

# WORTHY

and

RESPONDING TO 'QUASI-MEDIEVAL' TENDENCIES IN  
HIGH FANTASY

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## ABSTRACT

‘Worthy’ is about a young man – Cai – who must recover from the ravages of his past while he is being trained in sorcery. It is a fantasy novella set in the world of Terirth, which takes inspiration from 18<sup>th</sup> century western European culture and society and from Australian geography.

Cai, enslaved illegally in a brothel, is discovered and rescued by aristocrat and sorcerer Luca, who senses Cai’s latent magic abilities from a distance. Taken to the Court of Terirth, Cai recovers from fever and opiate addiction but continues to suffer profound memory loss as a result of trauma.

Luca begins training Cai in sorcery, but after Cai is attacked and his magic kills the assailant, the Queen tells Luca Cai must leave Court. Luca and Cai travel to the site of Luca’s childhood home, where Cai both develops as a sorcerer and begins to recover his memory. When his mother arrives, having searched for him since his abduction, his full recollection of the trauma he endured returns with her. Her unusual, only semi-human nature finally explains why Cai possesses such strong magic.

Meanwhile, behind the polished surface of the Court, political machinations are at work, masterminded by the Queen of Terirth herself. Perceiving Luca and his associates as a threat, she sets out to dispose of them, and it is then Cai’s turn to support his mentor. In doing so, he confronts and destroys his greatest abuser, finally gaining some degree of closure. The end of the novella sees Cai preparing to travel with his mother and Luca to attempt a rescue of Luca’s closest friend from the palace dungeons.

The exegesis, ‘Responding to ‘Quasi-medieval’ Tendencies in High Fantasy’, explores the development and popularisation of the quasi-medieval setting common in high fantasy since the 1960s. It attempts to both explain and interrogate the continuing pervasiveness of such a setting. It also positions ‘Worthy’ in relation to quasi-medieval fantasy, acknowledging its ties to this material as well as discussing the features which take it in a somewhat different direction.

## DECLARATION

I, Joanna Jarose, certify that 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.

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