her: all in silence, with the still look of wonder on her face.

(Le Guin, *Shore* 96-7)

The implication is that the two acts are the same—that Ged, at this point, completes Cob’s healing by giving him a new name.

insignificance, but he himself, so that in the eyes of the Archmage he was only a small figure, very small, in a vast scene of sea-girt lands over which hung darkness.

(Le Guin, *Shore* 14)

As Arren later says himself, he does not ‘believe in death’ (Le Guin, *Shore* 150).

However, as he accompanies Ged’s heroic journey, Arren is repeatedly forced to confront the fact of human mortality—through his abduction by slave-takers, the suicide of the madman Sopli, Ged’s injury and illness at Obehol, Arren’s inability to save himself and Ged when their boat drifts on the open ocean, and finally the journey into the Dry Land of the Dead (Erlich 457). The narrative emphasises Arren’s fear of death, and his consequent attraction to the transcendent possibility falsely offered by Cob. It juxtaposes Arren’s fear against Ged’s acceptance of death as a certainty:

‘ . . . there is a way. The way he looked for. Sopli. And Hare, and the others. The way back to life, life without death. You—you above all—you must know of that way—’

‘I do not know it.’

‘But the others, the wizards—’

‘I know what they think they seek. But I know that they will die, as Sopli did. That I will die. That you will die . . . And I prize that knowledge . . . ’

(Le Guin, *Shore* 135)

Ged’s heroic journey thus serves as the site of Arren’s education in the integrative ethic that underlies Ged’s actions. Unlike Ged, however, Arren learns before he acts. During their journey, Ged introduces Arren to the comedic theory of the individual’s relationship

to the world, in the fullest statement anywhere in the *Earthsea* cycle of the concept of Equilibrium:

‘ . . . The winds and seas, the powers of water and earth and light, all that these do, and all that the beasts and green things do, is well done, and rightly done. All these act within the Equilibrium. . . . But we, in so far as we have power over the world and over one another, we . . . must learn to keep the balance. Having intelligence, we must not act in ignorance. Having choice, we must not act without responsibility . . . ’

(Le Guin, *Shore* 77)

The journey complements this theory with a practical illustration of why acceptance of mortality is imperative: Cob’s achievement of his false immortality results only in a demonstrable ‘blight’ upon the landscape that leaves ‘ “ . . . The arts of man forgotten. The singer tongueless. The eye blind. . . . No births; no new lives. No children. . . . ” ’ Le Guin, *Shore* 151).

Arren’s journey into the Dry Lands and his encounter there with Cob, the embodiment of the transcendent impulse and actor of the tragic paradigm, is the point at which his theoretical understanding must transform into action. But as with Arha, Arren does not undertake heroic action (Slusser 43). He makes one gesture towards epic heroism, when he tries to use force to stop Cob from attacking Ged. However, this is ineffective. Cob, being dead already, is invulnerable to physical injury (Le Guin, *Shore* 201). But Ged’s completion of his heroic feat is not the close of Arren’s narrative. After Ged closes the breach between the worlds, he collapses. This performs the same function as the older companion’s death in the epic dyad: it calls out the young hero’s response from Arren, pushing him towards the completion of his own narrative. Because the heroic action is

already completed, however, Arren must achieve his coming of age in a different way. He undertakes non-paradigmatic action that is oriented entirely toward survival. Arren guides, and then carries, Ged through the Mountains of Pain and into the living world again. His method is not transcendence of his context, but endurance of its imperatives combined with action within those limitations: 'Arren knew that the way they had come was closed to them. They could only go on. They must go all the way' (Le Guin, *Shore* 202-3).

This physically and emotionally difficult journey across the Mountains of Pain and back to the living world completes Arren's coming of age (Crow and Erlich 215). It also makes him the fulfilment of prophecy: he has 'crossed the dark land living and come to the far shores of the day' (Le Guin, *Shore* 25) and is therefore the King of All the Isles—the central authority figure needed to stabilise the socially fragmented Archipelago. Arren's coming of age also makes possible Ged's first and only complete performance of the romance hero paradigm in the *Earthsea* cycle—one that incorporates not only success and survival, but also a return from the heroic feat to reintegrate with society. Ged and Arren return to their public starting point of Roke Island. There, Ged enables the regeneration of Archipeligan society; his public acknowledgment of the fulfilment of prophecy that makes Arren the King of All the Isles transfers responsibility for the wellbeing of the Secondary World to Arren (Le Guin, *Shore* 213). Ged then returns alone to his private starting point of Gont, where he is able to reintegrate with his own, original society through his marriage with Tenar, and foster-fatherhood of the dragon child Tehanu.

Arren's coming of age develops beyond the movement into private integrative action modelled by Arha in *The Tombs of Atuan*; it models a movement into the integrative ethic, an achievement of comedic understanding and orientation that is lived rather than acted, and that has power to affect the world. Through it, Le Guin suggests that the ethical

transition is dependent not on public action in the world, but the individual's development beyond heroic action, to the living of the integrative ethic in the world. Without that, heroic action will be unsuccessful in achieving its ends. Tolkien posits, through Aragorn's and Frodo's narratives, that public integrative action cannot preserve the Secondary World unless it is founded on a modified form of tragicomic action in the private sphere. In the original *Earthsea* trilogy, in contrast, Le Guin argues that in a Secondary World that balances itself, the success of public action in achieving ethical transition depends on the adoption of the comedic ethic in the private sphere.

The close of *The Farthest Shore* is stylised and symbolic, and Le Guin uses exactly the same symbol to close its focal narrative as Tolkien does in *The Lord of the Rings*: the restoration of the true King. As Crowe says,

the symbol of the True King really has little to do with politics. It has many layers of meaning; it suggests order against chaos, the rule of law, the legitimate use of power, the union of sacred and secular. It is a powerful symbol of social and spiritual unity.

(Crowe 73)

Arren's movement into the role of King of All the Isles symbolically instates the integrative ethic as the dominant in the Archipelago. However, this ending does not solve the problem of the transcendent presence in *Earthsea*; it only obscures it. The symbolic presence of an authority figure oriented to the integrative ethic cannot actually change the nature of the Secondary World. The Dry Land of the Dead still exists: Arren's new comedic order is still founded on the tragicomic principle that human consciousness is separate from and superior to its environment. Individual minds are still driven by the same inherent consciousness of and fear of death that drives Cob, and as Ged points out to

Arren in *The Farthest Shore*, ‘ “. . . It is much easier for men to act than to refrain from acting . . . ” ’ (77): the human impulse to ‘action’, the transcendent impulse, is still present in the world Arren, as Lebannen the King, rules. In *Tehanu* the wizard Aspen still acts to gain power over death and power over the world (Le Guin, *Tehanu* 241), and in ‘Dragonfly’ the Master Summoner Thorion comes back to Roke from death in an attempt to deny and control the eucatastrophic change (Le Guin, *Tales* 260). In *The Other Wind*, the wall between the living world and the Dry Land of the Dead still stands, and there is still enmity between dragons and humans because of it. There is still need for action against the transcendent presence; but heroic action, even by the orchestrator, is no longer appropriate, and cannot be effective. To work within the symbolic order and oppose the problems it obscures, new patterns of action are required.

After the close of *The Farthest Shore*, the conditions that produce paradigmatic heroism as a solution to disorder (Jackson 4) no longer pertain. There is a functioning authority figure at the centre of the Secondary World. Because of his learning experiences in *The Farthest Shore*, Lebannen embodies the integrative ethic, but he is not the *roi fainéant* (feeble king) common in epic and romance. He is not paralysed by his youth and inexperience; when Tenar encounters him for the first time in *Tehanu* she recognises ‘something in his eyes that [makes] her think: He has been through the fire.’ (Le Guin, *Tehanu* 145). Lebannen is mobile and active. In *Tehanu* he travels to Roke and Gont; during his reign he goes out with his navy to fight pirates and slave-traders (Le Guin, *Wind* 190); in *The Other Wind* he travels about Havnor, and sails to Roke. Lebannen is a working king: he is active in diplomacy and in government despite being an ‘indifferent politician’ (Le Guin, *Wind* 138). He in fact fulfils the function of the ideal king figure in epic and romance: ‘the sovereign, at least in the myth-borne and perfect pattern, aims to guide and balance his realm with an eye to the gains of fruitful peace’ (Miller 140).

Because there is a functioning authority figure in the Earthsea scenario for the first time, there is no further need for its proxy, the orchestrator. Ged retires from the role at the end of *The Farthest Shore*, and thereafter stays out of public life entirely. He does not attend Lebannen's coronation (Le Guin, *Shore* 214), or interfere in his reign: '[Ged] had handed over the power—wholly, freely. He would not even seem to meddle, to cast his shadow across Lebannen's light' (Le Guin, *Wind* 78). No Archmage can be chosen to replace him (Le Guin, *Tehanu* 156). Furthermore, the wizardry that enabled eucatastrophe in *The Farthest Shore* is no longer presented as heroic, or even positive. The wizards of Roke, in the continuation volumes, are more likely to be antagonists than protagonists, and even those who are not antagonists are (except for the three passive Masters, the Doorkeeper, the Patterner and the Namer) ambiguous figures. In the three continuation volumes, in a change of direction possibly referencing some of McKillip's insights in *The Riddle-Master's Game*, Le Guin explores the potential for different action to move the world closer to a real, rather than a symbolic, ethical transition, and one that extends beyond the personal and social into the physical.

In *Earthsea Revisioned*, Le Guin describes *Tehanu* as a 're-visioning', a literal re-seeing of the Earthsea of the original trilogy. In it, she interrogates the symbolic end of *The Farthest Shore*, and its non-symbolic implications for the Secondary World. *Tehanu* can be described as a return to and retake on the original trilogy, which is an essentially prefeminist text: ' . . . I look back and see that I was writing partly by the rules, as an artificial man, and partly against the rules, as an inadvertent revolutionary' (Le Guin, *Revisioned* 7). *Tehanu* was written during the period of disillusionment and bitterness following the apparent failure of second-wave feminism to achieve its goals. It is predominantly concerned with revealing the problems inherent in *The Farthest Shore's*

stylised conclusion (D. White 107). It does not, however, offer a solution to those problems. That is not its job.

The protagonist of *Tehanu* is Tenar. The story occurs immediately after *The Farthest Shore*, and in it, Tenar occupies one of the few traditionally ‘free’ spaces for women in literature. She is ‘the widow Goha’, a middle-aged woman with two adult children and a young foster-daughter, the burned child Therru. Tenar is already in the state that Arren attains at the end of *The Farthest Shore*. She embodies the integrative ethic that *The Farthest Shore* posits as the solution to the problem of the transcendent ethic—but she does so in a very different way from the detached ‘Taoist sage’ (Wytenbroek 177) ideal of *The Farthest Shore* (McLean 112). Tenar is integrated with a social world. She has a job: she is a farmer. She is tied to places—first her farm, and later Ogion’s hut as well—and to a community that includes her children, her neighbours and friends, the local witches and the people who buy from her farm. Tenar recognises her own abilities. She knows that she can save Therru’s life where Ivy and Ogion cannot, because as the former Priestess of the Nameless Ones she understands the source of Therru’s injuries in a way that neither Ivy nor Ogion can: ‘“I served them and I left them,” she said. “I will not let them have you”’ (Le Guin, *Tehanu* 5). She also knows her own limitations—she knows, for example, that the study of magic is not right for her (Le Guin, *Tehanu* 95).

However, despite being a widow, Tenar is not ‘free’. She is confined by a set of limitations imposed on her from outside, by other people’s ideas of who and what she is, and what it is appropriate for her to do and be:

. . . there in the Middle Valley, Flint’s wife, Goha, had been welcome, all in all, among the women; a foreigner, to be sure . . . but a notable housekeeper, an excellent spinner, with

well-behaved, well-grown children and a prospering farm: respectable. And among men she was Flint's woman, doing what a woman should do: bed, breed, bake, cook, clean, spin, sew, serve. A good woman.

(Le Guin, *Tehanu* 34)

Tenar is confined by how her culture sees her, and can be trapped and made vulnerable by its rules, as she is when Handy and his crew—the men who raped and burned Therru—use that definition to threaten her (Le Guin, *Tehanu* 192). If, as Albert Cook suggests, the literary genre of comedy is concerned with 'manners' and the individual's fit in society (34), then the ethic it expresses can easily be misinterpreted as unquestioning acceptance of the arbitrary rules of society. This is the point at which the integrative ethic becomes stagnant; and this is the face of the comedic ethic that Le Guin presents in *Tehanu*.

Tehanu shows that the traditional comedic methods of evasion and containment are, in this stultified comedic state, ineffective ways of dealing with the transcendent presence. Tenar resists culturally-imposed limitations on what she can be and do as far as she can, in small matters—when she runs Oak Farm herself in her son's absence, when she takes Therru into her family after she is burned, when she forces the Gontish wizards to hear her say Ogion's true name after his death rather than let him die nameless (Le Guin, *Tehanu* 29). However, in large matters, she cannot entirely escape the limitations imposed by her society. She recognises Aspen as a dangerous presence on Gont, and responds to him as such, before any other character, but because of her status as an ageing common woman she cannot act directly against the problem he represents. She uses the traditional comedic method of evasion in an attempt to block his actions and stay safe herself, adopting her local persona of Goha the widow (rather than the prominent and powerful Tenar of the Ring) in an attempt to shield herself from his enmity (Le Guin, *Tehanu* 126-7). She survives Aspen's

later curse by sidestepping it, drawing on the knowledge of ‘the girl Arha, who she had been long ago . . . [who] had known how to curse, and how to live in the dark, and how to be silent’ (Le Guin, *Tehanu* 136). By thinking in Kargish and keeping silent, Tenar is able to turn Aspen’s curse aside for long enough to make her way to Lebannen, the ‘haven’ (Le Guin, *Tehanu* 147). When Handy and his crew attack her home, Tenar protects herself and Therru by retreating, bolting all the doors and windows of her house until help arrives in the form of Ged, who may not have magic any more but who proves ‘useful with a pitchfork’ (Le Guin, *Tehanu* 201).

However, these strategies create only temporary refuges, and produce predominantly negative results. Tenar evades Aspen’s first curse thanks to the timely intervention of the King’s messengers, but this only increases Aspen’s malice and inspires his second curse. Lebannen’s intervention buys Tenar and Therru a long peace at Oak Farm, but that is eventually shattered by Handy’s assault. Tenar, Therru and Ged leave Oak Farm in the end, in response to a combination of duplicity and the uncomfortable presence of Tenar’s son Spark. When they do, Tenar and the powerless Ged are trapped by Aspen’s malicious magic ‘with a thong through her tongue and a thong through his heart’ (Le Guin, *Tehanu* 244). The traditional comedic method of evasion, of working within limitations and using them to contain and defeat transcendent ambition and isolation, does not serve, because the restrictions imposed by cultural conservatism are too great. Another, new form of action is needed—one that can access the integrative ethic but escape the limitations created by human culture.

This new possibility comes in the form of the abused and burned child Therru, whose body has had restrictions imposed on it by others (McLean 115), but who is not entirely limited

by them. Although she is ‘not one of the winged ones’ (Le Guin, *Tehanu* 244), Therru is a dragon child; to save Tenar and Ged, she calls her dragon kin out of the west:

[Therru] ran as fast as she could . . . to the edge of the cliff, where she was not to go because she could see it only with one eye. She was careful. She looked carefully with that eye. She stood on the edge . . . She looked into the west with the other eye, and called with the other voice the name she had heard in her mother’s dream [i.e. *Kalessin*].

(Le Guin, *Tehanu* 244-5)

The dragon Kalessin answers Therru’s call and reduces ^{*Aspen} Alder to a pile of ‘scorched rags of cloth and leather, and other things’, almost incidentally, in the course of freeing Tenar and Ged from his spell (Le Guin, *Tehanu* 250). This is in stark contrast to Ged’s gentle renaming of Cob in the Dry Land: no reconciliation with or containment of the transcendent ethic is possible any more. Furthermore, this scene reveals that Kalessin is also Segoy, the creator of both the language and the landscape of Earthsea (Le Guin, *Tehanu* 249). Kalessin’s intervention in the narrative at this point, and its destruction of Aspen and his transcendent actions, suggests that it is not the solution to a problem, but a beginning point from which a new solution must evolve: ‘the dragon is subversion, revolution, change—a going beyond the old order . . . of oppression. It is the wildness of the spirit and of the earth, uprising against misrule’ (Le Guin, *Revised* 23-4).

The narrative of *Tehanu* does not unpack the dragon symbol to say what that new vision of the integrative ethic might look like: Therru who is Tehanu, the dragon in a human body, still has ‘work to do here’ (Le Guin, *Tehanu* 249). Instead, the idea is unpacked in the next of the *Earthsea* continuations, the novella ‘Dragonfly’. The structure of ‘Dragonfly’ resembles that of *Tehanu* somewhat, in that the narrative of a female protagonist’s

individual development—Irian's need to discover who and what she is—brings her into conflict with both the transcendent impulse and comedic stagnation. However, unlike *Tehanu*, the narrative of 'Dragonfly' moves on from the failure of the old form, and (to adapt a phrase from McKillip: *Game 547*) explores a new possibility into existence.

In 'Dragonfly', everything is stagnant, both the integrative ethic and the transcendent.

Roke, the home of the doctrine of Equilibrium and thus of the institutionalised version of the integrative ethic, is defined by its exclusions—of women, of sexuality, of knowledge—and shown to be incapable of accepting change or incorporating differences of opinion.

Irian's father, the Master of Old Iria, has slipped from a lukewarm variety of transcendent endeavour—his pointless pursuit of 'his right to the whole domain [of Iria] as it had been a hundred years ago' through the courts of law—into a state of slow self-destruction through drunkenness (Le Guin *Tales*, 198). The Master Summoner Thorion, who has summoned himself out of death to bring the old order of the Archmages back to Roke, is in fact a dead man still:

As [the Summoner] walked slowly past Irian, she shrank back from him. It was as if a grave had opened, a winter grave, cold, wet, dark. Her breath stuck in her throat. She gasped a little for air.

(Le Guin, *Tales* 235)

The stagnant culture of Iria imposes heavy restrictions on Irian's identity, life and actions. Her father's pride and bitterness keep her confined by poverty and ignorance, and her knowledge of the world limited to the boundaries of Old Iria; the restrictions of Roke deny her the chance to discover the truth about herself. But within these restrictions Irian, like Tenar, embodies the integrative ethic. She is associated with a specific place—her father's

estate of Old Iria, on which she does ‘all the work’ (Le Guin, *Tales* 206)—and is part of a community including her father’s small household and a nearby village. She is, however, more closely connected to the animal world than Tenar, through her preference for the company of the ‘dogs and horses and cattle’ of the farm (Le Guin, *Tales* 199). And there is something unusual about Irian—she has ‘a strength’ that is not magic, that the village witch Rose cannot name (Le Guin, *Tales* 201).

Like Tenar, Irian initially uses the traditional comedic method of evasion to overcome the restrictions imposed on her. When her father insists that she ‘honor her inheritance and be true to Iria’, she promises herself that she will ‘be loyal to her mother, whom nobody knew or honored or was true to, except herself’ instead (Le Guin, *Tales* 198-9). The Master of Old Iria refuses to let either Rose or his neighbour’s sorcerer give his daughter her true name: the one is too lowly and the other a challenge to his nonexistent authority. Irian retorts, ‘ “He can keep me poor and stupid and worthless, but he can’t keep me nameless!” ’ (Le Guin, *Tales* 201), and persuades Rose to name her in secret anyway.

Irian overcomes her ignorance by talking to the sorcerer Ivory and learning about the world from him (Le Guin, *Tales* 212). Above all, she recognises that her true name, Irian—with its implication that she is identified solely with her father’s land and its tangled history—is not her full true name and does not express her whole self:

‘ . . . It’s *his* name. He can have it. He’s so proud of it, his stupid domain, his stupid grandfather. I don’t want it. I won’t have it. It isn’t me. I still don’t know who I am. I’m not Irian!’

(Le Guin, *Tales* 203)

When, at the age of twenty-three, Irian leaves home to discover the truth about herself, her methods recall a narrative device traditional to dramatic comedy. She colludes in the sorcerer Ivory's scheme for revenge on the Masters of Roke, and lets him disguise her as a man so that she can enter the School. However, this is ineffective; as soon as Irian gives her name to the Master Doorkeeper, he knows her true sex (Le Guin, *Tales* 229). Irian must then confront both the limits of the integrative ethic and the problem of the transcendent ethic directly—and simultaneously—and find a solution to both. They are, this implies, equally problematic and dangerous.

Comedic evasion proves inadequate for Irian as it did for Tenar. The sanctuary offered by the Master Patterner Azver in the Immanent Grove is temporary and tenuous; the Master Patterner himself recognises that he cannot act, but only 'hide in [his] woods' (Le Guin, *Tales* 253). Any response to Thorion and the transcendent ethic he embodies has to be direct; but when Irian undertakes such a response, it is neither heroic, nor a question of adopting or adapting to a particular ethos as in *The Tombs of Atuan* or *The Farthest Shore*. Instead, it is an extension of the way Irian has always dealt with the world—'standing up and speaking truth' (Le Guin, *Tales* 229), not only about the world, but about herself.

In an understated echo of the duel between Ged and Jasper in *A Wizard of Earthsea*, Irian challenges Thorion to meet her on Roke Knoll. Roke Knoll is a point of truth in the Secondary World, the place where 'things are what they are' (Le Guin, *Tales* 261). When Irian and Thorion step onto the Knoll they are revealed for what they truly are, and this revelation suggests Le Guin's new solution to the problem the transcendent impulse poses. In *Tehanu* Therru calls Kalessin into the story from outside; but when Irian stands on Roke Knoll, she discovers the truth previously indicated by her close attachment to the animal world—that her true nature is that of a dragon. Standing on Roke Knoll also reduces

Thorion to his true state, ‘a huddle of clothes and dry bones and a broken staff’ (Le Guin, *Tales* 264). This serves to at least partially unpack the unexplored dragon imagery at the end of *Tehanu*. The dragon revealed at Roke Knoll is the intrinsic truth of Irian’s nature, her whole self set free of the restrictions imposed on her by human culture. Irian’s transformation into her dragon self and her defeat of Thorion suggests that to further ethical transition in the Secondary World, it is necessary for the individual to reject the artificial constraints imposed by human society, and accept the fact that human beings are part of the animal as well as the social world. After Irian’s transformation, the Master Doorkeeper suggests that the wizards of Roke should ‘ “. . . go down to [their] house, and open its doors” ’ (Le Guin, *Tales* 265): this implies that the stagnation of both the transcendent and the integrative ethic have been cleared away by Irian’s self-revelation.

Le Guin explores the full implications of this idea in *The Other Wind*, the final volume of the *Earthsea* continuations at the time of writing (2003). In his review in the *Spectator*, Philip Hensher describes *The Other Wind* as a narrative of ‘metamorphosis’ that ‘turns on conversations between men and dragons, and beings who exist in an indeterminate state’ (49). This is an accurate description. There is no antagonist figure whose attempt to transcend the world sparks the narrative or crosses the protagonist’s path. Instead, there is a pair of problems to solve, and the means of solving them is communication. Solving those problems changes the nature of the Secondary World, inducing a true, physical metamorphosis rather than the symbolic and social change of *The Farthest Shore*.

In *The Other Wind*, dragons have begun to move into the Archipelago again after hundreds of years, and to harass the people living there in very specific ways: ‘ “. . . They’ve been after people’s livelihood. Harvests, hayricks, farms, cattle. They’re saying, *Begone—get out of the West!*” ’ (Le Guin, *Wind* 96). At the same time, a village sorcerer, Alder, begins

to dream of his dead wife calling to him from across the wall that separates the living world from the Dry Land of the Dead:

‘ . . . She was reaching her hands out to me, and so I reached out to her, and we took each other’s hands . . . I wanted to go to her, but I could not cross the wall. My legs would not move. I tried to draw her to me, and she wanted to come, it seemed as if she could, but the wall was there between us. We couldn’t get over it. So she leaned across to me and kissed my mouth and said my name. And she said, “Set me free!” . . . ’

(Le Guin, *Wind* 18)

After this, Alder dreams repeatedly of all the dead in the Dry Land trying to break down the wall—a thing that has never occurred before in Earthsea. Both the dragons’ threatening behaviour and Alder’s dreams of the dead indicate a disruption to Equilibrium. The narrative of *The Other Wind* turns on discovering the connection between the two symptoms, and discovering how to solve the problem they signal.

The narrative of *The Other Wind* unpacks the dragon image from *Tehanu* and ‘Dragonfly’ to its fullest extent, confirming the theory (first advanced in *Tehanu*) that dragons and humans are essentially one species. Dragons in Earthsea occupy an ambiguous position somewhere between the human and the animal. They have human intelligence, speech and magic, but animal bodies. When they die, their spirits do not go to the Dry Land of the Dead, but return to become part of the physical world like those of the animals and the Kargish people (Le Guin, *Wind* 145). Dragons are animals that speak, human in everything but their shape, and their presence makes a forceful argument for the fact that human beings also ‘are only animals that speak’ (Le Guin, *Wind* 145). The solution to the problems that disrupt Equilibrium in *The Other Wind* lies in not only the conscious

recognition of that fact, but the full acceptance of its consequences—the letting-go of the tragic habit of thought that constructs the human mind as separate from the system within which it exists.

The narrative of *The Other Wind* is pervaded by divisions and images of divisions. The most prominent is the wall between the living world and the Dry Land of the Dead; others are the Kargish High Princess Sesarakh's *feyag* veils, Roke wizardry and Pelnish wizardry, the differences of language between Archipeligans, Kargs and dragons, and Tehanu's scars and ruined voice. In order for the two problems that drive the narrative to be solved, these divisions must be broken down or revealed as false. In this process two characters serve as guides: Tenar and Orm Irian—Irian, the protagonist of 'Dragonfly', in her dragon identity. Significantly, these are both characters who have already been through the process of casting off artificial, culturally imposed limitations. Orm Irian lives within her dragon identity, describing herself as ' . . . sister to Orm Embar . . . and grandchild of Orm . . . ' (Le Guin, *Wind* 151). Tenar has dropped the Hardic use-name Goha, and maintains a Kargish perspective on the world regardless of the conventions of Archipeligan culture:

In the Kargad Lands people did not have a true name that they kept secret, as the speakers of Hardic did . . . [Tenar] was her true name; but it was not a word of the Old Speech; it gave no one any power over her, and she had never concealed it.

(Le Guin, *Wind* 116-17)

In *The Other Wind*, Tenar functions primarily to break down barriers to understanding between other human characters. It is Tenar who convinces Lebannen to listen to Sesarakh, and Sesarakh to learn to speak Hardic and to take off her *feyag* veils, and tell Lebannen the Kargish story of the Verdurnan. Tenar also provides crucial information

from her Kargish culture and education, which the Archipeligan cultures and the Masters of Roke lack: ‘ “You are not immortal,” Tenar said to the Summoner. . . . “*We* are! We [the Kargish people] die to rejoin the undying world. It was you who foreswore immortality” ’ (Le Guin, *Wind* 222-3). Orm Irian functions similarly to break down the barriers that block understanding between humans and dragons. Because of her experience with Thorion in ‘Dragonfly’, she is able to point out the fundamental similarity that underlies Roke wizardry and the Pelnish Lore (Le Guin, *Wind* 154). She provides information about the *verw nadan* that neither Kargish nor Archipeligan cultures can. And she shows Tehanu the way to become her whole, dragon self. Orm Irian and Tenar are supported by a character who connects even them—Irian’s former ally, the Kargish Roke wizard Azver, the Master Patterner.

All of the understandings these diverse characters supply are necessary for them to recognise the source of the problem—the desire of the ancient wizards of the Archipelago to both defeat death, and isolate their consciousness from the natural world. The ancient wizards achieved both of these goals by creating the Dry Land of the Dead:

‘ . . . they made a wall which no living body could cross, neither man nor dragon. For they feared the anger of the dragons. And their arts of naming laid a great net of spells upon all the western lands, so that when the people of the islands die, they would come to the west beyond the west and live there in the spirit forever . . . ’

(Le Guin, *Wind* 227-8)

The linchpin of the solution to the problem caused by the ancient mages’ transcendent actions is Alder, nominally the protagonist of the book. Alder is an informally-taught sorcerer, low in the hierarchy of Earthsea’s magic-workers, who has a talent as a mender of

things. As such, he is strongly associated with the integrative ethic. He has been married, and part of a community. He knows the possibilities of his talent, but he also knows its limitations: his wife Lily, a mender of greater talent than he, could ‘[heal] broken limbs of animals and people, something Alder had never dared try to do’ (Le Guin, *Wind* 16). In order for the imbalance caused by the ancient wizards’ attempt to circumvent death to be put right, Alder has to transform his understanding of the world, and show all the other characters involved in the narrative how to make the same change: he must discover the point at which breaking becomes mending. It is Alder who realises the solution to the problem that threatens Earthsea, and begins to break down the wall between the living world and the Dry Land (Le Guin, *Wind* 228). Although he takes action—integrative action—in the world, it is not heroic action any more than is Therru’s or Irian’s. In order to understand the problem, Kargs and Archipeligans—humans—and dragons must recognise themselves as part of the same continuum; in order to respond to it they must act not as individuals but as a group. And in the end, it takes not only Alder, but an entire team—Lebannen, Tehanu and Orm Irian, the Pelnish wizard Seppel and the Roke wizard Onyx, and the Master Summoner and the Master Patterner—all acting together, to pull apart the wall, plus Sesarakh and Tenar to ‘keep the house’ so that they can return to the living world after they have done so (Le Guin, *Wind* 237).

A king, a princess and a peasant, Roke wizards and a Pelnish wizard, two dragons, three Kargs, four women, changing the constitution of Equilibrium (Le Guin, *Wind* 235)—on Roke, the bastion of conservative male power in the Archipelago. This manifests in fact what the symbolic eucatastrophe at the end of *The Farthest Shore* implies: that the human community’s understanding of its relationship to the Secondary World within which it exists has changed. Although the breaking of the wall between the Dry Land and the living world does not involve the whole of Earthsea’s society, and thus in some respects is

as symbolic as the restoration of the 'true king' at the end of *The Farthest Shore*, it is nevertheless the result of cultural, as well as personal, change in Earthsea. As such, the breaking-down of the wall restores the natural order of the physical and nonphysical elements of the Secondary World:

Lebannen stood by the ruined wall and watched the dawn brighten in the east. There was an east now, where there had been no direction, no way to go. There was east and west, and light and motion . . . the wall of stones beyond where they had broken it shuddered and slid into rubble. Fire broke from the far, black peaks of the mountains called Pain . . .

He looked into the sky over those mountains and saw, as he and Ged had seen them once above the western sea, the dragons flying on the wind of morning.

(Le Guin, *Wind* 239)

Only one division is maintained in *The Other Wind*. This is the *verw nadan*, the agreed-upon division of states of being in the world between humans and dragons, which, as Orm Irian explains, was violated by human greed:

' . . . You own the earth, you own the sea. But we [the dragons] are the fire of sunlight, we fly the wind! You wanted land to own. You wanted things to make and keep. And you have that. That was the division, the *verw nadan*. But you were not content with your share. You wanted not only your cares, but our freedom. You wanted the wind! And by the spells and wizardries of those oath-breakers, you stole half our realm from us . . . '

(Le Guin, *Wind* 227)

The solution to the problem caused by the ancient wizards' transcendent striving is, quite simply, the restoration of the *verw nadan*. Le Guin's human characters must give back the

lands in the west beyond the west to the dragons. After the wall is broken down, the dragons leave the physical world of Earthsea altogether, probably forever, although it is not certain whether human wizards are still able to enter the west beyond the west (Le Guin, *Wind* 241). Through its restoration of the *verw nadan*, the narrative of *The Other Wind* constructs transcendent action as not only a violation of natural limitations, but a betrayal of trust with the world within which the individual exists. It suggests that the solution to the problem of transcendent behaviour in the Secondary World is not only the acceptance of natural limitations by both individuals and societies, but the conscious maintenance of those limitations—not the adaptation of the world to suit society or the individual, but the adaptation of the individual *and society* to suit the world. While complete ethical transition may never be achieved, the narrative of *The Other Wind* implies that it can be consistently worked towards, and brought closer.

In *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien argues that responsibility for saving the Secondary World lies partly with the characters within that world, but ultimately with an external power that invests it with order and meaning. In the *Earthsea* cycle, however, no external power exists, and the Secondary World has only an inherent, physical order. Through the narratives that make up the cycle, Le Guin argues that characters within the Secondary World also bear full responsibility for implementing the solution they adopt: in the *Earthsea* cycle, it is the characters acting within their landscape who save the Secondary World.

Le Guin's development of Tolkien's theory of achieving ethical transition in the *Earthsea* cycle is informed by her construction of the Secondary World as a system that possesses inherent balance, in which actions derive their significance not from their importance in a schema that extends beyond the world but by their physical and social consequences for it.

In the *Earthsea* cycle, Le Guin argues that, contrary to Tolkien's conclusions, heroic action is not the key to the salvation of the world, whether it occurs in the public domain or the private. Rather, in *Earthsea*, to save the world it is necessary for both individuals, and society as a whole, to move toward an integrative state of being—mentally, socially and physically. In order to achieve ethical transition, individuals and societies must be in the world in such a way as to promote its inherent balance, and must consciously suppress or override their innate tendency to transcendent action. In the *Earthsea* cycle, it is not the order of the world, but the characters within it, acting in awareness of and in accordance with that order, that save the world.

7 'YOU, I NEVER EXPECTED': ACTION, TRANSFORMATION AND BALANCE IN *THE RIDDLE-MASTER'S GAME*

In *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Earthsea* cycle, Tolkien and Le Guin construct formulae for ethical transition that are appropriate for Secondary Worlds balanced by relatively robust systems. In *The Riddle-Master's Game*, however, the system that maintains the integrity of the Secondary World is highly vulnerable. The land-law is an artificial construct, which cannot exist independently of its creator, the High One; thus the integrity of the High One's realm can be destroyed as easily by accident as by the shape-changer Eriel's transcendent endeavour. Through her narrative, McKillip develops a solution to the problem of the transcendent presence in the world that is specifically adapted to existence within this fragile system; thus while McKillip, like Le Guin, uses Tolkien's structure as the basis for her fantasy, she innovates on it as much as Le Guin does. But her innovations, and the theory of ethical transition that they express, are very different from Le Guin's. The narrative of *The Riddle-Master's Game* contains elements not present in either Tolkien's solution or Le Guin's, and privileges different elements of the high fantasy paradigm.

In this chapter, I will examine the separate stories of Morgon and Raederle, and discuss the narrative paradigms associated with these characters, the use McKillip makes of them, and the contribution they make to the achievement of ethical transition in the High One's realm. I will explore how McKillip's solution to the problem of a transcendent presence in the Secondary World represents a development from both Tolkien's solution and Le Guin's. Finally, I will discuss where McKillip's narrative locates responsibility for saving the world.

As discussed in Chapter Four, in *The Riddle-Master's Game*, McKillip interprets the source of the ethical transition as the individual's decision of conscience to take on responsibility for the world's well-being, and her representation of the achievement of that transition turns on the same issues: choice and change. McKillip creates her argument for the achievement of the transition from transcendent ethical dominance to integrative by combining a narrative device used by Tolkien in *The Lord of the Rings* with the hero paradigm used by both Tolkien and Le Guin, and a new element, the narrative paradigm of the female Gothic heroine. As discussed in Chapter Five, although Aragorn's performance of the hero paradigm is a focus of narrative attention in *The Lord of the Rings*, it is not a discrete narrative as Boromir's or Frodo's is. Rather, it is part of a larger narrative, the love story of Aragorn and Arwen Undómiel. This New Comedy-like narrative of love, an obstacle to marriage imposed from above, the defeat of the ban, and marriage, frames Aragorn's performance of the hero paradigm. However, it is only vestigially present in the narrative of *The Lord of the Rings*. It is referred to obliquely at the beginning of Aragorn's hero narrative, and becomes prominent only at its close; the story itself is exiled to the appendices.

A similar structure of framing romance narrative and inset hero narrative is present in *The Riddle-Master's Game*, but in McKillip's fantasy, it is considerably more developed, in ways that reflect both McKillip's feminist perspective (Wymer 1070) and her vision of the ethical transition. In *The Riddle-Master's Game*, before the narrative begins, Morgon of Hed wins a riddle-game against a murderous wraith, and by doing so unknowingly wins the right to marry his friend Raederle, the daughter of the King of An:

‘[Peven’s] crown is yours by right. Mathom would be the last to contest that.’ . . . [Deth] added gently, ‘And yours, if you choose, is Mathom’s daughter, Raederle . . . The King

made a vow at her birth to give her only to the man who took the crown of Aum from Peven.’

(McKillip, *Game* 18)

The first chapter of *The Riddle-Master of Hed* is concerned solely with the implications of Morgon’s winning the riddle-game. When Morgon leaves home at the beginning of the second chapter, it is to ask Raederle to marry him (McKillip, *Game* 19); only after he has begun this movement toward marriage, and the social integration it symbolises, is his understanding of his Secondary World disrupted by the appearance of the tragic power out of the past (the shape-changers attack Morgon during his sea voyage from Caithnard to Anuin). The sinking of Morgon’s ship by the shape-changers isolates Morgon from the marriage narrative, and leaves him injured and amnesiac in the ruined city of the Earth-Masters. This is the point at which his hero narrative begins.

In *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien focusses narrative attention on only one element of the framing narrative: Aragorn’s removal of the bar to marriage by the defeat of Sauron’s invasion and the restoration of the Kings of Gondor. Tolkien uses Aragorn’s narrative to create a line of progress from the problem of transcendent behaviour in the world, to the resolution of comedic blocking action, the containment of the transcendent presence, and regeneration. In *The Riddle-Master’s Game*, however, McKillip divides narrative attention between the two elements that make up the framing narrative, and tells both of the stories implicit in the comedic structure of movement towards marriage—not just the (male) protagonist Morgon’s, but also the (female) secondary protagonist Raederle’s. Each of these stories constitutes an engagement with narrative paradigm, and therefore with the idea of action in the world; each forms part of McKillip’s schema for the accomplishment of the ethical transition. McKillip uses her doubled narrative to both build on from Tolkien

and Le Guin's argument, and suggest a solution to the transcendent problem that is almost the exact opposite of theirs. In *The Riddle-Master's Game*, the achievement of ethical transition depends on the complementary and interdependent actions of Morgon and Raederle; in combination, their narratives model an effective response to both transcendent behaviour, and the irresponsible choice that produces it.

Through the narrative of Morgon of Hed, McKillip responds to Tolkien's and Le Guin's construction of public action in the Secondary World, and its degree of importance to the ethical transition. In *Strategies of Fantasy*, Attebery claims that Morgon's character is only 'sketched' in the first chapter of *The Riddle-Master of Hed*, and is at all times subordinate to his role-playing or 'actant' function (75). However, the chapter presents Morgon as nothing but character. It establishes him vividly as a young man with a distinctive personality, manner and temper, who governs an island, runs a farm, gets hangovers, fights with his younger brother and sister, grieves for his dead parents and is driven by a need he does not entirely understand, to answer every riddle but one:

' " . . . The stricture [of the riddle of Kern of Hed], according to the Riddle-Masters at Caithnard is this: Answer the unanswered riddle. So I do" ' (McKillip, *Game* 10). This first chapter also establishes Morgon's literal connection to the land he rules, when he comments to Deth, ' " . . . The Princes of Hed are rooted to Hed . . . " ' (McKillip, *Game* 17). This connects him firmly to the integrative ethic of comedy (Spivack, *Daughters* 121). The chapter serves to establish Morgon as an individual, a person, and—despite his title of Prince of Hed—one located firmly in the private sphere.

It is only in the second chapter of *The Riddle-Master of Hed*, as more information becomes available, that Morgon's potential to take on the role of hero emerges. Morgon may be a land-ruler, but he is also a working farmer whose island realm is considered by the rest of

the High One's realm to be both marginal (Wymer 1070) and rather negligible: the wraith of Peven of Aum loses his riddle-game to Morgon because of his mistaken belief that there are no riddles from Hed (McKillip, *Game* 29), and the wizard Talies describes the realm as ‘ “. . . uninhabitable . . . without history, without poetry, and utterly without interest. . . . ” ’ (McKillip, *Game* 102). As the Prince of Hed, Morgon is responsible to the High One for Hed's well-being (McKillip, *Game* 67-8). The High One appears at this point to be a passive authority, and as a land-ruler Morgon is active in the world on his behalf. Thus Morgon fulfils the three prerequisites of the hero paradigm: masculinity, isolation from society and a tie to a passive authority figure.

Additionally, Morgon is marked by a sign indicating that some form of action is required of him by his Secondary World: a pattern of three stars on his forehead (Nicholls 1816). The exact significance of the three stars is not understood, by Morgon or by anyone around him (McKillip, *Game* 30), but their general implication is: because it is a physical, external sign, that can be seen and read by others, Morgon's birthmark implies that he is required to undertake a movement from the private sphere in which he lives to the public. Morgon not only has the potential to fulfil the role of hero, but an obligation to do so. He must formally confront the transcendent presence on behalf of his Secondary World. The narrative emphasis created by Morgon's drawn-out and reluctant movement from his private identity to his public role of Star-Bearer makes a clear statement that the achievement of ethical transition in the world requires public action by the individual; through Morgon's narrative, McKillip explores what type of action that should be.

The structure of *The Riddle-Master's Game* is based on the literary trope of the godgame. This is McKillip's second innovation on the high fantasy structure established by Tolkien. A godgame is a situation in which a character in a narrative

is made a victim by another character's superior knowledge and power. Caught in a cunningly constructed web of appearances, the victim, who finds the illusion to be impenetrable, is observed and his behaviour is judged.

(Wilson 123)

A godgame is created by a character within the narrative, a *magister ludi* who 'creates an illusion, a mazelike sequence of false accounts, that entraps other characters. The entrapped character becomes entangled in the threads of . . . an incomprehensible strategy plotted by another character' (Wilson 124). The purpose of a godgame is the entrapment, observation and judgement of the victim (Wilson 128). Although Gandalf and Ged both manipulate and organise the characters around them, they are too visible, and their motives too transparent, to be *magisteri ludum*; furthermore, neither is the ultimate authority in his Secondary World. The High One, because of his hiddenness, his obscured motives and his status as the most powerful individual in his realm, can be read as a *magister ludi*.

In *The Riddle-Master's Game*, Morgon begins his hero narrative as the victim of a godgame. He is trapped in a double illusion. The first layer of this illusion is the one created by the false High One, the wizard Ghisteslwchlohm. In order to gain access to Morgon's power as Star-Bearer when the High One dies, Ghisteslwchlohm has, as one character puts it, built a 'wall of ignorance' around every mind in the realm, first at Lungold, and then as the Riddle-Master Ohm at Caithnard (McKillip, *Game* 100). He has erased from the realm's store of knowledge all information relating to Morgon's role marker of 'three stars', and silenced the last living wizards who hold some of that information (Hauert 132). As Master Ohm, he has also directly controlled Morgon's access to knowledge. As a result, Morgon begins his hero journey trapped by the belief

that no information regarding his role or the forces surrounding it exists anywhere in the High One's realm, and that the only way he can find answers is to ask the High One in person—that is, to deliver himself directly into Ghisteslwchlohm's hands at Erlenstar Mountain, beyond any possibility of help from the other land-rulers of the realm.

However, Ghisteslwchlohm is not the true *magister ludi* of *The Riddle-Master's Game*. Despite the creation of his massive illusion, Ghisteslwchlohm lacks several crucial pieces of information. He has bound the wizards, but cannot control what they do within those bindings. He does not know of the existence, or nature, of the shape-changers (McKillip, *Game* 451-2). And he does not know the location or identity of the true High One. His illusion is therefore easily disrupted by other forces, including the shape-changers, Deth (the High One, pursuing his own ends), and the wizards. Deth gives Morgon conflicting accounts of his own past, that are meant as clues. The wizard Iff, in disguise as a scholar at the Morgol's court, helps the Morgol to open some of his old books that contain riddles of the Star-Bearer. Suth comes out of hiding, knowing he will die, to tell Morgon that he ran away during the destruction of Lungold because of 'Ohm'. Nun, as the Lord of Hel's pig-woman, teaches Raederle the skills she later uses to access her shape-changer's inheritance. When Eriel reveals her presence in the High One's realm to Morgon, she reveals the extent of the forces in play around him, and forces him to become aware of the illusion. For Morgon, who is trained to solve riddles, these discrepancies in the illusion act as clues, and eventually allow him to fracture Ghisteslwchlohm's illusion. However, even when he is aware of that illusion, Morgon remains trapped by it, because Ghisteslwchlohm's illusion is only one element of the larger godgame played by the High One.

The High One's is not a classic godgame as Wilson defines them; the High One's illusion of his own absence, indifference and inhumanity has purposes apart from entrapment and observation. It is meant to protect the High One from the shape-changers who are hunting him, and to develop Morgon's capacity to become the new High One (Nicholls 1817).

Unlike a true *magister ludi*, the High One from the outset intends to dissolve the illusion himself, at a predetermined time and under controlled circumstances, when he judges that Morgon has played his way to an acceptable level of understanding:

‘I didn't dare let you see too much . . . I needed you powerful, confused, always searching for me, yet never finding me, though I was always near you . . . You startled the truth out of me, in Herun. I lost to you there. . . .’

(McKillip, *Game 592*)

For characters trapped within it, a godgame forms a conceptual labyrinth; it can only be navigated by making choices based on what limited information is available to them. But in the case of a godgame, the trapped character is judged by the *magister ludi* based on the choices she or he makes. The High One's godgame is designed not only to protect Morgon and the High One himself from the shape-changers as far as possible, but also, by offering Morgon choices, to let him develop his own understanding of the relationship between the individual and the world, and how that relationship affects action in the Secondary World:

‘ . . . You wanted a choice. I gave it to you. You could have taken the shape of power you learned from Ghisteslwchlohm: lawless, destructive, loveless. Or you could have swallowed darkness until you shaped it, understood it, and still cried out for something more. . . .’

(McKillip, *Game 590*)

Playing the High One's godgame through, according to the tenets of riddle-mastery, prepares Morgon to take on the role of High One. McKillip's use of the godgame trope to structure *The Riddle-Master's Game* implies that to implement the ethical transition in the Secondary World, the individual must first develop understanding of the situation within it, and then take action based on that understanding. Morgon's choices throughout the narrative are how McKillip articulates what kind of action that should be.

As soon as Morgon leaves home in *The Riddle-Master of Hed*, he is confronted with an heroic task—solving the riddle of 'three stars'—which, if taken up, will inevitably move him out of the private sphere and into the public. Morgon chooses not to pursue the hero role, announcing that all he wants is '“ . . . to go to Anuin, marry Raederle, and then go home and plant grain and make beer and read books . . . ”' (McKillip, *Game* 30).

However, because of his identity as the Star-Bearer, the High One's land-heir, he is not permitted to do this. Once he leaves home, Morgon is repeatedly confronted by the fact of the transcendent ethic in the world. The shape-changers attempt to drown Morgon and Deth during their voyage to Anuin; two shape-changers wearing the shapes of dead men try to kill Morgon and his rescuer Astrin Ymris; Morgon and Astrin disturb the shape-changer Eriel in her attempt to disrupt the land-law of Ymris; finally, shape-changers try to kill Morgon in Isig after he takes the Star-Bearer's sword from the Earth-Masters' dead children. Eriel three times tries to kill Morgon before he can begin his heroic task, confirming by implication how important it is for him to take up the hero role for the realm:

‘ . . . you shouldn’t have left your land to begin weaving riddles at Caithnard. The wise man knows his own name. You don’t know my name; you don’t know your own. It’s better for me if you die that way, in ignorance.’

(McKillip, *Game* 65)

Eriel’s repeated attempts to kill Morgon confirm by implication his importance to the Secondary World’s survival. Morgon must take on the role of hero and perform an heroic task—learning ‘his own name’, the meaning of the title of Star-Bearer that gives him his public identity—in order to negate the effect of Eriel’s transcendent striving on the rest of the world.

However, unlike those characters who perform the hero paradigm in *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Earthsea* cycle, Morgon’s reaction to the role imposed on him is not acceptance—not even the deeply reluctant acceptance shown by Frodo in *The Lord of the Rings*.

Morgon initially misinterprets the nature of the task his Secondary World requires of him. There are distinct signs that Morgon’s hero act must be integrative: his task is to find the answer to a riddle or series of riddles, which are linked to disruptions to the land-law; the first and most important of the two tools made for the Star-Bearer by the wizard Yrth is a harp, the sound of which restores Morgon’s voice and memory after the chape-changers’ attempt to drown him, and the lowest note of which shatters weapons. But Morgon is distracted from seeing this, by the other tool, the three-starred sword for ‘death’ that appears (wrongly) to point to a violent, destructive identity for the Star-Bearer. The public role prepared for Morgon appears to threaten his established, comedic identity:

‘[Morgon] saw a Prince of Hed with three stars on his face leave his land, find a starred harp in Ymris, a sword, a name, and a hint of doom in Herun. And these two figures out of

the ancient tale: the Prince of Hed and the Star-Bearer, stood apart from each other; he could find nothing to reconcile them.'

(McKillip, *Game* 116)

Morgon therefore, as Spivack states (*Daughters* 121), rejects the role, three times: in Ymris, after his encounter with Eriel; when confronted with the name and role of Star-Bearer for the first time in Herun; and when he learns of the existence of the three-starred sword from the shape-changer Corrig (McKillip, *Game* 110).

However, Morgon's resistance to taking up the hero role has violent consequences, which not only begin to erode the peaceful identity he wants to preserve, but also harm the people around him. At first Morgon blocks Eriel's violence with an evasive action, using the low string on Yrth's harp with its ability to shatter weapons (McKillip, *Game* 66). However, Eriel, baulked in her attempt to kill Morgon, puts out Astrin Ymris' eye in revenge. Later, in Herun, Morgon kills the shape-changer harpist Corrig to save his own life; he is forced to kill again in Isig Mountain, using the Star-Bearer's sword, to save a child from the shape-changers hunting him. Through the pattern of negative consequences following on Morgon's refusal to take on the hero role, McKillip constructs refusal to act against the transcendent presence in the world as an inadequate response to the problem it poses. The point is reinforced when, after receiving the three-starred sword from the dead children of the Earth-Masters, Morgon finally makes a firm—if reluctant—commitment to enact the hero role required of him: ' ". . . If there is nothing I can do but what I am meant to do, then I will do it now, as quickly as possible" ' (McKillip, *Game* 186). After this, his actions produce no negative consequences for anyone but himself until he retreats again after the destruction of Lungold in *Harpist in the Wind*, and the shape-changers tear apart the realm in their attempts to find him (McKillip, *Game* 515).

At the end of *The Riddle-Master of Hed*, Morgon reaches Erlenstar Mountain, the home of the High One and the traditional source of answers to questions in McKillip's Secondary World, the ostensible end-point of Morgon's heroic journey. At this point, Ghisteslwchlohm's illusion collapses, and Morgon begins to engage directly with the High One's larger illusion. He learns of the apparent absence of the High One from his own realm, and the usurpation of the High One's place by Ghisteslwchlohm. However, before he can continue with his heroic journey, he is subjected to a year-long period of imprisonment within Erlenstar Mountain, and during this time Ghisteslwchlohm invades his mind in an attempt to learn from him the nature and power of the Star-Bearer.

Morgon's imprisonment in Erlenstar Mountain recalls Ged's entrapment within the Labyrinth in *The Tombs of Atuan*. However, there are important differences between the two episodes. Because the Nameless Ones are not transcendent entities but immanent and passive ones, the Labyrinth forms a neutral space within which Ged can transform his mode of action, and complete his heroic task. Morgon is imprisoned in a space dominated by Ghisteslwchlohm and used to further his transcendent ambitions. In order to escape his imprisonment, Morgon must effectively become Ghisteslwchlohm. When Ghisteslwchlohm strips Morgon's mind of his strongest integrative characteristic (his capacity to hold the land-law of Hed: Nicholls 1817), Morgon replaces the loss with Ghisteslwchlohm's closest comparable characteristic—his power of wizardry—and uses that to free himself:

‘ . . . the Founder of Lungold was looking for something in Morgon's mind, some piece of knowledge, and in probing every memory, every thought, burning away at the deep, private places of it, he opened his own mind and Morgon saw his vast reserves of power. That's

how he broke free from Ghisteslwchlohm at last, by drawing from the wizard's own mind the knowledge of his strengths and weaknesses, using his own power against him. . . . '

(McKillip, *Game* 292)

But in taking on Ghisteslwchlohm's abilities, Morgon also takes on his modal orientation—so much so that at one point Raederle mistakes Morgon's mind, touching hers, for Ghistelwchlohm's (McKillip, *Game* 355). After freeing himself from Erlenstar Mountain, Morgon does not resume his broken heroic journey. Instead, he pursues a course of vengeance against the person who he believes betrayed him: Deth, his companion in *The Riddle-Master of Hed*, the disguised High One: ' ". . . That was one thing Morgon said he wanted to do before he went back to Hed . . . Deth betrayed Morgon, led him straight into Ghisteslwchlohm's hands, and Morgon intends to kill him" ' (McKillip, *Game* 292-3).

Revenge is a transcendent action; the pursuit of vengeance is the attempted creation by an individual of a subjectively-defined ideal state of affairs in the world. Revenge can be an act of epic heroism (Miller 339). In Renaissance drama, it is an act of tragic heroism, but one that carries a strong public, political significance. However, like all acts of tragic heroism, revenge has increasingly been constructed as an essentially private act; in the modern era, it tends to be represented as private except insofar as it violates the law (McEntee 4). In taking up the pursuit of vengeance, then, Morgon is deliberately abandoning the heroic role he previously committed himself to—and the responsibility for others that he took up along with it, and retreating to the domain of private action. Morgon knows quite well that he has 'greater powers in the world to contend with', and that by abandoning his hero role to pursue his vengeance he leaves his entire Secondary World in danger from the shape-changers (McKillip, *Game* 293-4). However, he chooses to ignore

that fact in favour of revenging an—admittedly staggeringly great—personal injury (Haunert 145). When Deth and Morgon meet again at the end of *Heir of Sea and Fire*, Deth accurately comments that in pursuit of his private goal Morgon, like Ghisteslwchlohm and Eriel, has lost interest in ‘the implications of action’ (McKillip, *Game* 373).

Morgon does not complete his act of vengeance in *Heir of Sea and Fire*. Deth, in a last attempt to avert his own premature death, offers a riddle to direct Morgon’s attention back to the godgame (McKillip, *Game* 593). Thus Morgon’s tragic actions have no consequence for the Secondary World. However, McKillip returns to the moment at the close of Morgon’s heroic journey in *Harpist in the Wind*, to make it plain that Morgon’s planned act of revenge, if carried out, would have carried the full consequences of tragic heroism—inadvertent self-destruction forming the epicentre of wider devastation. The High One tells Morgon, ‘ “ . . . If I had let you kill me, out of despair, because we had brought one another to such an impasse, the power passing into you would have destroyed you . . . ” ’ (McKillip, *Game* 593). The premature death of the High One would have released the shape-changers from their bound state, and the consequent death of the High One’s land-heir would have destroyed the land-law and left the landscape vulnerable to the shape-changers’ desire for power once more.

Through Morgon’s pursuit of vengeance in *Heir of Sea and Fire*, McKillip addresses the potential of tragic action to counter the transcendent presence in the world. Unlike Earthsea, the land-law of the High One’s realm has no independent ability to rebalance itself; unlike Middle-earth, it cannot incorporate the consequences of transcendent action into a larger, self-preserving pattern. Unlike Le Guin in *A Wizard of Earthsea*, McKillip cannot admit tragic action to be even a partially valid option; unlike Tolkien, she cannot

present it as an error that can be recovered from. Through Morgon's dismissal of the godgame and his abandonment of his hero role to pursue a course of revenge, McKillip constructs tragic action as not just an inadequate, but a catastrophically irresponsible response to the transcendent presence in the world.

At the end of *Heir of Sea and Fire*, Deth arrests Morgon's tragic action with the comment, ' "They were promised a man of peace" ' (McKillip, *Game* 374); in doing so, he gives Morgon back the integrative identity that Morgon believes he lost along with the land-rule of Hed. The restoration of Morgon's comedic identity enables him to take up his heroic task again. He accepts the title of Star-Bearer and the responsibility for his Secondary World which it carries, as the opening line of *Harpist in the Wind* suggests: 'The star-bearer [sic] and Raederle of An sat on the crown of the highest of the seven towers of Anuin' (McKillip, *Game* 383). He then plays the godgame to its conclusion in *Harpist in the Wind*. He does this by solving riddles—that is, by increasing his understanding of the situation he and his Secondary World are in—and by increasingly taking on responsibility for ameliorating that situation. As his understanding increases, Morgon takes up the responsibility to act protectively. He protects Hed by taking the dead of An to defend it against the shape-changers. He confronts the shape-changers and Ghisteslwchlohm directly, and in doing so realises again the potential of comedic, blocking action to contain them (this time he uses the low string of the three-starred harp to stop an entire battle). He learns the land-law of every kingdom in the High One's realm, integrating himself with his landscape. And he solves every riddle but the last one, to realise that the High One is the last of the Earth-Masters, the creator as well as the holder of the land-law of his realm, who has been hiding from his shape-changer enemies in plain sight in the shapes of the wizard Yrth and the harpist Deth (McKillip, *Game* 555).

Once Morgon is aware of this fact, he is able to dispel the High One's illusion, by making another choice. Where he has spent much of the later half of *Harpist in the Wind* challenging Yrth to reveal himself (Hauert 227), Morgon eventually chooses to show Yrth the degree of understanding he has achieved instead. Therefore, in Yrth's hearing, he tells the Morgol that Deth died to protect her from Ghisteslwchlohm. This is not only a signal to the High One that Morgon has recognised him. It is a deliberate act of healing, 'returning the riddle of the harpist's life to him unanswered, in exchange for nothing' (McKillip, *Game* 572), that re-establishes broken connections between many characters: not only the Morgol and Deth, but the Morgol and Lyra, Lyra and Deth, Morgon and Raederle, and Morgon and the High One. By making this gesture, Morgon makes it impossible for the High One to 'play' him as part of the godgame any further, partly because his level of knowledge now endangers them both, and partly because of the relationship of trust that now exists between them. The High One later tells Morgon,

'. . . I lost to you, there. I could endure everything from you but your gentleness . . . I was forced to turn everything I had ever said to [the Morgol] into a lie. And you turned it back into truth. You were that generous with someone you hated.'

(McKillip, *Game* 592)

After this point, Morgon is able to complete his heroic task. The luck that helps the romance hero complete his task comes into play when Raederle makes the connection between the High One nobody can find and the one place in the realm nobody can go to look for him: the top of the unclimbable Wind Tower in the ruined city of the Earth-Masters (McKillip, *Game* 581). Finally, when his understanding is complete, Morgon is able to let go of his need to perform the role of Star-Bearer as he originally understood it, and do as the High One has planned instead.

Morgon begins his heroic journey in *The Riddle-Master of Hed* with the implicit aim of protecting the status quo. The role of Star-Bearer seems to threaten his initial comedic identity, so he refuses to take it up; the shape-changers directly threaten the land-law that sustains the realm, so when Morgon takes on the hero role he does so to protect the land-law, the land, and the High One from them (McKillip, *Game* 185). However, this is an impossible aim. The fact of the High One's mortality is non-negotiable, a point recognised both by the High One himself and by Eriel (McKillip, *Game* 594), which is why she adopts the strategy of trying to prevent the transfer of power from the High One to the Star-Bearer as well as trying to discover the High One's location. When Morgon's understanding develops to the point that he recognises the meaning of the harpist's name (Deth/death: Hainert 234), he comes to terms with the impossibility of his aim, and is able to let go of his construction of the role of Star-Bearer and his task. He acquiesces to the High One's solution—that is, the High One's strategic death and Morgon's assumption of the land-law in his place (McKillip, *Game* 587). Because he does this, Morgon is able to succeed in his larger aim of defending his Secondary World from the shape-changers. He takes up the land-law, and uses the High One's power over the winds, land-law and the Earth-Masters' dead to imprison the shape-changers in Erlenstar Mountain ‘ “. . . until they die, or I die, whichever comes first . . . ” ’ (McKillip, *Game* 608). He is also able to restore the landscape after their influence has been contained:

He wandered through the land, taking many shapes, reworking broken bindings, until there was not a tree or an insect or a man in the realm he was not aware of, except for one woman.

(McKillip, *Game* 611)

Morgon manages to fuse his private, comedic identity with his final understanding of the role of Star-Bearer when he refuses to destroy the shape-changers. Because he does so, he is able to survive the completion of his task. He achieves the romance hero's conclusion of return to, reintegration with and reinvigoration of his context—shown on the physical level through his assumption of the land-law of the realm, on the social level through his newly developed relationships with the realm's land-rulers, and on the individual level through his relationship with Raederle. Through Morgon's long and hostile engagement with the concept of public action and the heroic role, McKillip argues, in agreement with Tolkien, that there is only one valid form of response to the transcendent presence in the world. Public action in the integrative mode of comedy, because it moves in exact opposition to transcendent action, is the only thing that can effectively contain the destructive effects of the tragicomic ethic on the Secondary World.

However, as previously stated, Morgon's story is not the whole story of *The Riddle-Master's Game*. Where the first volume of *The Riddle-Master's Game* focusses on Morgon's story, the second, *Heir of Sea and Fire*, focusses on Raederle of An, and her contribution to the ethical transition. Raederle occupies an ambiguous position in *The Riddle-Master's Game*. At the end of *Harpist in the Wind*, when Morgon returns to Wind Tower after assimilating the land-law of Ymris, he is surprised to find Raederle there. She explains to him that whereas he reached the top of the tower by the expected route—by climbing an illusory endless stair—she flew in from outside in crow shape: ‘ “ ... the High One let me come in. Otherwise I would have flown around the tower squawking all night” ’ (McKillip, *Game* 596). This image encapsulates exactly both Raederle's relationship to the godgame played between the High One and Morgon, and her relationship to the high fantasy paradigm in general. In neither *The Lord of the Rings* nor the *Earthsea* cycle is there a female character who models Raederle's role; while Raederle

initially shares Arha's passivity, her narrative develops in very different ways, and while like Éowyn she acts rebelliously, her actions are both more significant than Éowyn's, and different in kind. McKillip uses this intruder into the structure of the high fantasy to articulate a private component of the ethical transition, that is subtly different from those offered by Tolkien and Le Guin.

Like Morgon, and the rest of her Secondary World, Raederle is caught in both Ghisteslwchlohm's illusion and the High One's. However, Raederle is not 'played' in either godgame. She is excluded from Ghisteslwchlohm's godgame as an irrelevance, only becoming important when he realises that he can use her to manipulate Morgon (McKillip, *Game* 447). The High One initially dismisses her recognition that she is part of the solution to the problem posed by the shape-changers (McKillip, *Game* 307). However, Raederle has access to information from other sources than the privileged disciplines of wizardry and riddle-mastery. Her knowledge of her family history and her own magical talents compensates for her artificially-created ignorance, and allows her to solve a crucial riddle—that of her own identity. Raederle's story is of an individual coming to terms with both the presence of the transcendent ethic in the world, and the necessity for constructing a private response to it. It implies that public action, as represented by Morgon's engagement with the hero paradigm, must occur in conjunction with private action in order to be effective. Thus far, McKillip appears to agree with Le Guin and Tolkien. However, Raederle's narrative diverges significantly from the concepts of private action towards ethical transition, and its importance, in both the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Lord of the Rings*.

At the beginning of her narrative, Raederle is in the opposite position from Morgon. In *The Riddle-Master of Hed*, whereas Morgon is a character, Raederle is—in her complete absence from the narrative—constructed as an object (Mains 58). She is an image toward

which Morgon looks as the conclusion or reward of his quest. She is a public figure, the daughter of the King of An; as ‘the second most beautiful woman in the three portions of An’ (McKillip, *Game* 26) and the prize of the winner of Peven’s riddle-game, she is a performer of role rather than a character. Raederle performs the role of an imprisoned heroine, ‘the human prize fought for by the hero’ (Miller 169). She is metaphorically imprisoned in the tower haunted by the riddling wraith of Peven, the dead Lord of Aum; she also perceives herself as trapped by her father’s vow to marry her only to the man who wins Peven’s riddle-game and his crown.¹⁵ And whereas Morgon is connected to the integrative ethic through his holding of the land-law of Hed, Raederle is connected to the transcendent ethic through the tragic history of An; despite the fact that her father is the King of An, she has no more connection to the land-law of An than any other inhabitant of that realm.

Although Mains (58) and Rita M. Haurert (96) both claim that Morgon rejects the expectation imposed by Mathom’s vow—that having ‘rescued’ Raederle, he will automatically marry her—at the outset, in fact he does not begin to consider whether this is acceptable to Raederle until he has some experience himself of being trapped in a role he does not want to play (McKillip, *Game* 78). Once Raederle has been ‘rescued’ from her imprisonment by Morgon, she is expected by everyone to complete the narrative of the imprisoned heroine by marrying her rescuer. She can communicate distress at this situation, as when she tells her brother of her dream of ‘some huge, nameless, faceless stranger riding to Anuin with the crown of Aum on his head, claiming her and taking her away’ (McKillip *Game*, 27-8). However, she cannot act to ameliorate it. Within her

¹⁵ In fact Mathom’s vow is not intended to impose a future on Raederle; it is meant to protect the future she will make for herself. Mathom, who dreams the future, foresees Raederle’s relationship with Morgon before her birth, and makes his vow in order to allow that future to come to pass. However, because Mathom cannot explain the rationale behind the vow to Raederle, she experiences it as a trap.

public role of imprisoned heroine, Raederle is as inactive as Morgon is at the beginning of *The Riddle-Master of Hed*.

But Raederle, like Morgon, is marked out for activity in the Secondary World, although her sign is less obvious than Morgon's. In McKillip's Secondary World, names can express otherwise unsayable clues to a character's nature. The High One's personae of Deth and Yrth are not randomly named (Attebery, *Strategies* 74). Yrth is a vowel-shifted form of the word *earth*, which signals the wizard's true identity as an Earth-Master and as the holder and protector of the land-law; Deth is *death*, and signals the approaching death of the High One, the physical imperative that drives the entire narrative (Nicholls 1820). Raederle has a shape-changer (i.e. Earth-Master) ancestor, Corrig, whose half-human son Ylon became, briefly, King of An (McKillip, *Game* 212). Her name, like the High One's names, is a disguised form of another word: *riddle*. It implies that Raederle embodies the same riddle of shape-changers and Earth-Masters that Morgon, elsewhere in the Secondary World, is required to unravel (Haunert 152)—and it implies that she must undertake an equally necessary movement from the public sphere to the private, from role to identity, in order to help contain the transcendent presence.¹⁶

When Morgon loses the land-law of Hed at Ghisteslwhchlohm's hands, it is taken by almost everyone to mean that he is dead (McKillip, *Game* 222). This prevents the completion of the imprisoned heroine's narrative: there is no rescuer for Raederle to marry. However, it also confronts Raederle with the fact of the tragic ethic in the Secondary World, in the

¹⁶ Male characters have historically been associated with the public sphere and female characters with the private (Pateman 4); in *The Riddle-Master's Game* McKillip uses this gendered convention to access the two elements required for ethical transition, but the emphasis created by first Morgon's reluctant movement from private to public spheres, and then Raederle's movement from a limited public to an expanded private role, indicates that the point of the transfer in each case is not movement into a gender-'appropriate' sphere, but movement from inaction to action.

form of Ghisteslwchlohm's transcendent striving and the effect it has had on someone she cares about:

'Rood, that's the terrible thing I can't get out of my mind. That while I was waiting, while we were all waiting, safe and secure, thinking [Morgon] was with the High One, he was alone with someone who was picking his mind apart as you would pick apart the petals of a closed flower. And the High One did nothing.'

(McKillip, *Game* 231)

Raederle, like Morgon, is a riddle-master, though her qualification is informal (her father has educated her to be 'a riddle-master's wife': McKillip, *Game* 308). In accordance with the tenets of riddle-mastery, when she is faced with an unsolved riddle, she must attempt to answer it.

An imprisoned heroine can do nothing about evil except endure it, and perhaps offer covert assistance to her rescuer. However, the role of imprisoned heroine shares several of its early elements with a more complex and active narrative paradigm which, as Kate Ferguson Ellis points out in *The Contested Castle: Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology*, deals explicitly with a female character's engagement with ethical issues and the need to take action against evil. This is the paradigm of the female Gothic heroine, the female protagonist who 'chooses knowledge over innocence' (Ellis 38) and by taking action in the world develops from 'an innocent "young lady"' into 'a heroine who has encountered evil, learned from it, and triumphed over it' (Ellis 37).

The female Gothic heroine begins her narrative in a prison, often a haunted building. However, unlike an imprisoned heroine, she is attached to her prison by a mystery

surrounding her identity (Frank 441). The female Gothic heroine actively wishes to escape imprisonment to pursue a preferred life; her paradigm begins to diverge from that of the imprisoned heroine when she rebels against a parental and/or societal injunction to inaction (Ellis 58) and escapes from her prison to pursue this desired vision. Her rebellion is vindicated when, during her usually circular (Ellis 107) wanderings, she unravels the mystery of her identity, and by doing so moves ‘from innocence . . . to a level of experience of good and evil’ that enables judgement (Ellis 5). The female Gothic heroine then uses her acquired knowledge and experience to undo the evil that imprisoned her, and create her chosen future (Ellis 37).

In much the same way as the second chapter of *The Riddle-Master of Hed* reveals Morgon’s potential to take on the hero role, the first chapter of *Heir of Sea and Fire* establishes that while she performs the role of imprisoned heroine, Raederle also has the potential to take on the larger and more active role of the female Gothic heroine. If she is not precisely an innocent at the beginning of *Heir of Sea and Fire*, Raederle is certainly inexperienced. Her engagement with her environment has been limited: she has ‘never done anything in [her] life’ (McKillip, *Game* 341), and her knowledge is purely theoretical. There is a mystery attached to her identity. She possesses an odd, apparently small talent for working illusions that derives from her sea-born ancestor Ylon (McKillip, *Game* 213), but is shared by no-one else in her family. And although she is not literally imprisoned, she is constrained to endure an uncongenial situation—her father’s vow, which forces on her the unpleasant consequences of limited movement, unwanted male attention and objectification:

‘ . . . I’m not going to stay here and be argued over like a prize cow out of Aum . . . I’d rather listen to the pig herds of Hel during a thunderstorm than another spring council arguing with you [Mathom] about what to do with me.’

(McKillip, *Game* 206)

Raederle makes repeated attempts to escape from this situation. First she tries to negotiate a visit to a friend (McKillip, *Game* 206), and when that fails, she runs away to visit a friend of her dead mother’s, the Lord of Hel’s pig-woman.

Morgon’s apparent death therefore does not just confront Raederle with the fact of the transcendent presence in the world. It also fractures the role of imprisoned heroine, and opens up the latent female Gothic heroine’s paradigm that underlies it; in the aftermath of Morgon’s death, Raederle begins to move beyond the confines of her original role. Sent to Caithnard to bring her brother Rood home from the College of Riddle-Masters, she meets the Morgol’s daughter Lyra, a friend of Morgon’s, and they decide to act.¹⁷ This is not, as Peter Nicholls (1816) and other commentators claim, a search for Morgon. When Raederle and Lyra commandeer the King of An’s ship and sail to Erlenstar Mountain, it is with the explicit intention of demanding an explanation from the High One for the fact of the transcendent presence in the world, and doing something about it. As Lyra explains to the rest of the Morgol’s guard, ‘ “ . . . I couldn’t protect the Prince of Hed while he was alive; all I can do now is find out from the High One who killed him and where that one is . . . ” ’ (McKillip, *Game* 242-3).

¹⁷ It is no accident that it is an encounter with one female land-ruler in the High One’s realm, and her confident soldier daughter, that triggers Raederle’s movement into the female Gothic heroine’s paradigm; for this female character intruding into a male-dominated genre from a male-dominated history (there are no Queens of An), autonomy must be modelled by a female mentor, not bestowed by a male figure, in order to be genuine.

However, neither the false High One, Ghisteslwchlohm, nor the real High One is accessible. Raederle must discover the answers she needs herself. As she and her group of female companions—Lyra, the Morgol’s guard and eventually also Morgon’s young sister Tristan—journey north and Raederle experiences more of her Secondary World, it forces another fact on her attention. Raederle begins to realise that she has a connection to the forces that are disrupting her Secondary World. When she looks at a ruined city of the Earth-Masters in Ymris, she feels ‘something beyond all comprehension, a longing, a loneliness, an understanding [play] in the dark rim of her mind’ (McKillip, *Game* 264). Later, when she uses a jewel taken from that city to create an illusion of fire to escape from the Ymris King’s determination to send her home, she creates a double connection between herself, the Earth-Masters (she sees an image of the High One shaping the stone) and the shape-changers (Eriel is able to enter her mind and observe her thoughts: McKillip, *Game* 226-7). These incidents imply that Raederle is connected to both the Earth-Masters and shape-changers, and thus to the conflict that is in the process of completion around her: ‘ “ . . . I think there is something sleeping inside of me, and if I wake it, I will regret it until the world’s end. I have a shape-changer’s blood in me, and something of his power. That’s an awkward thing to have” ’ (McKillip, *Game* 268).

The nature of Raederle’s connection to the past is unpacked when she encounters the shape-changer Eriel face to face. She recognises their similarity, and by doing so solves the riddle of her identity: her strange ancestor out of the sea was the shape-changer harpist Corrig killed by Morgon in *The Riddle-Master of Hed* (McKillip, *Game* 302). Raederle’s ‘small’ talent for making illusions is the same in source, nature and scope as Eriel’s power for destruction (McKillip, *Game* 300). To all intents and purposes, she is a shape-changer. And not only does she inherit a shape-changer’s capacity to act in the world—she also recognises in herself a desire to exercise that capacity:

[Eriel] reached down, touched the white fire with one hand, drew it softly into a glistening spider's web, a polished bone, a scattering of stars, a moon-white chambered shell . . .

Raederle, watching, felt a hunger stir in her, a longing to possess the knowledge of the fire, the fire itself.

(McKillip, *Game* 300)

Raederle's connection to the shape-changers suggests that the transcendent ethic is not simply an element of the past that intrudes into the innocent, integrative present. Rather, it is an influence from the past that extends into, and informs, the present.

Having solved the riddle of her heritage, Raederle must, like a female Gothic heroine, come to terms with her connection to the transcendent ethic, and assimilate that information into her identity. Like Morgon, however, Raederle at first misinterprets her own abilities. Lacking the one piece of information that would allow her to connect the shape-changers and the High One (that is, the fact that they are all Earth-Masters), the only models on which she can base her understanding of action are Ghisteslwchlohm, the history of An, and the shape-changers. Raederle assumes that if she exercises her capacity to act in the world, she will act as the shape-changers, Ghisteslwchlohm and the dead Kings of An do—destructively, without care. She therefore rejects action altogether: she refuses to access her shape-changer's power under Eriel's aegis (McKillip, *Game* 301), and runs away from her. But when she encounters Deth, his dismissal of her newly-acquired understanding of her place in the world, and her importance to the world-story, forces her to claim her power to make her point. When Raederle handles fire for the first time and makes Deth pay attention to her (McKillip, *Game* 307), she acknowledges her shape-changer's power as part of her own identity.

A female Gothic heroine incorporates the secret of her identity into her self as a positive factor, which enables her to create her own future (Ellis 121). Raederle, however, assimilates this new information about herself as a negative. Her shape-changer heritage changes her shape, both in her own eyes and in the eyes of the world: when she returns to Anuin after her journey, one of her brothers literally fails to recognise her (McKillip, *Game* 367). Raederle can no longer be the imprisoned heroine or the second most beautiful woman in the Three Portions of An, because she is part of the transcendent force that threatens her Secondary World (Haunert 152):

‘ . . . I would be mute, beautiful, changeless as the earth of An for you. I would be your memory, without age, always innocent, always waiting in the King’s white house at Anuin—I would do that for you and for no other man in the realm. But it would be a lie, and I will do anything but lie to you . . . ’

(McKillip, *Game* 340)

Nevertheless, having both knowledge of her identity and experience of the nature of the transcendent ethic, Raederle goes on to fulfil the final stage of the female Gothic heroine paradigm. After they meet briefly at Caithnard, Morgon leaves to continue his pursuit of Deth across An; at the same time, the land-law of An, neglected since Raederle’s father left his realm to look for answers on his own account, erupts from its bindings into chaos. Raederle goes out alone into this disrupted landscape, and draws on her full identity—her knowledge of the history and land-law of An, her old skill with illusion and her new shape-changer’s power—and attempts to protect Morgon from both the land-law of An and from what she believes is Ghisteslwchlohm hunting him (McKillip, *Game* 353). She calls up the wraiths of the Kings of Hel to escort Morgon safely to Anuin. And, as discussed in

Chapter Three, when Raederle begins to act for the first time, she replicates the patterns of thought and feeling associated with the exercise of power in her own cultural context: the tragicomic ethic. While doing so, however, she also recognises the damage she is capable of doing, and rejects that form of action of her own volition. As discussed in Chapter Three, Raederle forces herself ‘to see clearly for the first time’ (McKillip, *Game* 370), and, like Morgon when he drops his three-starred sword and lets Deth walk out of Anuin unharmed, she makes a choice to not act transcendentally. By doing so, she shapes the future she wants. At the beginning of *Harpist in the Wind* Raederle closes the paradigm of the Gothic heroine, by establishing the romantic relationship that signals integration with society, but on her own terms rather than those her society demands of her. She tells Morgon,

‘ . . . my father has meddled enough with my life. He may have foreseen our meeting, and maybe even our loving, but I don’t think he should have his own way in everything. I’m not going to marry you just because maybe he foresaw that, too, in some dream.’

(McKillip, *Game* 386)

Through Raederle’s performance of the role of the Gothic heroine, McKillip suggests that the transcendent presence in the Secondary World is not only a power out of the past, but an influence on the present. It is therefore necessary to recognise the influence that it exerts on present patterns of behaviour and action, and to consciously refuse to perpetuate it. Thus far, McKillip echoes Le Guin’s argument for the rejection of the transcendent impulse and the achievement of a comedic state of being to counter it. However, McKillip goes further than Le Guin. Recognition of the individual’s implication in the ethic of transcendence does not constitute action against it. Although Raederle completes the narrative paradigm of the Gothic heroine in *Heir of Sea and Fire*, her story continues through the final volume of the trilogy alongside Morgon’s.

In *Harpist in the Wind*, Raederle moves outside of any pre-existent narrative paradigm, and undertakes a second stage of private response to the transcendent presence in her Secondary World. This is a change of worldview—Raederle transforms her own construction of the nature of action in the world, from her inherited tragic concept to the integrative one modelled by the High One. McKillip articulates this narrative of self-transformation through the issue of changing shape. Raederle's initial response to the shape-changer's power she possesses echoes Morgon's initial response to the necessity of performing the hero role in *The Riddle-Master of Hed*. While she uses some aspects of her abilities (notably her capacity to manipulate fire and to curse) to defend herself and Morgon against horse-thieves, shape-changers and Ghisteslwchlohm during their journey to Lungold, she flatly refuses to change her shape (McKillip, *Game* 415). She refuses to accept the full implications of her power, because they contradict her idea of who she is and what place she fills (or should fill) in her world (Mains 61). However, this is an ineffective strategy. Raederle's refusal to change shape leaves her and Morgon vulnerable to a trap set for them by Ghisteslwchlohm, from which they only escape because shape-changers intervene for their own purposes (McKillip, *Game* 452).

After this incident, Raederle recognises the need to engage with her own capacity for action, on her own terms: ‘ “Morgon, teach me the crow-shape. At least it's a shape of the Kings of An. And it's faster than walking barefoot” ’(McKillip, *Game* 458). As she cannot erase her power, her capacity for action, from her self, Raederle works through several stages to transform her construction of that power into one she can accept. First, by learning the crow-shape associated with the Kings of An (including her father), she integrates her shape-changing ability, and all the other powers it implies, with the human heritage she values. Having done this, she is able to recognise the positive aspects of her

power—particularly during her first flight in crow shape with Morgon (McKillip, *Game* 459-60). While Morgon is in hiding in the wastelands, learning to harp the winds, Raederle reinterprets her capacity for action, moving away from its initial association with the destructiveness of the shape-changers to discover the possibility of constructive or conservative use: ‘ “. . . The wizards have been searching everywhere for you [Morgon]. So have the shape—the shape-changers. So have I . . . I searched. In every shape I could think of . . . ” ’ (McKillip, *Game* 515). Defining herself in opposition to the shape-changers, Raederle subordinates her ability to change shape to the purpose she uses it for, and thus is able to accept it; after she finds Morgon in the wastelands and calls him back into the High One’s godgame for the last time, she evinces no more reluctance about changing her shape.

Eventually, Raederle develops the capacity to not only admit her desire to exercise power, but to accept it—to integrate her abilities with her self. When she and Morgon travel across the High One’s realm with Yrth in falcon-shape, she recognises that Yrth models power informed by care (Haunert 228). Following Yrth’s model, she finally reintegrates her ability with her identity, associating herself by her own choice neither with, nor in opposition to, the shape-changers, but rather alongside the conservative power of the High One, the last of the Earth-Masters. When the High One attempts to send her away from Wind Tower before Morgon’s last confrontation with Eriel, she refuses to go, telling him, ‘ “I am half Earth-Master. You will have at least one of your kind fighting for you after all these centuries . . . ” ’ (McKillip, *Game* 598). This is the first time she describes herself as an Earth-Master. And once she does this, she becomes able to act in the world. After the High One’s death, she uses her inherited power to act to oppose the shape-changers’ bid for transcendence alongside Morgon. Through Raederle’s narrative in *Harpist in the Wind*, McKillip argues that in order to act against the transcendent impulse, the individual must

not simply adopt an integrative state of being, as Le Guin suggests in the *Earthsea* cycle, but acknowledge her or his impulse to transcendence and actively reconfigure it into a conservative ethic—and then act on that conservative impulse. This is an idea Le Guin does not begin to approach until ‘Dragonfly’.

McKillip’s narrative may contain echoes of Tolkien and Le Guin’s solutions to the problem of the transcendent presence in the Secondary World, but her ordering of the elements that create ethical transition reveals her argument to be the opposite of both of theirs in one crucial way. In *The Riddle-Master’s Game* as in the *Earthsea* cycle, the characters within the Secondary World are entirely responsible for its salvation; only their methods differ. Once Raederle enters the phase of nonparadigmatic movement in *Harpist in the Wind*, she makes several crucial contributions to Morgon’s narrative. It is Raederle who recognises that Deth and Yrth are the same entity, and uses that knowledge to draw Morgon back to solve the High One’s godgame. Raederle is the first to realise that the vanished High One may be at Wind Tower. And in the final confrontation with the shape-changers on Wind Plain, Raederle sets Morgon free of their influence for long enough to summon the winds. Morgon makes only two contributions to Raederle’s narrative, and they are not on the same scale: backhandedly, through his insistence on her innocence, he leads her to the realisation that she has ‘never done anything in [her] life’ (McKillip, *Game* 341); and he teaches her how to take the crow-shape. Raederle’s narrative also begins after Morgon’s, and ends some time before his does.

As Mains states, Raederle’s and Morgon’s stories do not carry equal weight within the overall focal narrative: ‘Although Raederle’s separate quest occupies most of the second volume . . . [Morgon] is the primary focus, the obvious hero of the third and final volume’ (54). This does not mean that ‘Raederle’s quest is only an element of Morgon’s’ (Mains

54). But it does imply that in order to achieve ethical transition, not only must there be both private and public action, self-transformation and integrative action in the Secondary World, but that self-transformation must precede and inform public action in order for it to be effective. It is Morgon's public action, not Raederle's self-transformation, which saves the Secondary World. Morgon's narrative depends on Raederle's (Wymer 1071), but Raederle cannot effect the ethical transition. Only Morgon, as the High One's land-heir, can do that. In McKillip's Secondary World, because of how vulnerable it is to the transcendent actions of Eriel and her shape-changer allies, public comedic action is the crucial element that saves the world.

McKillip's resolution of the two characters' narratives confirms this reading. The conclusions of the inset narratives are in one way identical: the High One dies, and Morgon, the Star-Bearer, assumes the position of holder and protector of the land-law of the realm, and transforms it by doing so; Eriel, bound to the death of the High One (McKillip, *Game* 602), dies or otherwise vanishes from the realm, and Raederle moves into her place as shape-changer and transforms that also. However, when Raederle takes on the characteristics of the shape-changer, she does not take on any responsibility for land-law, or assume a formal, publicly recognised role comparable to Morgon's role as High One. Through her narrative Raederle develops personal autonomy and makes a significant contribution to the achievement of ethical transition. However, after the eucatastrophe, there is every possibility that in the eyes of her Secondary World she will become 'the High One's wife, rather than Mathom's daughter . . . still defined by her relationship to a male figure in her life, rather than by any meaningful work accomplished in her own right' (Mains 71). She may even vanish from sight altogether, as the shape-changers did. This is problematic in gender terms (Mains 71). In terms of the narrative of ethical transition, however, the close of Morgon's narrative and the close of Raederle's reflect and maintain

the balance between private and public domains, in which the private supports the public, but the public is the more important.

The closure of Morgon and Raederle's individual stories returns the focal narrative to McKillip's framing romance plot; and the resolution of the romance narrative confirms that Morgon and Raederle's apparent inequity is indeed part of the system's balance. The situation McKillip has created through Morgon and Raederle's characters and their complementary narratives is too complex for comedy's stylised resolution of marriage to accommodate convincingly. Morgon and Raederle between them have taken on the equal and opposite configuration of orchestrator and antagonist, as is evident not only from their spheres of action but from their association with the elements. Morgon, like the High One, is associated with earth and air. Raederle, like Eriel, is associated with fire and water. In the neopagan circular schema of the elements, fire and earth are schematic opposites, as are water and air (Greenwood 84-5). But Raederle's fire and Morgon's air are also both masculine elements with similar associations (will and intellect) while Raederle's water and Morgon's earth are feminine elements with similar associations—emotion and intuition (Mains 70). The High One and Eriel represented a fractured elemental schema because of their fundamental modal difference. Morgon and Raederle, through their common movement into the integrative ethic, bring the schema back into balance. However, the tensions inherent in the structure still remain (Nicholls 1819-20). In order to accommodate this, McKillip modifies the standard comedic conclusion of the romance narrative. Morgon and Raederle do not marry, or even live in the same space, but they retain their relationship and their connection nevertheless:

‘ . . . I loved the sea. Maybe I'll live in it.’

‘I’ll live in the wastes,’ [Morgon] said. ‘Once every hundred years, you will shine out of the sea and I’ll come to you, or I will draw you into the winds with my harping. . . .’

(McKillip, *Game* 615)

Thus between them, Raederle and Morgon create a stable and inhabitable landscape within which the comedic ethic that their actions both express and defend can continue to exist; through their relationship, the integrity of the landscape is preserved and reaffirmed.

Tolkien argues, in *the Lord of the Rings*, that saving the world is partly the responsibility of characters within it, but is ultimately achieved by the greater order those characters’ actions promote. Le Guin, in the *Earthsea* cycle, argues a different case: that the characters within the Secondary World are fully responsible for saving it. In *The Riddle-Master’s Game*, McKillip clearly agrees with Le Guin: through the narratives of Morgon, Raederle and the High One, she shows that it is the characters within the Secondary World who are responsible for implementing the ethical transition and ensuring its success. As in *Earthsea*, in the High One’s realm it is the characters within the Secondary World who save it; only the means by which they do so differ.

In *The Riddle-Master’s Game*, McKillip builds on both Tolkien’s argument in *The Lord of the Rings* and Le Guin’s in the *Earthsea* cycle, to argue a case that is ultimately the opposite of both. Working from the premise that the Secondary World is a damaged system, maintained artificially and from within, McKillip argues, like Tolkien and Le Guin, that saving it requires both private and public forms of action. However, through Raederle’s story, she argues that to save the world, action on the personal level must be a question of, not overcoming and suppressing an inherent aspect of the self to achieve an integrative state of being, but recognising the desire to act transcendentally and consciously

transforming it into an ability to act conservatively. McKillip also argues, through Morgon's story, that while such self-transformation is necessary for the salvation of the world, its survival ultimately depends on individuals taking public action in the integrative mode, to contain and repair the damage done by the antagonist's irresponsibility. In *The Riddle-Master's Game*, the protagonists are as wholly responsible for the salvation of the High One's realm as the antagonists are for the damage done to it. The constitution of the Secondary World is such that they have to be.

8 CONCLUSION: 'THE WORLD IS CHANGING'

In this thesis, I have argued that *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game* share a common perspective on patterns of human behaviour within the world. The three fantasies hold that the integrity of the Secondary World is endangered by the presence within it of the tragic worldview—the idea that the human mind is superior to and isolated from its physical context—and the transcendent behaviour it inspires. They also hold that an effective response to the danger posed by the tragic worldview can be found in the integrative ethic of comedy, with its emphasis on community, continuity and survival. In the cosmically-ordered landscape of Middle-earth, the transcendent impulse manifests as characters' need or desire to control their circumstances, in opposition to the world's inherent order. To neutralise this threat and save the world, Tolkien's characters must consciously co-operate as best they can with the cosmic order with which their landscape is invested. Tolkien argues that Middle-earth can be saved by a combination of public comedic action that contains the damage done to the world, and a private struggle with the instinct to control, which permits the cosmic order to assert itself and bring events to their right conclusion. While Tolkien's characters assist in saving his Secondary World, ultimately it is the cosmic order that does so.

In the inherently-balanced world of *Earthsea*, the transcendent impulse appears as the desire to escape death: Le Guin argues that to contain this danger to the Equilibrium, characters must consciously override their fear of death and replace it with an acceptance of mortality as part of the world's balance. To save *Earthsea* from destruction, Le Guin's characters must let go of the desire to act, and develop instead an integrative state of being—and only then act, in accordance with the principle of Equilibrium. In the *Earthsea* cycle, the characters are fully responsible for saving the Secondary World, but do not generate for themselves the solution to the transcendent problem.

In the artificially-sustained landscape of the High One's realm, transcendent behaviour is an irresponsible choice that can only be contained by other characters making the choice to act responsibly with regard to the world around them. McKillip argues that saving the Secondary World requires characters to consciously transform their understanding of the nature of action, from a tragicomic to a comedic model, and then to take comedic action to prevent further damage to the landscape. The characters in *The Riddle-Master's Game* are responsible not only for saving their landscape, but for working out how to do so in the first place.

A clear trend is visible in the three fantasies. As the construction of the Secondary World changes—as the external apparatus that endows the Secondary World with order is stripped away and the source of the landscape's integrity is revisioned from divine, to physical, to a fragile artificial construct—so responsibility for every stage of the process of saving the Secondary World is transferred to characters within that Secondary World. The changing nature of the Secondary World in fact requires this shift of responsibility.

If, as discussed in Chapter One, genre fictions are coded ways of speaking about and to society as a whole, it is possible to speculate that through their different interpretations of the high fantasy paradigm, *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game* may speak, indirectly, about issues of concern in the modern Western world. In his essay 'Heroic Fantasy and Social Reality: *ex nihilo nihil fit*', Zanger suggests that although the Secondary Worlds created by fantasists are nominally discrete from Primary Reality, they nevertheless exist in 'a symbiotic relationship with reality and its conventionalized representation' (227). Secondary Worlds are generated out of an author's

conscious rejection or transformation of certain aspects of Primary Reality. This rejection is intended to make a critical point:

the distance between [the] real world and the world created by the fantasist reveals those stress points at which the real world chafes the writer and reader, and chafing, generates the imaginative alternative . . .

(Zanger 227)

In *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game* alike, the point that differentiates Secondary World from Primary Reality most clearly is the level of awareness and importance of the physical environment. Tolkien's love of nature—particularly trees—and his dislike of the effects of industrialisation on the landscape of England are well-documented. They find expression in many places in *The Lord of the Rings*: Tom Bombadil; the power of the Elves and the Elven-Rings to preserve the land; the Scouring of the Shire; the battered landscape of Ithilien; and, perhaps most powerfully, the Ents and their trees, who although they are forgotten and disregarded by the rest of Middle-earth are able to destroy Isengard and bring down Saruman in their outrage over his industrial-scale land-clearing. In the *Earthsea* cycle, the Equilibrium (the philosophical and physical principle on which every narrative in the series turns) is ecology writ large. McKillip's story in *The Riddle-Master's Game* hinges on the concept of the land-law—the conscious preservation of the environment, even the uninhabited 'wastelands' that Morgon comes to love even above his homeland of Hed, purely for its own sake.

An explicit concern with the environment, with characters' actions in relation to that environment and with preserving the environment runs through *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game*. This suggests that it may be possible to

read these three fantasies as a series of thought-experiments that respond to the looming environmental crisis of the twentieth (and now the twenty-first) century. The latter half of the twentieth century especially was marked by increasing recognition of the extent of environmental damage (as opposed to aesthetic degradation) in the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution—and of how quickly that damage was escalating toward crisis point. As scientific understanding of the concept of ecology increased, emphasis was increasingly placed on human responsibility for creating, and escalating, the crisis; at the same time, popular understanding of the Earth and how it functions as a system began to change. Initially the Earth was viewed as, more or less, a massive machine that would, if not interfered with, continue to function as it had always functioned—a view stretching back as far as the seventeenth century (Pepper 137). During the later half of the twentieth century, two alternative interpretations began to replace this one. The first was of the Earth as a robust, self-correcting organism that could cope with all but catastrophic changes—the Gaia hypothesis (Lovelock 107-8). The second, less optimistic vision of the Earth was that of a fragile system already damaged to such a degree by human activities that only concerted effort from within would ensure that it remained inhabitable.

The three views of the Earth outlined above correspond remarkably closely to the constructions of the Secondary World in, respectively, *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *the Riddle-Master's Game*. Even Tolkien's story, given in *The Silmarillion*, of Ilúvatar creating Middle-earth and then leaving it to the care of the Valar (9-10) echoes the early modern construction of God as a Creator who 'set the machine going and then left it' (Pepper 137). The reproduction of popular understandings of the world in the worldbuilding of *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game*, combined with their narrative focus on problem-solving—literally saving the world—and with the nature of the solution they collectively propose, suggests that these

three fantasies might be read as not only reflections of, but responses to the environmental crisis that threatens the world. *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game* are thought-experiments; through narrative, they represent a problem, locate a solution to it, and model the implementation of that solution, in abstract forms. As understanding of the way the Earth functions develops in Primary Reality, the common solution that the three texts espouse is rewritten in new theatres, which display its continued validity, and put forward new means by which it can be achieved.

The genre of high fantasy, and the argument its structure encodes, have developed in two main directions since the publication of *The Riddle-Master's Game*—possibly because of a change in reading taste or authorial interest, but perhaps also because McKillip's trilogy stretched the paradigm almost to the limits of what its unreconstructed form could contain. On the one hand, there is a tendency to replace the Secondary World with a template landscape—an imaginary world that is incapable of eucatastrophe, the saving change. Within that landscape, some authors tend to reproduce the unaltered high fantasy paradigm until it begins to collapse. Others attempt to reject the paradigm altogether: 'Contemporary fantasists all bow politely to Lord Tennyson and Papa Tolkien, then step around them to go back to the original texts for inspiration' (Eddings 7). This, ironically, tends to produce fractured versions of both the paradigm and its ethical argument. More interesting, and perhaps more significant in terms of genre development, is the tendency for authors to combine the high fantasy paradigm with the governing motifs of other modern fantasy subgenres such as the wainscot fantasy, the world-crossing narrative or the urban faerie tale. This trend began with Stephen Donaldson's *First Chronicles of Thomas Covenant the Unbeliever*, written almost simultaneously with *The Riddle-Master's Game*; it continues today in fantasies such as J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series.

As the construction of the Secondary World changes in all these texts, and the treatment of the high fantasy paradigm shifts, so the ethical argument that the paradigm encodes continues to develop, moving away from the original texts' concern with environment into other, often more explicitly social territory. But no matter how much the form changes, or how far the argument shifts its ground, wherever the high fantasy paradigm appears, the concerns established in *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Earthsea* cycle and *The Riddle-Master's Game* remain central to the stories told within that framework: ethics, responsibility and the saving of the endangered world.

9 BIBLIOGRAPHY

9.1 Works cited

- Attebery, Brian. 'On a Far Shore: The Myth of Earthsea'. *Extrapolation* 21.3 (1980): 269-77.
- _____. *Strategies of Fantasy*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1992.
- Bailey, Edgar C., Jr. 'Shadows in Earthsea: Le Guin's Use of a Jungian Archetype'. *Extrapolation* 21.3 (1980): 254-61.
- Barbour, Douglas. 'J.R.R. Tolkien 1892-1973'. *Supernatural Fiction Writers: Fantasy and Horror*. Vol 2. Ed. E.F. Bleiler. New York: Scribner, 1985. 675-682.
- Barrow, Craig and Diana. 'Le Guin's Earthsea: Voyages in Consciousness'. *Extrapolation* 32.1 (1991): 20-44.
- Basney, Lionel. 'Myth, History and Time in *The Lord of the Rings*'. *Tolkien: New Critical Perspectives*. Ed. Neil D. Isaacs and Rose A. Zimbardo. Lexington: U of Kentucky P, 1981. 8-18.
- _____. 'Tolkien and the Ethical Function of 'Escape' Literature'. *Mosaic* 13.2 (1980): 23-36.
- Berkhofer, Robert F., Jr. *Beyond the Great Story: History as Text and Discourse*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1995.
- Brewer, Derek S. 'The Lord of the Rings as Romance'. *J.R.R. Tolkien, Scholar and Storyteller: Essays in Memoriam*. Ed. Mary Salu and Robert T. Farrell. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP, 1979. 249-64.
- Brooke-Rose, Christine. *A Rhetoric of the Unreal: Studies in narrative and structure, especially of the fantastic*. Cambridge N.Y.: Cambridge UP, 1981.
- Brooks, Peter. *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*. New York: A.A. Knopf, 1984.
- Burns, Marjorie. 'Gandalf and Odin'. *Tolkien's Legendarium: Essays on the History of Middle-earth*. Ed. Verlyn Flieger and Carl F. Hostetter. Contributions to the Study of Science Fiction and Fantasy 86. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 2000. 219-31.
- Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*. 1949. London: Fontana, 1993.
- Chance, Jane. *The Lord of the Rings: The Mythology of Power*. Revised edition. Lexington, Ky.: UP of Kentucky, 2001.
- _____. *Tolkien's Art: A Mythology for England*. Revised edition. Lexington, Ky.: UP of Kentucky, 2001.

- Clark, Craig. 'Problems of Good and Evil in Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings'. *Mallorn: The Journal of the Tolkien Society* 35 (1997): 15-19.
- Clute, John, and John Grant, eds. *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*. London: Orbit, 1997.
- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *Biographia Literaria, or Biographical Sketches of my Literary Life and Opinions*. London: Dent, 1975.
- Cook, Albert. *The Dark Voyage and the Golden Mean: A Philosophy of Comedy*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1949.
- Cranny-Francis, Anne. *Feminist Fiction*. Cambridge: Polity, 1990.
- Crow, John H., and Richard D. Erlich. 'Words of Binding: Patterns of Integration in the Earthsea Trilogy'. *Ursula K Le Guin*. Ed. Joseph D. Olander and Martin Harry Greenberg. Edinburgh: P. Harris, 1979. 200-24.
- Crowe, Edith L. 'Integration in Earthsea and Middle-earth'. *San Jose Studies* 24.1 (1988): 63-80.
- Cummins, Elizabeth. *Understanding Ursula K. Le Guin*. Columbia, S.C.: U of South Carolina P, 1990.
- Curry, Patrick. *Defending Middle-Earth: Tolkien, Myth and Modernity*. London: HarperCollins, 1997.
- _____. 'Less Noise and More Green': Tolkien's Ideology for England'. *Proceedings of the J.R.R. Tolkien Centenary Conference 1992*. Proceedings of the Conference held at Keble College, Oxford, England, 17th-24th August 1992 to celebrate the centenary of the birth of Professor J.R.R. Tolkien, incorporating the 23rd Mythopoeic Conference (Mythcon XXIII) and Oxonmoot 1992. Ed. Patricia Reynolds and Glen GoodKnight. Milton Keynes: Tolkien Society; Altadena: Mythopoeic Press, 1995. 126-38.
- Dowie, William. 'The Gospel of Middle-Earth According to J. R. R. Tolkien'. *J. R. R. Tolkien: Scholar and Storyteller: Essays in Memoriam*. Ed. Mary Salu and Robert T. Farrell. Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell UP, 1979. 265-85.
- Eddings, David and Leigh. *The Rivian Codex: Ancient Texts of the Belgariad and the Malloreon*. London: HarperCollins, 1998.
- Elgin, Don D. *The Comedy of the Fantastic: Ecological Perspectives on the Fantasy Novel*. Contributions to the Study of Fantasy and Science Fiction 15. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1981.
- Ellis, Kate Ferguson. *The Contested Castle: Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1989.
- Ellison, John. 'Images of Evil in Tolkien's World.' *Mallorn: the Journal of the Tolkien Society* 38 (2000): 21-9.

- Erlich, Richard D. 'The Earthsea Trilogy'. *Survey of Modern Fantasy Literature*. Vol 1. Ed. Frank N. Magill. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Salem, 1983. 447-59.
- Esmonde, Margaret P. 'The Master Pattern: The Psychological Journey in the Earthsea Trilogy.' *Ursula K. Le Guin*. Ed. Joseph D. Olander and Martin Harry Greenburg. Edinburgh: P. Harris, 1979. 15-35.
- Flieger, Verlyn Brown. 'Medieval Epic and Romance Motifs in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*'. Diss. Catholic University of America, 1977.
- Frank, Frederick S. *The First Gothics: A Critical Guide to the English Gothic Novel*. New York: Garland, 1987.
- Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957.
- _____. 'The Argument of Comedy'. *English Institute Essays, 1948*. Ed. D.A. Robertson Jr. New York: Columbia UP, 1949. 58-73.
- Galbreath, Robert. 'Taoist Magic in the Earthsea Trilogy'. *Extrapolation* 21.3 (1980): 262-8.
- Greenwood, Susan. *Magic, Witchcraft and the Otherworld: An Anthropology*. Oxford: Berg, 2000.
- Hauert, Rita M. 'Mythic Female Heroes in the High Fantasy Novels of Patricia A. McKillip'. Diss. Bowling Green State University, 1983.
- Heilman, Robert Bechtold. *Tragedy and Melodrama: Versions of Experience*. Seattle: U of Washington P, 1968.
- Helms, Randel. *Tolkien's World*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1974.
- Hensher, Philip. 'Here be dragons'. *Spectator* 19 October 2002: 49.
- Hoy, Cyrus. *The Hyacinth Room: An Investigation into the Nature of Comedy, Tragedy and Tragicomedy*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964.
- Hume, Kathryn. *Fantasy and Mimesis: Responses to Reality in Western Literature*. New York: Methuen, 1984.
- Irwin, W.R. *The Game of the Impossible: A Rhetoric of Fantasy*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1976.
- Jackson, W.T H. *The Hero and the King: An Epic Theme*. New York: Columbia UP, 1982.
- Jameson, Fredric. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. London: Methuen, 1981.

- Jaspers, Karl. 'Basic Characteristics of the Tragic'. *Tragedy is Not Enough*. London: Beacon, 1953. 41-56. Rpt in *Tragedy: Vision and Form*. Ed. Robert W. Corrigan. San Francisco: Chandler, 1965. 43-52.
- Jones, Diana Wynne. 'The Shape of the Narrative in the Lord of the Rings.' . *J.R.R. Tolkien: This Far Land*. Ed. Robert Giddings. London: Vision, 1983. 87-107.
- _____. *The Tough Guide to Fantasyland*. London: Vista, 1996.
- Kerr, Walter. *Tragedy and Comedy*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967.
- Kocher, Paul H. *Master of Middle-earth: The Achievement of J. R. R. Tolkien*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1972.
- Kuznets, Lois R. 'Tolkien and the Rhetoric of Childhood.' *Tolkien: New Critical Perspectives*. Ed. Neil D. Isaacs and Rose A. Zimbardo. Lexington, Ky.: U of Kentucky P, 1981. 150-62.
- Lakowski, Romuald Ian. 'Types of Heroism in *The Lord of the Rings*'. *Mythlore* 23.4 (2000): 22-35.
- Langer, Susanne. 'The Comic Rhythm'. *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art Development from Philosophy in a New Key*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953. 326-350. Rpt in *Comedy: Meaning and Form*. Ed. Robert W. Corrigan. San Francisco: Chandler, 1965. 119-40.
- Langford, Jonathan D. 'The Scouring of the Shire as a Hobbit Coming-of-Age'. *Mythlore* 18.1 (1991): 4-9.
- Le Guin, Ursula K. *Earthsea Revisioned*. Cambridge: Green Bay, 1993.
- _____. *The Farthest Shore*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974.
- _____. *The Language of the Night: Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction*. 1979. Ed. Susan Wood. Revised edition. London: The Women's Press, 1989.
- _____. *The Other Wind*. New York: Harcourt, 2001.
- _____. *Tales from Earthsea*. New York: Harcourt, 2001.
- _____. *Tehanu: The Last Book of Earthsea*. London: Gollancz, 1990.
- _____. *The Tombs of Atuan*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974.
- _____. *A Wizard of Earthsea*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971.
- Lenz, Joseph M. *The Promised End: Romance Closure in the Gawain-poet, Malory, Spenser, and Shakespeare*. American University Studies Series IV, English Language and Literature No 38. New York: P. Lang, 1986.

- Leyerle, John. 'The Game and Play of Hero'. Burns, Norman T. and Christopher J. Reagan eds. *Concepts of the Hero in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Papers of the Fourth and Fifth Annual Conferences of the Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies*. State University of New York at Binghamton, 2-3 May 1970, 1-2 May 1971. Albany: State U of New York P, 1975. 49-82.
- Lovelock, J.E. *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth*. 1979. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987.
- Mains, Christine. 'The Quest of the Female Hero in the Works of Patricia A. McKillip'. Diss. University of Calgary, 2001.
- Malory, Sir Thomas. *Le Morte d'Arthur*. Vols 1 and 2. 1969. Ed. Janet Cowan. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986.
- Manlove, C.N. *The Impulse of Fantasy Literature*. London: Macmillan, 1983.
- _____. *Modern Fantasy: Five Studies*. Cambridge, N.Y.: Cambridge UP, 1975.
- Mathews, Richard. 'The Lord of the Rings'. *Survey of Modern Fantasy Literature*. Vol 2. Ed. Frank N. Magill. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Salem, 1983. 897-915.
- McEntee, Joy Susan. 'Household Justice: feminism and the revival of revenge tragedy in the movies'. Diss. Monash University, 1997.
- McKillip, Patricia A. *The Riddle-Master of Hed*. 1979. London: Futura, 1986.
- _____. *The Riddle-Master's Game*. Fantasy Masterworks 19. London: Gollancz, 2001.
- _____. 'Three Ways of Looking at a Trilogy'. *The New York Review of Science Fiction* 156 (13:12): 1-5.
- McLean, Susan. 'The Power of Women in Ursula K. Le Guin's *Tehanu*'. *Extrapolation* 38.2 (1997): 110-18.
- Meeker, Joseph. *The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary Ecology*. New York: Scribner, 1974.
- Miller, Dean A. *The Epic Hero*. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins UP, 2000.
- Milos, Karyn. 'Too Deeply Hurt: Understanding Frodo's Decision to Depart'. *Mallorn* 38 (1998): 17-23.
- Mink, Louis O. 'History and Fiction as Modes of Comprehension'. *New Literary History* 1.3 (1970): 541-58.
- Mobley, Jane. 'Toward a Definition of Fantasy Fiction'. *Extrapolation* 15 (1973-4): 117-28.
- Molson, Francis J. 'The Earthsea Trilogy: Ethical Fantasy for Children'. *Ursula K Le Guin: Voyager To Inner Lands and Outer Space*. Ed. Joe DeBolt. Literary Criticism Series. Port Washington: Kennikat, 1979.

- Monks, Christine. 'Christianity and Kingship in Tolkien and Lewis'. *Mallorn* 19 (1982): 5-7, 28.
- Moorcock, Michael. *Wizardry and Wild Romance: A Study of Epic Fantasy*. London: Gollancz, 1987.
- Myers, Henry Alonzo. *Tragedy: A View of Life*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP, 1965.
- Nicholls, Peter. 'The Star-Bearer Trilogy'. *Survey of Modern Fantasy Literature*. Vol 4. Ed. Frank N. Magill. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Salem, 1983. 1813-1820.
- Oldridge, Darren. *The Devil in Early Modern England*. Stroud: Sutton, 2000.
- Olszański, Tadeusz Andrzej. 'Evil and the Evil One in Tolkien's Theology'. Trans. Agnieszka Sylwancowicz. *Proceedings of the J.R.R. Tolkien Centenary Conference 1992*. Proceedings of the Conference held at Keble College, Oxford, England, 17th-24th August 1992 to celebrate the centenary of the birth of Professor J.R.R. Tolkien, incorporating the 23rd Mythopoeic Conference (Mythcon XXIII) and Oxonmoot 1992. Ed. Patricia Reynolds and Glen GoodKnight. Milton Keynes: Tolkien Society; Altadena: Mythopoeic Press, 1995. 298-300.
- Pateman, Carole. *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory*. Cambridge: Polity, 1989.
- Pepper, David. *Modern Environmentalism: An Introduction*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Potts, David. 'Two modes of writing history: the poverty of ethnography and the potential of narrative'. *AHA Bulletin* 66-67 (1991): 5-24.
- Potts, Stephen. 'The Many Faces of the Hero in *The Lord of the Rings*'. *Mythlore* 66 (1991): 4-11.
- Roth, John K. ed. *International Encyclopedia of Ethics*. London, Chicago: FD, 1995.
- Russell, Jeffrey Burton. *Mephistopheles: The Devil in the Modern World*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP, 1986.
- _____. *The Prince of Darkness: Radical Evil and the Power of Good in History*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP, 1988.
- Schuyler Jr, William M. 'Magic as an Alternative to Science'. *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 9 (1998): 104-116.
- Scull, Christina. 'Open Minds, Closed Minds in *The Lord of the Rings*.' *Proceedings of the J.R.R. Tolkien Centenary Conference 1992*. Proceedings of the Conference held at Keble College, Oxford, England, 17th-24th August 1992 to celebrate the centenary of the birth of Professor J.R.R. Tolkien, incorporating the 23rd Mythopoeic Conference (Mythcon XXIII) and Oxonmoot 1992. Ed. Patricia Reynolds and Glen GoodKnight. Milton Keynes: Tolkien Society; Altadena: Mythopoeic Press, 1995. 151-6.

- Seeman, Chris. 'Tolkien's Revision of the Romantic Tradition'. *Proceedings of the J.R.R. Tolkien Centenary Conference 1992*. Proceedings of the Conference held at Keble College, Oxford, England, 17th-24th August 1992 to celebrate the centenary of the birth of Professor J.R.R. Tolkien, incorporating the 23rd Mythopoeic Conference (Mythcon XXIII) and Oxonmoot 1992. Ed. Patricia Reynolds and Glen GoodKnight. Milton Keynes: Tolkien Society; Altadena: Mythopoeic Press, 1995. 73-83.
- Senior, William. 'Donaldson and Tolkien'. *Mythlore* 70 (1992): 37-43.
- Shippey, T. A. *J. R. R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*. London: HarperCollins, 2000.
- _____. *The Road to Middle-earth: How J. R. R. Tolkien Created a New Mythology*. 1982. Revised ed. London: Grafton, 1992.
- Simpson, J.A., and Edmund S.C. Weiner, eds. *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. Vol 5. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989.
- Slusser, George Edward. *The Farthest Shores of Ursula K. Le Guin*. Popular Writers of Today 3. San Bernardino, Calif.: Borgo, 1976.
- Spivack, Charlotte. *Merlin's Daughters: Contemporary Women Writers of Fantasy*. Contributions to the Study of Science Fiction and Fantasy 23. New York: Greenwood, 1987.
- _____. *Ursula K. Le Guin*. Boston: Twayne, 1984.
- _____. 'Tolkien's Images of Evil'. *Inklings-Jahrbuch* 10 (1992): 23-35.
- St Claire, Gloriana. 'An Overview of the Northern Influences on Tolkien's Works'. *Proceedings of the J.R.R. Tolkien Centenary Conference 1992*. Proceedings of the Conference held at Keble College, Oxford, England, 17th-24th August 1992 to celebrate the centenary of the birth of Professor J.R.R. Tolkien, incorporating the 23rd Mythopoeic Conference (Mythcon XXIII) and Oxonmoot 1992. Ed. Patricia Reynolds and Glen GoodKnight. Milton Keynes: Tolkien Society; Altadena: Mythopoeic Press, 1995. 63-67.
- Stone, Lawrence. *The Past and the Present Revisited*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987.
- Swinfen, Ann. *In Defence of Fantasy: A Study of the Genre in English and American Literature Since 1945*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*. Trans. Richard Howard. Cleveland: P of Case Western Reserve U, 1973.
- Tolkien, J. R. R. 'Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics.' *Proceedings of the British Academy XXII*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1937. Rpt in *The Monsters and the Critics, and other essays*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. London: Allen and Unwin, 1983. 5-48.

- _____. *The Fellowship of the Ring*. 1954. London: Allen and Unwin, 1974.
- _____. *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*. Ed. Humphrey Carpenter. London: Allen and Unwin, 1981.
- _____. 'On Fairy-Stories'. *Tree and Leaf*. Boston: Houghton, 1965. 3-84. Rpt in *The Monsters and the Critics, and other essays*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. London: Allen and Unwin, 1983. 109-61.
- _____. *The Return of the King*. 1955. London: Allen and Unwin, 1974.
- _____. *The Silmarillion*. 1977. London: HarperCollins, 1999.
- _____. *The Two Towers*. 1954. London: Allen and Unwin, 1974.
- White, Donna R. *Dancing With Dragons: Ursula K. Le Guin and the Critics*. Literary Criticism in Perspective. Columbia, S.C: Camden House, 1999.
- White, Hayden. 'The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality.' Ed. W.J.T. Mitchell. *On Narrative*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1981. 1-23.
- Williams, Raymond. *Modern Tragedy: Essays on the idea of tragedy in life and in the drama, and on modern tragic writings from Ibsen to Tennessee Williams*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1966.
- Wilson, R. Rawdon. *In Palamedes' Shadow: Explorations in Play, Game and Narrative Theory*. Boston: Northeastern UP, 1990.
- Wymer, Thomas L. 'Patricia McKillip 1948-' *Supernatural Fiction Writers: Fantasy and Horror*. Vol 2. Ed. E.F. Bleiler. New York: Scribner, 1985. 1067-72.
- Wytenbroek, J. R. 'Taoism in the Fantasies of Ursula K Le Guin'. *The Shape of the Fantastic: selected essays from the seventh International Conference of the Fantastic in the Arts*. Contributions to the Study of Science Fiction and Fantasy 39. Ed. Olena H Sociuk. New York: Greenwood, 1990. 173-80.
- Zahorski, Kenneth J., and Robert H. Boyer. 'The Secondary Worlds of High Fantasy'. *The Aesthetics of Fantasy Literature and Art*. Ed. Roger C. Schlobin. Notre Dame, Ind.: U of Notre Dame P, 1982. 58-81.
- Zanger, Jules. 'Heroic Fantasy and Social Reality: *ex nihilo nihil fit*'. *The Aesthetics of Fantasy Literature and Art*. Ed. Roger C. Schlobin. Notre Dame, Ind: U of Notre Dame P, 1982. 226-36.
- Zimbardo, Rose A. 'Moral Vision in *The Lord of the Rings*'. *Tolkien and the Critics: Essays on J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings*. Ed. Neil D. Isaacs and Rose A. Zimbardo. Notre Dame, Ind: U of Notre Dame P, 1968. 100-108.

9.2 Works consulted

- Adams, Robert M. 'The Hobbit Habit'. *Tolkien: New Critical Perspectives*. Ed. Neil D. Isaacs and Rose A. Zimbardo. Lexington, Ky.: U of Kentucky P, 1981. 168-75.
- Ahern, M. B. *The Problem of Evil*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971.
- Aisenberg, Nadya. *Ordinary Heroines: Transforming the Male Myth*. New York: Continuum, 1994.
- Almond, Brenda, ed. *Introducing Applied Ethics*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995.
- Aristotle. *Poetics*. Trans. Malcolm Heath. London: Penguin, 1996.
- Attebery, Brian. 'Exploding the Monomyth: Mythical Fantasy in a Postmodern World'. <http://www.arts.usyd.edu.au/departs/rihss/ATTEBERY.rtf>. 07-04-2003.
- _____. *The Fantasy Tradition in American Literature: from Irving to Le Guin*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1980.
- Auden, W. H. 'The Quest Hero'. *Tolkien and the Critics: Essays on J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings*. Ed. Neil D. Isaacs and Rose A. Zimbardo. Notre Dame, Ind.: U of Notre Dame P, 1968. 40-61.
- Auerbach, Erich. 'The Knight Sets Forth'. *Pastoral and Romance: Modern Essays in Criticism*. Ed. Eleanor Terry Lincoln. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969. 190-201.
- Bain, Dena C. 'The Tao Te Ching as Background to the Novels of Ursula K. Le Guin'. *Extrapolation* 21.3 (1980): 209-22.
- Berger, Arthur Asa. *Narratives in Popular Culture, Media and Everyday Life*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1997.
- Birenbaum, Harvey. *Myth and Mind*. Lanham, Md.: UP of America, 1988.
- Bittner, James W. *Approaches to the Fiction of Ursula K. Le Guin*. Studies in Speculative Fiction 4. 1979. Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research P, 1984.
- Branham, Robert J. 'Fantasy and Ineffability: Fiction at the Limits of Language'. *Extrapolation* 24.1 (1993): 66-74
- Brooks, Peter. *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama and the Mode of Excess*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1976.
- Brownstein, Rachel M. *Becoming a Heroine: Reading About Women in Novels*. New York: Viking, 1982.
- Cameron, Eleanor. 'High Fantasy: A Wizard of Earthsea'. *Crosscurrents of Criticism: Horn Book Essays 1968-1997*. Ed. Paul Hiens. Boston: Horn Book, 1977. 333-41.

- Christopher, Joe R. 'The Moral Epiphanies in The Lord of the Rings.' *Proceedings of the J.R.R. Tolkien Centenary Conference 1992*. Proceedings of the Conference held at Keble College, Oxford, England, 17th-24th August 1992 to celebrate the centenary of the birth of Professor J.R.R. Tolkien, incorporating the 23rd Mythopoeic Conference (Mythcon XXIII) and Oxonmoot 1992. Ed. Patricia Reynolds and Glen GoodKnight. Milton Keynes: Tolkien Society; Altadena: Mythopoeic Press, 1995. 121-125.
- Collings, Michael R., ed. *Reflections on the Fantastic: Selected Essays from the Fourth International Conference of the Fantastic in the Arts*. New York: Greenwood, 1986.
- Collins, Robert A. 'Fantasy and "Forestructures": The Effect of Philosophical Climate Upon Perceptions of the Fantastic.' *Bridges to Fantasy*. Ed. George E. Slusser, Erik S. Rabkin and Robert Scholes. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1982. 108-120.
- Cook, Eleanor, et al. *Centre and Labyrinth: Essays in Honour of Northrop Frye*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1983.
- Coupe, Lawrence. *Myth. The New Critical Idiom*. London: Routledge, 1997.
- Croft, Janet Brennan. 'The Great War and Tolkien's Memory: An Examination of World War I Themes in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*'. *Mythlore* 90 (2002): 4-21.
- Doležel, Lubomír. 'Mimesis and Possible Worlds'. *Poetics Today: International Journal for Theory and Analysis of Literature and Communication* 9.3 (1988): 475-96.
- Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. 2nd Edition. 1983. Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1996.
- Eilers, Michelle L. 'On the Origins of Modern Fantasy'. *Extrapolation* 41.4 (2000): 317-337.
- Elgin, Don D. 'The Comedy of Fantasy: An Ecological perspective on Joy Chant's Red Moon and Black Mountain'. *Aspects of fantasy: selected essays from the Second International Conference on the Fantastic in Literature and Film*. Ed. William Coyle. Contributions to the Study of Science Fiction and Fantasy 19. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1986. 221-30.
- Ferrante, Joan M. *Woman as Image in Medieval Literature: From the Twelfth Century to Dante*. New York: Columbia UP, 1975.
- Fichter, Andrew. *Poets Historical: Dynastic Epic in the Renaissance*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1982.
- Filmer-Davies, Kath. *Scepticism and Hope in Twentieth Century Fantasy Literature*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State U Popular P, 1992.

- Filmer-Davies, Kath, ed. *Twentieth-Century Fantasists*. New York: St Martin's Press, 1992.
- _____. *The Victorian Fantasists: Essays on Culture, Society and Belief in the Mythopoeic Fiction of the Victorian Age*. London: Macmillan, 1991.
- Fish, Stanley. *Is There a Text in this Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1980.
- Fleemor, Juliann E. ed. *The Female Gothic*. Montréal: Eden, 1983.
- Flieger, Verlyn. 'Frodo and Aragorn: The Concept of the Hero'. *Tolkien: New Critical Perspectives*. Ed. Neil D. Isaacs and Rose A. Zimbardo. Lexington, Ky.: U of Kentucky P, 1981. 40-65.
- Frye, Northrop. *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1976.
- Genette, Gerard. *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. Trans. Jane E. Lewin. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP, 1987.
- Gevers, Nick. 'Driven by a Different Chauffeur: An Interview with Ursula K. Le Guin'. <http://www.sfsite.com/03a/ul123.htm>. 18-02-2002.
- Gibson, Andrew. *Towards a Postmodern Theory of Narrative*. Postmodern Theory. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1996.
- Grant, Patrick. 'Tolkien: Archetype and Word'. *Tolkien: New Critical Perspectives*. Ed. Neil D. Isaacs and Rose A. Zimbardo. Lexington, Ky.: U of Kentucky P, 1981. 87-105.
- Greenfield, Sayre N. *The Ends of Allegory*. Newark: U of Delaware P, 1998.
- Hartwell, David G., ed. 'Introduction'. *The Science Fiction Century*. New York: Quality Paperback Book Club, 1997. 17-20.
- Hooley, Catherine. 'An heroic Continuum: A Classicist's Perspective'. *Amon Hen* 99 (1989): 21-2.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *The Politics of Postmodernism*. New Accents. London: Routledge, 1989.
- Jackson, Rosemary. *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*. 1981. London: Routledge, 1988.
- Jakubowski, Martin, and Edward James, eds. *The Profession of Science Fiction: Writers and their Craft and Ideas*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992.
- Jameson, Fredric. 'Magical Narratives: Romance as Genre'. *New Literary History* 7.1 (1975-6): 135-63.

- Jeffrey, David L. 'Recovery: Name in *The Lord of the Rings*'. *Tolkien: New Critical Perspectives*. Ed. Neil D. Isaacs and Rose A. Zimbardo. Lexington, Ky.: U of Kentucky P, 1981. 106-16.
- Jeffer, Carol. 'Lord of the Rings as Tragedy'. *Mallorn* 21 (1984): 5-10.
- Jobs, Gertrude. *Dictionary of Mythology Folklore and Symbol Vols 1 and 2*. New York: Scarecrow, 1962.
- Kaler, Anne K. *The Picara: From Hera to Fantasy Heroine*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State U Popular P, 1991.
- Kekes, John. *Facing Evil*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990.
- Kemball-Cook, Jessica. 'TOLKIEN, J(ohn) R(onald) R(euel)'. *Twentieth-Century Children's Writers*. Ed. D.L. Kirkpatrick. London: Macmillan, 1978. 1230-3.
- LaFollette, Hugh ed. *The Blackwell Guide to Ethical Theory*. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2000.
- Lasseter, Rollin A. 'Four Letters About Le Guin'. *Ursula K Le Guin: Voyager to Inner Lands and Outer Space*. Ed. Joe DeBolt. Literary Criticism Series. Port Washington: Kennikat, 1979. 89-114.
- Lauter, Paul ed. *Theories of Comedy: Critical Writings from the Classical Period to the Present*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964.
- Le Guin, Ursula K. 'Rhythmic Pattern in The Lord of the Rings'. *Meditations on Middle-earth*. Ed. Karen Haber. New York: Byron Preiss, 2001. 101-116.
- Lewis, Alex. 'Boromir's Journey'. *Inklings* 10 (1992): 135-43.
- _____. 'Sauron's Darkness'. *Mallorn* 29 (1992): 17-20.
- Lewis, C.S. *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories*. Ed. Walter Hooper. London: Bles, 1966.
- Lucy, Niall. *Postmodern Literary Theory: An Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1997.
- Manlove, C.N. *The Fantasy Literature of England*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999.
- Martin, Wallace. *Recent Theories of Narrative*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP, 1986.
- Mathews, Richard. *Fantasy: The Liberation of the Imagination*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- McCollom, William G. *The Divine Average: A View of Comedy*. Cleveland: P of Case Western Reserve U, 1971.
- McGinn, Colin. *Ethics, Evil and Fiction*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1997.

- Mende, Lisa Anne. 'Gondolin, Minas Tirith and the Eucatastrophe'. *Mythlore* 48 (2000): 37-40.
- Merchant, Moelwyn. *Comedy*. Critical Idiom 21. London: Methuen, 1972.
- Molson, Francis J. 'LE GUIN, Ursula K(roeber)'. *Twentieth-Century Children's Writers*. Ed. D.L Kirkpatrick. London: Macmillan, 1978. 755-7.
- Moss, Anita. 'Pastoral and Heroic Patterns: Their Uses in Children's Fantasy'. *The Scope of the Fantastic—culture, biography, themes, children's literature: selected essays from the First International Conference of the Fantastic in Literature and Film*. Ed. Robert A Collins and Howard D. Pearce. Contributions to the Study of Science Fiction and Fantasy 11. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1985. 231-238.
- Parks, Henry B. 'Tolkien and the Critical Approach to Story'. *Tolkien: New Critical Perspectives*. Ed. Neil D. Isaacs and Rose A. Zimbardo. Lexington, Ky.: U of Kentucky P, 1981. 133-49.
- Pearce, Joseph, ed. *Tolkien: A Celebration. Collected writings on a literary legacy*. London: Fount, 1999.
- Petty, Anne C. *One Ring to Bind them All: Tolkien's Mythology*. University, Alabama: U of Alabama P, 1979.
- Pfeiffer, John R. 'But Dragons Have Keen Ears: On Hearing *Earthsea* with Recollections of *Beowulf*'. *Ursula K Le Guin: Voyager to Inner Lands and Outer Space*. Ed. Joe DeBolt. Literary Criticism Series. Port Washington: Kennikat 1979. 115-127.
- Pratt, Annis. *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction*. Brighton: Harvester, 1981.
- Pringle, David ed. *St James Guide to Fantasy Writers*. New York: St James, 1996.
- Rawls, John. 'Two Concepts of Rules'. *Philosophical Review* 64.1 (1955): 3-32.
- Remington, Thomas J. 'A Time to Live and a Time to Die: Cyclical Renewal in the *Earthsea* Trilogy'. *Extrapolation* 21.3 (1980): 278-86.
- Rivkin, Julie, and Michael Ryan. *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1998.
- Roberts, Robin. *A New Species: Gender and Science in Science Fiction*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1993.
- Robinson, Dave and Chris Gawatt. *Ethics for Beginners*. Cambridge: Icon, 1996.
- Rochelle, Warren. 'The Story, Plato and Le Guin'. *Extrapolation* 37.4 (1996): 316-29.
- Rosebury, Brian. *Tolkien: A Critical Assessment*. New York: St Martin's, 1992.
- Sale, Roger. *Modern Heroism: Essays on D. H. Lawrence, William Empson, and J. R. R. Tolkien*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1973.

- Samuelson, David N. 'Ursula Le Guin 1929-' *Supernatural Fiction Writers: Fantasy and Horror*. Vol 2. Ed. E.F. Bleiler. New York: Scribner, 1985. 1059-1066.
- Sandor, Andras. 'Myths and the Fantastic'. *New Literary History* 22.2 (1991): 339-58.
- Selinger, Bernard. *Le Guin and Identity in Contemporary Fiction*. Ann Arbor: UMI Research P, 1998.
- Shippey, T.A. 'The Magic Art and the Evolution of Words: Ursula Le Guin's *Earthsea Trilogy*'. *Mosaic* 10.2 (1977): 147-64.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. *Genres in Discourse*. Trans. Catherine Porter. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990.
- Torrance, Robert M. *The Comic Hero*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1978.
- Turner, Alice. 'Reading Patricia McKillip'. *New York Review of Science Fiction* 130. June 1999: 1-4.
- Upstone, Sara. 'Applicability and Truth in *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion*: Readers, Fantasy and Canonicity'. *Mythlore* 90 (2002): 50-67.
- Van Dyke, Carolynn. *The Fiction of Truth: Structure and Meaning in Narrative and Dramatic Allegory*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP, 1985.
- Villani, Jim. 'The Woman Science Fiction Writer and the Non-Heroic Male Protagonist'. *Patterns of the Fantastic*. Ed. Donald M. Hassler. Mercer Island: Starmont House, 1983. 21-30.
- Vinaver, Eugène. *The Rise of Romance*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1971.
- Waggoner, Diana. *The Hills of Faraway: A Guide to Fantasy*. New York: Atheneum, 1978.
- Walker, Jeanne Murray. 'Rites of Passage Today: The Cultural Significance of *A Wizard of Earthsea*'. *Mosaic* 13.3-4 (1980): 179-91.
- Waugh, Patricia. *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*. London: Methuen, 1984.
- White, Virginia L. 'Bright the Hawk's Flight: The Journey of the Hero in Ursula Le Guin's *Earthsea Trilogy*'. *Ball University Forum* 20 (1979): 34-45.
- Wicker, Brian. *The Story-Shaped World: Fiction and Metaphysics: Some Variations on a Theme*. London: Athlone, 1975.
- Wolfe, Gary K. *The Known and the Unknown: The Iconography of Science Fiction*. Kent, Ohio: Kent State UP, 1979.

Zimbardo, Rose A. 'The Medieval-Renaissance Vision of *The Lord of the Rings*'.
Tolkien: New Critical Perspectives. Ed. Neil D. Isaacs and Rose A. Zimbardo.
Lexington, Ky.: U of Kentucky P, 1981. 63-71.