

The magical land:
ecological consciousness in fantasy romance.

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ABSTRACT

The magical land: ecological consciousness in fantasy romance.

The modern genre of fantasy romance is a relatively recent development in popular literature, and one which is gaining increasing popularity. In its contemporary form, fantasy romance has developed from earlier fantasy and romance forms, and a generic base which includes romance, comedy and pastoral can be identified. Conventional fantasy romance is concerned with the defense of a magical land, characterised in terms of beauty, health and balance, from some destructive threat. This concern with the health of the land reflects modern ecological consciousness and awareness of potential environmental destruction. Ecological awareness can be traced through critical analysis of various works of fantasy romance. J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings, as the text which marked the beginning of the modern fantasy romance form, shows the potential for ecological awareness in the genre, although Tolkien's cultural context of post-war England in some ways inhibits ecological consciousness in the narrative. The development of a more modern ecological consciousness is studied through investigation of the Riddlemaster trilogy of Patricia A. McKillip, which shows a more abstracted sense of environmental destruction expressed through a concern with power and identity. Stephen Donaldson's Chronicles of Thomas Covenant provides a narrative awareness of generic convention which could be construed as postmodern. Derrida's deconstruction of the notion of genre allows an interesting insight into Donaldson's processes of generic mixing, although the narrative's success is ultimately compromised by Donaldson's lack of authorial control. Sheri S. Tepper's True Game series displays a highly contemporary conflation of ecological concerns with those of feminism, as the destructive impulses of largely male competitiveness are contrasted to an organic and intuitive female response to the land. Orson Scott Card's Alvin Maker series, in its depiction of an alternative settler America, integrates ecological concerns with those of racial harmony, while his construction of a messianic hero recalls Card's own Mormon background. Finally, some attention is given to fantasy romance as a potentially escapist genre rather than one which inspires actual ecological awareness, and links are made with popular elements in the ecological movement itself. The thesis concludes by proposing the relevance of fantasy romance's magical land as a regenerative ideal of health and beauty in an increasingly ugly and ecologically deteriorating modern environment.

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Chapter One:

Introduction - Fantasy as Genre.

*It is part of the essential malady of [our] days -
producing the need to escape, not indeed from life but
from our present time and self-made misery -
that we are acutely conscious both of
the ugliness of our works, and of their evil.
So that to us evil and ugliness seem indissolubly allied.
JRR Tolkien, "On Fairy Stories"*

The realm has had many names over the centuries. Initially it was the Garden of Eden or Arcadia, the land of the Golden Age. More lately, it has been Logres, Lyonesse, Huy Brasil, Avalon or the Forest Perilous. In this century it is all of these and more: Middle-Earth, Narnia, Earthsea, Nehwon. It may be an anthropomorphised planet or an unplaced and nameless realm. It may simply be called "the Land." It may even be America. It has always been the land of dreams. It exists primarily in the form of prose narrative, but also in poetry, film, graphic novel, even popular music. Its centre is enchanted beauty, its inhabitants are heroes, its history that of the quest which defends it against threat of destruction. Those who dismiss it with contempt recognise it nonetheless. It is kin to mythology and to the powerful archetypes of the unconscious mind.

The magical land of romance and modern fantasy operates as a powerful ideal within a literary genre which has expanded radically within the last twenty years. Increasing sales in fantasy and science fiction mark the development of a thriving popular culture. This culture is obviously highly diverse, but it finds one specific expression in the form of romance - a form which offers, potentially, wish fulfillment in the successful completion of the hero-quest¹. As always with a popular genre, the question of contemporary relevance is continually raised by the exponents and critics of "serious" literature, usually as a precursor to a contemptuous dismissal of fantasy novels as sheer escapism. The popular production of a non-realist narrative whose literary roots are found among mythic and psychological

¹ The concept of "hero" and "hero-quest" are relics of older genres, and are extremely problematical in a modern age of feminist awareness. Some of the heroic protagonists in the contemporary texts discussed are female, but their function in the narrative is often very similar to that of the traditional hero of the quest narrative. Despite problems attached to the term, I use "hero" and "hero-quest" in my historical account of genre to imply the traditional (male) sense, but intend the terms to be non-gender-specific when applied to modern fantasy texts. I have discussed problems and developments in gender roles specifically when they arise.

genres seems to some an unlikely ground for the discussion, in however tangential a form, of serious contemporary issues. This thesis, however, attempts to draw a parallel between the recurring depiction of the magical land in modern fantasy, and the development of an increasingly desperate awareness of the natural environment in modern culture. Discussion of the potentially escapist nature of fantasy romance will be reserved for the final chapter of the thesis.

Don D. Elgin prefaces his study of ecological narrative with the statement, "That the twentieth century is in the midst of an ecological crisis of monumental proportions is an accepted fact" (1985 p. 3). In the context of daily life, warnings on UV light hazards, the pleas of societies which attempt to save the white rhino and other endangered species, even the non-CFC guarantees on aerosol cans, bear testimony to a technological legacy which includes widespread pollution, the increasing destruction of natural habitats, and a hole in the ozone layer. Elgin's brief survey of the various schools of thought in ecological literature comes to the conclusion that the crisis has been caused by cultural modes of thought, namely that:

the dominant idea in establishing humanity's relationship toward nature has been its insistence upon their separateness from it... Following closely upon this fact is the assumption of humanity's superiority to nature (1985 p. 9).

Modern humanity, particularly urban humanity, is reaping the reward of such thought patterns in its increasing alienation from the natural environment, an alienation which, unlike any previous period in civilised history, is accompanied by the technological power to comprehensively ruin the world's ecological balance. This is an alienation which not only threatens to destroy what remains of that environment, but which is felt as a psychological lack, an absence of something which is necessary to the healthy functioning of the individual.

There is an increasing awareness in at least one portion of our society, therefore, of an environment threatened by destruction, a force which disrupts natural processes, a land in peril. It is precisely this element which has been present in a tradition of English literature since Arthur's knights first battled monsters, Sauron's orcs ravaged Middle-Earth, or the White Witch blanketed Narnia in eternal winter. It is present even in the most contemporary and post-modern forms of narrative, in Neil Gaiman's graphic novel in the Sandman series, A Game of You, in which the dream-quest must be completed or "the land must be lost to the cold and the dark, and the Cuckoo prevail over all" (1991 p. 4). In this sense, modern fantasy represents an awareness not only of potential destruction, but of an ideal of health, beauty, integration with the environment, which is largely lost to modern society but which can still be triumphantly defended in the fantasy world.

In this thesis I shall attempt to analyse the functioning of fantasy texts as environmental literature, focussing on the element which seems to me to be central, the constitution of the magical land itself, its thematic and generic function. In order to do so, I shall explore the development of the contemporary fantasy text from various genres in the English tradition, as well as its function as a modern popular form.

Sword and Sorcery: Fantasy as genre

The definition of "fantasy" as genre is problematical, invoking as it does various connotations and conflicts with genres such as science fiction, the fantastic of Kafka and the French fantasists, sword-and-sorcery, magical realism, and other forms of popular or literary speculative fiction. The genre in which I am specifically interested is one which has proliferated greatly in the last few years, giving rise to an increasing and highly specific fantasy and science-fiction readership, as well as a distinct body of associated critical thought. This subgenre is popular in nature, its development traceable through sword-and-sorcery adventure epics such as Robert E. Howard's Conan, Fritz Lieber's Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser, and Michael Moorcock's Elric. Its narrative focuses around an heroic, magical quest which takes place in a magical realm, a marvellous land which must be defended against some great, destructive threat.

This form of fantasy, which I shall label fantasy romance, is a fairly recent development. While it has similarities with nineteenth-century forms such as the romances of William Morris or George Macdonald, genre fantasy proper could be said to have begun with J.R.R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings, published in 1954. Tolkien's own narratives contain elements from older magical narratives: the profound moral and psychological concerns of Macdonald's allegorical fantasies; Morris's idyllic and nostalgic medieval atmosphere; the idealised battle-heroes of E. R. Eddison's Zimiamvia narratives. However, the texts on which Tolkien most fundamentally built - and thus the texts which underlie the modern fantasy form - are much older. Tolkien's essay "On Fairy-Stories" provides a survey of the historical elements which he identifies as making up fairy-tale, and thus fantasy. Of his own childhood attraction to fantasy, he says:

.. the land of Merlin and Arthur was better than [Red Indians], and best of all the nameless North of Sigurd of the Volsungs, and the prince of all dragons. Such lands were pre-eminently desirable
(1964 p. 41)

Thus Tolkienesque fantasy has developed from Tolkien's legacy of the romance quests of the Arthurian cycle, and the heroic traditions of epics such as Beowulf and the Norse sagas.

From Tolkien, the modern genre of fantasy romance has expanded in all directions. Often less literary than Tolkien, modern fantasy authors find their inspiration in widely diverse areas - the Celtic myths (Guy Gavriel Kay, Lloyd Alexander and countless others), the Mabinogion (McKillip and Alan Garner), even the Red Indians rejected by Tolkien, in the Native American magic of Charles de Lint and Orson Scott Card. Inevitably, with such expansion into a popular genre has come a reduction of overall quality, a rise in prolific authors quick to take advantage of a new market, and without the interest in writing worthwhile prose or the ability to do so. Ursula Le Guin comments on the creation of the new mythology of fantasy, the popularisation of the archetypes and structures of older forms. She identifies the Submyth of science fiction and fantasy, the creation of "images, figures and motifs which have no religious resonance and no intellectual or aesthetic value, but which are vigorously alive and powerful... It hurts to call these creatures mythological. It is a noble word, and they are so grotty..." ("Myth and Archetype in Science Fiction", 1989 p. 65). Nonetheless, in borrowing from tales, worlds, heroes and, ultimately, genres which are far older and stronger than the popular cult, modern fantasy, often despite itself, invokes meanings and implications which run deeper than the apparent superficiality of a popular, wish-fulfilling form. The concern of this thesis is thus to examine the operation of modern fantasy romance as a popular genre, in terms of one specific aspect of its appeal to a contemporary readership, but also to trace this appeal to fantasy's far older generic roots.

The process of generic identification rests upon the multiple genres included in and giving substance to the modern genre of "fantasy." This follows Jacques Derrida's supposition, in his discussion on "The Law of Genre," that there is, "lodged within the heart of the law itself, a law of impurity or a principle of contamination" (1980 p. 204); that genres, by definition rigidly demarcated, are in fact continually shifting, mutually influential, an ongoing development of form to keep pace with developing experience in society and culture. Samuel R. Delaney comments on the genesis of the fantasy and science fiction forms:

We get a new genre when two old genres, joining, lose their membranous separation, mix and interpenetrate on some intimate genetic level, which results in a spurt of growth, multiplication and the separation of modes, some of which, against an economic and social environment supportive enough, are able to flourish and become genres. (1987 p. 68).

Given this, it becomes logically difficult to pin down the concept of genre at any fixed point. Fantasy romance as genre may continue to develop, adding, subtracting and re-mixing generic themes until the genre is no longer recognisable. At the logical conclusion of generic development, genre breaks down and structure becomes chaotic.

The answer to this problem of fixity lies, as Derrida concludes, in the fact that the "disruptive `anomalies'" of generic mixing "are engendered - and this is their common law, the lot or site they share - by *repetition*" (1980 p. 204). Thus, while genres shift, change and grow, a genre becomes ultimately disparate and distinct through the sheer bulk of texts in which element and form are recognisably the same. Fantasy romance becomes a genre in its endless succession of magical lands protected from threatening evil and restored to harmony and beauty by heroic figures of renewal. In this, parallels can be found with Vladimir Propp's seminal discussion of the morphology of the folk-tale: like fairy-tales, modern fantasy romances are formulaic. Although "the names of the dramatis personae change (as well as the attributes accorded to each ... neither actions nor functions change" (1958 p. 18). It may not be excessive to state that, like fairy-tales, all fantasy romances, "by their structure, belong to one and the same type" (Propp p. 21).

Within the increasing and highly specific popular readership, the concept of genre comes to operate as more than a convenient historical classification. As a central and defining parameter to this form of literature, genre controls meaning and interpretation within the fantasy narrative. Derrida examines the naturally prohibitive properties of the concept of genre itself:

As soon as the word "genre" is sounded, as soon as it is heard, as soon as one attempts to conceive it, a limit is drawn. And when a limit is established, norms and interdictions are not far behind (1980 p. 203).

In identifying a fantasy narrative by the genre (or genres) which it represents, limitations and preconceptions have thus immediately been set up. This thesis does not simply analyse narratives, but narratives which have recognisable similarities, whose concerns, themes and narrative roots have common elements. Awareness of such commonalities, i.e. awareness of genre, as Tzvetan Todorov has noted, dictates not only how a text is to be read, but how it is to be understood as a critical exercise:

When we examine works of literature from the perspective of genre, we ... discover a principle operative in a number of texts, rather than what is specific about each of them. To study Balzac's The Magic Skin in the context of the fantastic as a genre is quite different from studying this book in and of itself, or in the canon of Balzac's works, or in that of contemporary literature (1975 p. 4).

Derrida continues his discussion to deconstruct and ultimately disallow genre as an exclusive concept. Whatever the legitimacy of genre as a fixed concept, however, it can surely be said that the identification of genre is an important element in the understanding of any text. Frederic Jameson has noted the assumption behind the "literary institution" of genres, that genre is "based on the presupposition that all speech needs to be marked with

certain indications and signals as to how it is properly to be used" (1975 p. 135). From this premise, it follows that the generic nature of a text must be inscribed within the text itself.

Derrida asks:

... can one identify a work of art, of whatever sort, but especially a work of discursive art, if it does not bear the mark of a genre, if it does not signal or mention it or make it remarkable in any way?
(1980 p. 211).

However subtly engrained in the text, the marks of genre and mode operate as signals which predispose the reader towards certain kinds of response to the text. Samuel Delaney places Derrida's supposition of generic mark into the specific science fiction/fantasy context when he states:

The generic mark... is a mark always outside the text, not a part of it - such as the designations "science fiction" or "fantasy" on the book spine or cover - a mark that codifies the text on bookstore shelf or under hand, calling into play the codes and reading protocols by which the texts become readable
(1987 p. 65).

Thus genre fantasy is marked not only by the codes of its narrative structures and themes itself, but by its existence as "fantasy" within the traditions and expectations of that genre. It is defined by its inclusion in a tradition, which, in the specific case of fantasy, means that it is defined by the publisher's mark which includes it in a tradition, a set of literary conventions, which aim at a specific and limited, if increasing, popular market. Within the structure of generic repetition is found the space occupied by the generic mark, the use of recognition as a key to meaning in the reading of a text. This is particularly important within the parameters of a genre which has developed primarily as a popular culture, where generic identification should be above all undemanding.

As an extension of this it is obvious that genre, particularly fantasy genre, is created as much by economic considerations as by anything else, and Delaney's comment on the development of genres points out the importance of market to the development of a new form. On a purely financial level, the author of fantasy is constrained by the expectations of the largely unsophisticated romance reader, who after all buys or does not buy the book. Certainly those authors at the lower end of the quality scale seem to write entirely for the market as they perceive it. In the texts studied, it is interesting to note how both Donaldson and Card, attempting to rewrite elements of genre fantasy, nonetheless present recognisable fantasy romances in the popular market sense - arguably to the detriment of their more radical generic concerns.

In addition to this, however, the conventions of fantasy come to provide a means of analysis, a structure through which the operation of fantasy texts may be examined. Genre itself is never fixed; while fantasy romance tends to follow a set of conventions, such conventions could be understood to represent a process of self-limitation rather than one of

intrinsic generic identity. Such limitations are artificial in that they are not, according to Derrida, intrinsically prescriptive: genres will always resonate together, mutually influencing function and theme. As David Clayton notes, "genre's abdication of prescriptive authority documents its most serious weakness: the absence of any certain base for its classifications" (1987 p. 202). However, given the artificiality of limitation, classification of genre allows for the creation of a set of conventions which establish a popular consensus for reading and for the basic form of writing. New genres, codified by repetition, develop from and embrace or modify older genres with their own traditions and reading codes. Thus the investigation of fantasy romance as a new genre offers, despite problems of definition, a historical tool for critical interpretation in that it enables the isolation of the concerns, impulses and formal structures from which it has developed.

Easy reading: fantasy as popular culture.

Fantasy romance, certainly in the sense in which I am exploring it, is a popular genre. Its most prolific expression is in the cheap paperback; its audience is mostly unsophisticated, reading for the sake of a good adventure, a fanciful setting, a romanticised happy ending. Its serious authors who possess both skill and self-awareness go largely unnoticed among the proliferation of pulp texts. This sheer bulk of similar texts - while linked to the generic process of repetition discussed above - is, Todorov suggests, what defines a popular genre in the first place:

... we grant a text the right to figure in the history of literature or science only insofar as it produces a change in our previous notion of the one activity or the other. Texts that do not fulfil this condition automatically pass into another category: that of so-called "popular" or "mass" literature... only "popular" literature (detective stories, serialized novels, science fiction, etc) would approach fulfilling the requirements of genre in the sense the word has in natural science...
(1975 p. 6).

A popular genre is thus by definition anything but innovative; its authors write to a recognisable formula. One could take issue with Todorov's definition of science fiction as a popular genre, given the extent to which much of modern science fiction has become experimental and self-conscious, but, while there may be exceptions, fantasy romance as a whole does fulfil his criteria for a popular literary form.

That a body of criticism exists at all suggests that not all fantasy and science fiction is pulp or potboiler, but the proliferation of popular texts has induced a certain degree of defensiveness in the serious critics of specifically speculative genres. Delaney notes the affinity of fantasy, at least in the eyes of the bookstore and the reading public, with other popular genres such as horror and "women's" romance novels. He comments:

Literature, fiction, science fiction, romance, fantasy ... this inelegant and aneuphonic set of overlapping marks, some of them clearly on the far side of the literary/paraliterary border... And what they mark ... is a marginal situation that we who are interested in the workings of genre, especially the interpenetrations and speciation of the paraliterary genres of science fiction and fantasy might do well to fix, at least momentarily, in the centre of our attentions
(1987 p. 65).

The frequent defensiveness of the critics serves to emphasise the fact that fantasy, whether a popular or a literary form - or both - is very much a marginalised form of narrative, one which continually contests its precariously-held position as any form of "literature" at all.

As a romance narrative, an adventure genre, the most frequent criticism levelled at fantasy romance is that it functions as a genre of escape. This escapist label is apparently supported by the perceptions of the readership of fantasy romance from its initial development in this century. The genre's historical development in its modern form finds its initial expression, as suggested above, in Tolkien's Lord of the Rings. David Glover notes the importance of the new, radical youth cultures of the 1950s and 1960s in popularising the fantasy genre, and quotes a letter to International Times:

"British mythology (Glastonbury, Arthur, etc), race relations, community experiments, India, Gandhi, William Blake... all... turning up and interpenetrating as matters of concern, with no feeling of oddity at all," Tolkien and McLuhan rubbing shoulders with Marcuse and Mao.... One effect of this ecumenicalism... was that texts having their origins and drawing their sense from quite distinct historical periods were rediscovered and assigned a new significance...
(1985 p. 191)

Most significantly for this thesis, the new "hippie" culture functioned as a new kind of audience for experimental fiction, "one that has been trained not on past art but on the violence, discontinuity and novelty of a modern environment" (Kermode in Glover, 1985 p. 192). The development of fantasy as a popular genre coincides significantly with the development of a youth culture alienated by the complexity and ugliness of a technological modern world. The reciprocal impulse to such alienation was, as it is in current fantasy, towards the defence of beauty and wonder: fantasy not only as "a kind of literary equivalent to the alteration of consciousness" (Glover p. 191)² but its heroes as people's heroes, Arthur as king over "a green land, a land of trees and hills and castles... a human yet spiritual land" (International Times in Glover, 1985 p. 191). The rise of the contemporary New Age movement offers a similar rediscovery of historical modes of thought, together

² Michael Clifton explores this idea of the unconscious and fantasy image in his "Jewels of Wonder, Instruments of Delight: Science Fiction, Fantasy and Science Fantasy as Vision-Inducing Works"; significantly for the relationship between fantasy and hippy culture, he quotes Huxley's visionary experiences with "mescaline and deep hypnosis" (1987 p. 98).

with a rather romanticised emphasis on spirituality and beauty which equally supports the rise of the fantasy genre.

Kathryn Hume, while admitting the function of fantasy as a literature both of vision and of revision, defines many fantasies as belonging to the literature of illusion, of escape from reality³. She invokes many of the major impulses of fantasy romance when she states:

Deflation of the ego, simplicity of life, passive openness, awareness of sensory data: these provide an escape for one kind of personality. For another, the desiderata are nearly the opposite: ego inflation, excitement, the illusion of strenuous activity, violence, and intense emotions. The only shared feature is the protagonist's freedom from unpleasant responsibilities (1984 p. 66).

In combining the beauty-centred pastoral of the magical land with the difficulties of the defensive hero-quest, fantasy romance fulfils most, if not all, of Hume's criteria for escape literature. In identifying with the hero or heroine whose successful quest renews the threatened land, fantasy readers, who "clearly find bourgeois life deeply unsatisfying... can glory vicariously in competence and the accompanying self-confidence [of] the stories' heroes..." (Hume, 1984 p. 66-67). At the same time, the setting of the magical land provides something of the beauty and potential harmony which a modern, technological world largely denies.

Fantasy is thus a genre of escape in that it offers something more than reality is able to. It allows glimpses of a simpler world, one where conflicts and resolution appear obvious, exaggerated, fulfilling in their simplicity. Northrop Frye notes how popular fiction needs to be "realistic enough to be plausible in its incidents and yet romantic enough to be a 'good story,' which means a clearly designed one." Definition in fantasy romance becomes moral: the genre typically provides the "two contrasting worlds of total metaphorical identification, one desirable and the other undesirable," which Frye isolates in mythic literature (1971 p. 139). In the oppositions of Sauron battled by the armies of Gondor, Maker against Unmaker, Lom threatened by the unthinking destructiveness of Talented humankind, the reader of fantasy is provided with a clear-cut depiction and subsequent resolution of conflict. Such reassuring clarity is impossible in the increasingly complex and fast-moving technological world of contemporary society.

Fantasy romance thus offers not only escape, but consolation. It fills a lack felt in a modern pressurised lifestyle which emphasises pragmatism and realism. This consolatory function is obviously present in other forms of popular literature. Bridget Fowler identifies the escape functions of women's fiction, another form of romance with some similar

³ See Chapter 7.

impulses to those of fantasy romance, as "an equivalent to bread and circuses, providing fantasy compensation, consolation and diversion for its readers" (1985 p. 102). Tolkien's discussion, however, defines more precisely a specific function of fantasy as magical narrative, the extent to which it can transcend, not only the social and emotional limitations highlighted by women's romance, but the limitations of the human condition and capabilities, a function of literary escape which will be discussed more fully in the final chapter of this thesis. He comments: "there are ancient limitations from which fairy-tales offer a sort of escape, and old ambitions and desires ... to which they offer a kind of satisfaction and consolation" (1964 p. 65-66), and gives examples of the desire to swim like a fish, fly like a bird, speak with the beasts. All of these impulses can be traced directly back to the profoundly nostalgic desire of modern man to be re-integrated with the natural - and naturally beautiful - environment which modern industrialised and urban society increasingly destroys. In this sense, fantasy romance is escapist in that the experiences it offers are unrealistic, in many ways nostalgic: it restores an experience which has been largely lost to the urban reader.

Jerry Palmer notes how "recent literary criticism takes the implied reader, thought of as a feature of the text, as a focal point for analysis" (1991 p. 154). It would seem that the writers of fantasy romance - or, indeed, other forms of popular fiction - write deliberately to fulfil the unrealistic desires of their readership. That this common desire to escape through fantasy - particularly the need to escape to some ideal of beauty and environmental harmony - has been correctly identified is supported by the growing popularity of fantasy romance. The importance of market to a developing genre has been discussed above, but this aspect of writing is particularly essential to a form whose pressures are often more commercial than literary. Palmer points out the modern notion of "narrative as commodity, as something produced directly and explicitly for sale. Indeed, to talk about 'popular' fiction in a capitalist society necessarily refers us to this dimension of culture, for here popularity is primarily measured by audience size and sales figures" (1991 p. 37). Despite its specialist market, fantasy romance is undoubtedly commercially viable: Donaldson's first Thomas Covenant trilogy was a bestseller in 1977, and the world-wide readership of the series has been estimated at eighteen million (Nicholls, 1993 p. 260). As well as major successes such as these, the specific fantasy/sf market becomes steadily greater, as indexed by the increasing number of shelves devoted to the genre in bookshops. It would seem that fantasy romance's magical land, as a consistent motif in the bulk of formula fantasy, does indeed fulfil a need in its readership.

Wishful thinking: fantasy as romance

The function of modern fantasy as a form of romance narrative is undeniable. The magical world of the fantasy realm is archetypically that of romance, akin to the enchanted forests and castles of the Arthurian legends or of fairy-tale. As such, the genre is unrealistic, its world removed from that which is familiar to the reader. Northrop Frye's Anatomy of Criticism⁴ provides an initial definition of romance which notes the specific narrative elements which mark this removal:

The hero of romance moves in a world in which the ordinary laws of nature are slightly suspended: prodigies of courage and endurance, unnatural to us, are natural to him, and enchanted weapons, talking animals, terrifying ogres and witches, and talismans of miraculous power violate no rule of probability once the postulates of romance have been established (1971 p. 33).

The environment of the romance narrative corresponds to Rosemary Jackson's definition of the narrative process of romance. She writes: "Movement into a marvellous realm transports the reader or viewer into an absolutely different, alternative world, a 'secondary' universe..." (1981 p. 42). Romance is thus an apt genre through which to express the escapist functions of popular culture, as well as the world-creating impulse of the modern fantasy text.

This secondary world is significantly different to reality in function as well as detail. Jackson notes the construction of the marvellous as the realm of "rich, colourful fullness..." (1981 p. 42) - not only different to reality, but richer in texture. Such richness is partly a result of the magical elements of the realm, but also relates to the strong symbolic structures of the genre. The presence of the magical serves to define and exaggerate the conflicts and moralities of the secondary world, creating a symbolic narrative which supplies the necessary lack of ambiguity and easy identification of the popular text. The marvellous realm very easily becomes the magical land of fantasy romance, allowing the idealisation of the land's beauty as well as the unambiguous identification of the destructive threat. Jameson notes how "romance comes to be seen as the struggle between the higher and lower realms, between heaven and hell, or the angelic and the demonic or diabolic" (1975 p. 138), and identifies this as a necessary element of marvellous or magical narrative:

⁴ Todorov comments that "Frye today occupies a preeminent place among Anglo-American critics, and his book is undoubtedly one of the most remarkable works of criticism published since the Second World War" (1975 p. 9). At the same time, Todorov and others have noted the frequent flaws and inconsistencies in Frye's account of genre and mode. Despite this, the Anatomy of Criticism supplies one of the fullest accounts of genre available, and one which is particularly appropriate to fantasy in its treatment of romance and comedy. I have used Frye extensively, but have attempted to moderate his views with those of subsequent critics.

... belief in good and evil is precisely a magical thought mode... It is difficult to imagine a conflict of magical forces which would not be marked in some way as positive and negative, or, in other words, ultimately as a struggle between good and evil, between white magic and black magic" (p. 141).

This radical polarisation in symbol structure relates essentially to the psychological aspect of romance. Frye emphasises this aspect of the mode when he states that "the romance is nearest of all literary forms to the wish-fulfilment of dream" (1971 p. 186). The themes of the psyche, self, wish, desire, are common to both fantasy and romance. Le Guin comments, in "Do-It-Yourself Cosmology," that "the original and instinctive movement of fantasy is, of course, inward ... The strength of fantasy is the strength of the Self" (1989 p. 105-106). Jackson gives a fuller psychological explanation of the romance dichotomy of good/evil: "In its broadest sense, fantastic literature has always been concerned with revealing and exploring the interrelations of the 'I' and the 'not-I', of self and other" (1981 p. 53). In itself, however, the self/other theme in fantasy relates back to "issues of interrelationship" - highly significant in this thesis - and to "the determination of relations between human subjects by unconscious desire" (Jackson, 1981 p. 61). The impulse of romance is towards not only the marvellous realm, but towards a deeply-felt need for integration with that realm, and identification with those elements which are "good", attractive, desirable.

The romance expression of self/other is particularly powerful in that romance is a form of magical narrative. Issues of desire and the confrontation of the desired - or, conversely, the undesired - and the identification which defines the self and necessarily emphasises the undesirability of the other, are exaggerated by their mythic expression. Jackson notes how "the other tends to be identified as an otherworldly, evil force: Satan, the devil, the demon" (p. 53), in contrast to the highly-charged and powerful depiction of mythic good. While the hero of fantasy romance is an obvious exemplar of this process of identifying the self with good, patterns of identification, desire, self, tend to become absorbed into the organic whole of the land itself. This is inevitable given Jameson's definition of a magical thought mode as:

... one which springs from a precapitalist, essentially agricultural way of life ... the formulation in terms of magic rather orients us towards the economic organisation of the society in question and the relations it entertains with the world of nature (1975 p. 141).

Romance, then, itself has an intrinsic connection with nature and natural processes. Frye's discussion of the hero's struggle with demonic evil concludes that "the conflict ... takes place in, or at any rate primarily concerns, *our* world, which is in the middle, and which is

characterised by the cyclical movement of nature" (1971 p. 187). Awareness of a cyclical and harmonious nature is echoed by awareness of its possible failure. On the level of mythic functioning, the hero's conflict with monstrous evil is deeply symbolic: "the monster *is* the sterility of the land itself.." (p. 189). Myth cycles of the wounded king or the Fisher king and the waste land are thus invoked, so that the restoration of the land's health has profound mythic significance. Frye suggests that such significance is also psychological: "the quest-romance is the search of the libido or desiring self for a fulfillment that will deliver it from the anxieties of reality but will still contain that reality" (p. 193). The suitability of romance as a popular, escapist genre is evident.

Romance thus deals centrally with magic, nature and quest, and Karl Kroeber notes its importance as contrast to a realist tradition: "Romantic fantasy celebrates the magical in a society for which magic had become only benighted superstition" (1988 p. 1). Magical narrative allows the creation and expression of the sense of enchantment and wonder. Within these parameters, the expression of desire through romance becomes, most fundamentally, the desire for beauty. Michael Clifton has noted the prevalence of images of jewels and flowers in fantasy, and defends fantasy as a literature of vision which allows conscious access to the images of the unconscious (1987 p. 97 ff). In the increasing noise, pollution and ugliness of our technologised and urbanised time, romance comes to supply a sense of the beauty which is lacking in an industrialised world, but which can be felt and recognised as something ideal from within ourselves.

Happy endings: fantasy as comedy

Fantasy romance is obviously a romance form - as noted above, it is a form of magical narrative, a genre of the marvellous, and its basis is both symbolic and psychological. It could be classified simply as romance, within Frye's definition, except that this does not adequately account for certain specific features of the modern genre. Modern fantasy is not identical in structure and theme to Arthurian romance, for example, although they have points in common. Evidently, modern fantasy romance - certainly given Derrida's account of the contamination of genre - must contain elements of other genres, modes or forms.

Perhaps the most striking feature of modern fantasy romance is its traditional fairy-tale happy ending, in which all crises are resolved and all threats countered by the hero-figure whose quest is depicted by the narrative. In this tendency towards necessarily idealistic and unrealistic conclusion, fantasy romance thus adds a parameter lacking in pure romance - the Arthurian cycle, for example, is tragic in conclusion. In its insistence on the defeat of evil

and the triumphant renewal of the land, modern fantasy includes elements which are identifiably that of the comic mode⁵.

In terms of form, fantasy romance conforms to comic structures in its emphasis on reconciliation after blockage - the "happy ending" of women's romance, Disney movies and sanitised children's fairy-tale. Frye notes how, in classical comedy, "the obstacles to the hero's desire... form the action of the comedy, and the overcoming of them the comic resolution" (1973 p. 164). It is in this comic element that the difference between classical romance such as the Arthurian cycle, and modern fantasy romance, can be most strongly identified. The Arthurian cycle is pure romance; its conflicts and reconciliations are strongly individual rather than social or environmental and, most importantly, its conclusion is tragic, the death of the king and the destruction of the golden age of chivalry. In fantasy romance, even those with tragic elements (Donaldson's isolated hero, Guy Gavriel Kay's depiction of the death of secondary heroes in the final battle), the conclusion is inevitably comic and replenishing, the defeat of the destructive threat and the restoration of harmony to the land.

In this adherence to a triumphant conclusion, the structural features of comedy thus provide space for, and confirmation of, another major feature of fantasy romance in its mythic and symbolic function, namely unambiguous moral polarities. Frye comments that "comedy moves toward a happy ending, and the normal response of the audience to a happy ending is 'this should be,' which sounds like a moral judgement. So it is..." (1973 p. 167). Fantasy's depiction of the land in peril concludes in the triumph of moral "good", beauty and heroism, reinforcing the perception that the magical land is worthy of defense.

Comic form shows a movement through blockage to a happy ending; within this, "the theme of the comic is the integration of society, which usually takes the form of incorporating a central character into it" (Frye, 1973 p. 43). In fantasy romance, the comic theme is expressed in the integration of the individual, i.e. the hero, and hence the community, into the environment. This concept is developed in detail in Don Elgin's study The Comedy of the Fantastic, where he concludes that the comic is governed by basic assumptions:

... that its primary virtue or goal is the affirmation of life; that comic humanity sees itself as but one part of a system to which it must accommodate itself and whose survival must be a primary concern if it hopes to continue to exist ...
(1985 p. 16).

⁵ I am indebted to Don Elgin's discussion of the comic and ecological aspects of fantasy throughout my argument.

Such a definition echoes the impulse at the roots of comedy, which lies, as F. M. Cornford notes, in ancient fertility rituals. These rituals function as "a representative both of the power of fertility, and of the opposite powers of famine, disease and death" (in Palmer, 1984 p. 69). In this opposition can be clearly traced the similar oppositions of fantasy, between the harmony of the land and the destructive powers which threaten it.

The integrative nature of comedy finds its fullest expression in romance, and Frye notes the extent to which romantic comedy such as that of Shakespeare "has affinities with the medieval tradition of the seasonal ritual-play. We may call it the drama of the green world, its plot being assimilated to the ritual theme of the triumph of life and love over the waste land" (1971 p. 182). Unlike the comedy examples explored by Frye, fantasy romance does not necessarily include the normal world as a distinct and contrasting companion to the 'green world', although of course narratives such as those of Donaldson and Kay do move protagonists literally from one world to another. As a further characteristic of fantasy romance, the 'green world' is always a magical realm, and it is interesting to note how many fantasies include an intensified version of the 'green world' within their primary 'green world' - *Lorien* (Tolkien), *Andarien* (Kay) and *Andelain* (Donaldson) are some examples - providing the same kind of contrast as that between the normal and the 'green world' in more classical comedy.

The comic tradition of the 'green world' contributes strongly to the land-centred environmental awareness of fantasy romance. Frye notes how "the green world charges the comedies with the symbolism of the victory of summer over winter," and, in this ritualised aspect, how it "has analogies, not only to the fertile world of ritual, but to the dream world that we create out of our own desires" (1971 p. 183). Comedy thus comes to duplicate some of the psychological function of romance, allowing for an energetic unity of theme despite the contributions of several genres. In a further generic link, the 'green world' "suggests an original golden age which the normal world has usurped" (Frye in Palmer, 1984 p. 83), thus invoking the generic element of pastoral which is present both in romantic comedy and in fantasy romance.

Restoring green peace: fantasy as pastoral.

The impulse of fantasy romance is ultimately towards the restoration of the idyllic, harmonious beauty of the magical land, the pastoral idyll threatened by the destructive evil faced in the hero-quest. Anita Moss has commented that "one is struck with the frequency with which fantasy begins in a secure and untouched pastoral world of comfort and youthful innocence... Heroic action may indeed occur when the pastoral and insulated well-being of

one's home is threatened" (1985 p. 232). Thus, while the action and interest of the fantasy romance are in the heroic quest which confronts and ultimately defeats the threatening evil, such romances both begin with and return to a static ideal of peace and beauty. The parallels with Fry's romantic concept of the 'green world' are obvious, the movement from pastoral to heroic modes similar to the movement from the everyday to the magic of the 'green world' which he identifies in Shakespearean comedy. As in Shakespeare, too, the 'green world' contains elements of the magical and marvellous as well as the idyllic.

Pastoral is thus a strong element in the escape and nostalgia generated by fantasy as a genre of popular consolation. Raymond Williams, in The Country and the City, discusses the tendency of every age to mourn the loss of the pastoral peace associated with a previous age. The nostalgic process extends apparently endlessly backwards through history: "Where indeed shall we go, before the escalator stops? One answer, of course, is Eden ... that well-remembered garden" (197 p. 11-12). Fantasy's mythic status is certainly akin to that of the biblical paradise. Nostalgia for the pastoral past does not in fact look back on any specific age, but to an idealised construct of humanity's place in nature which has only ever existed in wistful fantasy, myth, and, of course, in literature. And, while each age looks backwards, the nostalgia of our own time is allied with a greater potential for destruction than ever before.

The literary pastoral is a classical poetic form, dating back to Theocritus and Virgil, and its relevance to the idyllic aspects of fantasy romance is that of mood and setting. Williams comments on the richness of pastoral imagery in depicting rural setting, agriculture and the happy, rustic inhabitants of such a setting: "Within the beautiful development of the pastoral songs this sense of simple community, living on narrow margins and experiencing the delights of summer and fertility the more intensely because they also know winter and barrenness and accident, is intensely present" (1985 p. 15). Certainly William Empson's analysis of pastoral allows it to be "dogged by humbug" (1935 p. 9); there is something of hypocrisy in a form which enables the urban reader to experience something of nature despite contemporary society's increasing alienation from nature, and without having to lose any of the benefits of technology. Again, the potential for escapism is obvious. Like comedy, pastoral is integrative, and Thomas G. Rosenmeyer notes Johnson's concept of nature in this regard: "a pastoralist should be, not an excursionist or a slummer, but one for whom the country... provides an appropriate frame for staging a way of life that is 'natural'... There is nothing mysterious about the bond between the herdsman and his habitat..." (1969 p. 19). Thus fantasy romance could be seen to reproduce, in a drastically modified form, some of the functions and impulses of the pastoral.

Unlike comedy, pastoral springs from a sophisticated literary impulse, "an urban interpretation of rural matters" (John Barrell and John Bull, 1982 p. 4), which again places it close to the concerns of fantasy romance, the land revisited by the nostalgic member of a technological society. The sophistication of the pastoral allows for its use as social commentary, the investigation of current political themes under the guise of rustic simplicity; Barrell and Bull, in their introduction to the Penguin book of English Pastoral Verse, note that the pastoral "did provide the poet with a way of talking about his world and its values" (1982 p. 7). This social function is akin to the satirical social investigation of some forms of comedy, and, as noted above, is alien to the constitution of fantasy romance. Perhaps the most interesting parallel is found in the pastoral Eclogues of Virgil, whose contrast, reflecting the aftermath of war and the resulting social upheaval, "is between the pleasures of rural settlement and the threat of loss and eviction ... the peace of country life could be contrasted with the disturbance of war" (Williams, 1985 p. 17). Fantasy romance depends, as discussed above, on a similar contrast, between the peace and beauty of the land and the need to defend it against destructive threat. Perhaps the best example of this is McKillip's *Hed*, whose peaceful farming community serves as an inspiration to the hero in his necessarily violent battle against the destructive forces of the *Shapechangers*.

The land depicted by the pastoral is frequently very far from realistic, functioning, as does the magical land, as "a paradise of our hopes and wishes, a country that never was and never will be" (Rosenmeyer, 1969 p. 18). Both Williams and Barrell and Bull invoke the classical myth of the Golden Age, the idealised time of effortless, pastoral happiness, and both relate this image to the biblical Garden of Eden myth. Barrell and Bull note how the pastoral is "a mythic view of the relationship of men in society...", its function "to mystify and to obscure the harshness of actual social and economic organisation" (1982 p. 4). While some versions of pastoral do allow for the effort and toil of agriculture, this is never harsh; Rosenmeyer insists that "the pastoral has such reminders lightly edged in. They furnish muscle and tone; they do not attract our ideological attention" (1969 p. 23). The presence of the magical paradigm in modern fantasy in some ways intensifies such elements of ease. Tolkien's Elves, for example, inhabit Lorien effortlessly, food (which Tolkien, in true bucolic style, describes in abundance) appearing apparently from nowhere. Donaldson's *Stonedowners*, too, have a lifestyle which could serve as a metaphor for effortless integration with the environment, wants such as heat and healing supplied by the land itself. Elements such as these may seem to call into question fantasy romance as a truly ecological, and hence effectively political, genre; again, I will address this issue in the final chapter.

It is evident that fantasy romance is not pastoral, although obviously some fantasies are closer to pastoral than others - as Hume suggests, Bradbury's Dandelion Wine is almost pure pastoral, as is The Wind in the Willows. I would, however, disagree with Hume's identification of "insider" and "outsider" pastoral, both essentially plotless, and based in the nostalgic recalling of sensory pleasures (Hume, 1984 p. 60-63). Instead, I would argue that fantasy literature as a genre includes elements of pastoral, often in the form of sensory gratification (landscape and food are the most frequent), but primarily in the central function which she gives to pastoral, to "invite the reader to escape from complex contemporary life... pastoral can sharpen our sensory awareness and remind us of ways in which our lives lack simplicity" (1984 p. 64). While some fantasy may be pure pastoral, most fantasy romance - certainly all fantasy romance based in the magical land - will contain pastoral references as a result of the pastoral impulse within the genre as a whole. And, again, the presence of pastoral elements in fantasy romance introduces from yet another angle the motif of escape from an ugly and increasingly urban technological world.

The green world: the land as ecological construct

Discussing Richard Adams' beast-fable fantasy Watership Down, Christopher Pawling identifies "a strain of thought which emerged in the nineteenth century and has played a large part in shaping the culture of the English middle class. From the Romantics onwards, 'nature' is presented as a utopian alternative to the world of industrialisation and commerce" (1985 p. 216). Raymond Williams confirms this: "Into a green and quiet nature we project, I do not doubt, much of our own deepest feeling, our senses of growth and perspective and beauty" (1980 p. 81). While romance, comedy and pastoral have strong associations with nature in their own right, they are only part of a tradition of writing nature as replenishment, one which finds particular expression in the strong natural imagery and awareness of beauty of the Romantic poets. Kroeber's study points out the general neglect of the Romantic era in modern studies of fantasy, which have dealt primarily with continental literature, and notes the Romantic awareness "that in writing fantasy they were recovering a major feature of their finest literary tradition" (1988 p. 7). The importance for modern fantasy romance of the dual Romantic interest in fantasy and nature is obvious.

Wordsworth's Preface to the Lyrical Ballads states his preference for "rustic" situations as subjects for poetry because, among other things, "in that situation the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature." His poetry stresses the importance of nature as a vision in the midst of urbanisation, as here the song of the thrush recalls the countryside even in the middle of London: "a note of enchantment" evoking "A

mountain ascending, a vision of trees" (*The Reverie of Poor Susan*). The Romantic tradition saw the development of an intensely emotional relationship with the natural world, one that focused on the awareness, not only of beauty, but of harmony. Inevitably, with the Industrial Revolution and the increasing urbanisation of the Victorian age, the poetic love of nature became associated with an awareness of the ugliness of an industrial age, and a growing awareness of the extent of humanity's alienation from nature. This is powerfully expressed in the poetry of William Blake, "England's green and pleasant land" contrasted with the "clouded hills" and "dark Satanic mills" of industry (from *Milton*), or the dynamic and terrifying mechanical energy of *The Tyger*, the processes of creation becoming those of industry:

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

The Industrial Revolution's effect on literature was to create, not only the need for an ideal of natural beauty, but also a sense of the potential destruction of such beauty. Fantasy's magical land, celebrated for its beauty but threatened by destruction, thus takes its place in a tradition of writing, one particularly associated with the development of technology and the increasing urbanisation of the environment.

The sense of the land's encapsulation of beauty and health is thus matched by an equal tradition of the land as waste land, as locus for destruction and despair. The Romantics, and later the Victorian poets, were instrumental in developing the association between damaged landscape and emotional negativity - despair, terror, a sense of death. Keats uses this correspondence effectively in poems such as *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, where the knight's despair, "Alone and palely loitering," is reflected in his desolate environment:

The sedge has withered from the Lake
And no birds sing!"

The association between land awareness and the romance genre is strong, both in this poem, with its elements of faerie and chivalric love, and in others. In the Victorian era, Browning's *Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came* fuses the quest motif with a ravaged landscape, the "starved ignoble nature" and "grey plain" through which the protagonist travels echoing his uncertainty, moral confusion and eventual despairing failure. The sense of disease, decay and wasted landscape is in many ways a precursor to Tolkien's Mordor, Donaldson's perverted Land, Tepper's depiction of pollution and destruction, which mirror the mental state not only of the individual who attempts to halt the destruction, but of the human society which caused such ravages of the land.

This awareness of the potential destruction of the land in English literature continues into this century, to find its most notable expression, again in the context of romance, in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. Eliot's highly complex engagement with the insecurity and disintegration of modern experience is expressed in synchronic and fragmented images which centre on the mythic image of the waste land itself. The poem resists conventional romance patterns in its insistence on disorder, the lack of underlying unity in the experience of the time. Like modern fantasy romance, Eliot's poem responds to social context in expressing loss, but his fragmented depiction of the breakdown of fertility and life into drought, disintegration and stasis is fundamentally bleak, denying the possibility of regeneration. The land here is wasted indeed, its images diametrically opposed to either integrative harmony or underlying meaning:

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water.
(*The Waste Land*, I. "The Burial of the Dead.")

The landscape is stripped of its beauty, mystery or romance, for "the nymphs are departed"; its rivers, polluted and ugly, "[sweat]/ Oil and tar." Sexuality, which stands both for fertility and for integration, is mechanical and meaningless, "caresses... unreprieved, if undesired" ("The Fire Sermon.") Eliot's intense and literary awareness of the mythic land is thus expressed entirely negatively, a bleak and despairing vision of an environment and a humanity alienated beyond redemption.

Landscape, in the English tradition, may thus reflect an emotional or intellectual state, and its health and beauty is intrinsic to the health both of the individual and of the society. It can be seen how the development of a scientific and popular cult of environmental awareness could be met by a parallel poetic and literary awareness of the healthy land. The environmental movement has gained strength over most of this century, building up a body of associated theoretical and sometimes spiritual thought which attempts to define the place of humanity, with all of humanity's new abilities and problems, in a vanishing natural environment. Raymond Williams discusses the social impulses and conditions which led to the establishment of environmental issues in contemporary society, again in this integrative sense of environment as a reflection of the psyche:

Most earlier ideas of nature had included, in an integral way, ideas of human nature. But now nature, increasingly, was 'out there', and it was natural to reshape it to a dominant need, without having to consider very deeply what this reshaping might do to men. People talk of order in those cleared estates and those landscaped parks, but what was being moved about and rearranged was not only earth and water but men
(1980 p. 79-80).

The dominant idea which characterises modern environmental awareness is that of integration, a reaction against the domination of the landscape which humanity has hitherto heedlessly practised. Much of natural beauty in our time has been lost, leading to the ecological movement a fierce defensiveness which aims at the preservation of that beauty which still remains - a defensiveness seen at its logical extreme in activists such as Greenpeace and other fanatical ecological and deep-ecology movements.

The implications for modern fantasy's magical land are clear. Its central focus, as a romance form, is both beauty and the potential loss of beauty; its quest-motif is a perfect vehicle for confrontation and defense. As comic narrative, its mode is integrative and restorative, and its pastoral elements define an ideal of peace as well as beauty. The increasing modern awareness of a real attack on the ecology of our planet is represented by an idealised sense of the land under threat. The land is defended and restored in a clear-cut and unambiguous confrontation which lacks the problematical grey areas of practical environmental awareness in either a capitalistic or an underdeveloped setting. Fantasy romance can thus be seen to have an identity as a literature which, following Elgin's study (1985), I have defined as ecological: reflecting and celebrating the healthy and self-renewing beauty of the natural environment, i.e. the land, and expressing an impulse of integration of humanity with the environment as well as the environment's harmonious integration with itself. Elgin comments:

... ecology itself underscores three features of natural life: interdependence, diversity and vulnerability. These features are enormously important in evaluating the role literature plays in creating attitudes towards nature since they are a direct contradiction of the tragic idea and a direct affirmation of the comic (1985 p. 27).

In a dualistic development, the growth of ecological awareness in modern society has paralleled the gradual emergence of a literary form whose generic roots combine to create precisely the same concerns and themes as those of the environmental movement.

In this thesis, then, I wish to look at several fantasy romance texts, mostly fantasy series within the conventional expectations of the genre, in terms of their depiction of the magical land. The texts chosen are, I hope, more competent and self-aware than the majority of fantasy writings, particularly as represented by successful and prolific authors such as Eddings and Anthony, but they remain popular texts, recognisably genre fantasy. While the emphasis is on contemporary American texts, given that the bulk of fantasy romance appears to be generated in America, I have included a discussion of Tolkien's Lord of the Rings for purposes of comparison. As the originator of the genre, Lord of the Rings shows the ecological potential of the generic magical land, but, written in a time of lesser ecological awareness, fails to develop it to the same extent.

Of the contemporary American texts, McKillip's Riddlemaster trilogy focuses on problems of pacifism and violence in the defence of the land, and thus deals integrally with the identification of the threatening other within the self. Donaldson's Thomas Covenant series is particularly interesting in terms of its attempt to subvert the conventions of the fantasy romance genre, an attempt which in some ways lessens the ecological imperative of the narrative, but ultimately fails due to the author's lack of control over his text. Tepper's True Game world functions as loosely-rationalised science fantasy narrative, but nonetheless conforms to the romance parameters of the fantasy genre, and her feminist motivations provide interesting variations on the hero-quest in her provision of a heroine as well as a hero, and in the resulting confluences of female/land. Orson Scott Card's Alvin Maker transposes the traditional hero-quest into a more recognisable land, namely settler America, which brings the ecological impact of the series into vivid immediacy. His depiction of the hero and the land is informed both by a post-colonial awareness which is developed in the self/other conflict of the romance, and by his Mormon background, which allows for a slightly conflicting sense of America as promised land.

Finally, I deal briefly with the issues of fantasy romance as an escape genre, in an attempt to determine whether ecological impulses in fantasy romance could have any realistic impact on the development of environmental awareness in modern society, or whether it in fact provides consolation without necessitating action.

Chapter 2:

J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings

*I am.. very much in love with plants and above all trees, and always have been;
and I find human maltreatment of them as hard to bear
as some find ill-treatment of animals.*

(JRR Tolkien, in a letter to the Houghton Mifflin Co, 30 June 1955)

In considering the claims of modern fantasy romance as an ecological genre, it is both necessary and illuminating to investigate the modern genesis of the genre, in Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings. Tolkien's concern with natural beauty and landscape is undeniable, inherent both in the character of the writer and in the narrative's generic roots in romance, pastoral and quest. The Lord of the Rings can be said to mark the beginning of ecological consciousness in the modern fantasy novel. Despite this, however, Tolkien's perspective is in some ways imperialist, and the narrative's ecological awareness is limited by the context in which the author was writing. Ecology tends to occupy a peripheral and often metaphorical position in the narrative, subordinate to the writer's deeper humanocentric concerns, and to a Christian vision which is both idealising and limiting.

While he is highly aware of ecological themes of beauty and health, Tolkien writes in England, a land tamed by dense population and the agricultural operation of centuries. He consequently seems to lack any coherent sense of the independent and powerful land. The effect is ultimately distancing, as the beauty and vitality of Tolkien's landscapes, rather than being a locus of regeneration, become imbued with unattainability and an inescapable nostalgia. In a sense, he mourns the beauty and enchantment now lost to Britain. This provides a certain contrast to the ecological expressions of later American authors, writing as colonisers in a colonised land, in a decade of ecological consciousness, when the awareness of the environment both free and tamed is infinitely more recent.

Furthermore, Tolkien's experience of warfare is radically different to that of the modern writers studied. His personal distaste for ugliness and destruction did not prevent him from partaking of something of the idealising consciousness of World War I, a consciousness very different to that of Card or Tepper, whose narratives stress the unavoidable horror of power used destructively. With this celebration of battle, stemming equally from his literary base in epic, Tolkien loses the consciousness which tends to attach battle in any sense to the awareness of invasion and environmental destruction inextricable from modern

post-colonial guilt. Any possibly political aspect of Tolkien's ecological writing is at least partially undercut by his epic-based glorification of battle.

Thus, while Tolkien's love of natural beauty is obvious throughout his narrative, it is revealed as limited when compared to post-1960s consciousness. In The Lord of the Rings we can see the potential, the first expression of the love of natural beauty which has had such a powerful effect on modern romance writing. T.A. Shippey comments on Tolkien's frequent return to the landscape for inspiration, his "obsessive interest in plants and scenery, pipeweed and athelas, the crown of stonecrop around the overthrown king's head in Ithilien..." (1982 p. 100). However, where Tolkien's writing represented his own attempts to transcend his own context of environmental unawareness, modern writers find free and natural expression for such themes in contemporary ecological consciousness, allowing for development in the genre which is both radical and interesting.

Ecological presence in The Lord of the Rings falls into two distinct camps: the magical (the Elves, the Ents, Tom Bombadil) and the everyday (the Shire). Humanity's¹ place is seen to be the controlled and limited world of agricultural reality, effectively a fruitful co-existence with nature in its tamed state. The hobbits form the ideal of this kind of interaction, characterised as "a close friendship with the earth" (Prologue to I 18)². The political confirmation of power from the land itself seen in the narratives of Tepper, Card and McKillip, is lacking, since magic and enchantment are separate issues from the land, often expressed through it, but far from intrinsic to it. Unlike the ecological hero, mortals are permitted only limited participation in the enchanted world, whose ecological vitality is furthermore sapped by stasis and a sense of decay. This can be seen at least partially as a reflection of Tolkien's experience of a land stripped of enchantment by cultivation and human presence.

Tolkien's Elves: the land as Other

Tolkien's Elves are, obviously, the most prominent locus of natural beauty in the narrative, and Lorien, the "Golden Wood" (I 438), serves perhaps as Middle-Earth's only and limited

¹ I believe that Tolkien considers hobbits as part of "Men" - as he comments, they are "relatives of ours: far nearer to us than Elves.." (I pg. 18). In the narrative, they provide the comic aspect of humanity, where Aragorn and his kin provide the tragic or epic; however, in Tolkien's moral structure they are ranged alongside man, with the same duties and concerns.

² I have referenced the three parts of The Lord of the Rings by volume: I The Fellowship of the Ring; II The Two Towers; III The Return of the King.

version of the magical land.³ It is undeniably beautiful, "the fairest of all the dwellings of my people", as Legolas comments (I 434), but its beauty is somehow a foreign element, imposed rather than intrinsic, and elevated rather than earthy. Frodo's perceptions of Lorien recognise this quality of addition, for "A light was upon it for which his language had no name" (I 455). Not only is the beauty of the land beyond mortal description, but it is in itself unnatural, its beauty removed from the natural cycles of the earth: "There are no trees like the trees of that land. For in the autumn their leaves fall not, but turn to gold." (I 434). Finally, unlike the natural order, it is ideal, without flaw: "No blemish or sickness or deformity could be seen in anything that grew upon the earth. On the land of Lorien there was no stain" (I 455). While a beautiful forest, Lorien's beauty has little to do with its "forest"-ness: its harmonies are far other than those of nature.

Much of this aspect can, of course, be linked to Tolkien's perceptions of magic and particularly of faerie - the land of enchantment that is always separate from the land of men. In his essay *On Fairy Stories* Tolkien describes "the realm of fairy-story" in terms of threat as well as of separateness:

... beauty that is an enchantment, and an ever-present peril; both joy and sorrow as sharp as swords. In that realm a man may, perhaps, count himself fortunate to have wandered, but its very richness and strangeness tie the tongue of a traveller who would report them.
(Tolkien, 1947 p. 3)

The idealisation of the Elves and their land is akin to that which Tolkien's essay ascribes to the folk of Faerie, and also an antidote to the "flower spirits and fluttering sprites with antennae" which he disliked as a child (1947 p. 6). However, in this insistence on the aspects of nobility and lack of blemish, the depiction of the Elves has also distanced the land they occupy from the land occupied by mankind: faerie holds "tree and bird, water and stone, wine and bread", but only "ourselves, mortal men, when we are enchanted" (1947 p. 9, my emphasis).

Like the realm of Faerie, Lorien is set apart, dangerous as well as beautiful - in Boromir's words, a "perilous land" where "few come out who once go in; and of that few none have escaped unscathed" (I 439). Shippey comments on its likeness to the "earthly Paradise" of the Pearl manuscript, having some of the impact of myth as well as that of romance (1982 pp. 163-4). It represents a removed and magical land whose power is in no way available to mortals, except as a respite from the ills of their ordinary world; it is apart from the

³ Lorien is the most obvious example, which I have studied at length; Rivendell operates similarly as a locus of enchantment, although to a lesser extent. I have not dealt with Mirkwood, as my focus is on adult fantasy romance, not children's as in The Hobbit, but Mirkwood's ecological nature is slightly different to that of Lorien, and represents a less idealised and magical environment.

struggles of natural life⁴. This forms a marked contrast to the magical lands of Tepper, McKillip or Card, whose heroes are continually sustained and empowered by the land they both inhabit and defend.

Lorien is thus a magical land, but does not wholly allow for the expression of ecological awareness, not only because of its qualities of idealised removal, but also from its lack of true vitality. As well as reflecting an exhausted England, this is closely linked to Tolkien's primary concerns with death and mortality in the narrative; while the "Golden Wood" is timelessly lovely, it is also static, a beautiful object, preserved rather than continually renewing. As does their land, the Elves lack true ecological power, since their skills are those of creating artefacts rather than promoting growth. Tolkien comments on the nature of Elves as "embalmers":

They wanted to have their cake and eat it: to live in the mortal historical Middle-earth because they had become fond of it... and so tried to stop its change and history, stop its growth, keep it as a pleasaunce, even largely a desert, where they could be 'artists' - and they were overburdened with sadness and nostalgic regret.
(Letter to Naomi Mitchison, 1981 p. 197).

As Tolkien himself suggests, the notion of the land as "pleasaunce", as created artefact which is trivialised by its function and to which its makers condescend, is one lacking in self-sustaining vitality, leading to the concept of the "desert", the ultimate sterility. Arthur Morgan's paper notes the condemnation which Tolkien's essentially Christian moral structure attaches to such a use of power. The magic of the Elves is held in their rings, just as is that of Sauron, and "tampering with [creation], re-ordering it or re-shaping it to one's own will, is to put the creature in its pride above the Creator" (1992 p. 6). While allied on the side of Good, the Elves are largely powerless, their "stainless" garden contaminated by a hint of the same seduction of power to which Sauron fell. They cannot defend their land because it is neither theirs, nor really a "land" in the vital sense.

Thus Lorien, icon of natural beauty, is also sterile. Timeless and unearthly, it can take no part in the struggles of mortals; it is a respite, not a source of power. While its groves hold the ideal of beauty and wholeness for which the War of the Ring is being fought, it lacks the comic vitality which would grant the Elves the status of ecological protectors. Lorien has "a power that holds evil from the land" (I 438), but should Sauron triumph, such power will fade and Lorien will fall. Ultimately, Lorien must pass away and the commonplace age of man must prevail. The tragedy of its creators, condemned to lose what they love, is

⁴ Treebeard, representing the inherent power of the land rather than the superimposed magic of the Elves, recognises Lorien as "a queer place, and not for just anyone to venture in" (II 82).

compelling, a nostalgia which pervades the narrative and, in parts, outweighs its comic affirmation of continued life.

Tom Bombadil: the marginalised presence of the pagan.

If the Elves are the tragic ideal of natural beauty, then the figure of Tom Bombadil provides some approach to the comic, and he is certainly depicted in terms of the vitality which the Elves largely lack. From his first appearance he is associated with an exuberant natural world and a vibrant physical presence: his "deep glad voice", singing "carelessly and happily" is followed by the appearance of his blue-feathered hat, and finally, with an animal "hop and a bound", the individual himself. He is described in completely natural images - he stumps along like "a cow going down to drink", his face is "red as a ripe apple" (I 165), and he carries the water-lilies he brings to his wife.⁵

In his association with Goldberry, daughter of the river, Tom Bombadil suggests the more pagan and animistic attitude to nature which Tolkien, excepting the tree-spirits who are the Ents, largely neglects. Unlike the Elves, Tom both understands and empathises with nature, and even in his power over it, addresses it in its own terms - he tells Old Man Willow to "Eat earth! Dig deep! Drink water! Go to sleep!" (I 166). His house is also elemental, characterised in terms of "clean stone" and "fresh green rushes" (I 172). His comic presence is strengthened by his power over the unnatural death exemplified by the Barrow-wights, into whose cold realm he bursts to the accompaniment of "the light of the sun rising red behind him" (I 194).

However, despite this affinity with nature, Tom, while a powerful figure of natural strength, is still limited, in that his power carries the moral weighting which Tolkien apparently cannot avoid. Tom's home excludes "mist and tree-shadows and deep water, and untame things" (I 171) - such entities as Old Man Willow and the trees of the forest. In the sense that Tom's affinity with the land excludes certain parts of it, it is perhaps not entirely naturalistic, but contains an element of the same imposed morality which characterises the Elves. Tolkien comments that people apparently cannot "imagine things hostile to men and hobbits who prey on them without being in league with the Devil"

⁵ The language in which he is depicted forms a complete contrast to the descriptive abstractions applied to the Elves - compare the first appearance of Galadriel and Celeborn, "grave and beautiful... clad wholly in white", their hair of "deep gold" and "silver long and bright", their eyes "keen as lances in the starlight" (I 460) - unearthly and elevated imagery.

(Letter to Molly Waldron, 1981 p. 228). However, while Old Man Willow is not associated with the evil of Sauron, he is nonetheless seen as an "evil" part of nature where Tom is "good"; Tolkien's Christian image structures are unable to include twisted trees or deep water in the realm of the (desirably) natural.⁶ Tom, in his non-condemnatory relationship with the old willow tree, comes closer than the Elves to an acceptance of the darker side of nature, but its "good" elements are still firmly in control.

Despite his potentially strengthening relationship with the land, Tom Bombadil is nonetheless a marginalised and largely ineffective presence in the narrative's larger issues. Tolkien comments that "Tom Bombadil is not an important person" although "he represents something I feel is important" (Letter to Naomi Mitchison, 1981 p. 178). Although a powerful nature-spirit within his own realm, he is strictly localised to the Withywindle, and entirely peripheral to the events surrounding the Ring. In the same letter, Tolkien notes that, unlike both Sauron and the Elves, Tom Bombadil stands apart from any workings of power in the narrative.

... if you have... renounced control, and take your delight in things for themselves without reference to yourself, watching, observing and to some extent knowing, then the question of the rights and wrongs of power and control might become utterly meaningless to you, and the means of power quite valueless. It is a naturally pacifist view... [but] there are in fact things with which it cannot cope; and upon which its existence nonetheless depends.
(Letters, 1981 p. 179)

Thus, while Tom represents natural (ecological) power in his knowledge of the land, that ecological strength is nonetheless helpless in the face of the evil of Sauron. The Ring has no power over Tom, but he likewise has no power over the Ring. In the brief moment where he holds the ring, he becomes the complete antithesis to the Eye of Sauron, holding power yet untouched by it: "the hobbits had a vision, both comical and alarming, of his bright blue eye gleaming through a circle of gold" (I 183). The strength of his association with the land is marginalised, peripheral to the moral struggle that Tolkien perceives as being central to the narrative.

The figure of Tom comes closest, perhaps, to the ecological heroes provided in Morgon, Jinian or Alvin. "No one has ever caught old Tom walking in the forest, wading in the water, leaping on the hill-tops under light and shadow. He has no fear. Tom Bombadil is the Master." (I 172). He is a part of the land, one with it. However, as Elgin notes, while

⁶ He is more successful in his depiction of the Ents and Huorns; the darkness and power of the Huorns manages to project some sense of the dark/light or death/life balance of nature, while escaping the implicit condemnation given to Old Man Willow and the Old Forest (see discussion of Ents below).

he is "a kind of elemental life force, older and more powerful than the abstractions of time and power that surround him", he is no solution to the problem of evil posed by Sauron: should Sauron triumph, Tom Bombadil must fall. Like Lorien, he provides a respite for the heroes in whose hands rest the power of moral regeneration, but he cannot himself regenerate the land.

The marvel of the trees: Ents and the active land

In the Ents, the land moving of and for itself in the battle against destruction by mankind, Tolkien perhaps comes closest to the ecological forces portrayed in more recent fantasy. Like Tom Bombadil, the Ents are both ancient and powerful, representing the elemental forces of nature, and Tolkien's powerful vision of the walking forest finds its echoes in much modern fantasy (Tepper's enormous forest spirits are one example). Unlike Tom, however, the Ents retain the sense of mysterious and terrifying power which Tolkien's moral idealism tends as a rule to write out of natural forces. In the Ents alone does the narrative supply some sense of the dualism of nature, its ferocity as well as its beauty.

Tolkien's love of and defensive attitude towards trees is clear, as in the quotation at the head of this chapter; elsewhere he states that "In all my works I take the part of trees as against all their enemies" (Letters, 1981 p. 419). This impulse is seen in the portrayal of the Ents primarily as defenders, tree-herds whose role is protection of the forests. The element of slowness in the characterisation of the Ents adds to this sense of responsibility, while forming a sharp contrast to the "hasty" affairs of mortals (obviously including tree-killing). Pippin's impression of Treebeard is of "slow, steady thinking... as if something that grew in the ground... had suddenly waked up and was considering you with the same slow care it had given to its own inside affairs for endless years" (I 77). Evidently, Tolkien feels that "slow care" is both appropriate to trees, and the antithesis of the destructive impulses that destroy them. The concept of dangerous speed becomes important in his treatment of magic, discussed below.

As well as being preservers, the Ents are creatures of great power, a potent force in the defense of their trees:

... We are made of the bones of the earth. We can split stones like the roots of trees, only quicker, far quicker, if our minds are roused! If we are not hewn down, or destroyed by fire or blast of sorcery, we could split Isengard into splinters and crack its walls into rubble.
(II 107)

However, as with other natural powers in Tolkien's world, the Ents are limited in their effect, confined to moving only in defence of their trees, and unconcerned with the world of men. Treebeard tells the hobbits that "I am not altogether on anybody's *side*, if you understand me.. Mordor is a long way away... There is naught an old Ent can do to hold back that storm: he must weather it or crack" (II 89). As Elgin notes, the Ents respond only to an immediate threat, not to the moral abstractions of the struggle of the Ring: "Treebeard, as a part of nature, is concerned with precisely what any ecological system is concerned with, survival" (1985 p. 41). Rather than the increasing threat of Mordor, it is the destruction to trees by Saruman's Orcs to which Treebeard reacts - "But Saruman now! Saruman is a neighbour: I cannot overlook him" (II 89). Where Tepper's forest numens wage active war against invading humanity on a global level, the Ents respond only to direct action against their particular forest.

The power of the Ents is greatly strengthened by the sense of ruthlessness, anger and brooding intensity which clings to them, most obviously in the characterisation of the Huorns. It is interesting that Tolkien describes these semi-Ents in terms of shadow, which is a property most often attributed to the influence of Sauron - Chapter 2 of Book VI, describing Sam and Frodo's journey through Mordor, is entitled "The Land of Shadow". This sense of brooding power is applied to the Huorns, described as "great groping trees" by a rather overawed Merry: "There is a great power in them, and they seem able to wrap themselves in shadow... They can move very quickly, if they are angry.. They have become queer and wild" (II 211). Unlike the cosy domesticity of Tom Bombadil, this force of elemental nature is black as well as green, destructive as well as redemptive. The association with Mordor suggests Tolkien's unease with this aspect of nature, although his sense of natural power is perhaps too strong to permit him to omit it entirely.

Even so, the power inherent in the destructive aspect of the forest is insufficient. The forest walks and is strong, but its strength is undercut for any regenerative process since, like the timeless garden of the Elves, it is ultimately sterile: the Ents have lost their Entwives. Treebeard mourns the fact that "there were never many of us, and we have not increased" (II 93). Like trees, the Ents grow slowly and with dignity, but, ironically for a race personifying the power of trees, they lack the vitality of reproductive growth, and their forests are claustrophobic and stifling. Pippin uses the strangely domestic metaphor of a room where "the furniture has never been moved or changed for generations" (II 74). While the Ents are not entirely static, being capable of gradual growth and change from and to Huorns, this is limited and takes place at a rate too slow to compete with that of mortals - certainly too slow to have any vital power in their struggles.

Thus, while the Ents escape the abstracted morality of the Elves, they are similarly limited. Tolkien has devised a fitting revenge for the "destruction, murder and torture of trees" and the "savage sound of the electric saw" which so distresses him in his own world (letter to the Daily Telegraph, 1981 p. 418), but such a revenge remains peripheral to the true concerns of Middle-Earth. Tolkien's principle seems to be that the land is unconcerned with the moral outrage which Sauron represents. Its power, although often considerable, is confined to the area it inhabits, lacking the instrumentality which characterises the magic of the land in much modern fantasy. In many ways, the walking forest of the Ents is a logical antidote to the polluted desert of Mordor, a vision whose power endures into much modern fantasy writing; yet Tolkien's moral structure defines the corrupted power of Sauron as strictly a human problem.

Domestic comedy: the hobbits and the taming of the land

The hobbits and the Shire are central to the narrative, both morally and ecologically. They introduce a compelling pastoral ideal, a peaceful, placid and non-technological existence that is primarily agricultural and totally unconcerned with issues of power. As noted above, the hobbits have "a close friendship with the earth" (I 18). They also conform to the comic ideal: "... laugh they did, and eat, and drink, often and heartily, being fond of simple jests at all times, and of six meals a day.." (I 18). Their earthy vitality, rustic good-nature and pastoral lifestyle is backed by their natural fecundity, and they are the only people in the narrative to be associated with children on any extended basis. Hobbits, free of the sterility associated with Elves and Ents, would seem to be a natural locus of comic and ecological strength in the war of the Ring.

As with other sources of potential power, however, Tolkien subverts this apparent strength: the ecological power of the hobbits may not be sterilised, but it is certainly trivialised. Here, more strongly than any other element in the narrative, Tolkien projects his sense of the placid rural Britain now largely lost. The hobbits are characterised as prosperous but rustically narrow-minded farmers:

... an unobtrusive but very ancient people, more numerous formerly than they are today; for they love peace and quiet and good tilled earth: a well-ordered and well-farmed countryside was their favourite haunt..
(I 17).

Moss's article on fantasy and pastoral discusses the association of pastoral with "youthful innocence" (1985 p. 232), and there is certainly a sense in which the hobbits are childlike, protected from the more "adult" terrors of the outside world. Their relationship with nature is an engagement entirely with its benevolent aspect, excluding the very real savagery touched upon by the Ents. Like children, they are given a sanitised version of nature.

They are at ease in the land only from the perspective of their snug holes and homes, and the fox passing Frodo and his companions on their quest is amazed- "I have seldom heard of a hobbit sleeping out of doors under a tree" (I 105). As Tolkien's Prologue comments, "they were, in fact, sheltered" (I 23), believing that things outside their well-ordered lives had nothing to do with them.

As well as this aspect of removal, the Shire has within its society an element of repression: wild nature is not only ignored, it is actively tamed. This is seen in the institutions of the Shirrifs, "concerned with the strayings of beasts", and the Bounders, employed to see that "Outsiders... did not make themselves a nuisance" (I 29). In other situations, their response to untamed nature is on the fine line between "taming" and the destructiveness of Sauron. When the Old Forest tries to encroach, "the hobbits came and cut down hundreds of trees, and made a great bonfire in the Forest, and burned all the ground for a long strip..." (I 154). Tolkien's love of nature obviously extends only to those aspects of nature which he perceives as "good", "benevolent" or "safe" - Goldberry confirms this in her reassurance to her guests that Tom Bombadil's house is safe from "untame things" (I 171).

Such a limited sympathy is matched by a very limited sense of power coming from the land, although this earth-friendship does allow the halflings a strength which is perhaps the precursor of the power granted to the ecological hero of modern fantasy. Hobbit wood-craft is in some ways akin to the skills of Card's Indians, although more mundane in nature:

They possessed from the first the art of disappearing swiftly and silently.. and this art they have developed until to Men it may seem magical. But Hobbits have never, in fact, studied magic of any kind...
(I 17-18)

Thus the benefits of their closeness to nature run no further than comfort to themselves, and a certain facility in concealment (the "burglar" aspect exploited in The Hobbit). They have no magic, no real power in the battle against Sauron. Their importance in the narrative, however, is based on their ability to endure - a moral quality, but one that also stems from the peace of their closeness to nature. The placid existence of the Shire becomes a secure base from which to enter the heroic world. Moss's discussion of pastoral notes the tendency for the fantasy hero to start from "a secure and untouched pastoral world of comfort and youthful innocence", from which he or she moves to be "radically tested in the heroic sphere of existence" (1985 p. 232). However, where modern fantasy's symbiosis with the land produces such heroes as Morgon, whose power over the land is rooted in his affinity for the peace of Hed, here it results in a hero whose success is expressed in terms of his resistance to enchantment, his prosaic endurance and lack of affinity with magic.

Hobbits are characterised by a sturdy practicality which disassociates them from magic, from the enchantment and strength of the land on which modern fantasy relies so heavily.

Magic does enter the Shire, but it has the effect only of magnifying the (prosaic) good inherent in the already fertile landscape. This is seen in the employment of Galadriel's box of dust. Sam's use of it produces an idyllic season of growth:

a marvellous year... wonderful sunshine and delicious rain, in due times and perfect measure... young hobbits very nearly bathed in strawberries and cream... And no-one was ill, and everyone was pleased, except those who had to mow the grass"
(III 369).

For hobbit-kind, the reward of defeating evil is not enchantment, but enrichment. Like Gandalf's fireworks, a source of wonder and suspicion to the hobbits, magic cannot for long impinge on the essentially petty-bourgeois environment of the Shire. After a perfect year, reality soon re-asserts itself, and life must continue as normal. Tolkien's ecological vision seems to disassociate health and vitality from magic and enchantment, and in the end, it is prosaic everyday life which will endure.

Thus, this potent source of comic vitality and fertile nature in the narrative is firmly separated from magic, enchantment or power. Elgin notes the existence of the Shire as a pastoral Eden which is nonetheless temporary and which, however idyllic, can never escape from reality. Commenting on the passage quoted above, he notes that "the conclusion of the lyric description... reminds us gently but unmistakably that the real world of mowing grass, with all its attendant irritations, is always present" (1985 p. 39). The Shire is sheltered, but its inhabitants are included integrally in the moral struggles of "real life": natural power is firmly subordinate to human morality. Tolkien's ecological concept celebrates a continuation of life, but its mundane vitality serves only as a pastoral base for the moral heroes with whom he is actually concerned.

The magic of Middle-Earth: externalised paternalism

Shippey's discussion of Tolkien makes the suggestion that "Earth and magic and non-human species are all in differing proportions very closely combined" in the narrative (1982 p. 101). This is certainly true in the general impact of landscape in The Lord of the Rings, and, as discussed above, in the various ecological empowerments of non-human races such as Elves, Ents and Tom Bombadil (as well as the hobbits in a slightly more complex sense). However, such an impact is superficial, both in the limitations of the non-human powers, and in the underlying rationalisation of magic itself in the narrative.

Magic in Middle-Earth is far from being a freely available force, but rests instead in certain individuals, places, objects - Gandalf, Lorien, the Rings. There is no sense in which humanity generally may learn to wield magical power. The moral struggles of the narrative are generated, assisted or inhibited by magic as an externalised and largely paternalistic force, although often with a strong ecological character. Tolkien's own time, where the paternalism of colonial attitudes was largely accepted, is reflected in the political workings of the novel's magic, where powerful figures removed from humanity wield power against or in defence of humanity - never with humanity. Gandalf, for example, is a deliberate sage figure in the tradition of the Arthurian cycle's Merlin: like Merlin, Gandalf purpose is to "train, advise, instruct." As the White Rider, he is a figure of emergency rescue: "the crisis had become too grave, and needed an enhancement of power" (Tolkien in a letter to Robert Murray, 1981 p. 202). The same is true of the Elves, whose interest in things natural involves a sense of education, almost condescension - "waking trees up and teaching them to speak, and learning their tree-talk. They always wished to talk to everything, the old Elves did" (II 84). The use of magic is seen to be too great a matter for humanity.

In terms of this magical removal, the heroic foci of events - the Nine Companions, most particularly Frodo and Sam - cannot themselves use magic to fulfil their various quests. Tolkien himself states that "magic in this story... is not to be come by by 'lore' or spells, but is in an inherent power not possessed or attainable by Men as such" (Letter to Naomi Mitchison, 1981 p. 200). Thus, while Middle-Earth exercises a powerful enchantment over the reader, such an enchantment allows for no creative interaction with magic on the part of the protagonists, a marked contrast to the modern ecological fantasies which focus largely on the hero's discovery and use of land-based power.

Tolkien's particular and underlying concept of magic both underlines his concern with natural beauty, and points to the limitations, in the ecological sense, of such a concern. Effectively, magic in Middle-Earth is removed, remote, enhancing natural beauty without ever engaging fully with it or with the agents of regeneration, moral or environmental. The basis for this removal can perhaps be found in Tolkien's rather abstracted and academic view of magic, which is also linked to the Christian concepts of creation and the fall from grace. In the case of the Elves, "their magic is Art, delivered from many of its human limitations: more effortless, more quick, more complete... And its object is... subcreation..." (Letter to Milton Waldeman, 1981 p. 146). To Tolkien, magic, as art, reflects life, whereas modern fantasy has taken this concept one step further, in making magic intrinsic to life, part of its processes.

However, as subcreation, Tolkien's magic also has profound moral implications. Magic becomes blasphemous, flawed, when its intent is to dominate, to change creation rather than to sub-create. Tolkien comments in the same letter on original evil in the form of Morgoth:

... his was a sub-creative Fall, and hence the Elves (the representatives of sub-creation par excellence) were peculiarly his enemies... Their Fall is into possessiveness and (to a less degree) into perversion of their art to power (1981 p. 146).

Thus magic, in Tolkien's view, essentially cannot affect the processes of natural life, since that is original Creation, and cannot be changed. The art of the Elves is permissible in that it enhances the beauty of that creation with sub-creation - Galadriel's mirror, for example, or the Elven tree-city, or Elven cloaks and ropes. It becomes problematical when it interferes with creation. The timelessness of Lorien, for example, is simply an attempt by the Elves to hold onto the beauty they have created beyond its natural span. Such an attempt is sterile, and Lorien must pass away.

The basis of ecological romance is thus seen in this conflation of magic with creation, i.e. with natural life. However, the limitation of Tolkien's view is seen when Creation, as opposed to sub-creation, becomes sanctified, and the true power of the land may not be touched; to him, magic is an addition to the created world rather than sourced in it. In one sense at least the magic utilised by the modern ecological hero would be, in Tolkien's terms, illegitimate: it touches the most basic laws of the land, which to him are the province of the Creator. Modern fantasy is thus emancipated and empowered greatly by its largely non-Christian background.

In itself, then, magic is characterless, its externalisation allowing it to be used equally for good or evil. Tolkien distinguishes between two types of magic, *magia* and *goeteia*; *magia* as the magic with 'real' effects, mostly the reduction of labour; and *goeteia* as a power closer to sorcery, affecting mainly the mind. As he comments, either form of magic is moral "only by motive or purpose or use. Both sides use both.. The supremely bad motive is... domination of other 'free' wills" (Letter to Naomi Mitchison, 1981 p. 200). The Elves and Gandalf use *magia* sparingly, "for specific beneficent purposes" (like a fire in wet wood). Their use of *goeteia* is "artistic and not intended to deceive", although they may bewilder humans - another aspect of the "faerie" nature of Elves, removed from the mortal world, and perilous to visit. Sauron, on the other hand, uses *magia* to dominate, mainly in the forging of the Ring, but also in his creation of deformed beings such as Orcs and the winged Nazgul. He himself is characterised primarily in terms of *goeteia*, the chilling power he exercises over the minds of his opponents.

It is *magia* which is perhaps more akin to the ecological magic of modern fantasy, although Tepper's Talents could be seen as a development of a form of *goeteia* with 'real' results. Interestingly for the ecological implications, however, the ecological possibilities in *magia* are equalled by technological elements: Richard Purhill's discussion notes Tolkien's apparent conflation of *magia* with science as a balance to *goeteia* as art, and suggests that the distinction is appropriate to the "twofold nature of Elves as 'scientists' and 'artists', or rather, as idealisations of the scientific and artistic elements in human beings" (1984 p. 103). The parallel between *magia*, art that speeds up action to achieve an object, and modern technology, is clear, and Tolkien's moral structure allows ample room for a warning to the modern world. Immediate action can be destructive and thoughtless, and it is also more effective, thus exaggerating mistakes. It is no accident that the Ents, as ecological icons, are a slow, careful race whose primary caution to humanity is against being "hasty".

Thus, in a moral/magical structure which holds the potential for disaster in the removal of effort, Tolkien makes a profoundly ecological statement. As Purhill comments, "Long before the effects of environmental pollution began to cause general alarm, Tolkien was an instinctively 'ecological' thinker" (1985 p. 103). This awareness of possible destruction of natural beauty is an intrinsic element in the structure of magic in Middle-Earth, yet its expression is limited in the narrative. The dominating morality of Tolkien's world does create a magical paradigm where the regenerative sense of (magical) power from the land, so intrinsic in the development of modern fantasy, is lacking; The Lord of the Rings warns against technological destruction while leaving defence against such destruction to power other than the threatened land.

The threat to the land: ecological versus moral flaw.

Tolkien's concern with scenery, with the health and beauty of trees, is intrinsically related to his depiction of evil, and images of natural destruction, akin to technology and pollution, abound in the narrative. These are most predominant in the works of Saruman, the desolation of Mordor and the final desecration of the Shire. Elwyn Jenkins notes that Tolkien "takes up William Blake, depicting... the horrors of what industrialisation does to his beloved English countryside" (1992 p. 3). His awareness is similar to the more contemporary ecological disasters of Tepper's polluted forests or the wholesale corruption of Donaldson's Sunbane, but as with the other ecological elements in the narrative, Tolkien's threat to the land is subordinate to the moral concerns of his narrative. The larger issue is that of power itself, and the destructive effect on the land is a symptom of abuse rather than an intrinsic ecological threat.

The tension between science and art is highly relevant to the nature of ecological evil in Middle-Earth, bound up in Tolkien's idea of magic. As noted above, some types of magic allow effect with the reduction of effort, a dangerous concept if employed without thought, and one which alienates the wielder from the harmonious processes of nature. The more thoughtless this magic becomes, the more it resembles technology, and the more removed it becomes from ecological awareness. Tolkien describes the process in a letter to Naomi Mitchison:

The Enemy, or those who have become like him, go in for 'machinery' - with destructive and evil effects - because 'magicians', who have become chiefly concerned to use *magia* for their own power, would do so... Of course, another factor then comes in, a moral or pathological one: the tyrants lose sight of objects, become cruel, and like smashing, hurting and defiling as such." (1981 p. 200).

Saruman is the exemplification of this process. As Treebeard says, "He has a mind of metal and wheels; and he does not care for growing things, except as they serve him for the moment" (II 90). The enchantments of Lorien and Fangorn are seen as the antithesis of what Tolkien in On Fairy Stories describes as "the vulgar devices of the laborious, scientific, magician" (1947 p. 10).

The destruction of the land in Middle-Earth takes on all the aspects explored in modern ecological narratives: the pollution of Mordor, the tree-cutting and machinery of Orthanc, the petty industrialisation of the Shire, the burning and looting on the plains of Rohan. The forces of darkness attack the most basic aspects of ecological survival, intruding above all with ugliness into the beauty of Tolkien's landscapes - a trend expressed ultimately in modern fantasy with Donaldson's wholesale destruction of the Land. However, such environmental effects are in a sense symptomatic rather than essential. Orthanc's machinery and the attacks on the Ents are an expression of the corruption of Saruman, not in themselves an attack on the land. Once again, the ecological aspects of the narrative, here ecology threatened with destruction, serve a largely illustrative function, deeply felt as wrong but part of a larger whole.

Thus the anti-ecological evil of the narrative is inextricable, as are its positive environmental concerns, from Tolkien's Christian moral structure. Saruman and Sauron are condemned not because they simply destroy the land, but because their exercise of power over it is immoral. Elgin comments on Sauron's perception of nature as "that which can, should, and must be manipulated for his own purposes... thus has the tragic hero ever sought to make the world conform to his view of it and to reflect his will" (1985 p. 42-43). Despite undertones of ecological heroism, this attribute is applicable equally to Aragorn and the Captains of the West, whose rule involves control of nature, although with less

destructive emphasis. In achieving the epic ideal of feudal, structured order, the ruler must impose his (legitimate) power on nature equally with society. Ecological renewal becomes a secondary confirmation of that power, and one which in this narrative is woefully tame compared with the political affirmation granted a Morgon or an Alvin by the Land.

Perhaps another element in Tolkien's semi-ecological depiction of evil is in its construction not only as destructive abuse of power, but in the corruption of an ideal. Evil in Middle-earth continually mocks the true creation of the land - fallen Maia, Sauron servant of a fallen Morgoth, Orcs as corruptions of Elves, trolls as imitations of Ents, Ringwraiths as fallen, mortal Kings, all twisted and ugly. Saruman, particularly, expresses this sense of fallen good, more specifically the sense of an abstracted spiritual power succumbing to the seduction of a more earthly control - the Maia reduced to commanding Orcs. Morgan's article notes Saruman's change in garment from white to many-coloured as a symbol of this fall, "his willingness to stain the white radiance of the spirit, deny his divine mission in Middle-Earth, taking on worldliness with all its shifting colours" (1992 p. 10). More importantly for the ecological theme, such colour indicates an engagement, albeit destructive, with the vitality and realities of the land rather than its abstractions, underlining yet again Tolkien's suggestion that true morality has little to do with anything as vital and organically diverse as nature.

Thus the Orcs and trolls of Sauron's army, however clear-cut a moral issue, are a problematical area in Tolkien's ecological narrative. Their depiction is in terms of a rough vitality, a kind of vulgar strength and character; yet while they eat, sleep and die on the land, they are technically not actually part of it, being corruptions engineered by Sauron in default of true creation. Shippey suggests that "the Orcs entered Middle-earth originally just because the story needed a continual supply of enemies over whom one need feel no compunction" (1982 p. 174). Certainly the heroes of the narrative feel no compunction at killing them, rather a grim joy (the grisly competition of Gimli and Legolas at Helm's Deep rather springs to mind here). The creatures in some ways personify to them the evil of Sauron. Once again, the moral idealism of Tolkien's narrative exerts a demand for a kind of purity in the conception of nature - the "land", that which is defended, consists of those things created legitimately, not those things which live and have a place, however marginalised, within the system. The Orcs are apparently apart from the system, having no right or place on the land.⁷

⁷ The contrast is interesting with the tribes of Men allied with Saruman or Sauron - the Hillmen whose reward for their part in Helm's Deep is "to repair the evil in which you have joined" (II 185), and the Southrons and Easterlings in the Pelennor who are depicted as worthy enemies, "strong and war-hardened [who] asked for no quarter" (III 146). Orcs, in contrast, are vermin to be exterminated.

On one level, this separation seems justifiable. As the slaves of Sauron, the Orcs represent the brute physical manifestation of his will and power, where he himself is the magical and spiritual force. Their destructive nature is plain, and Legolas comments that "It seems their delight to slash and beat down growing things that are not even in their way" (II 20). As with Sauron's magic, the emphasis is on hurried achievement of their goal without care for its consequences. Orcs are thus fairly comprehensively portrayed as being despoilers, servants of evil, worthy only of destruction, yet Tolkien himself states that they are not creations of Sauron, since evil cannot create, but "pre-existing real beings on whom the Dark Lord has exerted the fullness of his power in re-modelling and corrupting them" (Letter to Peter Hastings, 1981 p. 195). The ecological implications are interesting, since "by accepting or tolerating their making... even Orcs would become part of the World, which is God's and ultimately good" (1981 p. 195). While corrupt, the Orcs are in fact part of the system, and Gondor's crushing of them becomes as much expedience as the Orcs' own disregard for the land.⁸

The armies of Mordor thus stand as a somewhat problematic emblem of Sauron's mundane might and physical capacity to despoil. On another level entirely, the Ringwraiths, most terrifying servants of Sauron, operate morally as a device which demonstrates the consequence of desire for power and its dehumanising effect. At the same time, their unlife is a powerful motif in a narrative which utilises the comic as well as the tragic genre, striking at the need for life and vitality which is already partially obscured by Tolkien's tragic concerns. Tolkien's depiction of them is as cold and deadly entities, their attacks aimed not only at the will of the individual, the capacity for moral endurance, but at the life and vitality of the individual - the aspect of hobbits, particularly, which derives from their pastoral relationship with the earth.

Evil in the narrative is thus careless of nature, but this is a symptom of its true immorality, its relationship with power. The emphasis of the narrative itself confirms this tendency: the true renewal of the land is in Frodo's destruction of the Ring, not in the Ents' destruction of the machinery of Orthanc. Evil stands as corruption, but its emphasis is on the individual before the land. While Tolkien's conception of ecological disaster is effective, it lacks the horror of, for example, Donaldson's Sunbane, since it is attached to and localised with the power-abusing evil which is Tolkien's main concern.

⁸ In the modern context, the separation enforced on created evil is less rigorous: Donaldson, for example, allows for the instrumentality of ur-viles and waynhim, neither of which are naturally created, in serving the land-law in which they nonetheless have no part.

Middle-Earth's heroes: legend walking the land

Epic evil may attack with mighty magics, and the powers of good defend their people with magical power in times of need; however, it is in the human figures of the narrative that Tolkien's moral concerns ultimately rest. As noted above, the concept of "human" is problematical, since the hobbits are non-human, but identified strongly with human interests and qualities. In terms of the "heroes" of Tolkien's (sadly masculinocentric) narrative, the reader's interest rests most on the figures of Frodo (with Sam, by extension), and Aragorn. Tolkien's narrative, however, is neatly constructed around not only these figures, but those of the original Nine Companions, so that the epic sweep of the story is conveyed through Merry and Pippin, Legolas and Gimli, as well as the more obvious "heroes".⁹

It has been seen how the lack of interaction with magic and the land deny Tolkien's heroes much of their potentially regenerative power, and hence of their possible ecological status. While Aragorn provides the necessary icon of kingship without domination, and Frodo the resistance to and renunciation of the corruption of power, neither figure has access to magic. Tolkien comments that Aragorn's power of healing "might be regarded as 'magical'... But it is (in theory) reported by hobbits who have very little notions of philosophy and science; while A. is not a pure 'Man'..." (Letter to Naomi Mitchison, 1981 p. 200). In fact, it is very much akin to the hobbits' own apparently 'magical' power, that of moving secretly and silently. In his two main heroes, Tolkien thus represents humanity as being slightly more than human (hobbit or half-Elven), almost enchanted but not quite. They exist on the borders of ecological heroism without actually being ecological heroes.

Their ecological power, what there is of it, thus rests more in attitude and symbol than in actual power. Hobbit and ranger are both at home in the land, concerned with its health and defence on a purely prosaic level, associated with it by symbol (pipeweed, the White Tree) and attribute (hiding and healing), but they are not empowered by it in the moral struggles they face. Aragorn's concern is with defence on a very human level, that quite simply of battle, and Frodo's struggle is with the choices engendered by magical power externalised as artefact. Both concerns exclude participation in the land in any sense other than as metaphor for health and beauty, or as emotional locus for defense and protection. Aragorn, indeed, makes a rather grim distinction between the pastoral rusticity of the

⁹ This facility of tale-telling provides a marked contrast to the frequent narrative solecisms of Donaldson in particular, whose concern with Thomas Covenant often conflicts with the author's evident desire to provide psychological insights into other characters as well as the epic sweep of narrative achieved more successfully by Tolkien.

hobbits, i.e. the land at peace, and himself who defends it, at the same time that he affirms the need to for such a defence of peace and beauty:

... 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 must be... (I 325).

It is a recurring theme in the narrative: those who fight to preserve the land and people they love, may not be able to enjoy the peace they have won. Frodo, too, suffers from the inability to enjoy the pastoral environment he is responsible for preserving: "I tried to save the Shire, and it has been saved, but not for me" (III 376). This element can be related to the paternalistic tendencies of Tolkien's structures of defence. Rather than the land or people fighting for themselves, defence is in the hands of heroes, the moral as well as the magical, who are not only apart from the societies they protect, but are barred from enjoyment of the pastoral. It can be seen how the isolated hero has developed from this in modern fantasy, in McKillip's Morgon who loses the land-law, and most exaggeratedly in Thomas Covenant; but Tolkien's heroes can also be contrasted with the modern heroes who are integrated fully with their environment - the animal-related Talents of Tepper's protagonists, for example, or Alvin Maker's increasing affinity with the land.

Both Aragorn and Frodo are ultimately tragic figures. As noted above, Frodo is damaged by his quest so that he can never enjoy the pastoral peace of the Shire, or the comfortable marriage gained by Sam. Aragorn, too, is touched by the sense of loss felt by his Elven kindred at the mortality of Middle-Earth, and even in victory his words to Gandalf speak poignantly of loss: "I shall die... For I am a mortal man... And who then shall govern Gondor and those who look to this city as their queen...?" (III 302). Aragorn, unlike Frodo, is permitted to pass from the tragic mode of the warrior to one which, although elevated, contains elements of the comic. His marriage to Arwen Evenstar expresses the comic possibility of continuation even after death, so that "not day only shall be beloved, but night too shall be beautiful and blessed and all its fear pass away" (III 304).

The image of continuation is undercut, however: partly because it is difficult to see Arwen in terms of the warmth and fertility necessary for true comic renewal; partly because of the Appendix which describes the death of Aragorn and the tragedy of Arwen's choice; and primarily because of the mood and image of Tolkien's narrative at this point, almost entirely elevated and epic. Aragorn is a moral hero, the narrative's locus of legitimate power, a defender and warrior before he is a figure of regeneration. It is only once he has

defeated his Enemy, partially or fully, and earned his Kingship, that he is granted symbols of regeneration - his healing powers after the battle of the Pelennor, and the sapling from the Tree once Sauron has fallen. Tellingly, Gandalf leads him to the discovery of the Tree by instructing him to "Turn your face from the green world... and look where all seems barren and cold" (III 302) - a strange command in a narrative which sets such a high store by the "green world". While the contrast suggests that victory can bring growth out of apparent destruction and barrenness, it equally suggests that regeneration is an abstracted, moral concern, rather than one relating to simple life and vitality. In the final analysis, the victory in the War of the Ring is one of moral rather than ecological struggle.

Frodo as a tragic figure is to some extent balanced by Sam as a comic figure, but the effect of this division is largely to weaken the concept of ecological heroism. Purhill comments on the divided hero, noting that "Frodo is Sam's nobler side, just as Sam is Frodo's earthy Hobbit side. The two together make one whole person.." (1984 p. 72). Within the parameters of the ecological hero, however, this is problematical: Sam stands for the regenerative force of comedy, while Frodo represents the moral struggle of the battle against destruction. Tolkien himself recognises the importance of the comic continuation of life, and the inadequacy of Frodo as hero:

... Sam is the most closely drawn character, the successor to Bilbo of the first book, the genuine hobbit. Frodo is not so interesting, because he has to be high-minded and has (as it were) a vocation. The book will prob. end up with Sam. Frodo will naturally become too ennobled and rarefied by the achievement of the great Quest, and will pass West with all the great figures; but S. will settle down to the Shire and gardens and inns (Letter to Christopher Tolkien, 1981 p. 105).

The division of the hero allows Tolkien to express both the tragic (or epic) and the comic elements of his narrative, its consistent nostalgia as well as its pastoral ethos of continued life. However, the dual focus of emotion in the narrative precludes it from becoming a fully-developed ecological text, since the tragedy and nostalgia of the passing away of Frodo with the Elves, in emotive terms at least, overshadows Sam's comfortable English rusticity with wife and children.

At least one source of this overshadowing of the comic is in a weakness of the comic itself, namely its lack of a feminine element - Hugh T Keenan comments that "The marked absence of women in the novel calls attention to its fertility theme, an important part of the continuing struggle of life against death" (1968 p. 71). As seen above, Aragorn's regenerative potential is lessened by the depiction of Arwen, herself "ennobled and rarefied" by her part-Elven nature, and further peripheralised by her lack of activity in the text. The same problem applies to Sam, whose rustic romance with Rosie Cotton includes no development of Rosie herself as character or instrument in the narrative. This is a

problem very much attributable to Tolkien's unfeministic context of writing, and one which has been largely addressed in much modern fantasy - McKillip's Raederle and female wizards, Elena and Linden in Donaldson's texts, Tepper's (feminist) heroines Jinian and Mavin.¹⁰

While Tolkien's text is not lacking in feminine figures with strong metaphorical implications - Galadriel, Goldberry, Arwen - these women lack not only instrumentality in the larger moral plot, but real life. The exception, at least to some extent, is Eowyn, whose contribution to the battle is no small one - the destruction of the king of the Ringwraiths. Tolkien both recognises and allows expression for her desire to make some contribution to a man's world, her fear of "a cage... To stay behind bars, until... all chance of doing great deeds is gone beyond recall or desire" (III 63). However, while Tolkien allows her some significant action in the battle and the characterisation of her love for Aragorn, she is very soon relegated to the "proper" place of women in the narrative - married off to a suitable male to perpetuate the comic idea of life, her identity submerged in that of her husband, although her actual contribution to the battle is just as great as that of Faramir.

Tolkien thus undermines the narrative's sense of comic continuation in his depiction of the women through whom such life must continue. While Galadriel has considerable power, she is Elven and imbued with the Elven sense of removal and nostalgic regret; Goldberry does not exercise power at any stage, and Arwen is merely a "sign" to Aragorn that his rule will be perpetuated (III 302). Along with Eowyn, the female characters escape the comic, and hence the ecological, in the remoteness of their depiction, and in the "courtly, chivalric love" with which they are associated, having nothing to do with comic vitality (Elgin, 1985 p. 53). Rose, of course, occurs mostly as a metaphor for Sam's attachment to the Shire, as a source of rustic humour, and as a figure of traditional nurture, both of Sam and of Frodo. Keenan notes the "reiterated fertility-sterility conflict in this world" (1968 p. 64): perhaps a reason why Tolkien's tragic elements are more effective than his comic themes is because epic tragedy is possible in the sterility of an entirely male world, where comedy is not.

As a further aspect of this masculine, epic sense of heroism, Tolkien's battle-ethic becomes problematical in the context of his underlying ecological concerns. His own war experiences, while distasteful to him, are to him both necessary and morally strengthening: the death of a friend is a matter of "holiness of courage suffering and sacrifice", and the

¹⁰ A more extreme antidote to Tolkien's masculinocentric writing is found in the narratives of Guy Gavriel Kay, whose *Fionavar* series, as well as highlighting feminine instrumentality (Kim as seer) allows only women to have access to the earth-power of the goddess Dana.

war itself is "for all the evil of our own side with large view good against evil" (Letter to G B Smith, 1981 pp. 9 & 10). Later, he frets at his inactivity in World War II, but comments that "it is something to be the father of a good young soldier" (Letter to Michael Tolkien, 1981 p. 55). The contrast between Tolkien's unscathed heroes and those of ecological fantasy narrative is marked; for example, McKillip's final battle, undertaken in desperation, is both futile and painful in its destruction of innocence.

At least some of Tolkien's concerns are ecological, however, and his hatred of "ruin" does serve to mute the battle elements in the narrative. While retaining epic elements, The Lord of the Rings operates on a far different level to that of, for example, Eddison's The Worm Ouroboros, whose circular narrative is an attempt to deny the fact that victory or defeat must end the joy of the conflict. The similar sense of battle-joy in Tolkien is limited by the moral and ecological concerns of the story, but its presence cannot be denied. The Battle of the Pelennor is a locus of the sense both of the anger and joy of battle - the Rohirrim singing as they kill, Eomer's "wrath... ruin, and a red nightfall," the heroes at the end "unscathed, for such was their fortune and skill and the might of their arms, and few indeed had dared abide them or look on their faces in the hour of their wrath" (III 144-147). The Rohirrim, indeed, crystallise much of the ferocity of the defense in their alliterative, Old-English-based verse, celebrating "horns in the hills ringing, / the swords shining" at the same time that it mourns the dead (III 147).

This glorious battle, of course, falls away in the peace after the destruction of Sauron; but its effect lingers. Elgin suggests that "Tolkien would like to affirm the heroic code and the tragic tradition, but he cannot, for he sees too clearly the disasters these once proud ideas have wrought" (1985 p. 36). This statement is problematical, since the effect of the narrative is in fact to affirm the heroic code: Aragorn is confirmed in his kingship by battle almost to the exclusion of his regenerative symbolism, and Frodo's heroism is seen in terms of his hobbit powers of physical endurance as well as moral resistance to the Ring.

The continuation of the narrative after the success of the final battle, i.e. the final, more mundane defence of the Shire, does serve to undercut the heroic ideal at least partially. However, the position of Merry and Pippin in the Shire, admired as 'lordly' with "their mail-shirts so bright and their shields so splendid... now large and magnificent" (III 371) suggests that Tolkien cannot quite abandon his admiration of the heroic code, even when it is out of place in a rustic and pastoral setting. Of course, this rustic admiration ignores the more vital heroism of Frodo, which has just as much element of epic without the element of

display; but the implications of the hollowness of this heroic identity are largely lost in the charm of its continuation.¹¹

Since the destructive ethos of heroism and the regenerative ethos of the ecological hero are mutually exclusive, it is easy to see how Tolkien's ecological themes are submerged and weakened by the tragic heroism of his battle epic. Similarly, heroism itself is undercut by the ecological presence in the narrative, so that the reader cannot but respond to the futility of Theoden's death, of the march on Mordor, of Aragorn's kingship without consort. However, in many ways Tolkien's own nostalgia for the celebration of epic tends to overshadow his ongoing comic concerns. While Middle-Earth may endure despite the death of its heroes, we cannot but mourn the heroes.

Conclusion: the passing of Middle-earth.

It is ultimately impossible to separate Tolkien's ecological concerns from his moral concerns in the narrative. He writes from the Catholic perspective of a fallen world, accepting the necessity of evil at the same time as the necessity to fight it: Middle-earth is beautiful, but threatened from within and without by the evil of fallen existence. The presence of enchantment in the narrative is effectively a glimpse of the lost Eden where man may not return. Tolkien suggests that "We all long for it, and we are constantly glimpsing it: our whole nature at its best and least corrupted, its gentlest and most humane, is still soaked with the sense of `exile'" (1981 p. 110). To Tolkien, enchantment is permissible only as an aspect of, effectively, heaven.

The element of nostalgia which pervades the narrative is thus a partially bleak view, but also underlines the beauty of the natural world and sense of enchantment which is being lost. Perhaps Tolkien's most telling attitude to environmental concerns is seen in a letter to his son during World War II: "We were born in a dark age out of due time... But there is this comfort: otherwise we should not *know*, or so much love, what we do love" (1981 p. 64). The narrative, in its sense of tragic and heroic loss, and of comic affirmation, effectively divides the ecological potential of Middle-Earth, mourning the loss of enchantment - the passing away of the Elves, Gandalf, Lorien - while celebrating the continuation of the earthy and prosaic. This is a very different thesis to that of the modern ecological fantasy in which enchantment is an aspect of the power of the land, and the sense

¹¹ Comparisons with Tepper's True Game are interesting, since her depiction of Talent suffers from exactly this problem: the chivalric glitter of the Talented, and the joy of Talent found in her protagonists, endure beyond the series' conclusion, that Talent is destructive and mankind is unworthy to hold it. Like Frodo's passing, the moment when Lom removes Talent is one of profound tragedy.

of a magical Eden is conflated with the harmonious place of mankind in nature, with the health of the system.

The tension in The Lord of the Rings is always between tragedy and comedy - the heroic ethic of battle and defence in tension with the comic sense of the continuation of life. Elgin has commented on this division of generic idea, suggesting that "the ultimate rejection of the tragic, heroic quest motifs for the comic, ecological ones is done with such evident regret that many critics fail to notice who endures and why" (1985 p. 37). However, the effect on the critics is also the effect on the reader, and Tolkien's nostalgia for the epic ideal in fact overbalances the comic regenerative themes of his narrative. The satisfaction felt for Sam's continuation is largely lost in the nostalgic sense of tragedy as the Elves depart; if Tolkien has succeeded in producing a form of ecological narrative on the level of theme, he has failed on the level of mood. The problem could be linked again to the loss of enchantment, since Tepper, for example, creates real regret with the ultimate denial of Talent to her human colonisers, but balances it with the joyous (magical) regeneration of her world. Tolkien's sense of regeneration, while real, is too quiet (too mundane?) to impinge on the reader in quite the same way as the passing of the Elves.

The ecological theme of The Lord of the Rings cannot be denied. As fantasy romance, it is true to its generic roots in addressing what Robert A. Collins describes as "the `alienation' of man from his cosmos", reaching instead for "an organic vision of coherence, for a fantasy world in which meaning and value are integral, demonstrable, implicit in the very fabric of things-as-perceived" (1982 p. 116). Such meaning and value in the narrative are inextricable, both as metaphor and as creed, from the concept of the land and the celebration of its natural beauty. However, while Tolkien remains a pioneer of such ecological thought-modes, his social context and his other generic interests prevent the fulfillment of the ecological ideal achieved in much modern fantasy. While his land is both magical and beautiful, we must mourn its passing more than we celebrate its continuation and life.

Chapter 3:

Patricia McKillip's Riddlemaster trilogy

Beware the unanswered riddle.

The wise man knows his own name.

(The Riddle-Master of Hed)

The three deceptively slim volumes of McKillip's Riddle-Master series represent an unusually assured and densely-written fantasy narrative. Peter Nicholls (1983) has argued that McKillip's trilogy is "a work of classic stature," and that "the intricate narrative of its quest story echoes a moral complexity almost unheard-of in fantasy trilogies" (in Nicholls, 1993 p. 759). Through the exploration of the phenomenal potency of the magical land, McKillip's protagonists must come to terms with issues of identity and power. While their quest is in many ways the classical fantasy confrontation with the other, in this series moral polarity is never unambiguous, and resolution not so much a defeat of the threatening other as a reconciliation with the other within the self.

McKillip's concern with power in the fantasy setting may be traced through her other works, most notably the young adult novel The Forgotten Beasts of Eld, where again moral maturation results in the withholding of magical influence. Her later, strongly female-orientated fantasies, The Sorceress and the Cygnet and The Cygnet and the Firebird, exhibit an awareness of power on a more symbolic level, with the second novel developing the theme of the destructive potential of power for its own sake. The impact of the Riddlemaster series is equally moralistic: the quest to save the land from the considerable threat of the shapechangers is intertwined with and dependent on the protagonists' development of understanding of the rules which bind their land. The land itself is a setting of highly magical natural beauty, and the exercise of power within the narrative is developed through an elemental framework whose beauty is often lyrically described.

While the narrative centres around the characters of Morgon and Raederle and their attempts to unlock the riddle of their own natures and power, riddlery has other functions in the series. The structure of the three novels, and the course of the quest, depends heavily on an element of the unexpected. McKillip's complex and densely-written narrative, based around the protagonists' processes of discovery, allows for twists in the plot and continual

shifts in the perception of reader and character alike. The narrative's romance quest is the solving of riddles - who is the High One, who killed the Earth Masters, who is the Star-Bearer? Authorial explanation is notably absent, and the reader is often uncertain and confused as to the significance of events. The narrative thus acts out the textual motif of the riddle, the ritual framing of knowledge as question. Nicholls notes how McKillip, "through a series of strategies (including subliminal hints as little obvious as leaves in a forest) ... forces the reader also to become a decipherer of codes. Thus the book's meaning is enacted by the way it must be read" (1993 p. 759).

More than this, the riddle motif is integral to McKillip's sense of ecological harmony. Her protagonists come into their power through understanding the riddle, not only of the land, but of their own place in it. The series thus follows fantasy romance's integrative tendency, the adaptation of the individual to the environment. Elgin's account of ecological thought in fantasy notes that "Humanity can and will seek to use [the natural environment's] laws, but only to such an extent that the system remains stable, for humanity knows that its continued existence depends on the continued existence of the system" (1985 p. 18). Morgon and Raederle develop in their understanding, not only of the structure of the land, the balance between High One and shape-changer, but in the riddle of their own power and how it may safely and harmoniously be used. The same structure of discovery may be found with a later science fiction work of McKillip, Fool's Run, where the riddle of a woman's strange mental state reflects similar ecological concerns in the final revelation of her mental link with a distant alien being.

McKillip's dense narrative style is arguably related to another element in the Riddlemaster narrative, her use of the Welsh hero-cycle of the Mabinogion. The quest for the High One and the concept of the land-law are very much McKillip's own, but aspects of the setting and action of the Riddlemaster's world draw on the Welsh legends. Most importantly, McKillip's riddle-based narrative style echoes that of the Welsh bards, who, as Gantz notes, are "characterised by a partiality to ambiguity and paradox" (1976 p. 12). As well as this, the sound of many of the names in McKillip's world recalls Welsh roots - El Elriarhodan, Ghisteslwchlohm, Ylon and Ymris - and Morgon itself is a Welsh name. Characters and places loosely recall those of the Mabinogion. Mathom could stand for the wily Matholwch, king of Ireland, and Annwryn, land of the dead, is paralleled in Anuin, seat of the kings of An whose land-law binds the dead of Hel.

The image of the sea, too, pervades the Mabinogion as it does McKillip's narrative. Dylan, son of Arianrod, who returns to the sea (Mabinogion, 1976 p. 106), is recalled in the

legend of Ylon (HSF 9ff¹), and Gwydion, the hero whose creations are "conjured up ... out of the kelp and the seaweed" (Mabinogion, 1976 p. 108), are echoed in the shapechangers whose threat to the land is "shaped out of seaweed and foam and wet pearl" (RMH 47). The motif of shapechanging pervades the Mabinogion, particularly the fourth tale of Math, son of Mathonwy, where lovers become deer, swine and wolves. It is significant that McKillip places importance on the same animals - the vesta and wolves of Har the wolf-king, and the pig herds of Hel. At the same time, the central theme of the harpist recalls the nature of the Mabinogi themselves, the tales learned and told by the ancient bard, himself known as the Mabinog. R. Williams, in his introduction to the Mabinogion, notes that its mood is that of mythology softened by time: "The gods have ceased to be gods, but they have not become ordinary men" (1905 p. 8). In McKillip's characters - High One, land-rulers and shapechangers, as well as Morgon and Raederle themselves - the narrative offers a similar acceptance of the magically superhuman as a natural part of life.

The power in every stone: McKillip's dangerous land.

McKillip admits her own interest in landscape - "the forest, the tangled woods" - as inspiration to her writing:

What I want to try to do is use or refer to landscape in the same way early American writers did, like Melville or Hawthorne. The forest was, to them, a symbol of something tangled and wild and passionate. And Melville used the sea as an entity that people respond to
(in Locus, 1992 p. 69)

This symbolic function of landscape can be clearly seen in the Riddlemaster series. The wild beauty of the realm, expressed through McKillip's finely-depicted sense of the magnificence of earth, sea, fire and wind, stands both for inherent power and for its balance and restraint. The High One's understanding and binding of the land-law is necessary in order to restrict the destructive potential of those less aware of the need for harmony. The poignant paradox of the shape-changers' destruction shows how the celebration of natural power can become disastrous:

It was born out of a kind of innocence. We held so much power, and yet we did not understand the implications of power... We lived so peacefully once, in these great cities. They were open to every change of wind. Our faces changed with every season; we took knowledge from all things: from the silence of the backlands to the burning ice sweeping across the northern wastes. We did not realise, until it was too late, that the power inherent in every stone, every movement of water, holds both existence and destruction (HW 228).

¹ The three books in the series are referenced as follows: RMH The Riddle-Master of Hed, HSF Heir of Sea and Fire, HW Harpist in the Wind.

Morgon's experiences of the realm, from Hed's rich, pastoral peace to the harshness of Osterland, exemplifies a similar love for the natural beauty to which, as the High One's successor, he is heir. Again, power comes from understanding, the unravelling of the riddle which is the natural order of the land and the source of the restraints which keep it in harmony. In his gradual experience of the realm, Morgon's love of the land operates as a consolation for the suffering and confusion he suffers as he attempts to reconcile himself to his changing nature and destiny; he tells the High One: "You are giving me even the wastelands. I loved them. I loved them. And the mists of Herun, the vesta, the backlands ... I was afraid, when I realised how much I loved them. I was drawn to every shape ..." (HW 226).

As well as having considerable beauty, McKillip's land is characterised strongly by its order, the land-law which is held not only by the High One, in his control of the entire realm, but in the individual talents and land-awarenesses of the various rulers. McKillip's land-rulers are in many ways unique in fantasy, powerful and nurturing figures who seem to be free from political ambition and, to a large extent, from personal failings. They are in all ways a reflection of the land they serve. The closeness of the rulers to the realms they protect is expressed in their various powers, utterly appropriate to their lands and land-law, and displaying a certain practicality. The Morgol, enclosed in her valley kingdom, can see through mountains (RMH 105); Har's wild country necessitates his wolf and vesta shapes, while the endurance of Isig's stone is expressed in Danan Isig's tree-shape, "a great pine, still and dreaming above Isig" (RMH 208). Even Mathom's cunning is reflected in his crow-shape. Their powers are those of natural things, bound by the laws of nature which the High One has imposed. Like Morgon, the rulers are Mabinogion heroes, more than human if not actually gods. They are powerful, ageless and above all, wise.

McKillip's concept of land-awareness functions as a compelling ecological motif in the narrative. The ruler of each part of the realm can safeguard it from harm through their complete awareness of the places, harmonies and balances of every aspect of their charge. Land-law is "the heritage of kings, bound into them by the High One;" it is also "the greatest source of power in the realm" (HW 156). Morgon's inheritance of the Hed land-rule is an experience of complete integration - "For a moment I saw every leaf, every seed, every root in Hed ... I was every leaf, every new-planted seed" (RMH 85). The construction of a compelling ecological responsibility is underlined by the chilling tale of Awn of An, the land-ruler who set fire to An in an attempt to discourage an army from Hel.

Safe at last, he had awakened out of a sleep of exhaustion to realize he had lost the wordless, gentle awareness of things beyond eyesight that had been with him, like a hidden eye, since the death of his father. His land-heir, running grief-stricken into the room, had stopped, astonished, to find him still alive...
(RMH 129)

The charge of the land-rulers is, above all, nurture of their realm in its intrinsic natural balance, not its political integrity. In creating the land-law, the High One had no thought for the concerns of man: "His one concern was the land; his one law, the law instilled deeper than thought, deeper than dreaming, in his land-rulers" (RMH 129).

McKillip's ecological awareness thus has something more of harshness than that of, for example, Tepper's self-aware world, or the perfect balance of Card's American wilderness. Natural balance must be maintained, not only for its own sake and for the sake of peace, but because its inherent powers transcend the ability of man to wisely utilise them. The parallels with contemporary society are clear: science and technology have harnessed natural laws to wildly destructive effect. Despite this potential for disastrous use in the Riddlemaster series, however, the power of the land is ordered, not chaotic. The creation of the land-law by the High One is an intensification of natural order rather than an order imposed from outside: "binding all earth-shapes to me by their own laws, permitting nothing to disturb that law" (HW 229).

McKillip's vision thus echoes the modern environmentalist's awareness of disaster inherent in the unrestrained use of power. She notes her own interest in ecological consciousness, and has worked on a novella with the theme of "fairyland and pollution ... I couldn't turn that one down" (in Locus, 1992 p. 5). Unlike Tepper's strong vision of technological destruction, however, McKillip's sense of the threatened land is expressed more symbolically, with none of the images of pollution and technological devastation seen in the True Game series or in Alvin Maker. Even in its ruined state, Wind Plain is tragically beautiful, its destruction caused by forces as much a part of nature as the stone from which it is built. Raederle's response to the city encapsulates this sense of sadness at natural power overbalanced into ruin:

It stood like some half-forgotten memory, or the fragments on a torn page of ancient, incomplete riddles. The stones she recognised, beautiful, massive, vivid with colour. The structure itself, bigger than anything any man would have needed, had been shaken to the ground seemingly with as much ease as she would have shaken apples out of a tree
(HSF 70).

Unlike many contemporary fantasies, McKillip's sense of ecological threat is thus not in any way external, as in Card's settler invasion, Donaldson's Tolkienesque evil deity, or Tepper's human presence leading the land to despair. Instead, integration with the land

becomes excessive: too much unrestrained knowledge destroys the natural balance as surely as would any outside threat. The obvious dichotomy of land threatened by sea is facile, the true problem lying instead in an imbalance within the system itself.

Knowing one's own name: identity in the defence of the land

While the Riddlemaster series depicts a land threatened by the forces of the sea, the restraints of law potentially overwhelmed by chaotic power, its land-centred conflicts are never unambiguous, and are thus far less polarised than those of Tolkien or of many contemporary romances. While Morgon and Raederle struggle to preserve the land against the destructive threat of the shapechangers, the invaders are heir to the same land-powers wielded by Morgon, their power not only that of the natural world, but identical with that of the High One who restrains them, and of Raederle who is their descendant. While alien, they are thus also familiar. Karen Schaafsma suggests that "The central event in fantasy ... is the encounter with the supernatural Other. It is the catalyst for the hero's transformation and for the restoration to health, physical and spiritual, of the larger community" (1986 p. 63). In the Riddlemaster series, the classical fantasy confrontation with the destructive other is in fact the encounter with the destructive potential in the self. McKillip's continuing fascination with motifs of identification, the naming both of the self and of the enemy, the solving of the riddles which pervade the narrative, expresses clearly her concern with self-knowledge, and most particularly the discovery of potential dangers within the self.

Self/other conflicts on an essentially personal level are integral to the development of both hero and heroine in the Riddlemaster series. Raederle and Morgon, effectively seeking their own "names" or identities, inevitably find that "You can't run from yourself... or from the riddle at your back that you never face" (HW p. 62). Raederle must come to terms with her potentially destructive shape-changer heritage, Morgon with his own heritage of the High One's immense power, paradoxically exercised to protect the realm from the immense power of the Earthmasters. McKillip thus invokes the notion of quest as *bildungsroman*: a conventional rite-of-passage tale unfolds against a background of high fantasy, magical destruction and the imperative need to protect the land. Discussing the use of Welsh mythic elements in fantasy, C.W. Sullivan notes Campbell's concept of mythological function: "to initiate the individual into the order of realities in his own psyche, guiding him toward his own spiritual enrichment and realisation" (Campbell in Sullivan, 1987 p. 94). The land's need must be thus answered by the realisation of power within the individual. McKillip's ecological vision is bound up in the development and maturation of her protagonists, their identification and acceptance of their own powers and

identities as protectors of the land. Naming, both of the self and of the enemy, is integral to the narrative, the necessary end to the setting of riddles as well as the psychological growth of the individual. The defence of the land against the dangers which threaten it is only possible once those dangers have been named, discovered, understood, and, more importantly, once the protagonists have learned to put a name to their own powers, thus understanding and accepting their place within the structure of the land.

Fantasy romance, as a form capable of expressing ideas both of community and of quest, is thus doubly appropriate to McKillip's purposes in the narrative. Le Guin notes the function of fantasy as a genre which turns inward, rather than outward, which is concerned above all with the psyche, and "the journey to self-knowledge, to adulthood, to the light:"

It also seems to me that most of the great works of fantasy are about that journey, and that fantasy is the medium best suited to a description of that journey, its perils and rewards. The events of a voyage into the unconscious are not describable in the language of rational daily life... (1989 p. 55).

The movement is dualistic, however, in that the turning inward to explore and reconcile the impulses of the self, the identity, must be followed and moderated by a turning outward, to reconcile the newly-defined self with the environment in which it exists. Elgin's definition of the fantasy novel notes "its emphasis upon humanity as part of a total environment or system ... acknowledging the absolute dependence of humanity upon that system" (1985 p. 23). At the same time, the archetypal and symbolic elements of fantasy romance serve to externalise the inner conflict of the emerging psyche so that, finally, environment and individual are one, and the struggle to integrate the self becomes indistinguishable from the struggle to defend, protect and renew the land.

In keeping with the dramatically destructive threat to the realm in the Riddlemaster series, the shaping of identity within the protagonists is associated with painful conflict throughout the narrative. McKillip's focus on the maturation of Morgon and Raederle is accompanied by a more general interest in the struggles of adolescence reaching for maturity, and the conflicts within lesser characters - the friction of Lyra's hero-worship for Morgon against her loyalty to the Morgol, Tristan's determination to find her brother despite her unfitness for the task - form a thematic sub-text to Morgon's reluctant assumption of his role as Star-Bearer. Morgon's gradual discovery of his destiny as the Star-Bearer and heir to the High One leads to inevitable conflict between his initial identity as Prince of Hed, the archetypally peaceful place of a farming ruler, and his new nature as bearer of the starred sword, with all its implications of defence through violence. His assertion that "I was born to rule Hed and that is where I belong - that is my name and my place ... In Hed at least I have a name" (RMH 98, 99) inevitably gives way to the realisation that "The wise man

knows his own name. My name is one of power" (HW 165). The difficult and agonising progression from Prince of Hed to Star-Bearer constitutes yet another aspect of the narrative's concern with riddles, hidden knowledge and gradual discovery, McKillip's conclusion apparently that the nature of the self is the greatest riddle of all.

The farmer prince: pastoral and the impossibility of peace.

In the creation of an ecological hero rooted in the peaceful insularity of a farming community, McKillip provides a powerful illustration of the recurring presence of the pastoral in modern fantasy romance. While the dynamic energies of the land as a whole generate a realm with a wild, harsh beauty as well as a more accessible fertility and productivity, the island of Hed functions as an ideal and an inspiration to Morgon as regenerative hero, and to the land as a whole. Hume defines the main impulses of pastoral as "sensory experience and the escape from responsibility" (1984 p. 60), and this latter certainly defines Morgon's attitude to Hed, a fierce desire to retain the peace and simplicity of his farming heritage. The regenerative hero thus resists a harsh and demanding destiny in favour of the "passive pleasures of bucolic perfection - intellectual retreat, ego deflation and the definition of life in radically simple terms" (Hume, 1984 p. 60). Despite this, however, Hed's peace has positive resonances throughout the narrative, functioning as the "luminous sphere containing dynamic imaginative energy" which Moss identifies in pastoral: "it is not merely a regressive nest" (1985 p. 232).

McKillip notes wryly that "Somebody called my work 'domestic fantasy' because all the kingdoms are so small and the households seem tiny and don't get into social issues and things" (in *Locus*, 1992 p. 5). In this domestic sense, a pastoral thread runs through much of the narrative. The awareness of a down-to-earth, personal aspect to the affairs of the realm is seen in the households of most of the land-rulers², but is present most strongly in Hed - the squabble over Peven's crown which opens the series, Morgon's concern over Snog Nutt's leaky roof (RMH 65), even Raederle's surprised reaction to Akren: "Such a small house" (HW 27). In Hed's farming community, the escapist pleasures of a classical pastoral Arcadia insulate the inhabitants from the desperate conflicts of the beleaguered land outside. Hume comments on just this insularity in pastoral: "responsibilities are limited ... Economy, wars, ambition or want are not much understood or worried about" (1984 p. 61). It is from these roots, however, that the Star-Bearer must come to understand the complex and urgent conflicts of the land to which he is heir.

² Most notably in McKillip's depiction of the family squabbles in Anuin and in the comfortable family scenes in Isig among Danan Isig's numerous grandchildren.

McKillip's intentions here are obvious: the High One's land-heir is rooted in the pastoral peace of Hed precisely because the Earth-Masters' destruction was so violent and compassionless. There is thus an affirmation of hope in the words of their children: "The great war destroyed us. So we were promised a man of peace" (RMH 197). Morgon's pastoral heritage, his primary experience of a land-law and people whose "instinct for peace drove deep into the land like a seed" (RMH 113), insulate him from the excesses to which the shape-shifters fell prey, since, after all, his power has the same origin as theirs, understanding of the land. Rooted in the peace of Hed - "a stillness of land dormant under snow, of animals dreaming placidly in warm places" (RMH 187) Morgon will never take for granted that power that, lacking the restraints placed on the shape-changers by the High One, is greater than theirs, and potentially even more destructive.

The contrast between Hed's pastoral peace and the powers of the High One's land-heir is thus extreme, and Morgon's realisation of his heritage as the Star-Bearer is associated continually with poignant loss. This is accentuated by his awareness, from the start, that the Star-Bearer's destiny is in all ways incompatible with the peace of Hed. Moss notes the same conflict between pastoral and heroic modes: "The pastoral space thus projects a vision of total unity between subject and object, and the heroic in its ultimate state suggests a self in total opposition and rebellion to an 'other'" (1985 p. 232). McKillip's treatment of the pastoral/heroic opposition is complex and sophisticated in that the other to which Morgon is opposed is partially himself: his destiny as wielder of the starred sword will make him "a stranger in my own land, the weapon like a disease that would wither all the living roots of Hed" (RMH 113).

Significantly, however, the dichotomy is also between innocence and awareness, between adult action and a naivety which Moss identifies as immature, "a secure and untouched pastoral world of comfort and youthful innocence ... the protected, pastoral dreams of childhood" (1985 p. 232). Inevitably, Morgon must mature from such childlike innocence into adult, heroic action, but the process is marked by pain and loss. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings reflects a similar process in Frodo's enduring scars from his time as Ring-Bearer, the preservation of the pastoral ideal necessitating heroic rather than pastoral action, and hence loss of innocence. Frodo comments that "I tried to save the Shire, and it has been saved, but not for me. It must often be so ... when things are in danger: some one has to give them up, lose them, so that others may keep them" (Return of the King 376). Similarly, Morgon is aware of the incongruity of the Star-Bearer within the pastoral setting, in his wry image of himself, a figure of destiny with "a worn, spare face, a great sword at his side and

a starred harp at his back, sitting on the porch at Akren with a bowl of beans on his knees" (HW 11/12).

Threat from within: the complexities of otherness

Nicholls suggests that the Riddlemaster trilogy "contains one of the most sophisticated uses of the shape-shifter theme to be found anywhere in sf or fantasy" (1993 p. 759).

Ultimately, the shape-changers stand for the desire for unbridled power - the danger of too much knowledge and insufficient maturity. The definition of good and evil, of creativity and destruction, finds a paradoxical expression in the shape-changers who are also Earthmasters, a part of the ecological whole, yet dangerously lacking in compassion. As Raederle comments, "the power is a simple matter of the knowledge of rain and fire, and the laws they shape themselves to are the laws of the earth" (HW p. 194). The conflict arises because "the High One restrains the Earth-Master's full power. Which is reason enough in itself for them to want to fight him..." (HW p. 195).

McKillip's sense of the beauty of her created realm extends to the shape-changers, whose powers are depicted with the same lyrical intensity as is the land itself, and with the same elemental emphasis - sea, fire, earth, wind. The obvious contrast is between the land and the sea, the shape-changers, once Earthmasters, now banished to another realm which they have made their own. The sea stands for the wearing power of water, the strength that is fundamentally inimical to the earth. In the final battle on Wind Plain the shape-changers attack like a tidal wave, "flowing like a wave in the shapes of men and animals... uprooting knowledge in his mind, breaking bindings... they tore knowledge, power from him like a wave eating at a cliff" (HW 239, 240). Their power is doubly terrifying, both physical and mental in its attacks and in the metaphors in which it is expressed. McKillip creates a force in her narrative which is essentially natural, described in terms of sea and fire; and yet which threatens both man and nature with utter destruction.

The metaphorical nature of the shape-changers as the dark side of the self is expressed strongly in the exploration of Raederle's emotions as she comes to terms with her heritage of power, and with its potential for destruction. Such destruction is, however, allied with more ambiguous qualities: while they threaten, the Earthmasters are not without beauty, passion and intensity. Schaafsma notes the paradoxical nature of the fantasy other: "On the one hand, it is powerful, awesome, mysterious, and impersonal; on the other hand, it is revealed as vulnerable, subject to loneliness, sorrow and loss" (1986 p. 63). While they are obsessed with power and immensely destructive, the shape-shifters are nonetheless the locus for tragedy and loss as well as considerable beauty. Raederle's shape-shifter heritage

allows her to see "Not compassion, but passion... The shape-changer answered me with that. And then she wove her fire into such beauty that I hungered for her power..." (HSF p. 151). Jackson's psychoanalytic discussion of otherness suggests that it is "an aspect of personal and interpersonal life, a manifestation of unconscious desire ... an externalisation of part of the self" (1981 p. 55), an analysis which is highly appropriate to Raederle's experience of kinship with the shapechangers, the fascination and attraction which she feels and which mark the affinity generated by the presence of shapechanger powers within herself.

McKillip's conclusions seem consistent with Le Guin's Jungian discussion of the shadow: "If I deny my own profound relationship with evil I deny my own reality." More importantly for the ecological concerns of the series, the individual who learns to accept the shadow "has grown toward true community, and self-knowledge, and creativity" (1989 p. 54). Both Raederle and Morgon, in learning to integrate their own powers with their concepts of self, learn also to include the shape-changers in their overall sense of the land, as a part which must be balanced with the whole rather than rejected as other. Morgon, finally achieving his full power as High One,

... could have destroyed them, could have stripped them of their power, as they had tried to do to him. But something of their beauty lingered in Raederle, showing him what they might have been once; and he could not kill them
(HW 244).

The lesson taught by Morgon's rootedness in Hed is that destruction is no answer to destructiveness, that the land must be balanced, in all its dark and light, within itself.

It becomes interesting to investigate McKillip's use of self/other distinctions in the light of modern literary theory of the Other. While the Riddlemaster trilogy does not itself constitute an exploration of colonial discourse, it deals very clearly with the other in the context of invasion, and Homi K. Bhabha's discussion of the Other in the colonial context makes some relevant points. He comments on the "dependence [of colonial discourse] on the concept of 'fixity' in the ideological construction of otherness" (1983 p. 18) - a definition which works interestingly with McKillip's depiction of the shape-changing other in terms of shifting, dissolution and lack of fixed shape. The power of the shape-changers is massive, but their true horror lies in their mutability, their ability to change shape with the deceitful, shifting movement of water. They are utterly alien, threateningly other, simply because they have the power to assume the shape of the familiar. The people of Morgon's land are helpless in the numbing fear of the invasive other which may be indistinguishable from the self - "an enemy that kept no single shape, but a constant, fluid changing that mesmerised opponents to despair and to death" (HW 241). While the idea

itself has a fixed status in the minds both of reader and of `self'-allied character, it is at least partially undercut by the lack of fixity in the threatening other itself. This is consistent with McKillip's gradual undercutting of traditional concepts of the invasive and threatening other: the shape-changers are in fact `self' both to the Earth-Masters (i.e. the High One and hence Morgon) and to Raederle.

McKillip thus seems to have a clear understanding of the perspective urged by Bhabha, an awareness of "the productive ambivalence" of the other, "that `otherness' which is at once an object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity" (Bhabha, 1983 p. 19). Schaafsma's discussion continues this line of thought, suggesting:

The fundamental act for the hero is not the defeat of evil, but the affirmation of the value inherent in the Other. Ultimately, fantasy suggests that those who oppose themselves to that value are doomed by their own alienation, while those who recognise the spiritual and moral authority of the Other attain a superhuman status (1986 p. 63).

Within the context of the land, the true triumph of the hero thus lies in the recognition of the ecological whole. The destructive Other is equally a product of the environment, and must thus be re-integrated into that environment rather than destroyed in its turn. Morgon's agony as he learns to meet the violence of his opponents with his own violence thus underlines McKillip's complex moral purposes: the Other cannot simply be destroyed.

Thus, while Morgon, as heir to the High One, functions as ecological hero in his capacity to renew the land³, he is a sadly fragmented hero-figure throughout most of the series. In this, McKillip's narrative shows something of the qualities Jackson has attributed to fantastic rather than marvellous literature, the "many partial, dual, multiple and dismembered selves scattered throughout literary fantasies" (1981 p. 82). The Riddlemaster trilogy echoes this concern with "unstable forms, whose identities are never definitively established" (Jackson, 1981 p. 83) not only in Morgon's and Raederle's shifting identities, but in the powerful metaphorical motif of the shape-changers themselves. The motif of self-contradictory identity, individuals "imaged as scattered objects, dislocated and distanced from themselves" (Jackson, 1981 p. 85) is echoed in the fluid shapes of Morgon and the shape-shifters alike: "a flame-streaked shadow" (HSF 165), the self "frayed ... into shadow" (HW 131), shapes that "melt", "boil", "swirl", "shaping themselves out of the blur of light and darkness" (HW 130-31).

³ The parallels with the Celtic fisher-king archetype as well as Freudian psychology are obvious: as the aged and failing parent-figure in the battle against the shape-changers, the High One, who is "very old, and ... cannot hold them much longer" (HW 229) must be superseded by his son, in whose youth and vigour the land may be renewed.

The fantastic fragmentation of the self, whether as body or identity, finds a different expression in fantasy romance, a marvellous rather than fantastic form. Where the literature of the fantastic explores fragmentation as a given attribute of reality, fantasy romance moves through fragmentation to restore order and wholeness. The tendency of fantasy romance is towards integration of disintegrated order, and the fragmented self must thus be reconciled for the conventional comic resolution of the narrative to be possible. Thus Morgon's assumption of his place as High One signals both the re-integration of the self and the integration of the land as a whole. In McKillip's context of ambiguous polarity, where the shape-shifter threat is revealed as a part of the land's order rather than alien to it - "the power is a simple matter of the knowledge of rain and fire, and the laws they shape themselves to are the laws of the earth" (HW 194) - the integration of the hero allows for the conceptual re-integration of the other, the threat, into the whole. Jackson notes how "incoherent, fluid selves exist in opposition to precious portraits of individuals as whole or essential. They break the boundaries separating self from other, leaving structures dissolved, or ruptured, through a radical open-endedness of being" (1981 p. 87). Morgon, the scattered self restored to order, allows the possibility of acceptance of the shape-shifters as part of that order, their status as other eroded by the presence of otherness within the self.

McKillip's vision deals finally with power and with the paradox of power, a continually-set riddle which can only be answered paradoxically. The land itself is powerful, simply in itself, in its own natural laws. Such power may be used to excess, without compassion, and is thus destructive, but excess can be contained and answered only by the exercise of further power, which is potentially equally destructive. The salvation of the land lies in a process of discovery, the solving of the riddles around which the narrative is centred: the twofold realisation that the destructive potential forms a shadow to every individual, but that power may be used to combat destruction if it is based in an ideal of peace. The narrative conforms to the comic tendency of fantasy romance in that the destructive threat is neutralised, the land preserved; but a tragic element is nonetheless present, in the loss of innocence in the regenerative hero, who can never re-attain the pastoral ideal he has defended. McKillip's narrative demands a difficult self-awareness from its protagonists, a realisation of a place and function for themselves, and a breadth of awareness of their environment which precludes simple enjoyment of it. Written in a context of technological threat to many areas of our world, McKillip's trilogy suggests that awareness is vital, that an innocent enjoyment does not apply to so precarious a beauty or peace.

Chapter 4:

Steven Donaldson's Thomas Covenant

*Something there is in beauty
which grows in the soul of the beholder
like a flower:
fragile -
for many are the blights
which may waste
the beauty
or the beholder -
and imperishable -
for the beauty may die . . .
(LFB 59)¹*

The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant are possibly the most popular and widely-read example of post-Tolkienesque fantasy. Donaldson's Land is a vivid and compelling creation, one notable among fantasy romances in its depiction both of beauty and of threat, and which thus operates with considerable force as an ecological narrative. At the same time, the series is one of the few which, like The Lord of the Rings, draws a readership which is wider than the usual highly specific circle of fantasy aficionados. In some ways the narrative holds a unique position as a bridge between fantasy and mainstream writing. While the Land is a fantasy world in the Tolkien tradition, the series seems to be a deliberate attempt to break with Tolkien. Donaldson himself states that Covenant represents:

the needs of the real world projected onto the stage of the Tolkienesque epic fantasy in order to see if that sort of thing can be centred in him and brought back into relevance with a sophisticated perception of modern reality (in Stan Nicholls, 1993 p. 267).

Structurally, the Chronicles of Thomas Covenant offer a conventionally-conceived fantasy realm, but one framed within and pervaded by a contemporary psychological narrative. This psychological narrative centres on Covenant himself, the leper-messiah brought from his own world to the aid of the threatened Land. In effect, Donaldson mixes the genre of the psychological novel with that of the romance, adding a dimension of complexity to the traditional hero of romance. While the fantasy world retains the usual trappings of enchantment, quest and magical land, Donaldson's narrative works to supply a depth of psychological insight often missing from fantasy. He thereby creates a form of internalised fantasy; were Thomas Covenant written in the first person, it would function as a confessional text. On this level, the narrative is akin to the modern novel, offering

¹ Abbreviations of the books in the series are: LFB Lord Foul's Bane; IW The Illearth War; PTP The Power That Preserves; WL The Wounded Land; OT The One Tree; GW White Gold Wielder.

experience in and through the awareness of the protagonist, an awareness both subjective and of overriding importance in the narrative. Tension arises in the juxtaposition of these novel elements with the very different expectations created by the romance element in Donaldson's text.

The importance of Derrida's and Delaney's expositions of generic marking (discussed in Chapter I) is obvious here. The reader's expectations of fantasy romance are very strongly invoked, both by the Tolkienesque parameters and magical nature of the Land, and by the conventional "epic fantasy" format of the six-book series. The psychological focus on Covenant clashes markedly with such expectations. Within the parameters of this discussion of genre, then, Donaldson's narrative can be said to have transgressed the boundaries of genre, in its insistence on elements from both novel and romance which are effectively incompatible. This would provide grounds for disparagement of the series, were it not for Derrida's continued discussion of his initial statement that "Genres are not to be mixed": he concludes that to define any such law of genre is, ultimately, madness (1980 p. 228). A similar unease is encountered in Delaney's wry quote from Joanna Russ: "Worrying about the purity of the genres is like worrying about the purity of the races" (1987 p. 64).

Derrida acknowledges that "a text cannot belong to no genre, it cannot be without or less a genre. Every text participates in one or more genres, there is no genreless text": yet, at the same time, "such participation never amounts to belonging" (1980 p. 212). The nature of genres is that they do not limit the text, and may mingle freely. Derrida concludes that:

The law of the law of genres... is precisely a principle of contamination, a law of impurity, a parasitical economy. In the code of set theories... I would speak of a sort of participation without belonging - a taking part in without being part of, without having membership of a set. The trait that marks membership invariably divides... (1980 p. 206)

In the light of this, while we may conclude that Donaldson has mixed elements of the modern psychological, "realist" or confessional novel with elements of fantasy romance, we cannot condemn the resulting clash as wrong: there can be no transgression if the parameters for transgression do not exist. The operation of the generic markings of the text may call for conflicting responses in the reader, but at best we must define this as itself a different kind of text, one which differs radically from its generic roots, one of unease and interrogation. The intrusion of the psychological narrative, with the internal agony of its hero, serves to subvert and interrogate the fantasy elements of the series, whose symbolic operations become over-simplified by contrast. At the same time, the romance elements of

the narrative interrogate and subvert the internal experience of the hero, continually holding out the possibility of resolution and identification which the novel narrative denies.

The operation of fantasy romance with framing novel narrative thus becomes post-modern, the process which Derrida notes as the "instance of belonging to one or several genres" itself becoming a "thematic component of the work" (1980 p. 212). Donaldson may indeed be credited with the deliberate creation of a tormented and fallible hero, in a brave attempt to move away from the cliché of the genre. Juan Prieto-Pablos insists that Donaldson's subversion of the accepted heroic code is "not gratuitous, even if sometimes it may seem exaggerated", and suggests that, as in the science fiction contemporary to the series, it is a response to the doubts and insecurities of the 1970s (1991 p. 75ff).

Donaldson thus re-defines the conventional genre of fantasy romance in both including and subverting the accepted parameters of land/hero/quest, bringing into contemporary language the function he sees fantasy as performing: "to understand the human condition" (in Nicholls, 1993 p. 266). Thus, while the conflicts between generic concerns and formats are obvious in the narrative, this can be seen as deliberate, a necessary part of Donaldson's attempt to align fantasy with the "sophisticated perception of modern reality" which characterises the contemporary world. The operation of the generic markings of the text may call for conflicting responses in the reader, but at best we must define this as itself a different kind of text, one which differs radically from its generic roots, one of unease and interrogation.

While the added complexity of psychological narrative and its resulting generic tensions may legitimate the series to the mainstream reader, I would, however, argue that it simultaneously undermines the conventional generic operation of the fantasy text. Donaldson achieves a dynamic tension which is both innovative and potentially illuminating, but he also undercuts the ecological power of the magical Land. While Thomas Covenant is an interesting narrative, it does not, despite its strong focus on the magical land, allow to any great extent the identification, wish-fulfilment and, through the hero, participation in renewal, offered by conventional fantasy. Thus, analysis of this narrative in terms of its ecological parameters, which is the concern of this thesis, is illuminating precisely because the narrative is flawed as an ecological text. The tensions, omissions and different generic agendas of the Thomas Covenant series throw in to sharp relief the expectations and preconceptions, ecological or otherwise, attached to the magical land of fantasy romance.

Thomas Covenant: the ecological anti-hero?

The nature and situation of Covenant in the series radically invert expectations of the archetypal romance hero. Unattractive, far from likeable, diseased and disbelieving, he represents the least likely candidate for heroism conceivable². The contrast of the beauty of the Land with Covenant's leprosy and abrasiveness is extreme, and conflicts continually with the romance setting of the Land itself. His operation against the conventional notions of the romance hero functions in two main areas. The first of these is in his actual character and personality, his destructiveness, denial of and lack of identification with the land, and continual failures once he does decide to act. This is supported by Donaldson's methods of characterisation in the narrative, namely his insistence on Covenant's centrality as the psychologically-investigated hero of the novel rather than the symbolic and more stereotypical hero of romance.

Donaldson creates a continual and increasing tension in the narrative with the implications which Covenant's disease and disbelief hold for the basic ecological parameters of romance. In this thesis, I have defined fantasy romance as a genre which celebrates beauty, enchantment and the continuation of life, themes centred very often around the ecological strength of the magical land. Significantly for Donaldson's narrative, Northrop Frye comments on the extent to which the symbolic poles of romance (good, evil, light, dark, life, death) are linked not only to the nature of the hero, but to the natural forces of the land:

The enemy is associated with winter, darkness, confusion, sterility, moribund life and old age, and the hero with spring, dawn, order, fertility, vigour and youth
(1971 p. 187-188).

Covenant, in his identity as wielder of the white gold, operates as a figure of renewal - the young, vigorous hero of spring - in the Land's conflict with Foul. Simultaneously, as the leper whose psychological processes are continually exposed by the author, Covenant is associated with death, disease, and, in his desperate attempts to come to terms with his experience, with conflict. Donaldson thus refuses to allow the hero to function within the security of the conventional heroic mould; further than this, the identification of Covenant

² Even less likely than Tolkien's Frodo: the hobbit is similarly a deliberate inversion of the heroic in his down-to-earth and prosaic nature, but Tolkien is concerned with demonstrating the possibility for the prosaic character to embrace heroism, rather than Donaldson's insistence on the impossibility of flawless heroism even in those designated as "hero".

Another memorable locus of Covenant's power for ill is in his relationship with the Ranyhyn, the "wild and challenging animals" who are "the Land personified - the essence of health and power" (LFB 259). The magnificent horses are associated with Covenant's own power in their wildness - like his wild white gold magic - and their challenge, since Covenant's own attitude to his experience is similarly confrontational. The association is strengthened in the bargain he makes with them, fulfilling his own name of "Covenant" in a relationship which nonetheless once more denies the sense of unconstrained dedication which the reader might expect to characterise the protective hero.

His symbolic kinship with the power of the Ranyhyn offers a potential for the integration with the Land of even a wild and abrasive hero such as Covenant - a potential denied by the horrific results of his bargain. In the life-denying and tragic winter which follows Elena's destruction of the Staff of Law, the Ranyhyn are bound to their plains in their promise to visit Lena, a binding which almost destroys them. Piettan throws the accusation at Covenant: "You had already chosen to betray them . . . The Ranyhyn cannot seek the safety of the mountains. They are shackled by commitments which you forced on them, you! You are the true butcher . . ." (PTP 209). As with Covenant's other acts of destruction, his impulses are perverted by his own nature. He wishes to give Lena pleasure because of his guilt at raping her, and the Ranyhyn cannot leave because of his selfish demand that they also answer Covenant himself. Covenant's horrified realisation is intrinsic to the symbolic functioning of the narrative: "Lord Foul and I are the same" (PTP 210).

The series offers little opportunity for identification with ecological renewal; when, in the second series, Covenant eventually does accept his role as wielder of the white gold in the renewal of the Land, he is doomed to failure. In his quest to find the One Tree and replace the Staff of Law, for example, he not only fails, but almost destroys the Land: the One Tree is actually the Worm of the World's End.

Here the Despiser cannot fail! If the Worm is roused, the Earth will end, freeing Despite to wreak its vengeance against the cosmos. And if the ring-wielder attempts to match his might against the Worm, he will destroy the Arch of Time . . . (OT 462).

Covenant thus exists on the fine line between power and destruction. He is the hero, but, unlike the typical romance hero, is "poised on the precipice of the Despiser's victory" (OT 464): he may fail not because he is fallible, but because he is both akin to and being used by the force he attempts to defeat. The danger of power is a common thread in fantasy romance - Frodo's seduction by the Ring and McKillip's exploration of Morgon's potential for destruction are cases in point - but few heroes hold the potential for wholesale

destruction, not only of the land, but of the world itself, which Covenant perpetually courts, fights and suffers.

This duality as hero-figure continually questions the nature of heroism itself, and seems to deny the possibility of the ultimate comic resolution conventionally supplied by fantasy romance. Prieto-Pablos comments on this generic effect of the hero's fallibility: "failure is possible, and its cost is not only the loss of the hero's life, but it is another step in the ultimate failure of the Land to remain a world of wonder" (1991 p. 75). Covenant, chosen by both Foul and the Creator for his task, underlines the capacity for good or evil in power (a central theme to ecological narrative), while simultaneously undermining the concept of the ecological hero. His heroism is continually called into question by the possibility that his actions fulfil Foul's purposes - as they often do, most notably in the quest for a new Staff of Law.

The existence of a hero who is an instrument of destruction and failure, and only reluctantly of renewal, badly endangers the ecological functioning of the narrative. It is increasingly obvious throughout the narrative that Donaldson's central concerns are psychological, and his use of the ecological parameters of fantasy romance is almost incidental. In its quest-narrative forms particularly, romance functions around the successful resolution of the conflict situation or threat which confronts the hero - in fantasy, specifically the threat to the magical realm. Frye notes how romance "expresses more clearly the passage from struggle through a point of ritual death to a recognition scene, that we discover in comedy" (1957 p. 187). As such, it is also very much a genre which depends on the reader's experience of vicarious fulfillment in the successful resolution of the quest, the restoration of harmony to the threatened land. As Frye suggests, "romance is the nearest of all literary forms to the wish-fulfilment of dream" (1957 p. 186).

As well as insisting on the repellent nature of Covenant's destructiveness, Donaldson compounds the impossibility of satisfactory comic closure through identification with the hero, with his use of the contemporary social framework which surrounds the magical realm. Covenant, once he has reluctantly achieved the renewal of the land, must either return to his own world, in the first trilogy, or be cast outside the Arch of Time, in the second. This outcome runs directly counter to the integrative nature of comedy. Frye suggests that the theme of comedy as a mode is "the integration of society, which usually takes the form of incorporating a central character into it," (1957 p. 43), an idea extended by Elgin, who argues for the comic integration of the individual into his environment in the more ecological sense (1985 p. 16ff). Donaldson's hero is not permitted to share in the pastoral idyll rediscovered by his renewal-quest, which materially weakens the power of the

and the people of the Land with the attributes not only of the Land but of Lord Foul, seems to deny the possibility of romantic heroism at all.

Covenant's flaws are such that there are grounds for identifying him as an ecological anti-hero. He is continually associated with overt acts of destruction and desecration that operate directly against the health and wholeness of the Land. The initial action which most memorably defines him is the rape of Lena, which sets the tone for Covenant's problematical relationship with the Land. His betrayal of Lena stems equally from the cure of his diseased impotence by the Land, and from his belief that what he experiences is a dream. He hopes that "the Land might offer him some spell with which he could cure his impotence," although he believes that "Such hope did not require that the Land be real" (LFB 61). His assault on Lena is sparked by her assertion that "the Land - ah, the Land is real" which unleashes his anger and frustration - "Are you trying to drive me crazy?" - leading directly to his assault on her (LFB 90).

Covenant's continual doubt of his experience of the Land, at least in the first series, fundamentally undermines the heroic archetype. He identifies himself at the start as "the Unbeliever" - he refuses to believe in his experience either of the beauty or vitality of the land, or of his instrumentality in its renewal. He reiterates this denial throughout the first part of the narrative - "His resemblance to a legendary hero was only part of a dream, not a compulsory fact or demand" (LFB 92); "None of this matters - I don't give a damn about your precious Land." (LFB 110) Fantasy's land-centred identification thus lacks a point of departure. Covenant does eventually and reluctantly confront Foul and thus restore the Land, but the reader of romance must still suffer frustration in Covenant's refusal either to affirm or to participate in the comic quest-experience offered him. In the second series, while his anguish at the suffering of the Land is very real, his fear of his own power still abrades the romance setting.

As a further result of Covenant's attitude of disbelief and question, the experience of the land itself is subsumed into the experience of his hero, a conflation which is highly problematical in a romance narrative. The Land becomes an area of doubt, its existence continually drifting between subjectivity and objectivity. Both in his centrality to the narrative and in his disbelief, Covenant conflicts fundamentally with the operation of the land, not only as a romance realm, but as one which belongs to the fantastic subgenre of the marvellous. Rosemary Jackson defines the marvellous as a mode which functions with "absolute confidence and certainty towards events," contrasting it with the fantastic (as seen in the writings of authors such as Kafka), which depends for its effect on hesitation, question and unease (1981 p. 33). The concept of the Unbeliever continually calls into

question the objective existence of the Land, thus undermining the element of certainty required by the marvellous, and replacing it with the hesitation which characterises the fantastic. The narrative is thus removed a further step from the wonder and enchantment generated by conventional fantasy romance, as yet another generic element increases narrative tensions and further undermines the romance status of the land.

The rape of Lena is motivated partly by Covenant's unbelief, but it underlines his nature as ecological anti-hero all the more, in that it follows Lena's description of marriage among her people, where the couple vow to "share life, in joy and sorrow, work and rest, peace and struggle, to make the Land new," and particularly of her parents' marriage, where Trell's use of orcrest breaks the drought that was on their village (LFB 88). The rape of Lena becomes a logical extension of Covenant's denial of the Land, since in the Land marriage, and therefore sex, are inextricably linked to the health and upholding of the Land.

Lena's rape, occurring early in the first series, has resonances throughout the six books of the narrative. Effectively, Covenant can never escape the consequences of that first betrayal of Lena and the Land. It taints Elena, Lena's daughter and High Lord of Revelstone, and her words to Covenant have ironic force: "I fight for the Land, and will not quail although the beauty may die, or I may die, or the world will die. But there is much of Lena my mother in me . . ." (IW 89). The flaw in Elena, the "nameless reek of wrong" which Covenant perceives (IW 448) is exploited mercilessly by Foul, so that Elena, and ultimately Covenant, become responsible for the breaking of the Law of Death and the destruction of the Staff of Law. The Sunbane and the complete perversion of the Land's health and power in the second trilogy are possible only because the Staff of Law no longer exists, and can thus be traced back to the rape and to Covenant's guilt.

Covenant's destructive potential is reiterated throughout the series, as he is associated with action after action of betrayal and devastation. After the rape of Lena he allows Foul's agents to wreak havoc among the Wraiths of Andelain, whose dance expresses the "beauty and wonder" of the Land (LFB 153), again distancing himself from the heroic functioning which, in the classical symbology of fantasy romance, would normally protect the land's beauty. Atiaran's despair and resentment at his refusal to act are yet another element in her hatred of him: "since you permitted Wraiths to die - this blade has cried out for your blood... Other crimes I could set aside. But that! To countenance such desecration!" (LFB 169). With the loyalty to the Land of all its inhabitants, she will forgive the rape of her daughter before she will forgive the betrayal of the Wraiths, but on both counts, Covenant's guilt is extreme.

fantasy narrative as comedy in its concern with the continuing and life-affirming function of the system. Donaldson permits the ultimate restoration of the land, as is expected of the fantasy romance which more conventionally depicts the same motif of the magical land as does Thomas Covenant. Donaldson, however, seems intent on proving that, in the modern world, closure and resolution can never be simple or wholly comic, and that a hero, despite tradition and convention, is never more than human³.

The Land: health, beauty, power destroyed from within

The creation of a realm known only as "The Land" both focuses attention on the ecological implications of land, and allows a universalisation of theme. W.A. Senior notes the efficacy of the name itself, its power to crystallise out an ideal of the concept of land:

`the Land' comes to articulate everything that should and could be at Frye's "conceivable limits of desire"; it represents verbally a palpable condition of active health in all its diversity, possibility and strength (1990 p. 261).

Donaldson underlines this power of name and being in Covenant's rather grim awareness of the very different attributes of land in our reality: "Where I come from, there is no `Land.' Just `ground.' Dead" (IW 140). The presence of Covenant allows Donaldson to make a deliberate and powerful comparison between the dead ground of our world and the aggressive life and ecological power of the Land - a comparison which links directly to the function of fantasy with which this thesis is concerned, as a modern response to increasing ecological disaster.

The suggestion, early in the series, that the Land is a dream of Covenant's, allows for further psychological interpretations. John Timmerman comments on the importance of Covenant's first appearance in the Land, on the spire of Kevin's Watch, so that he is led by Lena "down into the fantasy world" (1983 p. 106) - the implication being that he simultaneously travels down into the deeper layers of his own psyche⁴. Critics of fantasy have noted the link between unreality/dream and desire, which in Covenant's case is the desire for health: Jackson suggests that fantasy functions as "a literature of desire, which seeks that which is experienced as absence and loss" (1981 p. 3). The desire for health and beauty, underlined in Lena's song with which I opened this chapter, is an important element

³ It is interesting to compare the operation of Guy Gavriel Kay's Fionavar series in this context, since Kay's protagonists also originate in contemporary society. However, while two of the five protagonists ultimately return to their own world, their regret is obvious. Furthermore, the other three remain in Fionavar, variously because of death by self-sacrifice or because of a love relationship - fates which connect them integrally to the land and its people. Thus, while some characters must abandon Fionavar in the moment of its fulfillment, their integration with the fantasy realm is never in doubt.

⁴ A Jungian analysis of this process would be interesting, with Jung's use of the anima, the female side of a male personality, as a possible guide in the development of the psyche.

which contributes to the popularity of modern fantasy in an increasingly ugly modern world.

The appeal and enchantment of the Land are considerable. Donaldson seems to expand on aspects of Lorien to create a magically aware, beautiful, living land with all of the vitality and growth that Lorien lacks. Senior suggests that the power of the Land

... harks back to such nature and creation myths as those surrounding Gaea... The Land and Earthpower functions as would such a figure, being sentient, operative and ethical. As their names gradually come to indicate, the two invoke, both physically and metaphysically, incarnate health and strength (1990 p. 261).

This is reflected in Covenant's growing ability, after his arrival, to perceive the health of the Land, its vitality obvious to the perception in a powerful symbolic affirmation of ecological wholeness. "He was seeing health, smelling natural fitness and vitality, hearing the true exuberance of spring. Health was as vivid to him as if the spirit of the Land's life had become palpable, incarnate" (LFB 123).

Donaldson's narrative shows plentiful examples of images and motifs which celebrate and crystallise the exuberant health and vitality of the Land. An initial and powerful image is found in hurtloam, the river-mud which temporarily cures Covenant's leprosy, justifying and illustrating Lena's assertion that "there is power in the Earth - power and life" (LFB 57). The potent aliantha berries operate as a motif of sustenance and strength throughout the series, surviving even the Sunbane. Most emphatically, perhaps, the realm of Andelain offers naked Earthpower, its beauty having a "keener essence" and carrying "a purer impression of health" than any other part of the Land. It offers both a concentrated essence of Earthpower and a sense of more palpable magic, one confirmed by Covenant's experiences with the Dead in Andelain during the Sunbane (WL Ch. 12). In this it is akin to Tolkien's Lorien, a realm set apart in its magic and beauty. Like Lorien, Andelain has "a dangerous loveliness - not because it was treacherous or harmful, but because it could seduce" (LFB 145). Unlike Tolkien's narrative, however, Andelain strengthens the ecological force of the land, its essence concentrated rather than localised. Middle-Earth's more prosaic land offers a contrast to the magical power of Lorien, but Andelain serves to intensify the very real ecological power of the Land; Donaldson's ecological vision, while peripheral to his narrative, is ultimately stronger than that of Tolkien.

The Land is thus both beautiful and powerful, and provides continual celebrations of potency and ecological wholeness. More than simply a beautiful land, however, Donaldson comes close to creating an ecological Utopia in the relationship between the people of the Land and the Land itself. The Land's society is characterised by a dynamic interaction of

communities with the wood or stone on which they are based, and a deep love and reverence for the beauty which surrounds them. Prieto-Pablos notes the "ecological concern... manifested in the compact established between the people of the Land and all its sentient creatures, including the most elementary ones, the stone and wood" (1991 p. 74). The relationship of the Gravelingas to the rock on which the community of the Stonedown is built is proof of Donaldson's ability to find beauty and regenerative power in the normally sterile medium of stone. Trell's tenderness for the broken stoneware pot (LFB 74-5) is echoed in Lena's craft of suru-pa-maerle, "making images from stone without binding or shaping... learning to see what it is the Earth chooses to offer" (LFB 51). The Woodhelven, the tree-villages of the people of the lillianrill, and the lomillialor rods themselves, extend this sense of the peaceful co-existence of humanity with the elements of the Land.

Perhaps one of the most original and striking aspects of the Land, functioning both as comic and as ecological motif in the narrative, are the Giants, who stand in the narrative for strength, endurance, gentleness and generosity of spirit. Atiaran offers the judgement that "The Giants of Seareach are another name for friendship" (LFB 166), a perception that links the Giants even more firmly to the sense of community and integration which is central both to comedy and to an ecological narrative. As an extension of this, they are an example of the wise use of power in a narrative which plentifully and tragically supplies examples of disastrous failure; the Giants are responsible for returning the First Ward of Kevin's Lore to the Land after the Desecration, since Kevin "had trusted it to the Giants before the last battle" (LFB 101). In their strength and endurance the Giants are associated with stone: Covenant notes the "rocky concreteness of the Giant's presence... The Giant struck his perceptions as tangibly as stumbling on rough stone" (LFB 166). This links to the sense of the vitality of stone found in the Stonedowns and the powers of the gravelingas, the extent to which normally non-living elements are energised in Earthpower.

However, the Giants contribute most materially to the ecological functioning of the narrative in their power of laughter. Covenant's experience of Saltheart Foamfollower includes his humour, characterised by "a contagious sound, a colouration of uncomplicated joy" (LFB 172). In the comic operation of the ecological narrative, the humour of the Giants emphasises their vitality, their celebration of life and the beauty of the Land, a joyousness which continually affirms the possibility of continuation of life. This becomes central to Covenant's experiences in Foul's Creche at the end of the first series. He cannot destroy Foul, since that would affirm destruction, but instead confronts him with an affirmation of comic vitality and healing: "I want to laugh. Take joy in it. Bring some joy into this bloody hole.... Let Foul alone! Heal yourselves!" (PTP 426). The final sentence

of the trilogy confirms this link between laughter and life, when, battered and only just pulled back from death, Covenant "smiled because he was alive" (PTP 439).

The power of the Land is thus undeniably real, an ecological construct with the potential for a vigorous and compelling resolution offering the characteristic fulfillment of the romance genre. The peril which the Land faces is equally strong and similarly problematical: Donaldson's exuberant Land is threatened most centrally, not by Foul, but by the hero who should offer renewal and regeneration. It seems that Donaldson, having created an ecological construct of unusual power, is impelled to balance it with unusual threat - threat that is not only horrific but which, in an inversion of the usual scenario of defence against obvious external force, comes from within.

Threat may be externalised in the figure of Lord Foul, but his attacks are structured to exploit the weaknesses and potential for harm in the people who oppose him. The narrative's emotional force comes from the horror of watching good turned to evil, likeable characters possessed by Foul's Ravers, Elena's pride and desire for power turned against herself - and, most essentially, the hero denied heroism, Covenant's bitterness and fear of the great and wild force he wields, used cruelly against the Land he should protect. In this internal threat, the "many... blights / which may waste / the beauty" which Lena's song describes, Donaldson finds a potential for horror and tragedy matched in few contemporary fantasies.

The threat to the Land is thus interior rather than exterior. Despite the Other-made-real of Foul, the Land is actually destroyed by perversion and disease rather than simple attack, the corruption of the Land from within undermining the identification of "good" threatened by "evil" which characterises more conventional magical narrative. This becomes even more apparent in the second trilogy, where the corruption of Earthpower into the Sunbane offers a powerful symbol of ecological unhealth - Linden perceives it as "a running sore. I keep expecting to see it bleed" (WL 137). The adulteration of Earthpower is paralleled by the perversion of the perceptions of the Land's people - they believe that alianatha, the "quintessential nectar of the Land" (WL 147) is poisonous, that the Lords fight the Sunbane when in fact they feed it. Sunder's anguish is poignant - "all the life of the Land through all the generations has had no meaning" (WL 148). Lord Foul's horrific misuse of Earthpower has effectively alienated the Land from its people, made the land itself Other and deadly when it should be the locus for identification, regeneration and beauty. Donaldson thus achieves a deeper level of ecological threat than most other fantasies, since the threat, while ultimately from Lord Foul, is channelled through the land and becomes identified with it. The theme of danger from within, seen as Covenant's own destructive

potential in the first series, and expressed through Lena, Elena and the Staff of Law, thus becomes more overt in the second series with the sickening corruption of Earthpower.

As another aspect of this continual blurring of self/Other, land and destructive threat, the one fortification of knowledge and resistance against the Sunbane is found among the Waynhim, whose underground gardens and zoos preserve plant and animal life from the Sunbane. Their gardens are "lush and lovely, as natural as if these plants had been born to fructify under a stone sky" (WL 288); yet the Waynhim themselves, like the ur-viles, are Demondim-spawn. While they have broken with Lord Foul, they have the dark associations and alien genesis which make them Other. They are associated with evil and destruction as well as difference, yet their service to the Land is considerable. In Donaldson's world, clear identifications of self/Other, land/threat, villain/hero, become impossible. Distinctions are blurred, and the Land's protection as well as the potential for its destruction come from unlikely and ambiguous sources.

Of these, Covenant himself is of course the most central. The parallel operation of the Sunbane and the perverted and false beliefs of the Land's people finds another level of symbolic functioning in the pervasive motif of Covenant's leprosy. Like the Sunbane, the disease comes from within, a corruption of the body in the same way that the Sunbane is a corruption of the Land. Like the Sunbane, it destroys health and beauty, and causes alienation. Its most powerful implication for a narrative that utilises an ecological form, however, is the fact that it cannot be cured. Covenant's leprosy offers no potential for resolution and renewal - his miraculous cure from the power of hurtloam is not permitted to continue throughout the series, and his character is built around the resentment and despair that comes from a complete absence of hope. In this, the constitution of the hero as leper operates directly against the conventional functioning of the romance narrative which centres on the magical land.

The rules of power: restraint and ward.

The existence of the Land as a pastoral as well as an ecological Utopia is defined in the Oath of Peace by which its peoples are bound. The condemnation, central to ecological narrative, of needless violence and destruction, is summed up in the Land's Code:

Do not hurt where holding is enough;
do not wound where hurting is enough;
do not maim where wounding is enough;
and kill not where maiming is enough;
the greatest warrior is one who does not need to kill
(LFB 262).

Fantasy romance, concerned with the protection of the magical land, expresses a continual involvement with the balance and restraint of power. Donaldson's narrative is no exception, although the images associated with the abuse of power are perhaps more exaggerated than in most fantasy, often to the point of being sickening. It is interesting that the Code itself, a call for restraint without weakness, is phrased in terms of negative violence rather than positive peacefulness, its overall effect being to emphasise hurting, maiming, death.

Donaldson's structuring of Earthpower underlines this extent to which the power of the land, like the power utilised by its peoples, is conceived as being structured and balanced. The Staff of Law functions as a powerful locus of this system of restraints, which is also expressed through the magic of tree and stone, gravelingas and hirebrand, and through the power of ecological renewal held by the Lords. The Staff is both an answer to the abuse of power, and a ward against such abuse. The legend of Berek functions as an important motif in the narrative, since Berek is the maker of the Staff, and is associated continually, in his hero-status and the promise of ecological renewal, with Covenant himself.

Berek makes the Staff in response to the degraded lust for power of his King; despairing at the shadow that has overcome both King and Land, he fears that "Beauty shall pass utterly from the Land." The ecological theme of the land as entity is invoked in the pledge of healing Berek makes to the Land, "promising respect and communion and service for the Earth from himself and all the generations which followed him upon the Land" (LFB 82). This is continued in the intervention of the Fire-lions, and an instance of the Land moving, in concert with its people, to protect itself. Berek operates as the source of the Utopian relationship with the Land enjoyed by its inhabitants, a relationship based intrinsically in the denial of violence and destruction.

The opposite to abused power, however, is not the abandonment of power, but the wise and beneficial utilisation of it. As with most fantasy narratives, the vigorous energy of the land may be used for great good. The narrative continually sets up the opposing poles of destruction and healing, the healing motif connected integrally with Covenant's own illness as well as with the desecration of the Land. The Staff of Law paradoxically stands both for power, in that it is the centralisation of Earthpower, and for its restraint. Thus Earthpower is in a sense limited by the Staff at the same time as it is codified against the manipulations of Foul - it is only after Elena's destruction of the Staff that Foul can cause, first, the winter which grips the Land, and then the perversion of Earthpower in the Sunbane.

Such a limitation of power becomes necessary in Donaldson's depiction of the fallibility of human nature, the extent to which the wielders of power may become corrupted by it. In the series, Elena stands as the most poignant example of this, her intensity of desire to defeat Lord Foul translating into a desperate need and desire for power - Covenant perceives her as being "rife with hungry conclusions - so packed with needs and duties and intents that she was about to shatter" (IW 449). Covenant's own ambiguous relationship with his white gold tends at times towards the same danger, that of succumbing to the power and the destructiveness it represents; this is seen most clearly at the One Tree, when his blaze of white gold risks waking the Worm of the World's End.

The abuse of power stretches beyond Covenant's own tale, into a mythological dimension which adds depth and authority to the textual motif. As Tolkien does, but to a far lesser extent, Donaldson uses the history of the Land to add emphasis to the themes and concerns which centre around Covenant. Most significantly, the figure of Kevin Landwaster and the Ritual of Desecration stand as a potential end for Covenant should he misuse his power under the machinations of Foul. Kevin's unleashing of the Desecration operates as a powerful image of the ultimate ecological betrayal, centred on a despair which runs fundamentally counter to the life-affirming nature of both comedy and romance. Kevin's song, invoked both by Elena and by the singer in Revelstone, expresses this profound absence of hope which is Foul's primary weapon against his victims. In a doubt and sadness which echoes Covenant's own denial of the Land, Kevin questions the basis of ecological strength itself and its ability to endure against threat:

Where is the Power that protects
beauty from the decay of life?
. . . secures fealty from that slow stain of chaos
which corrupts?
. . . Ah, Creator!
Did You intend
that beauty and truth should pass utterly
from the Earth?
(IW 120)

The potentially benevolent power of the great Lord is thus corrupted, re-channelled into destructiveness by the insidious despair engendered by Foul. In the ultimate irony, the ecological strength of the magical land is used specifically against itself. This supplies interesting comparisons with other narratives: in the Riddlemaster series, for example, the power of the land is utilised by the Shapechangers, but against the people of Hed, not the land itself; Tepper's Lom, however, suffers a parallel process of despair and self-destruction, although without the mediating instrumentality of humanity.

The cunning of the Despiser may be seen to operate symbolically as well as functionally in the narrative, as an extension and metaphorical representation of the inherent weaknesses of

humanity. The link between Covenant, Foul and the Land is constantly reiterated in the narrative's complex symbolic structure. The Land, in the modern realist narrative, exists only as dream, as a construct within Covenant's mind, so that mental processes cannot be separated from the state of the Land. Symbolically, within the romance narrative, Covenant as hero, his mental processes bared to the reader, moves through a landscape which reflects on the symbolic level his internal fears and horrors. At the same time, within the realist narrative Foul himself exists only as the negative aspects of Covenant's mind, so that his heroic status is further undercut by the perception that the Land's sufferings are caused by himself - "Lord Foul and I are the same" (PTP 210). The multiple layering of the narrative inescapably stresses the extent to which internal doubts and fears are projected upon the external world in destructive and damaging ways. Power, despite its origin in the Earth, is channelled through the human psyche, and thus is easy prey for Foul.

Donaldson's inescapable conclusion is thus that power, in itself, achieves nothing against the internal threat symbolised by Foul. Earthpower, the power of the Lords, even the white gold, are continually undercut and downplayed because, in fact, they are not the central issue in Donaldson's themes of renewal and self-discovery. Despite cannot be killed, opposed with power in any way; at the end of the first series, in a book significantly entitled "The Power that Preserves", Covenant's revelation is that "I can't kill him. He always survives if you try to kill him. He comes back stronger than ever the next time" (PTP 426). The final resolution of the series explicates exactly this sense of passive resistance; Covenant, cast by death beyond the Arch of Time, protects the Arch against Foul's attacks simply by his presence. In his final achievement of peace, he can peacefully defy Foul: "I keep telling you you're wrong. I wouldn't dream of fighting you," as he endures Foul's onslaught: "He did not oppose it, made no effort to resist or evade the attack. He simply accepted it." In Covenant's passive but effective resistance, Donaldson attempts to provide some kind of justification for the suffering and destruction which the narrative presents: "Pain doesn't last. It just makes me stronger" (WGW 473).

In the final renewal of the Land, the Sunbane is resisted by the same process of absorption. Linden cannot fight it directly, for "its power was atrocious beyond belief... the very Earth was bleeding to death" (WGW 486); beyond this, it is in fact Earthpower, and any attack on it will attack the Land. Instead, in a triumphant reversal of the narrative's process of power used and corrupted by its users, she absorbs and cleanses the power of the Sunbane:

... the pain she had taken upon herself was swept from her - cured and cleansed, and sent spilling outwards as pure Earthpower. With the Law she healed herself"
(WGW 487).

The restoration of the seasonal balance of the Land, perverted by the Sunbane, is a powerful vision of ecological wholeness, centred in Linden's awareness of health. The fertile, desert, storm and pestilential suns are given their proper and balanced place in the healthy Land. Donaldson's ultimate vision of power is thus almost neutral in its conception. Power should be feared, as both Covenant and Linden fear it, but can be used for good or ill, its ultimate effect as regenerative or as destructive as its user. Thus the series is not so much a celebration of ecological wholeness rediscovered, as it is an exploration of the psychological processes by which Covenant and Linden come to terms with their own flaws, to an extent where their wielding of the power of the Earth is both benevolent and regenerative.

Psychological fantasy: the failure of genre?

Donaldson's series reflects an attempt to create a contemporary narrative (modern in its reflection of ills characterised as current rather than symbolic, medieval or magical) using the elements of traditional fantasy. In doing this, he achieves a complexity and ambivalence which do not exist within the traditional parameters of quest-narrative, romance or pastoral. As suggested at the start of this chapter, Donaldson's generic mixing has powerfully postmodern potential, and attempts to offer a radical and contemporary re-writing of the traditional romance hero. His conclusion, that heroism is impossible (or at least very different) in a more cynical postmodern world, challenges the assumptions of the specific readership of fantasy romance at the same time that it opens the genre to the examination of a more sophisticated audience. As such, Thomas Covenant could be seen as forming a part of the highly self-aware and challenging speculative tradition exemplified by writers such as Gene Wolfe and Ursula Le Guin.

Such an analysis of the series, however, while it may possibly illuminate Donaldson's objectives, is highly problematical. Both as fantasy romance and as postmodern rewrite, there is an extent to which the Chronicles of Thomas Covenant can be said to have failed, an extent to which the execution of the series fails to equal the author's apparent intention. Such a failure can probably be attributed directly to the dubious quality of Donaldson's writing style itself.

Perhaps the most obvious element in Donaldson's style is, quite simply, length. The six-book series sprawls over some 3000 pages (the Fontana paperbacks average out at around 470 pages each), placing it firmly in the category of "epic fantasy series" (with Eddings' Belgariad, McCaffrey's Pern, etc) and hence in the often equivalent category of "non-literature." This, together with the generic and Tolkienesque fantasy world aspects of

Donaldson's Land predisposes the reader towards a more simplistic response than Donaldson's apparently radical agenda would seem to require. The resulting clash between the expectations surrounding stock fantasy (identification, wish-fulfilment, vicarious experience of closure and replenishment) and Donaldson's insistence on painful realism, ultimately seem to frustrate to a greater extent than they challenge. The failure is heightened by Donaldson's inability to present any real progression of character or theme throughout his six volumes, since Covenant's basically simply movement from denial through angry engagement to an eventual realisation of the futility of power, could be developed appropriately in one or two books.

This frustration is, of course, centred around the ambiguous figure of Covenant himself. The nature of the "hero", actually anti-hero, precludes the cathartic identification with the instrument of renewal usually experienced by readers of fantasy. The lack of hero/health/renewal parallels may be seen as a part of Donaldson's attempt to bring the concept of heroism closer to the modern experience, but even with this postmodern aspect the characterisation of hero as leper is problematical. Frye notes the identification patterns of romance, where "all the reader's values are bound up with the hero" (1971 p. 187); it is difficult to see how the experience of a leper, particularly one with Covenant's bitterness and lack of hope, could parallel the experience of anything but a very minimal proportion of the series' readership. In removing the possibility of identification, Donaldson fails to replace it with any viable position from which the reader may experience the narrative.

Covenant is thus associated most strongly with obstruction, frustration and failure. The strong fantasy romance parameters of the series invoke the pattern of blockage/resolution which arise from the comic aspect of fantasy romance: Frye suggests that "the obstacles to the hero's desire ... form the action of the comedy, and the overcoming of them the comic resolution" (1971 p. 164). Donaldson's series allows of blockage on two levels, however, that which prevents the restoration of harmony and health in the Land, and that which prevents the restoration of harmony and health in the hero. Effectively, while the Land may be healed, Covenant may not; he escapes the torment of his leprosy only in death. The heroic/comic of fantasy becomes heroic/tragic, a radical revision of conventional fantasy, but one which only minimally illuminates. The insistence on blockage, destruction and frustration throughout six books comes to outweigh, in its emotive impact, any intellectual satisfaction gained from Donaldson's revision of the heroic archetypes.

Donaldson's exposition of his themes is thus characterised by a lack of emotional balance as well as a failure to provide any consistent point of identification for the reader of what is effectively a romance narrative. A further problem arises from the author's insistence on

Covenant as the locus of the narrative's psychological exposition, a characterisation alien to the generic workings of fantasy romance. Again, Donaldson's radical agenda could be seen to allow for such a conflict, but in this case, generic tension highlights a clumsy overlap of style. Northrop Frye discusses precisely this differentiation between romance and novel, in terms which relate specifically to the conflicts perceived in the series. He writes:

The essential difference between novel and romance lies in the concept of characterisation. The romancer does not attempt to create "real people" so much as stylised figures which expand into psychological archetypes. It is in the romance that we find Jung's libido, anima, and shadow reflected in the hero, heroine, and villain respectively. That is why romance so often radiates a glow of subjective intensity that the novel lacks, and why a suggestion of allegory is constantly creeping in around its fringes (1971 p. 304).

Romance is thus the genre of archetype and symbol, and fantasy, particularly, functions as a romance genre which deals intrinsically with this externalisation of meaning into magical symbol. The inner quest for meaning, attribute of the novel rather than the romance, which Covenant undergoes during the course of the narrative, is paralleled and duplicated unnecessarily in his external quest to combat the evil of Lord Foul. Fantasy romance typically offers a narrative whose plot and symbol structure are linked intrinsically to the nature of the hero - here, the Land's diseased suffering externalises the leprosy-induced suffering of Covenant himself.

Donaldson himself (somewhat paradoxically, given the kind of duplication found in the series) differentiates on a theoretical level the operation of psychology and symbol:

Fantasy is a form of fiction in which the internal crises or conflicts or processes of the characters are dramatised as if they were external characters or events... and so the internal struggle to deal with those needs/problems/exigencies is played out as an external struggle in the action of the story (in Senior, 1990 p. 259).

As Donaldson's own definition suggests, Covenant's crusade to save the Land operates on a powerful symbolic level. His attempt to overthrow Foul parallels his inner quest to overthrow his own self-hatred and despair; the Land stands for the exuberant health and vitality which he, as a leper, lacks. Covenant himself recognises this: "Lord Foul was only an externalised part of himself." Given this powerful symbolic exposition of Covenant's internal processes, Donaldson's frequent several-page investigations into Covenant's angst-ridden mental state become both unnecessary and irritating - particularly since, as noted before, any development of character happens agonisingly slowly. The reader is aware of Covenant's suffering in the suffering of the land and its people; Lord Foul, destructive and insidious, provides a far more effective metaphor for Covenant's angst than Donaldson's realistic descriptions of his mental state.

Structural excess in Donaldson's writing is echoed by stylistic excess at the most basic level. Donaldson chooses to explore the psyche of his protagonist in long, rather tortured passages which effectively hold up the action of the narrative - and it should not be forgotten that romance, in whatever form, is based at a very fundamental level on adventure. Thus psychological insight, which should be perceived as interrogation of the genre, is perceived as clumsy intrusion: a perception not alleviated by the frequently repetitive and self-consciously angst-ridden nature of Donaldson's writing. Le Guin notes how the characterisation of the fantasy hero depends on the competent style of the writer:

[his] lordship is the outward sign or symbol of real inward greatness. And greatness of soul shows when a man speaks... In naturalistic fiction... we expect lapses, and laugh at an "overheroic" hero. But in fantasy, which, instead of imitating the perceived confusion and complexity of existence, tries to hint at an order and clarity underlying existence - in fantasy, we need not compromise. Every word spoken is meaningful, although the meaning may be subtle
(1984 p. 74).

In these terms, Donaldson's style, overstated and frequently redundant, would be enough to compromise the heroic stature of Covenant, even without his insistence on Covenant as a naturalistic hero. The novel narrative, dwelling at length on tortured inner process, seems itself to preclude the "greatness of soul" necessary to the hero of romance. Donaldson's writing simply does not have the depth and control necessary both to affirm and interrogate his romance narrative.

Frye suggests, "a... romancer should be examined in terms of the conventions he chose" (1957 p. 305), and specifically, in terms of the justice he does to those conventions. Quite apart from the suspicion of artistic incompetence on a level purely of language, the logical conclusion is that Donaldson, while motivated by the desire to create an original hero, has not thought properly through the conflicts and interrogations engendered by such a generic mix. His narrative is at times painfully self-conscious, yet at a structural level is too unselfconscious for real success. I can only conclude that the uncomfortable tensions within Donaldson's narrative are ultimately artistic rather than thematic.

Conclusion: (badly) subverting the Land

In Thomas Covenant, Donaldson undoubtedly tries to do something different with the accepted conventions of fantasy romance - to interrogate the assumptions of the genre in the light of a more complex experience. While his stylistic failure may flaw the series, his use of conflicting genres also impacts on the operation of his fantasy land as an ecological construct. The ecological themes of fantasy romance are still present, powerfully presented in the metaphors of health and disease. To a certain extent, however, Donaldson seems to

demand that they become secondary, a mere dream-world parallel to the eventual psychological redemption of Covenant, a powerful metaphor whose ecological impact is almost allegorical.

Thus, while the Land is a powerful and compelling magical realm, its ecological themes strengthened by implicit comparison with our own reality ("Ground. Dead."), Donaldson celebrates its eventual renewal only as such renewal symbolises the successful conclusion of Covenant's psychological quest. The lessons of power, restraint and passive resistance apply first to the individual, and only thereafter to the Land. The result is to weaken the fulfillment and closure offered by the Land's renewal: the sense of enchantment created by the undeniable beauty of the Land is almost entirely outweighed by the horror of the Land's corruption. While obviously utilising the ecological theme of magical beauty as a locus of moral exposition, Donaldson nonetheless prefers to focus on the psychological exposition with which his series is most pressingly concerned.

Thus, despite the very real power of the series, in its aspect of fantasy romance, to offer triumphant ecological regeneration after the overcoming of profoundly anti-ecological threat, the functioning of the series as romance is in some ways flawed. Resolution is finally offered, but the overall impact of the series is in its vision both of ecological and of psychological corruption. In the terms of the romance narrative which the series at least partially purports to be, this is a flawed process. The essentially unsophisticated reader of romance does not want to be offered resolution only once the tortured problems of the hero's psyche have been resolved, since this adds another layer of threat and blockage to the successful comic resolution of the narrative. The balance between blockage and fulfillment is delicate, and too many obstacles endanger the success of the narrative; just as too much psychological investigation holds up the flow of events. Donaldson's Thomas Covenant is frustrating at the same time that it is compelling, and the success with which it functions as fantasy is highly limited. More than this, the complex agendas as well as the problematical narrative control and writing style of its author may be said to compromise the success with which the Thomas Covenant series functions not only as fantasy romance, but as psychological narrative, postmodern narrative, or indeed any form of narrative at all.

Chapter 5:

Sheri S. Tepper's True Game series

*Lolly duro balta las lom. Walk well upon the lovely land.
(Shadowpeople blessing).*

*Women [learn] more than men most times
(Jinian Footseer)*

The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction identifies Sheri S. Tepper as "one of the most significant new - and new feminist - voices to enter 1980s sf" (1993 p. 1212). The nine books of the True Game series are among Tepper's earliest works, but show many of the same thematic interests as her more recent novels. Tepper herself comments that the early novels are "packed with the same kinds of themes I have used over and over later on" (in Locus 1994 p. 4). While later works are mainly science fiction, specifically The Gate to Women's Country (1988), the loosely-connected trio of Grass (1989), Raising the Stones (1990) and Sideshow (1992), and the post-apocalyptic Plague of Angels (1993), they share with the True Game series a consistent and urgent interest both in ecology and in feminism, as issues which are often inextricably linked.

The True Game series could be described as science fantasy, given its use of a loose scientific rationalisation to its world and events. A human group, fleeing nuclear war, has colonised a distant planet, using as its excuse the need to isolate and monitor an emerging telepathic talent; the new world has native inhabitants, and the series investigates human impact on them as well as the development of a telepathically-skilled - "Talented" - human community. Despite this, however, the mood, tone and image of the series are those of fantasy - the world itself, for example, is sentient - and the scientific rationalisation is very much background to the contained and marvellous events of the apparently "magical" setting. Tepper's protagonists, one male and two female, possess various forms of this telepathic Talent, and the series follows their increasing realisation of the harm done to the host planet by the human presence. As in Orson Scott Card's narrative, awareness of environmental destruction is linked very naturally to an exploration of colonial themes.

Tepper's interests, as well as being ecological, are strongly feminist, and an inevitable feminism/ecology association develops through the perspectives of the two female protagonists. Mavin the shape-shifter and the wizard Jinian are both members of the male-dominated society of Gamesmen, those with Talent; both are intelligent and able women whose rebellion against their societies is instrumental in the redemption of their world. This conflation of feminism and ecology is an increasingly common theme in contemporary

science fiction and fantasy, one which underlines the destructive potential in patriarchal attitudes. Deidre Byrne, in her discussion of Le Guin's ecological concerns, notes the similarities in male views of women and of nature:

... woman is natural, representing the "other" to men's "self", a being to be distanced through "scientific" scrutiny, political oppression in patriarchy and a long list of mythologies ... Scientific discourse has also represented nature as a thing, a woman to be treated sexually ... More recent discourse on the current ecological crisis has used a similar register in deploring the "rape" of nature
(1992 p. 351).

The True Game series, like other works of feminist science fiction, sets out to establish the common ground between male attitudes to women, and male attitudes to the environment. The background story of Didir, the original female telepath, and the male scientists given the task of observing her, illustrates precisely the tradition of masculine scrutiny or objectification of both woman and nature identified by Byrne. Likewise, both Mavin and Jinian experience the male treatment of women as child-bearing objects, in *Danderbat Keep* and *Vorbold's House*.

The True Game series thus reflects the contemporary eco-feminist movement in identifying both sexism and environmental destruction as an entrenched and dominating attitude of mind. Karen Warren describes the eco-feminist view:

... the connections between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature ultimately are *conceptual*; they are embedded in a patriarchal conceptual framework and reflect a logic of domination which functions to explain, justify and maintain the subordination of both women and nature
(1987 p. 3).

In this ethic of male domination, woman and nature alike become marginalised and objectified, denied any status as subjects in their own right with their own needs or desires. Tepper's fantasy framework is especially appropriate, allowing the exploration of the common speculative theme of otherness, as woman and nature alike are identified as the alien, the non-man, by the dominant hierarchy. Le Guin's discussion of the concept of otherness in "American SF and the Other" reflects the logical necessity for domination of that identified as other:

If you deny any affinity with another person or kind of person, if you declare it to be wholly different from yourself - as men have done to women ... you may hate it or deify it, but in either case you have denied its spiritual equality and its human reality. You have made it into a thing, to which the only possible relationship is a power relationship
(1989 p. 85).

Tepper's setting recognises the destructive potential in such identification of otherness, and instead demands the recognition of communality not only between human and human, but

between human and non-human; eventually, and most importantly, between human and alien world.

Little Star and the Daylight Bell: marginal narrative

Sarah Lefanu's discussion of feminist science fiction suggests that "in literature ... an act of revolution can be achieved only through a subversion of the narrative structure that holds the protagonist in place" (1988 p. 35). Such a subversion is particularly necessary given Tepper's use of the romance genre, traditionally the domain of the male hero; Lefanu notes the need for female romance writers to "insert a female subject into a preponderantly male discourse" (1988 p. 23). In the True Game series, Tepper faces the twofold challenge of allowing a voice, not only for the women marginalised by the patriarchal structures of Talented society, but for the land itself, suppressed by the same processes. The True Game, in its emphasis not only on the female perspective, but on marginal forms of narrative such as folktale and children's games, achieves this in unique and confident style. Nicholls notes Tepper's "astonishing assuredness of narrative voice; for [she] is that unusual kind of writer, the apparently *born* storyteller" (1993 p. 1211).

The narratives become increasingly intimate in their feminist and ecological exposition. The True Game itself, written first, is Peter's first-person narrative and contains little of feminist or ecological theme, but in Mavin Manyshaped and the Jinian series, Tepper uses third-person female and then first-person female voice, giving immediacy to the feminist themes. Jinian's story is interleaved with further first-person male narrative, Peter's account, the presence of which underlines the integrative and reconciliatory impulse of the series. The final narrative functions with considerable thematic urgency, combining the feminist awareness of Jinian's relationship with Peter with the critical ecological quest to save the dying world¹.

As a sub-text to these overt narratives, however, run the narratives of the world itself, the folk-tales and rhymes such as "Little Star and the Daylight Bell", in which are ritually encoded the needs and workings of the colonised world and its original inhabitants. The potential for encoded knowledge in apparently trivial forms is seen in the use of the

¹ The increasing development of serious theme throughout the series reflects Tepper's own maturation as a writer. She herself admits that the initial trilogy was "aimed at about a 13-year-old sensibility" (in Locus, 1991 p. 4), but the Jinian trilogy, written two years after the True Game trilogy, is thematically consonant with Tepper's later and more serious science fiction works.

children's skipping rhyme to describe the Eleven original Talents (TG 202)², again integral to the land in that Talent itself, in its original form, is a gift from Lom. Such apparently simplistic tales in fact house vital knowledge, an essential part of the communication structures of the system. The Dervish Bartelmy, herself part of a group dedicated to running the old roads which are Lom's network of communications, notes that "there are truths in these old tales ... They persist. The very words persist, century after century. Like rituals. Not merely tales for amusement, but rituals of truth" (JF 182).

The Little Star tale, which guides Jinian's rescue of Chimmerdong forest, and sends Himmagery and later Peter and Jinian on the quest for the Daylight Bell, in fact encodes more than the lost balance of light/shadow. In the ritualised and repetitive events of the tale (MM 353; JF 82, 187, 191) are found the reciprocity and equality of human/Eesty interaction with the Old Gods. Little Star offers to help, signalling human/Eesty and Old God alliance in a matter vital to the world, and Little Star's entrapment of d'bor wife, flichhawk or gobblemole follows reciprocally on the creature's attempt to entrap Little Star. Ritualistic entrapment is non-vindictive, resulting in the granting of boons - a representation of the land's generosity as well as a powerful insistence on integration, the need for apparently disparate elements to work together. The vision of the tales is thus profoundly ecological. Tepper herself admits her interest in legend and folktale: "I always like to include legends and stories of the people I'm writing about, because I always think people's stories and legends tell you so much about the people themselves" (in *Locus* 1994, p. 81). In this case, the legends and stories are of the land in harmony, and the information they give is the ecological blueprint for living interactively with the land.

Such encodings become, by extension, an almost exclusively female narrative form. Folklore, the land's own narrative, is also the domain of the female, wizardly Sevens and of old women such as the dams from Betand, Lily-sweet and Rose-love (MM 343). Jinian's Seven comment that "the story of Little Star and the Daylight Bell is a wize-art story, a seven-dam story, passed down and passed down" (JF 92). The arrogant disregard of such women's tales by the apocryphal Chamferon exemplifies the patriarchal attitude towards narrative, rejecting the intuitive for the concrete. Mavin's experience with the Eesties, giving information on the same topic as Lily-sweet's tale, puts Chamferon in "an acquisitive glow" where the folk-tale is treated with contempt (MM 356). Himmagery and the real Chamferon are very much exceptions to the masculine rule in their interest in folk-tale.

² The books in the True Game series have been referenced as follows: TG The True Game, MM The Chronicles of Mavin Manyshaped; JF Jinian Footseer, DD Dervish Daughter, JS Jinian Star-eye. Reference to "the True Game series" refers to all three trilogies as a whole, while The True Game refers only to the first three-part book.

Tepper's world is thus unfolded by a process of multiple narration, reported fragments of narrative as well as direct description of experience. Each three-part book in the narrative of the True Game centres around one protagonist, Peter, Mavin or Jinian, and follows the maturation of the individual, in character, development of Talent, and their intensifying realisation of the ecological problems inherent in their society. Within this structure, Tepper's increasingly serious thematic concerns are evident; The True Game, the first three-part book, deals with the fairly generalised concept of power and its abuse, which becomes a specifically feminist and ecological vision in Mavin Manyshaped and the Jinian series respectively. The use of differing perspectives allows Tepper to provide different accounts of the same events, accounts which frequently, in keeping with her feminist agenda, point to the inadequacy of even the enlightened patriarchal view.

Unlike much political writing, the True Game novels thus invariably place the protagonist among the colonising forces rather than the colonised, raising issues of responsibility as well as those of struggle, and adding considerable complexity and depth to the social vision inherent in the fantastic confrontations. Despite this disparity in perspective, however, Tepper's main characters are in sympathy with the ecologising movement in the world, and hence conform to the integrative and life-affirming function of the conventional fantasy romance form. The movement of the series as a whole is strongly towards an eventual comic resolution of human/native conflicts of the world. While each trilogy progresses towards a personal conclusion for its protagonist, the ultimate goal - realisation of the underlying harmonies of the world itself, and disempowerment of human destructive qualities - is achieved only at the end of the third trilogy. It becomes obvious that the human stories told in the series are secondary to the larger thematic conclusion.

Lom: the dis/integrated world

Tepper's marvellous world is one of often striking beauty, but such beauty is found in radically contrasting forms. Throughout the nine volumes, the tension is evident between the colourful, spectacular and vividly realised world of the colonising human gamers, and the gentler mysticism of the world's original inhabitants. In a strongly ecological vision, Tepper gives flamboyant expression to the destructive potential inherent in human nature while setting up an opposing semi-Utopian ideal of earth consciousness. Lom's native inhabitants have an element of childlike appeal, a whimsical and gently humorous aspect which in no way detracts - indeed, which may materially contribute to - Tepper's serious investigation of the possibility of an ecological Utopia. Against the whirling stars and fragile, wide-eyed beasts who sing is placed the abrasive glitter of human Talent, with its colourful symbol and pageantry.

Tepper's depiction of the world of Lom is unified by her obvious interest in the theme of communication, the informed integration of the system with itself. The characterisation of Lom as a self-aware entity, consciously directing its parts, is instrumental in this process, and provides a compelling symbolic illustration of the deep-ecology ecosophical insistence that "we harmonize with the will-of-the-land" (Bill Devall, 1990 p. 10). More than this, Tepper's depiction of Lom's dynamic inter-relatedness seems to invoke the biological model of systems theory. Fritjof Capra suggests that:

The systems view looks at the world in terms of relationships and integration. Systems are integrated wholes whose properties cannot be reduced to those of smaller units. Instead of concentrating on basic building blocks ... the systems approach emphasises basic principles of organisation (1982 p. 286).

Tepper's Lom stresses precisely this concept of organisation. In the ongoing administration of the world-system, the concept of the message crystals and the Eestie messengers who run the planet's roads to carry them are central. Crystals and messengers become an externalised metaphor for the organic and integrated moderation of the system. Where a normal environment regulates itself without such overt mechanisms, the magical setting allows for a powerful metaphorical expression of communication within the system. "These are messages which the world sends. To itself. To all parts of itself. To bunwit and tree rat ... To Eesties. To mankind" (JS 201). Capra's description of the system activity of transaction is relevant here, "the simultaneous and mutually interdependent interaction between multiple components" (1982 p. 287). The crystals thus convey instructions for the harmonious function which allows the world's continued survival, the filling of ecological niches by the world's organisms. Beedie experiences the crystals which were "messages to the great bottom worms. Locations of vines to eat. New hot springs with special minerals to cure skin troubles. I found one crystal once which must have been intended for a bird, full of flying, strangeness, lands and valleys below..." (DD 120). The crystals thus stand equally for integration of the human communities of the world: "Messages concerning your cities on our side of the world, and messages concerning our cities on yours. Well, it's all one world, after all." (DD 120).

The nature of Lom as self-aware entity reflects the modern systems-based awareness of our own planet as Gaia, herself a system perceived as an entity - "The planet is not only teeming with life but seems to be a living being in its own right" (Capra, 1982 p. 308). Tepper's construction of the message crystal system thus illustrates the concept of the planet as "a self-organising system, which means that its order in structure and function is not imposed by the environment but is established by the system itself" (Capra, 1982 p. 290).

The depiction of planet as consciousness naturally extends and illustrates the Gaia concept, adding a new urgency and symbolic force to the need for ecological harmony within the environment as a whole.

The existence of the Old Gods is a microcosmic illustration of this principle, a representation of the conscious spirit of the system's parts, forest or bird or earth. Capra comments on the composition of systems from smaller systems: "Although we can discern individual parts in any system, the nature of the whole is always different from the mere sum of its parts" (1982 p. 287). Jinian's experience of the Chimmerdong numen is of "all tendril, all bark, ramifications of trunk and twig, fortresses of root, everything in one, in itself, enormous yet contained" (JF 192), yet at the same time "it was not a whole thing. A thing made whole, yes, but not a whole thing" (JF 193). The Old Gods are part of Lom, part of the network of communication which operates via the Old Roads. Tepper uses specifically organic parallels in the Dervish's description of the isolation of Chimmerdong: "Reduced to small volition. Living from little rage to little rage. With your nerves cut ... you would be isolated, imprisoned in your own skull, helpless. Separated. Cut off from the world..." (JF 180).

The reconciliatory impulse both of the harmonious system and of the fantasy genre itself is reflected in Lom's extension of the crystal messages to the human invader. The blue crystals contain the instructions which will allow the human community to integrate themselves beneficially with their environment as part of its chain of messages, "to run the roads of Lom, to serve as the Eesties served and to live as the Eesties lived. Which was only to invite man to become like the angels" (JS 46). Lom thus responds to the invader with welcome rather than resistance, attempting to absorb the new factor into the whole system. Parallels with system theory are clear. The organism reacts to change by adaptation, and "complex ... changes take place among the more stable components of the system to absorb the environmental impact and restore flexibility ... the organism recaptures some of its flexibility by substituting a deeper and more enduring change for a more superficial and reversible one" (Capra, 1982 p. 295). Lom thus attempts to integrate humanity into the complex net of interactions which constitute itself, effectively by increasing humanity's own ability to communicate, through the gift of Talent.

Thus, while the telepathic ability of Didir provides the excuse for the colonisation of Lom by refugees from Earth, the Talents of the True Game world are extensions and amplifications of that ability, provided as a gift of the world itself. Lom's answer to destructiveness is increased understanding and communication, given to a race whose

problem appears to be lack of precisely that integrative and self-aware faculty; within the system, man is given the information necessary for survival.

Lom had decided that man was destructive because he was weak. Man knew no way but destruction. He knew no way of quiet strength and slow building, no way of harmony and peace ... He did not perceive the willingness of Lom to provide, even to these foster children from some other world. And Lom, in response to this weakness had decided to give man Talents (JS 44).

The Talents of humanity are thus another metaphorical representation of the system's dependence on internal transaction, the communication between parts of the whole.

The emphasis on communication is continued in other aspects of the narrative. Many of the original inhabitants of the world are presented as a synthesis between the animal and the human, attractive fluffy animals with the power of speech. The Talent of Jinian, the Wizardly third protagonist of the series, emphasises the symbolic importance of this process of communion with the animal, the non-human other. Jinian's gift is presented as a process of delighted discovery: "Talking to geese. Talking to strange bunwits in hedges. Singing to birds in the air or on treetops..." The presence of the shadow-people in the narrative fulfils a similar function, bringing elements of the beast very close to the human. Mavin's initial meeting with the shadow-people emphasises their qualities of gentle, animal charm, with the additional attraction of communication: "Huge, fragile ears ... large dark eyes ... slender form fluffed with soft fur, crying, crying words ... words" (MM 97). The appeal of Lom's creatures is that identified by Tolkien as "one of the primal `desires' that lie near the heart of Faerie: the desire of men to hold communion with other living things" (1964 p. 15). It is also the appeal of a world in communication with itself, in harmonious balance as a result of that communication.

The ecological disaster which is so narrowly averted is thus the result of a failure in communication, a blockage in the messages which the world sends to its parts. Lom's plan is destroyed by the jealous action of the younger Eesties, whose response to human destructiveness is also in terms of destructiveness - "Let the man-beasts die of their own destruction, as they will" (JS 46). They consciously reject the integrity of the system, deciding that Lom's integrative impulse is mad, but they effectively disable the mechanisms Lom has already set in place for integration of the humans, and overbalance the system completely. Lom's own inhabitants thus acquiesce in its breakdown, if not cause it. Capra notes that the breakdown of an integrated system "is usually caused by multiple factors that may amplify each other through interdependent feedback loops. Which of the factors was the initial cause of the breakdown is often irrelevant" (1982 p. 289). Lom ultimately gives up when human destruction and Eesty imbalance become too great, when the cost of

continuing is too high. Thus the yellow crystals are sent to all parts of the world, and "there is only one message now. Death. Peace and a final contentment and death..." (JS 201). The environmental lesson is poignant when applied to our own ecological disasters: it is the responsibility of those within the system to maintain it, and to be aware of the implications of their actions.

Talent, attachment and (feminist) angst: human relationships in the True Game world.

Against the organic, reciprocal and integrated system of the world, Tepper sets the rigid hierarchies of the Gamesmen. The depiction of Talents and the society which sustains them utilises some of the worst tendencies of human culture: rigid class distinction, hierarchical discrimination, and the complete expendability of human life under a meaningless code of privileged behaviour. Himaggery comments on the breakdown of the system of restraints into system for its own sake:

He told us that nations of men fell into disorder, so nations of laws were set up instead. He told us that nations of law then forgot justice and let the law become a Game, a Game in which the moves and the winning were more important than the truth... It was the laws, the rules which made Gaming. It was Gaming made injustice
(TG 540).

Social comment, however, is both tempered and rendered ambiguous by the working of overtly fantastical elements in the depiction of the world: the rigid and largely male-dominated hierarchy of the Gamesmen creates an intricate, vividly realised and startlingly seductive fantasy world. Tepper's writing makes full use of devices of colour, pageantry and symbol in creating an encoded system which, despite its inherent problems, holds a glittering appeal.

Given Tepper's ecological and feminist agendas, however, such glitter eventually becomes abrasive. The placement of sympathies in the major characters demands a continual re-analysis of Gamesmen and their ways in terms of destructiveness rather than glamour. It is evident early in the series that the Talents of privileged humanity mask a classically careless exploitation of a vulnerable ecosystem by the egocentric coloniser. Talent is associated with the motif of draining: Gaming draws from the world itself the energy which is unleashed so destructively upon it. Watching the futile duel between Firedrake and Cold Drake, Peter reflects that "They would soak our heat for their play just as they would that from the sun-hot stones... I wondered as we lay there how many thousands of pawns - and lesser Gamesmen too - had died thus, lying helpless... while Gamesmen drew their heat away, slow degree by slow degree..." (TG 56). The mechanics of Game thus function as a

metaphor for the effects of mankind upon the world Lom - a thoughtless, destructive draining.

The sapping of energy from the environment is backed by images of pollution and contamination which echo ecological disasters in our own environment, almost industrial forces impinging on the health of the land. The old gods, forest and river, are "made captive in their own places. Chimmerdong was ringed with grey fire. Boughbound was dead. The spirits of Ramberlon dammed up and driven away..." (JS 41). Chimmerdong's desecration by Daggerhawk Demesne is a form of technological pollution, the forest sprayed with "something oily, glistening, which settled in a deadly film on the green, smoking slightly, turning it black on the instant" (JF 131)³. Tepper's depiction of technological pollution is supported by the metaphorical and fantastic concept of shadow, the result of the Shadowbell, which together with the Daylight Bell stands for the dynamic balance of light and dark, creation and destruction, in the world. The Eesties' destruction of the Daylight Bell allows shadow to gather out of balance, in the same way that the human presence on Lom unbalances the harmony of the world.

Such ecological ravishment is largely masculine, as is the destructiveness of human-on-human Gaming itself, the competitive matching of abilities for purely egocentric ends. Women are largely excluded from this process, institutions such as Vorbold's House existing "to remove them from the Game until some good alliance could be made ... most Gamesmen would value them as subject allies or breeders but would reject them as Gameswomen" (JF 88). Peter's experience of formal dinner in Vorbold's House links the women there with the female "monsters" in the labs of the Magicians:

... all the young women who were of an age to have manifested Talents wore appropriate helms or crowns or symbols, but all reduced in size and bulk to the status of mere ornaments. The heavy silver bat-winged half helm of a Demon might be expressed as a mere bat-winged circlet, airy as a spray of leaves. I saw a Sorcerer's spiked crown, tiny as a doll's headdress, and a Seer's moth-wing mask reduced to a pair of feathery spectacles drawing attention to the wearer's lovely eyes. It was as if they sought to make the Talents less important than the women who wore them ... Why did I suddenly think of the consecrated monsters which Mavin and I had seen in the caverns of the magicians? Was it some similar blankness of eyes? (TG 384).

Women such as Mavin and Jinian, or the Talented women of Jinian's seven, must thus fight against the trivialisation, objectification and general disregard of women in their social environment. Any positive gain in understanding and working for the integrity of the world

³ Tepper's 1991 novel *Beauty*, a fairy-tale/fantasy/science fiction/fable based on the Sleeping Beauty theme, expresses more clearly Tepper's concern with the loss of natural beauty. She says, "I had been depressed by seeing the natural places I had loved as a child - the river bottoms and the woods - destroyed, and uglification taking their place" (in *Locus*, 1991 p. 4).

is achieved either covertly, as in the case of the sevens, or by radical rebellion such as Mavin's.

Among the protagonists of the series, Talent thus has more positive implications than the generality of futile Gaming would suggest. Unlike the majority of oblivious and self-centred Gamesmen, Peter, Jinian and Mavin are linked thematically with the integrative nature of the land in the skills they possess. As shapeshifters, Mavin and Peter are organisms as marvellously flexible and adaptive as the world itself, able at will to become beast or tree. The ecological implications of this total identification with the environment are obvious: "the Jungian interpretation of identifying oneself with an animal is that it represents integration of the unconscious, and rejuvenation through a return to the source of life" (Lisa Tuttle, 1991 p. 103). Where shapeshifters within Game are as self-centred and limited as other Gamesmen, Mavin and Peter transcend conventional Shifter expectations to regain, perhaps, the integrative insight intended by Lom in its original granting of Talent.

However, Mavin's shape-shifting abilities hold further significance within the feminist awareness of the series. Lisa Tuttle's article discusses the motif of female shapechange in science fiction, noting how changing into animals "can represent escape into wildness and the delights of strength and sensuality, or it can express the limitations of a purely physical existence, the frustration of being denied a share in human culture" (1991 p. 97). The flexibility of Mavin's forms extends this potential escape, the limitless possibilities and freedoms of her changes contrasting strongly to the Danderbat Keep's treatment of women as child-bearers and sex objects without minds or rights of their own. Tepper's depiction of the life of a Danderbat female is harsh, the potentially liberating ability of shapechange itself appropriated by the patriarchal hierarchy. "Because I'm shifter, a she-child shifter, the Elders have said I have to womb-carry for them ... I can't fly or leap or turn into any other thing ... If I'm biddable, though, after I've had three or four or so ... they'll let me go..." (MM 23). Tuttle's discussion concludes by noting the liberating potential of the woman-as-animal theme in feminist literature: despite their roots in "feelings of frustration and alienation," shape-change narratives, very much like the story of Mavin, are "celebrations of diversity, growth and change" (1991 p. 106).

The Talents of Jinian, the other female protagonist, are equally linked to the natural and animal world, not only in her ability to communicate with the beasts, but in her use of the Wise-art. The rituals and herbal wisdom of Wizardry illustrate a fruitful communion with the land and the powers of the land: "The art was always a matter of respectfully invoking the power of beings larger than ourselves" (JS 235). Integral to the last of the trilogies, the power of the sevens provides an alternative "magical" source to the Talents of the

Gamesmen. Unlike Gaming, it is female rather than male-dominated; the Dervish comments that "Women learned more than men most times, so we built the sevens mostly and the Dervishes entirely out of women." (JF 180). While male Wizards appear to be individualistic and overt in their actions, the sevens exemplify a more subtle and intuitive form of power. Tepper thus seems to make assumptions on male/female roles, associating male with the Taoist concept of yang action and female with yin. Capra notes that "yin can be interpreted as corresponding to responsive, consolidating, cooperative activity; yang as referring to aggressive, expanding, competitive activity. Yin action is conscious of the environment, yang action is conscious of the self" (1983 p. 20). The implication is that the feminine sense of ecological harmony is significantly better-developed than that of the male; the exercise of Talent in Game is the most aggressive and competitive use of it, but even enlightened Wizards such as Himaggery seem to lack the intuitive wisdom of the sevens.

In conception, the Wizardly arts have much in common with ancient earth-religions of our world - a sense of oneness with natural forces, accessed through simple rituals and the use of herbal and natural focuses. Parallels are obvious with contemporary ritualistic celebration of the earth/woman association, the New Age rediscovery of paganism in the form of Wicca and other ecological mysticisms. While illustrating the potency of the world as organism concept, the Gaia myth of the earth goddess, such earth-based mysticism can be powerfully feminist. Warren notes the insistence of "nature feminists" such as Starhawk on "the close connections between women and nature ... [they] urge women to ... rejoice in the place in the community of inanimate and animate beings, and seek symbols that can transform our spiritual consciousness so as to be more in tune with nature" (1987 p. 14). Tepper presents such natural awareness as the only legitimate form of power for the coloniser - one which forces humanity to submit itself to the demands of the earth forces, rather than impose itself on natural order.

While the destructive use of competitive Talent provides a damning indictment of patriarchal structures, Tepper provides an equally telling feminist vision in her development of relationships between her protagonists. While the genuine affection between Mavin and Himaggery, Jinian and Peter, is evident, Tepper's males are always lesser characters than her females, her protagonists distinguished from other males by a lesser version of the short-sightedness and self-centredness which has caused ecological disaster. Nicholls comments that Tepper, throughout her writing, sees men as "almost doomed by their own sociobiological nature", and while her science fiction works are more overtly feminist, "the same controlled anger is visible in the apparently affable science-fantasy books" (1993 p. 1211). Radical feminism may take issue with Tepper's interest in male/female relationships, despite its privileging of the female input. Tuttle comments on Lefanu's

distinction between "feminist sf" and "feminized sf": "the latter ... while it challenges established sexism by valuing women and feminine values over men and masculinity ... does not question the man/woman paradigm or question the construction of gender..." (1993 p. 425). Lefanu herself, however, notes the "brave" assertions of Shulamith Firestone, who states that "a book on radical feminism that did not deal with love would be a political failure. For love, perhaps even more than childbearing, is the pivot of women's oppression today" (in Lefanu, 1988 p. 76).

Such a statement seems consistent with Tepper's agendas in the True Game novels, particularly the entrapment of women through affection, and her vision of masculine limitation is in many ways inextricable from her sense of ecological threat. Mavin and Jinian, while feminist agents of ecological integration who use their Talents very differently to the masculine traditions of Gaming, must adapt themselves around the potentially problematical foibles of the men they love in order to aid their stricken world. At the same time, the skills of Peter and Himaggery, although they show to a far lesser extent something of the ecocentricity of Gamers, are equally necessary to the regeneration of Lom. Environmental integration is thus achieved only through individual integration, the absorption and neutralisation of potentially harmful masculine impulses.

Tepper's vision thus seems to accept the necessity for personal sacrifice if any real male/female relationship is to be possible. In the case of Mavin and Himaggery, Mavin's sense of Shifter freedom, badly threatened by Himaggery's love for her, prevails over the desire to be near him. Despite her undoubted love for him - "what her blood would do and how little her head could manage it" - she retains the self-discipline necessary to insist on defining herself as an individual before submerging her identity in a relationship. She tells Himaggery, "I am Mavin of Danderbat Keep? What is a Mavin of Danderbat Keep? What shape is it? What colour? What does it feel and know in its bones? ... What places has it seen?" (MM 145). Her sense of the potential relationship is that she would, in true Gamesman style, be no more than "the servant of the Wizard Himaggery" (MM 147).

Love does not disguise the fact that the relationship would be unequal because of Himaggery's inability to comprehend the real Mavin - "He doesn't care whether I'm Mavin the woman, a fustigar hunting bunwits, or a Singlehorn. He's in love with the idea of me" (MM 459). Mavin's conclusion, as Himaggery fails to notice her pregnancy, is to agree with Throsset, that "Men sometimes do not see these things" (MM 453), and to refuse to sacrifice herself for the sake of such an unintuitive inadequacy. Tepper's ongoing concern with communication, understanding, reciprocity in a dynamic system, leads inevitably to a rejection of masculine abstraction and self-absorption such as that shown by Himaggery.

rejection of masculine abstraction and self-absorption such as that shown by Himaggery. Mavin notes with frustration that "he talks of his plans. His plans, his desires, his philosophy. I listen. Sometimes I think he is very naive, for I have found things in the world to be different from his beliefs, but he does not hear me if I say so" (MM 453). It is significant that Mavin's best experience of her lover is when they are both in beast form as Singlehorns, truly equal, fully integrated into their environment, yet at the cost of losing the individual awareness of both of them: "Mavin ceased in that moment ... There was whatever-she-was and the other, two who were as near to being one as had ever been" (MM 369).

Jinian's is a different decision, an affirmation of love despite problems in her relationship with Peter. Unlike Mavin, Jinian is prepared to dissemble, disguise any unadmiring judgement of her lover, and Tepper's narrative structure points unavoidably to the fact that Jinian's version of Peter is very different from Peter's own, rather naive account. The "rescues" of her described in his own narrative are re-assessed to reveal Jinian very much in control, and either patronising - "he rescued me very nicely" (JF 219) or largely unimpressed by his efforts - "I didn't, quite frankly, think it was terribly good planning on Peter's part" (JF 218). Even Peter's final, flamboyant "summons" of the bone creatures on the Wastes is in fact Jinian's achievement. Again, the relationship is unequal, Peter prey to much of the same short-sightedness which characterises Himaggery, yet Jinian chooses to remain with him. This in part compensates for the failure of Mavin and Himaggery's relationship, restoring something of the integrative potential in human lives, and Peter has learned enough to realise that "He never really said the right things to her ... And so they spent most of their lives apart and the time they spent together they spent fighting with each other" (DD 170).

At the same time, it is significant that Jinian's love for Peter is in a sense non-spontaneous, a product of incautious Wizardry in Jinian's youth - she is "trapped, and no way out of it" (JF 32). The spell is based in the power of the land, and signals a genuine kinship - "he was my true love, no question about that" (JF 33), but Jinian is defined by it in a way that Mavin is not defined by her love for Himaggery. Tepper's conclusion seems to be that the woman must be the stronger, more intuitive partner in a relationship. She is apparently limited by the association with the man, but such an unequal union seems to be necessary, for the achievement of worthwhile goals, since male and female skills are complementary, and to take part in the generative and integrative functions of the system, the life-affirming function of fantasy romance's magical land.

Claws that Snatch: gods, bao and mercy killing

Tepper's ultimate vision of an integrated human/alien society works on fundamental assumptions which reveal a somewhat pessimistic and pragmatic view of human nature. Nicholls concludes that Tepper's attractive worlds conceal a harsh awareness of serious feminist and ecological themes: "the kindly spellbinder, who tells romantic tales around the campfire, has jaws that bite and claws that snatch" (1993 p. 1212). Something of this realistic approach may be attributed to Tepper's own years of work in the Planned Parenthood organisation, and Tepper herself acknowledges that "overpopulation is an issue that's preoccupied me most of my life" (in Locus, 1994 p. 4). While later science fiction works contain more overt examples of her concern for the environment over the individual (an extreme example is found in The Gate to Women's Country, in the ruling women's use of cold-blooded population control via staged wars between male communities), The True Game offers an equally hard-headed vision in its concept of *bao*, or soul, and the obligation of a species to mercifully put to death its own members in whom *bao* is lacking.

Tepper's idea of *bao* assumes the existence of moral awareness as something which develops within an individual; she herself comments that "the hatching within a child of a moral persona comes with the thought of himself being other than the monster" (in Locus, 1994 p. 80). Tepper's creation of the Midwives in the True Game series underlines the importance of this concept: "Midwives can see into the future of the babies they deliver, and those who will not get a soul, they do not allow to live" (JF 87). This is proved even more important when the Talent of Midwife is the only true Talent left to humans at the conclusion of the series, when Lom takes back its gifts. Tepper's insistence on the removal of those members of society incapable of morality seems harsh, but the alternative, wanton destructiveness from the soulless, seems harsher. *Bao* is more than soul, but comprehends the concepts of community, integration, belonging, that are central to the series. The necessity for removal of creatures without *bao* is made more urgent by Tepper's emphasis on the fact that such killing is in fact merciful: the Oracle mocks Jinian with the bitter assertion that:

Those like me will always prey on those like you ... Until you learn mercy towards us! Until you learn that not-being is more merciful than being for one like me! Where there is no belonging, no way, why do those like you always think it more merciful to make us go on living?
(JS 228).

In the conflict between invading and native species, Tepper's lesson is clear: responsibility for death of the soulless lies with others of the same race, not with any other outside force. The Oracle's tragedy is that its destructive achievements are allowed to happen as a direct

result of the cowardice of its parent, Ganver: Ganver has to "take the final step - merciful destruction. Each of us must take responsibility for our own. No-one else can do it for us, for that way lies the destruction of all that is good" (JS 238). The individual is thus not only responsible for his or her own morality, but for the morality of dependants, children, associates, the whole race. Lom's removal of Talent from all Talented humanity may seem unfair on those - such as Tepper's protagonists - who used their Talent well, but the lesson of *bao* suggests that guilt for the near destruction of Lom rests equally with all humanity, who acquiesced in a process in which they may have taken no active part. Again, the concept of the integrated system is paramount: health of the whole must be reflected in every part, and it is the whole which suffers if one part is found wanting.

It seems, then, that as a whole humanity is found badly wanting. The use of the Midwife's talent, the need for early destruction of the potentially destructive, the final intervention of Lom, point strongly toward a recurring and largely pessimistic awareness in Tepper's work, that of humanity's inability to integrate with its environment without intervention from some powerful outside source. The same impulse is seen in Tepper's other novels, most notably in the gods of Raising The Stones, whose influence enforces peaceful and productive behaviour. Similarly, the angelic figures in Plague of Angels and the cold-blooded genetic manipulation of the female Council of The Gate to Women's Country show the same ingrained disbelief in the ability of humanity - and specifically mankind - to rise spontaneously above its destructive and anti-social impulses. While an early work, written initially as young adult fantasy rather than adult literature with a social theme, the True Game series shows the same awareness of human fallibility, since the colonisers are integrated only by the kindly intervention of the planet itself, through its system of message crystals. Humanity must be informed inescapably and unambiguously of its ecological obligation in order not to destroy its own environment.

Unlike Tepper's later science fiction works, however, the True Game series holds out some hope for humanity's future development as a race capable of *bao*. Tepper's moral structure demands that creatures without *bao* are killed mercifully, since there is no point in punishing something which cannot learn - "Will you punish a gnat because it cannot sing?" (JS 91). Lom has dealt with potential colonisers in the past, destroying with flame from the mountains the "mud monsters" and the "metal beasts from the farther star" (JS 43), and could easily deal with the human invader in the same way. The profoundly tragic final moment of the series, humanity's loss of Talent, thus holds hope as well as loss, "for if Lom thought we had no *bao*, it would not have punished us. It would have done the merciful thing" (JS 231). While our race is short-sighted and must be taught how to exist as part of a greater whole, Tepper thus seems to suggest that we may yet learn, that Talent

may return. Her conclusion is supported by the strong and responsive characters she has created, whose skills and intuition suggest not only that salvation is possible, but that it lies in the hands of the women rather than the men. The final words of the series express hope for the human race in terms that are strongly feminine, generative, humble rather than assertive: "I pray the midwives will find bao in all our children."

Chapter 6:

Orson Scott Card's Alvin Maker series

*And behold, this people will I establish in this land,
unto the fulfilling of the covenant which I made with your father Jacob;
and it shall be a New Jerusalem.
And the powers of Heaven shall be in the midst of this people...*
The Book of Mormon, 3 Nephi 20:22

Orson Scott Card is a major figure in contemporary science fiction, whose novels have been distinguished by Hugo and Nebula awards (for Ender's Game and Speaker for the Dead in 1986 and 1987), and whose output includes plays, reviews, video scripts, the editing of books, magazines and anthologies, as well as fantasy and science fiction novels and short stories. In The Tales of Alvin Maker Card explores the conventional concerns of the fantasy romance genre, namely the wielding of power in the defence of the land. However, his treatment of such themes is distinctive in its construction of the land - America rather than any imaginary realm - and the narrative's consequent awareness of themes of invasion and colonisation. Alvin Maker also reflects Card's background as a Latter Day Saint, and the religious themes of the series are in many ways characteristically Mormon.

The Tales of Alvin Maker represent a distinctive sub-genre in fantasy, that of the alternative history. Brian Stableford defines this, in the Encyclopedia of Science Fiction, as "an account of Earth as it might have become in consequence of some hypothetical alteration in history," and notes the "extraordinary melodramatic potential inherent in the idea of alternate worlds" (1993 p. 23). Card's alternate world includes a Puritan England in which Cromwell was never overthrown, with a resulting Puritan New England colony; a central and smaller United States with seven rather than thirteen member states; a southern, Stuart-loyal state with the feudal characteristics of the Deep South; Spanish Florida and Louisiana; and Canada under the sway of the French¹. To this he adds a developing Indian state, complicating the more clear-cut patterns of conquest in actual history. America as land is thus the locus of conflict on all levels - between factions of the settlers themselves, between settlers and native inhabitants, and between settlers and the land itself.

The focus on history thus adds a dimension of political and post-colonial awareness to the conventional land-based quest of fantasy romance. While the series is undeniably fantasy

¹ I am indebted to unpublished doctoral notes by Nicholas Gevers for insight into the historical process and re-workings of Card's text.

romance in its thematic concerns with quest, nature and heroism, Card's sense of the magical land is linked inextricably to his awareness both of the position of the American Indian and the African American in American settler history, and of the moral motivations of the American settlers themselves. The depiction of a frontier ethic, akin to the Mormon outlook in its emphasis on hard work, Christian morality and productively taming the land, thus exists in tension with Card's development of ecological and humanist concerns in the series. The clash of interests, both social and ecological, is that of both the colonial and the environmental problem the world over: Myrtle Hooper's introduction to an AUETSA conference on Literature, Nature and the Land notes how "questions of dispossession and reinstatement render the relation between people and land a complex and problematic one, with inexorable implications both for those who lost their land and those who settled on it" (1993 p. xi).

Card's re-writing of the early eighteen-hundreds modifies events to better express the themes with which he is concerned, and the new factor of magical energy is used to highlight and exaggerate the issues he examines. The land, while a powerful ecological construct, thus embodies conflicts and threats which affect human relations as much as they do the land. The battle between Maker and Unmaker comes to stand not only for the typically abstracted good/evil clash of conventional fantasy, but for the very human clash between oppressor and oppressed. Ultimately, Card affirms the comic nature of fantasy romance in his insistence on the need for the integration of human society with itself as well as with its environment.

The American setting for the Alvin Maker series creates a magical realm which is at once familiar and marvellous. Despite land, hero and destructive threat, the series is free from conventional cliché, completely non-Tolkienesque. In an interview with Locus (June 1987), Card insists that "it's just a different kind of fantasy. No knights and dragons, no wizards and spells, and the magic is closely tied with the kind of life that the people lived on the frontier." He thus attempts to subvert the conventional expectations of generic setting, abandoning the English sense of countryside, the legacy of the Romantics and Victorians, for the more urgent American sense of wilderness. At the same time, he retains the basic elements of hero and quest which identify land as ecological ideal at the same time as they attempt to preserve it from harm.

Much impact is gained throughout the novels through Card's use of a distinctive narrative style. The sense of simple tale-telling is strong: Card acknowledges that "I fell in love with that hill-country voice" (in the Afterword to Lost Songs, 1990c p. 670). The series reflects, although in a less exaggerated form, the "folky mountain-country voice" (1990c p.

670) of the original idea, Card's long narrative poem "Prentice Alvin and the No-Good Plough," (1990c) which reproduces more strongly the sense of oral repetition of legend. In the series itself, the colloquial narrative viewpoint of a small American boy lends both intimacy and conviction to the events described, as the reader is introduced to experience entirely from the protagonist's perspective. The second and third volumes of the narrative allow a shift in perspective, often to repeat the same events from a different point of view. The device effectively underlines Card's concern with establishing understanding between differing positions, a powerful reflection of the integrative impulse of fantasy romance. The perspectives of other protagonists - the contemptible Hooch, or Lolla-Wossiky the Indian - are equally characterised by a narrative simplicity and the "folky" voice.

The narrative devices of the series in many ways serve to highlight the fundamental importance and complex urgency of Card's developing themes. The reader is able to participate in the growth towards an understanding of important concepts which are initially grasped on a childlike or over-simplified level. Alvin's experience with the Shining Man (SS 89ff)² is a good example of this innocent straining towards an understanding of enormous issues. At the same time, the identification of writing style with protagonist to a large extent defuses the mystical or poetic aspects of a novel which is, after all, one of high fantasy: Maker meets Unmaker. The tone in which magical events or experiences are described is at times one almost of uncomprehending wonder, a groping for explanation. Alvin's encounter with Redbird exemplifies this tendency - "Alvin was as sure as shucks that Redbird wasn't here by accident." (PA 157).

Despite its strong thematic treatment of ecology and its complex post-colonial awareness, the trilogy is problematical in terms of analysis, as it is incomplete. While the movement of ideas can be clearly seen, it is impossible to interpret the series from the standpoint of any definitive conclusion. Prentice Alvin finishes with Alvin as just that, an apprentice to his craft of Making; the definition of its parameters is just beginning. The difficult conflict between a work-based settler morality and the American Indian land awareness is complex, its issues far from clear-cut. The strongly-drawn ideal of the Crystal City has not yet been achieved, although it is evident that much of the message of the novels is essentially bound up in this ultimate goal. Nonetheless, the series seems likely to conform to the conventional comic resolution of fantasy romance. Card evidently intends the successful comic resolution of Alvin's quest: "Prentice Alvin and the No-Good Plough" hints at "the rest of the tale":

... how they looked for the crystal city
How they crept to the dangerous heart of the holy hill,

² The three books in the series have been referenced as follows: SS Seventh Son, RP Red Prophet, PA Prentice Alvin.

How they broke the cage of the girl who sang for rain,
How they built the city of light from water and blood...
(1990c p. 599-560).

Failing the continuation of the series, however, analysis must be both tantalised and challenged by the incompleteness.

The Promised Land: fantasy as religious doctrine

Religious background is overt in many of Card's works. Card himself states, "I have been writing to my own community, the Mormon community, all along" (in Locus, June 1987), and Card's strongly articulated religious beliefs (seen particularly in novels such as Folk of the Fringe) are particularly important in the context of the fantasy romance genre. To the centrality of the land as the focus of the regenerative hero-quest is added the importance of the land in the Mormon context, as the promised land of Mormon sacred scripture. As a religion whose genesis is quintessentially American, Mormonism comes both to inform and to inspire Card's complex and overlapping agendas of land in the ecological sense, and land as America. Gary L. Ward comments:

Some scholars have called [Mormonism] the most American of religions in the sense that it incorporates many American trends of thought and celebrates the American land ... Mormonism partakes of the Pilgrim doxologies offered to the American land as the New Israel, and adds to them by proclaiming that land as the site of a visit by Jesus and of the eventual home of the ten lost tribes of Israel
(1990 p. i).

The presence of the messianic figure of Alvin Maker himself can be seen as a part of this process. Michael Collings has noted Card's recurring concern with messiah protagonists: "a single individual, possessed of a peculiar talent, must assume responsibility for the welfare of a community unable to understand the nature of its own saviour ... its fullest manifestation to date [is] ... in the Tales of Alvin Maker" (1990 p. 461-2). John Clute suggests that the three volumes of the series "come as close as humanly possible to the telling of an sf tale as Mormon parable, for the life of Alvin Maker clearly encodes the life of Joseph Smith (1805-1844), the founder of the Mormon Church" (1993 p. 195). Alvin as Maker, however, seems to conform to an even greater archetype, as his mother suggests: "There hasn't been a Maker ... since the one who changed the water into wine" (SS p. 192). More than simply a representation of the Mormon prophet, Alvin's identity as Maker and American redeemer is firmly linked to the Mormon belief in Christ's second coming to America. The conventional regenerative function of the hero in the land-based quest is thus overlaid with a more didactic and moral function not necessarily linked to the fate of the land.

The mix of speculative genre and religious belief is perhaps not as generically problematical as it may at first appear. In an afterword to Card's selection of Mormon science fiction tales, The Folk of the Fringe, Michael Collings, himself a Latter-Day Saint, quotes his own earlier argument that "science fiction and Mormonism provide essentially opposing perspectives, since their expectations for the future and their modes of knowing that future are so opposite" (1990 p. 239). He later refutes this statement in acknowledging that Alvin Maker:

... builds on [Card's Latter-Day Saint] background to create a fantastic world that entertains while communicating specific values ... Card skilfully blends what has been called a uniquely American literary form, science fiction, with what has been called the only indigenous American religion, to create an entirely new perspective on speculation and extrapolation (1990 p. 242).

Fantasy functions as a particularly moral and symbolic speculative form, and it is this moral element which Card utilises in the series, linking the established good/evil clash of fantasy with the traditional Mormon belief in "a responsibility for righteousness and worthiness" (Collings, 1990 p. 241). Both religious belief and fantasy romance rely heavily on symbolic moral expression; at the same time, however, the humanocentric doctrines of Mormonism appear, at least superficially, to come into fundamental conflict with the ecological agendas of the fantasy romance form.

The narrative of Alvin Maker functions as the site of tension between the conventional ecological concerns of fantasy romance, and the more problematic religious concept of the promised land and its messiah. Where conventional fantasy typically moves to establish a harmonious integration with the natural forces of the land, the religious impulse tends towards the constitution of land as an area belonging by right to the religious community. Such a sense of "right" comes to suggest a degree of domination over the environment, claimed even by likeable characters such as Alvin's mother, who refers significantly to "the land which the Lord your God has given you" (SS p. 76). This reflects both the Mormon sense of America as a promised land, seen in the quote from the book of Nephi which heads this chapter, and the more generalised definition of the book of Genesis, where God's command to humanity is to

... Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground ... I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food (Genesis I v 28-29).

Such images of domination and exploitation of the land call continually into question the settler ethos of the series, which in many ways reflects the Christian doctrine of domination over the earth; yet, at the same time, Alvin's affections and identification are with his own

people, whose religious beliefs express another form, however limited, of impulse towards right.

Moral and religious impulses are further problematised by the colonial setting of the series, seen in ideas such as those expressed by Armor-of-God Weaver - "We want this whole country to be civilised and Christian" (SS 120) - a problematical assumption in a post-colonial society. Armor's qualification, that the settlers want "a country that stretches from sea to sea, White man and Red, every soul of us free to vote the government we want to make the laws we'll be glad to obey" (SS 121), also fails to address the problem. Armor typifies a highly moral settler desire for peaceful co-existence with the Red man in a shared America, but one which ignores the question of whether the white man has any right to be there at all. Throughout the series, the narrative thus wavers between the two main drives of fantasy romance, at one moment expressing the desire for the comic integration of the White community into its environment, at another identifying the settler with the conventional, polarised and destructive threat of romance's "evil" extreme.

Card's agendas in the series thus seem to conflict, since the settler love of the land, although very different to the American Indian love of the land, is given positive value - such as the achievements of Alvin's family - equally with the Red perspective. The fact that the three books represent only half of Card's planned series is significant here. The themes explored in the first three books suggest that Card's conclusion is likely to finally privilege one perspective: ideally the Indian in a clear-cut anti-colonial and ecological scenario, but perhaps the settler in a more pragmatic resolution of the conflict of communities. Alternatively, the vision of the Crystal City seems to suggest a possible outcome which melds and transcends conflicting interests. Halfway through the series, however, the reader is permitted to sympathise with both versions of land-religion, the dominant and the integrative.

The possibility of Alvin Maker's ultimate rejection of settler "rights" to the land, despite all religious confirmations, is perhaps prefigured in other works by Card. Most relevant is the short story "America" from The Folk of the Fringe (1990a), Card's collection of accounts of a post-apocalyptic Mormon community. "America" couches its message in the didactic tone of Alvin Maker, using a religious concept of wrongdoing and subsequent punishment, but the avenging god-figure is the land itself. The South American woman who is the Virgin Mother of - again - a messianic saviour of the American land, identifies the European settler as a punishment for the native South American's bloody civilisation and treatment of the land. She insists: "... the land rejected us. The land called to Columbus and told him lies and seduced him and he never had a chance, did he? Never had a choice.

The land brought the Europeans to punish us" ("America" 208). Despite the promises of religion, right to the land is lost by misuse of the land. The Mormon belief in America as the promised land is legitimated as a promise of the land itself, a response to the failure of its original inhabitants, but the failure is repeated by the new inhabitants, a collapse of morality echoed in the inevitable failure of scripture. The Mormon boy who fathers the saviour of "America" comes to a bleak realisation of his religion's inadequacy:

... It sounded so close to what the old prophets in the Book of Mormon said would happen to America: close, but dangerously different. As if there was no hope for the Europeans any more. As if their chance had already been lost, as if no repentance would be allowed. They would not be able to pass the land on to the next generation. Someone else would inherit. It made him sick at heart, to realise what the white man had lost, had thrown away, had torn up and destroyed ("America" 209).

Such a conclusion has interesting implications for the ultimate judgment of Alvin Maker. It demonstrates that Card is not afraid of reinterpreting or rejecting the legitimacy of Mormon sacred scripture, as he does elsewhere in Folk of the Fringe, resulting in condemnation from some Mormon readers. However, he states unequivocally that he will "bow to no authority but the light I see by, which I will shine into every dark corner until somebody shows me a brighter one" (quoted by Collings, 1990 p. 240). Alvin Maker may potentially conclude that the American Indian is the true heir of the land, that the European presence is illegitimate, destructive, unworthy. However, "America", with its depiction of a process of identification/failure/rejection, also opens the series to another possible interpretation, that the land may be inherited by those who have proved themselves fit to inherit. The settler may regain the religious right to the land if Alvin's quest is successful, if he attains the Crystal City of his vision, with its implications for a less dominating mode of thought, of awareness of the needs of the land.

Card's religious questioning is strongest in the narrative in his treatment of institutionalised Christianity, which is depicted as a very different impulse to that of settler morality. The presence of William Blake in the person of Taleswapper enables Card to invoke Blake's vivid and terrifying vision of a prescriptive church alienated from God and true religion, with the inclusion of poems such as "The Garden of Love" (SS p. 166). Taleswapper's view is supported by the American Indians, who stand in the narrative for an ideal of meaningful religion in integration with the land; Ta-Kumsaw insists that "Your god is nothing and nowhere, so you build a church with nothing alive inside..." (RP 196). The Reverend Thrower exemplifies the narrow-minded bigotry of a limited Church, determined to impose its views on the "dark forests of barbarism" which is its version of the American land (SS 62). As an extension of its threat to the land, empty religion becomes a vehicle

for the Unmaker, in the person of the Visitor who guides the Reverend Thrower, and later in the monstrous instructions of Cavil's Overseer. The Unmaker finds fertile ground in the superstition, racism, sexism and intolerance of the church, perhaps most terrifyingly demonstrated in Thrower's willingness to contemplate the murder of a child in the name of his god (SS Ch. 13).

Card's Mormonism, while implicit in the series, does not necessarily limit to his ecological themes. His ability to question the religion he explores is in many ways intrinsic to his use of the speculative genre: Adam Frisch and Joseph Martos, discussing the religious imagination in science fiction, note that "science fiction writers who deal with religious themes today ... generally use the accepted fundamental structures to question particular items in its content" (1985 p. 14). Card himself acknowledges that "Science fiction is a constant attack on rigid systems of thought" (in Locus, January 1992).

The green song: the land in balance

Tenska-Tawa, the Red Prophet whose vision of the land embraces pacifism while it admits the destructive nature of the White settler, offers a powerful vision of an America which in the series is only a possibility, but which provides an interesting and condemnatory comment on features of the American land today:

... all the land will die, not just a part... White man will kill all the land, from one ocean to the other, from north to south, all the land dead! And the Red men will die except a very few who will live on tiny pieces of ugly desert land, like prisons, live there all their lives... (RP 232).

The land celebrated in Red awareness in the series could not be further from the industrialised, urbanised and heavily-populated America of reality, with its few Indian reservations and its burden of colonial guilt. In its awareness of this potential for a dead America, the series' function as alternate history allows Card to explore the course of events which could moderate or reverse the destruction of an ecologically harmonious land.

Card's love of untouched wilderness is evident in his depiction of an unspoiled America, and in his awareness of the damage done by the settler presence in the land. Like Tolkien before him, and like many other fantasy authors, Card's personal sense of natural beauty is strong; he admits that "if there aren't trees around now I start getting hungry for them" (Locus 1987 p. 58). This is reflected in his occasional reference to America before settler development, the "primeval wood" experienced by Taleswapper, "where Red men wandered more quietly than deer and Taleswapper felt himself to be in the cathedral of the most well-worshipped God" (SS 127).

The American Indian stands as ecological hero of the series, in his complete integration with the land and its forces. The power of the American Indian is an integral awareness and oneness with the flow of natural life, the ability to hear the "green song" of the forests. Alvin's healing of Lolla-Wossiky provides an exuberant and moving illustration of true ecological integration, as the Indian rejoices in his restored land-sense:

The earth yielded to his feet... the grass rose up stronger where he stepped; the bushes parted for him, the leaves softened and yielded as he ran among the trees... songbirds awoke to sing with him; a deer leapt from the wood and ran beside him through a meadow, and he rested his hand upon her flank (RP 132).

Card's awareness of integration is never sentimental, since the "green song" of the land encompasses both life and death. Alvin's experience with the Shining Man includes the revelation that "dying and killing, they were both just a part of life;" the Red man and the deer he kills are both "acting according to their natural law" (SS 92). At the same time, the Red man feels restraints on death which preclude unnatural carnage such as that of Tippy Canoe; Alvin must learn to "feel the need of the land before changing it ... to be Red instead of White" (RP 125).

America before the settler exemplifies the ecological ideal of human existence within an environment without destroying the balance of that environment. The presence of the settler is a stark contrast to such harmony, an unnatural and destructive blight upon the land. After experiencing the American Indian awareness of the land, Alvin perceives White cultivation as a wound, the plough as a blade "teaching the earth to bear":

... like the blood that seeped upward under the Red man's knives, the wheat or rye or maize or oats would seep upward, make a thin film of life across the skin of the earth, an open wound all summer until harvest blades made another kind of cut. Then the snow again, it would form like a scab, to heal the earth until the next year's injury. This whole valley was like that, broken like an old horse (PA 167).

Card thus radically subverts the traditional, European sense of a seasonal cycle based on planting and harvest, insisting that the land's own rhythms are very different. Agriculture, effectively, can be interpreted as an artificial result of population pressure, civilisation and ignorance of the land's needs.

Despite this recurring condemnation of White farming, the series displays a complex moral awareness in that the settler, too, has a kind of love for the land. White land-love, however, is twisted, acquisitive rather than integrative: "Land was what they wanted, as if the mere ownership of dirt could turn a peasant into a squire" (SS 61). Issues of belonging, community, and of hard work put into the land, colour the settler awareness of the

environment, impulses which have nothing in common with the effortless American Indian existence; yet, particularly in the context of Card's own religious background and the narrative's endorsement of Christian values, the settler land-love comes close to a virtue, however short-sighted. Alvin, despite his awareness of the true Red experience of the living land, represents the settler in his awareness that "this land is all the land we have, and our people all the people that we've got" (RP 389).

Card's ecological agenda in the series is thus complicated by the nature and upbringing of his settler hero, which strongly reflect Card's religious background. While the narrative obviously works to reject much of the White community's treatment of the land, paradoxes remain. Perhaps the most powerful expression of this privileging of the settler community's agricultural work ethic is in Alvin's journeyman forging, the living golden plough. Card's depiction of the messianic pain and self-sacrifice endured by Alvin, and the miracle of Making which brings the plough alive, does not compensate for the fact that the plough itself is an implement which re-orders and subjugates the land to human purposes. The agricultural processes in which the settlers pride themselves, while apparently productive, are no more than a rape of the land's abundance: Tenska-Tawa sees the White lands as "brutalised into submission, stripped and cut and ravished, giving vast amounts of food that was only an imitation of true harvest, poisoned into life by alchemical trickery" (RP 300).

Such visions of ecological destruction throughout the series seem to undermine both Alvin's journeyman achievement and the hard-working farming values which characterise the settler community. Given the centrality of the golden plough as Alvin's first great act of Making, it seems likely that the series will attempt to reconcile settler and Indian rather than rejecting the settler. Card's possible thematic development may be hinted at in "Prentice Alvin and the No-Good Plough", when Alvin rejects the concept of plough as blade to insist, "Mar to mend, from the moldrin leaf / Will grow the limb" (596). In true messianic and Calvinist mode, perhaps Card's didactic purpose insists on suffering and sacrifice as necessary and intrinsic to achievement. However, for any consistent ecological theme to be possible as the series continues, Alvin must ultimately re-assess and reject the problematical nature of his dazzling journeyman work.

The distinction between Red and White treatments of the land is expressed on a more metaphorical level by Card's depiction of magic in the series, which highlights and exaggerates the issues he explores. The strong religious flavour of the narrative supports the symbolic nature of the magical framework, often with some interesting implications which demonstrate Card's willingness to extrapolate from conventional doctrine. The

alternative America of the series allows for the existence and efficacy of settler folk magic, the magic of minor ritual, superstition and hex - as Card himself notes, "in this world American folk magic works" (Locus interview 1987). Card seems to root this petty magic in the traditions both of the medieval village and of the fairy-tale; Alvin, for example, is born under a caul (significant in folk superstition), and he is also the seventh son of a seventh son (pure fairytale). This folk-tale resonance rather incongruously supports the religious implications of Alvin as Messiah as well as the traditional renewal-function of the romance quest-hero.

The nature of magic is central to the concerns of the series. Card notes the opportunity fantasy narratives provide for "dealing with ways that people have power over each other and the way that people take control of the world around them, which is what magic usually is about when it's used intelligently in fantasy" (interview in Locus, 1987). The nature of magical power in the Alvin Maker series serves to underline and emphasise the central distinction between coloniser and colonised: the American Indian has the land-magic where the settler has only the hex. The bulk of white man's magic in the novel is a lesser thing, a highly structured and ritualised utilisation of "hexes and doodles and charms and beseechings and suchlike" (SS 58). Its effects are petty, but can be creative on a small scale, charming for comfort, or concealment, or protection. This lesser magic is almost entirely European in tradition, hearkening back to village magic of medieval England and the small towns of the Continent. It is consequently out of place in the magical landscape of America - as Ta-Kumsaw says, "White man's knacks, they make noise, very much noise." (RP 195). Magical power thus reflects the nature of its user: White magic is uncomprehending, manipulative, often destructive - it "bends the land", creates "the bad stink when a sick man loosens his bowels". The Red land-sense allows far stronger abilities (endurance, concealment, provision of food) which are profoundly integrative - "clean, like part of the land" (RP 282).

Making the Crystal City: Alvin as ecological hero?

Card's vision of a balanced and harmonious land is compelling, yet the ecological conflict between healthy land and destructive settlement, between American Indian and White, is not the most fundamental issue of the series. Alvin, whose affinity with both White and Red communities and magic is unique in the narrative, functions as a site of a more profound conflict, that of the struggle between Maker and Unmaker. Maker/Unmaker functions as a metaphorical representation of the various struggles in the narrative, following the tendency noted by Frisch and Martos for religious thought to fundamentalise issues:

Those who look at the world through the lens of religion often simplify the complexities of the cosmos into basic sets of realities (such as god/devil, or creation/duration/destruction) and then think of the universe in terms of such fundamental imagery (1985 p. 11).

Making and Unmaking form precisely this kind of simplified contrast, the conflicts of land/settler and Red/White reduced to their fundamental component of creation/destruction. Card's trilogy thus deals quintessentially with the fight between good and evil - the archetypal clash of fantasy romance.

Invasion and destruction in the series are far from being dichotomous processes. The American Indian stands firmly in the position of the ecological good, invaded by the damaging and uncomprehending power of the white settler. Card, however, declines to leave his analysis at this simplistic level of environmental conflict. Above and beyond such conflict stands the abstracted and magical contest of Maker and Unmaker: the plight of the Indian is thus extrapolated to point to universal truths. The real clash is between Maker and Unmaker, between Alvin himself, and the unpleasantly-depicted "Visitor" (SS 124) or "Overseer" (PA 9) who is the Unmaker.

As "Maker," Alvin's true power is creativity, the genesis of beauty, utility and intrinsic good out of the direction of his personal powers. His responsibility is ultimately to "make all things whole" (SS 95). In contrast, the Unmaker's tools, Reverend Thrower and Cavil Planter, represent the extreme social evils of religious bigotry, egotism and the most horrific racism. The epic battle of romance thus receives unmistakable moral resonance, reflecting a tendency in speculative fiction to "moralise in its imaginative visions," here supported by the religious impulse towards the "morally good life" (Frisch and Martos, 1985 p. 20). Card's images are potent: the Unmaker is associated with unpleasant motifs such as slime and acid, and he appears at one stage as a dragon. Together with the urgent sense of a deteriorating environment, Card addresses the tensions of profound human insecurities in the clash with the religious and the racial other. These motifs recur throughout the series, alongside the greater contest between creativity and destruction on the epic scale.

The tensions of Maker/Unmaker are further expressed in the profound elemental conflict depicted in the novels: the Unmaker is aligned with water, and Making with fire. The justifications for such a polarisation seem obvious. Fire represents the spark of creativity, the energy of life and growth. Peggy is a "torch", and other White characters with magical knacks often refer to the awareness as a "spark". Alvin's apprenticeship is ended in a spectacular union with fire, as he creates the living golden plough by immersing himself in

the flames of the forge. This contrasts, interestingly enough, with the depiction of American Indian magic in terms of earth, greenness and animal images, and air, in the tornado which reveals the Crystal City, and the song of the land.

At the other end of the scale is the wearing and corrosive power of water, the force which can extinguish the spark of creativity and human energy, and which is insidious, enveloping and cold. Alvin's accident with the millstone is caused by water seeping in and weakening the ground through faults already present, and this process serves as an excellent metaphor for the work of the Unmaker in the characters of Reverend Thrower and Cavil Planter, whose own weaknesses leave them open to subtle and devastating manipulation. In Card's alternative America, the water which symbolises Unmaking is the ultimate metaphor of invasion, the invasion and corruption of the psyche as much as the invasion of America by the settler.

Red and White magic are as different as Red and White cultures, yet Card melds them in his hero-figure. As Maker Alvin is unique, his abilities outweighing those of his own people as well as the Indians. His messianic nature is based in both aspects of the social and ecological struggle, the Red land-awareness and the White "knack", but transcends both in its power and range. Alvin's experience at the Eight-Faced Mound underlines his function as a means of reconciliation between White and Red interests, since his path up the Mound lies on the edge between two faces. To follow him, Ta-Kumsaw and Taleswapper must go together, so that they are "like Alvin - a Red soul and a White soul in a single body" (RP 327). Fantasy romance's reconciliatory function is powerfully expressed, the union of Red and White enforced by the land itself - when Ta-Kumsaw attempts to return down the Mound alone, he is scratched and torn by briars and brambles and cannot continue. Ta-Kumsaw stands for the Red view which denies the invaders any right to the land, but wants to "drive the White men back across the mountains, back into their ships, back into the sea" (RP 232), yet, even without a conclusion to the series, Card's messiah-figure evidently moves towards a solution which embraces White and Red alike.

The struggle to retain the harmony of the environment is compelling and urgent, yet Card's most central concerns seem to go beyond the level of the basic ecological text. Despite Alvin's awareness and support of ecological harmony, his power of Making is not simply an expression of the land, but transcends it. His power is "something else; either it was part of the green music, or it caused the music, or they both were caused by the same thing" (RP 190). Card is thus reaching beyond the definition of good as ecological awareness, since the course of the novels defines the American Indian's awareness as insufficient. The balance of the land is important, but something further is required to

convert the destructive invasion of the white man into a possible symbiosis of Indian, settler and land.

The author's vision of this is essentially expressed in the metaphor of the Crystal City, the ideal towards which both Alvin and the Red seer Tenskwa-Tawa are groping. The incompleteness of Card's narrative quest renders any full understanding of this ideal difficult, but its centrality is evident. The Prophet's conception of the city is mystical - it is "light without dark, clean without dirty, healthy without sick, strong without weak... life without death." Where the Red man's vision includes a natural awareness of opposites - life and death, the complementary powers of earth and air, fire and water - the Crystal City seems to lack this kind of balance, to exist as an ideal of purity. Alvin feels that the city must be made from "people as pure as the atoms of this gold. They'll make the Crystal City a living thing much larger and greater than any one of us who are its atoms." (PA 384). Where the land must manifest in terms of opposites, mankind and society cannot be allowed to do the same. The opposite of human good is contained in characters such as Hooch, whose destructive potential is almost infinite, and who by his very nature is inimical to good of any description. Card is thus reaching beyond the sense of ecological balance to an essential ideal of human nature, the realisation of which is seen as the only hope for both invaded and invader.

The land-sense is thus not sufficient to combat the destructive invasion of the land. The Crystal City functions as a good which transcends the balance of land in much the same way that the settler presence overwhelms and destroys it. In the words of the Indians themselves, the "Red man can't build this place alone... we are part of the land, and this city is more than the land alone. The land is good and bad, life and death all together, the green silence." (RP 218). The land holds within its "green silence" the seeds of both growth and decay, life and death, destruction and creation; it is a balance which is intrinsically desirable, yet which, in its very symmetry of energies, lacks the dynamism and power to respond to the overwhelming threat of the white man. It is insufficient, and Tenskwa-Tawa recognises the image of the Crystal City as a good which his culture cannot itself create.

As metaphor and object of quest, the Crystal City is thus apart from the land, and, indeed, the image of city is in many ways opposed to the image of land or country. Williams comments that "A contrast between country and city, as fundamental ways of life, reaches back into classical times" (1985 p. 1). The positive associations with the city are relevant to Card's purposes, "the idea of an achieved centre: of learning, communication, light." At the same time, the city stands for everything that is anti-ecological - noise, pollution,

press of population, destruction of the environment. The abstraction and moral purity of the Crystal City ideal ignore such ugly associations in favour of the sense of community and enlightenment which Alvin seeks to create. As he says to Peggy, "the city ain't the crystal towers that I saw, the city's the people inside it ... it's a city of Makers" (PA 393).

Despite this, the presence of the ideal of a city in the narrative seems to signal irrevocably the fact that the land itself is not the narrative's primary concern. Making, while epitomising the creative impulse of nature, is abstracted from the environment, its imagery and impulse far beyond that of ecological integration.

Conclusion: ecology as abstraction

The central problem of the Alvin Maker series is that experienced by Alvin himself in facing the Unmaker: "I'm supposed to be your master ... So tell me, Unmaker, how do I undo *you*, when all you are is Undoing?" (PA 153). As in McKillip's pacifist vision, the paradox of ecological defence is that force, while inherently destructive, is necessary to overcome force. In the Alvin Maker series, the force which could resist the settler is not that of the land, but transcends the land. Card's vision of an ecologically and socially resolved America is hence one which relies on a strong concept of intervention. The land, once threatened by the settler, cannot renew itself, but must be rescued by an outside power; likewise, conflicts between communities must be resolved through the construction of a powerful ideal apart from the warring societies.

The provision of a solution from outside the land seems to suggest that Card's ecological vision could be seen as being in some sense flawed. Since the Crystal City is apparently necessary in order to integrate settler, American Indian and land, even an ecologically balanced land is apparently not self-sustaining or powerful enough to resist the radical and ecologically destructive change brought by the settler. Obviously, the author's more abstracted agendas, the religious and moral redemption of America, transcend the more concrete preservation of its natural beauty, but Card's version of an ecologically integrated land is nonetheless a compelling ideal. The redemption of the threatened land by a force greater than the land's own balance echoes the need in our own time for an ecological solution which is more all-encompassing than mere "green" thinking. Social inequality, lack of morality, the religious intolerance and arrogance which has coloured Western attitudes to its fellow humanity; such issues are, in Card's narratives, inextricable from the problem of vanishing ecological harmony. True land-awareness entails a fundamental change in human perspectives across the social spectrum.

Such an inclusive approach is very close to modern ideas of "deep" ecology; and in this Card's breadth of ecological vision echoes those of other ecological thinkers. Devall notes the problem with what he identifies as "reform ecology," the superficial ecological strategising which "avoids comments or questions concerning personal or cultural transformation. The authors do not call for a new worldview nor do they criticise human chauvinistic attitudes towards nonhuman nature" (1990 p. 10). Card's urgent call for the moral reformation of America includes all that reform ecology neglects, insisting on the "fundamental priorities of value and basic views concerning the development of our societies" which characterises the deep ecology movement (Naess in Devall, 1990 p. 11). Both Card's alternative America and the deep ecology of current America thus insist on an internal, spiritual dimension to ecological thought, one which provides a deeper and more inclusive basis for action. Thus Card's Crystal City is necessary for an informed and meaningful reformation of America; thus, also, the American Indian land-sense is insufficient because it is a way of life, not a principle, and cannot look any further than the present. Alvin himself realises that "there's no fear of future in the song of life, just the ever-joyful present moment" (RP 396); and, in the face of the destruction inherent in White attitudes, a long-sighted plan is precisely what the land cannot exist without. Thus, while apparently something apart from the land's struggle to survive, the Crystal City and Alvin's transcendent powers of Making are in fact part of a greater ecological whole, one which demands in the most powerful terms a change in human society and morals if the land is to be preserved.

Chapter 7:

Conclusion - ecological escape?

*I talk of dreams
Which are the children of an idle brain,
Beget of nothing but vain fantasy;
Which is as thin of substance as the air,
And more inconstant than the wind
Romeo and Juliet, Act I, Scene iv.*

*Postulating a heaven gives man an out
for having been unable to retain the paradise
he was given here on earth.
Sheri S. Tepper Plague of Angels p. 74*

The tendency within the fantasy romance genre to express a concern for the preservation of the land has been demonstrated in the texts studied. Donaldson's memorable Land, Tepper's self-aware Lom, Card's America and the High One's realm in McKillip's series are equally magical worlds which come very near to destruction. As a part of this process of defence, these texts deal with the integrative movement and comic resolution which confirm the ecological survival of the land - most notably in Card, whose agendas of racial reconciliation provide a powerful subtext to his sense of the need to preserve the natural American environment.

The potential for ecological consciousness within popular fantasy has been developed with varying degrees of overtness by the authors studied. Tepper's anti-technological agenda is obvious, whereas McKillip's awareness of environmental destruction is more allegorical, being largely incidental to her investigation of the dangers of power. Within these different levels of expression, the genre's foundation in and progression from the partial ecological awareness of Tolkien's Lord of the Rings can be clearly seen. All four modern texts studied reflect fantasy romance's tendency to set up the magical realm as an ideal of integrative health and beauty which must be defended against the threat of destruction, and as such parallel the ecological movement's awareness of the vanishing natural environments of our world.

Despite these tendencies, however, any insistence on fantasy romance as a genre which definitively contributes to the ecologically-aware treatment of our planet, would be simplistic. While fantasy novels may celebrate the beauty of the land - and some, such as Donaldson's Land and the wild places of McKillip's world, are compellingly beautiful - the nature of the genre as a wish-fulfilling popular narrative leads inevitably to charges of escapism. Identification of a beautiful ideal, affirmed by such devices as the sentient and

active world (Tepper) or the contrast between health and sickness (Donaldson) may function as an inspiration in our technologised contemporary context, but it may also, in the process of consoling the reader for the loss of much of such beauty in our reality, remove the necessity for addressing that reality's problems.

The essentially comic nature of fantasy romance contributes materially to this possible weakness. Conventionally, the form insists that the land will always be preserved, that the ideal of beauty will always endure: Lom will regenerate, Morgon will contain the destructive shapechangers, the Land will be healed, Alvin will replace racial and ecological tensions with the unifying impulse of Making¹. As long as this comic impulse is expressed, the possibility exists for the removal of the sense of urgency in the reader's awareness of the modern ecological crisis. Where the heroic quest could inspire a similar protection of the real land, it could also offer a substitute for action, a world in which the exaggerated technological mistakes of our civilisation were not made and thus do not have to be reversed. As well as this, modern fantasy is a romance genre, and thus falls prey to the suspicion with which critics regard romance. Howard Felperin notes that romance

... though it is as ancient and enduring an offspring of the human imagination as tragedy, comedy, or satire, has traditionally been eyed askance by critics - owing perhaps to its very popularity in every age and culture - and has received less than its share of sympathetic and thoughtful regard
(1972 p. 6).

The medieval context and foundations of much fantasy romance are central to the issue of escape, potentially providing images of an idyllic pre-technological setting rather than inspiring awareness of the need to protect the post-technological land. The hero of fantasy romance inevitably defeats the anti-ecological threat in a fairy-tale and unrealistic conclusion which fails to attach to the ecological ideal the necessary, desperate sense of the impending loss which faces our environments today. Donaldson's Land, for example, is sufficiently removed, in its effortless and non-mechanised integration of Stonedowner and Woodhelven with their environment, to offer an unrealistic substitute for the problems of our technologised world. Likewise, McKillip's realm reflects a slow and dignified medieval style of living, and the settler ravages on the land in Card's series are historical rather than contemporary. It is only in Tepper's True Game lands that technology is overtly depicted, in the form of the magicians and the accounts of the scientific defeat of Lom's old gods, and Tepper's fantasy rather than science fiction emphasis serves to render such manifestations remote and unrealistic in many ways.

¹ This is an assumption based around the conventions of the form and the movement of the series so far. Obviously, since Card has not yet finished the series, the probable comic conclusion of the narrative is an inference and is open to correction once the projected six books have been completed.

The view of fantasy romance as a form of escapist culture is perhaps strengthened by the reception accorded early examples of the genre, such as Tolkien and Moorcock, by the hippy movements of the 1960s. Allied to hippy ideology's rejection of the economically-centred principles of industry and the state was "a marked preference for anti-realist genres, fictional worlds whose sense was conditional on the acceptance by the reader of supernatural or extra-scientific elements in their narratives" (Glover, 1984 p. 191). The hippy movement's dissatisfaction with society included, according to Glover, an often socialist sense of a Utopian society as the goal of protest (1984 p. 190), a concept which has similarities, in its rejection of technology, with fantasy's magical land. The relevance of this Utopian concept was, however, questioned by the establishment, who were able to dismiss protest as a youth-orientated, unrealistic and therefore negligible force. Fantasy operated as another facet of this lack of realism, enabling the dismissal of its adherents as dreamers at the same time that the association of fantasy with the counter-culture of the 1960s allows for contemporary associations of the genre with escapism and unattainable Utopias.

The potentially escapist nature of the fantasy romance genre in many ways parallels the increasing problems of ecological consciousness itself, namely its entry into contemporary popular culture and the subsequent trivialisation of the impulse towards preservation of the land. The environmental movement itself is underpinned by a serious, desperate and motivated response to increasing pollution, the loss of species of wildlife, the myriad effects of an overpopulated and technological age. It is a large enough movement, however, that some, at least, of its concerns have passed into Western consumer culture, to find superficial expression in "green" products, Save the Whales stickers and recycled paper. Williams notes the existence of a "nature reserve" mentality in modern conservation, an apparent opposition to the industrial exploitation of nature which is actually superficial. Its adherents are "in the plainest sense hypocrites."

Established at powerful points in the very process which is creating the disorder, they change their clothes at weekends, or when they can get down to the country; join appeals and campaigns to keep one last bit of England green and unspoilt; and then go back, spiritually refreshed, to invest in the smoke and the spoil
(1980 p. 81).

The urbanised reader of fantasy romance could be seen to have just such a "weekend" status, their appreciation of natural beauty confined to an idealised, ghettoised and unrealistic image whose undeniable beauty in no way contributes to a holistic awareness of environmental disaster. Williams concludes that the end result of "weekend" environmentalism is to consume nature as any other product is consumed, "as landscape, scenery, image, fresh air" (1984 p. 81), a point which begs comparison with the similar

functions of modern fantasy romance as a popular and often commercially-driven genre. The best-seller status of Donaldson's Thomas Covenant may perhaps be seen to reflect the mind-set of an urban culture used to escaping to an attractive landscape which they are not obliged to treat seriously. Significantly, Covenant himself suffers from precisely this inability to fully engage with the problems and conflicts of the magical land.

As Williams notes, the consumption of the land as product, whether in literature or reality, necessitates the rejection of "all other products and by-products ... The consumer wants only the intended product" (1984 p. 81). Within this non-holistic consumption of the magical land's Utopian image, the prevalence of the pastoral ideal provides another problematical element in determining the genre's modern relevance. Frequently restored or invoked by the triumphant conclusion of modern fantasy, the pastoral idyll is itself unrealistic, a sanitised and comic setting that excludes the "images of tearing and eating, the natural savagery" which, Williams suggests, characterise genuine "unspoilt" environments (1984 p. 82). Instead, the comic restoration of pastoral, the triumph of the hero and reconciliation of conflicting forces, provides an idealised and often sentimentalised version of nature. Gaiman's post-modern magical land in his graphic novel Game of You plays on this tendency in the figure of the Cuckoo, the ruthless dream-predator who "survives because the cute, the kitschy ... the hopelessly sentimental hide her murderous impulses towards the stuff of fantasy" (Delaney's introduction to Game of You, 1993). Fantasy's depiction of nature is thus potentially dangerous in its lack of realism, the consolation it offers through a removed and encapsulated pastoral ideal of the land, which is perhaps best represented by McKillip's depiction of the farming community of Hed. While this is a motif of almost pure pastoral, the lands studied all contain elements of such Utopian peace: the American Indian mystical and effortless engagement with natural balance in Card's narrative, for example, or the peaceful integration of Tepper's pre-human Eesty community.

The political workings of fantasy within the romance context may thus be suspect in the consolation they offer. Jackson notes the extent to which "fantasy characteristically attempts to compensate for a lack resulting from cultural constraints: it is a literature of desire, which seeks that which is experienced as absence and loss" (1981 p. 3). Tepper's Shadowpeople and Eesties perhaps encapsulate a desire for integration with the other, of communication with the animal, while the shapechanger motif of the narrative express a more contemporary desire for female freedom and power. In Jackson's terms, such losses may be expressed as a form of expulsion. Her broad treatment of the fantastic as a mode allows for a far more diverse coverage of "fantastic" texts than does the limited and highly specific scope of this thesis. Fantasy as romance fulfils only part of Jackson's definition: it

manifests desire, but makes no attempt to expel it as a cultural disturbance. W.R. Irwin's account of "The Value of Fantasy" comes to the same conclusion:

Just as fantasy does not exclude emotion, so it does not fundamentally attack the norms it denies. It may leave the reader enriched with an intellectual modification that prevents his ever again holding to his original naive understanding of the norm, but it will cause no revolution.
(1976 p. 183)

Rather than subversion, fantasy romance, in the recuperation of the various magical lands, functions as nostalgic narrative. As well as this, the eventual integration of the human community into the balanced health of the land in all four contemporary narratives studied, marks fantasy romance's concern with reconciliation rather than expulsion, the fulfilment rather than the rejection of desire.

The inevitable preservation of the magical land is thus in many ways inappropriate to a cynical and postmodern age. The status of the magical land as an unreal construct is demonstrated clearly in the postmodern context of Gaiman's Sandman graphic novel, A Game of You, where the conventional quest, to save a land strongly reminiscent of Lewis's Narnia, happens within the framework of a dream. The strongly-marked contrast between the heroic dream-quest and the gritty, often tragic, modern city reality of the dreamer, emphasises the transitory and unreal nature of the dream. Sharply differentiated language, diction, even lettering (angular for New York, ornamented and script-like for the dream characters), underline the sense of removal, as well as the obvious visual contrast between the Land's clean lines and beautiful settings, and the ugly clutter of the city. Gaiman's insistence on the starkness of experience largely denies the regenerative power of the dream-land, which is eventually destroyed, having reached the end of its natural life. Its intrusion into the "real" world of New York, in the person of the great, lion-like creature Martin Tenbones, is also tragic, as the Princess Barbara's faithful companion is gunned down by New York police (Game of You Chapter 1). Gaiman's postmodern awareness denies any final valuation: evil is not evil, the parasitic Cuckoo is a little girl in whose final flight to freedom there is something of glory. In the dissolution of the dream-land, the creatures of the land vanish into the Dream-lord's shadow, in much the same way that the creatures of Narnia vanish into Aslan's shadow in The Last Battle, but there is no judgement and no great Door which will return them to an eternally reconstituted land.

Gaiman's postmodern treatment of the magical land insists that the land is only a dream, that real life, with its attendant difficulties, injustices, demanding relationships, must continue; and that even in the dream-world, moral choices are never unambiguous. For Barbie to have asked for the re-creation of her dreamworld after the Dreamlord has dissolved it would have been escape, a refusal of responsibility, a lack of engagement with

the world. At the same time, however, the dream-land's effects may be felt in the real world, if only in Barbie's dream of Wanda, happy and sure in her identity, reconciled with a nurturing Death figure. The magical land is not the real world, but it may offer lessons which reflect the truths of the real world. Donaldson's narrative provides a similar conclusion, with Covenant's acceptance of his illness in his real life brought about by his experiences in the Land. It is this argument which many critics of speculative fiction bring to the argument against fantasy as sheer escapism: while the reader may escape, the world to which they escape may simply be another version of the truth.

The best-known defence of fantasy as escape literature comes from Tolkien, who refuses to accept "the tone of scorn and pity with which 'Escape' is now so often used."

In what the misusers are fond of calling Real Life, Escape is evidently as a rule very practical, and may even be heroic... Evidently we are faced by a misuse of words, and also by a confusion of thought. Why should a man be scorned if, finding himself in prison, he tries to get out and go home? Or if, when he cannot do so, he thinks and talks about other topics than jailers and prison-walls? The world outside has become no less real because the prisoner cannot see it. In using Escape in this way the critics have chosen the wrong word, and, what is more, they are confusing, not always by sincere error, the Escape of the Prisoner with the Flight of the Deserter (1964 p. 60).

The "escapism" of fantasy may thus be seen simply as an awareness of an ideal, both moral and aesthetic, which is lacking from the world as it currently exists. The texts studied provide ideals of benevolent use of the land's power: Donaldson's gravelingas and woodhelven, Tepper's mental and physical integration with Lom's creatures, Card's inter-racial understanding, McKillip's sense of non-destructive power with the potential to create extraordinary beauty.

Conceptualisation of a better state of affairs may in fact be liberating or strengthening to the individual. Le Guin, in the article which asks "Why are Americans Afraid of Dragons?", expands on this defence to more specifically defend fantasy as the use of the imagination. She argues that the "free play of the mind ... is done without an immediate object of profit - spontaneously. That does not mean, however, that there may not be a purpose behind the free play of the mind, a goal; and the goal may be a very serious object indeed" (1989 p. 33). The fantasy texts studied provide appropriately serious objects in their insistence on the need for rejection of such human faults as destructive use of power, prejudice, exploitation of the environment, sexism and violence.

The argument in favour of fantasy is thus linked to the argument which defends art in general as a necessary instrument of action. Glover quotes William Burroughs:

"I think that the most important thing in the world is that the artists should take over this planet because they're the only ones who can make anything happen." According to this view the regenerative power of the artist is believed to extend beyond the aesthetic sphere proper and is assigned a capacity and obligation to shape the human order, or at very least to provide a privileged key to its workings (Glover, 1984 p. 186).

In this view, art is instrumental in social change since social change must be informed and directed by some kind of vision. Fantasy romance, while arguably a literature of escape, is also a literature of vision, and one whose vision is particularly accessible in that it is operates through desire via mythic and symbolic images - Covenant's leprosy contrasted to the health of the Land, Lom's message crystals, the winds which stand for Morgon's power as High One. Le Guin insists that "the great fantasies, myths and tales ... speak *from* the unconscious *to* the unconscious, in the language of the unconscious - symbol and archetype" ("The Child and the Shadow", 1989 p. 51). Felperin's account of Shakespearean romance suggests that this is an attribute of romance itself, "because romance, of all imaginative modes, is the most fundamental, universal and heterogeneous" (1972 p. 7).

The clear-cut moral poles of fantasy romance may thus insist on a need for action in a way which Gaiman's postmodern land, in whose depiction clear-cut morality is denied, cannot. The externalisation of social problems into clearly-recognisable figures such as Sauron, destructive Talents, corrupt Eesties, compassionless shapechangers or the derisive cruelty of Lord Foul, forces the narrative's conflicts unambiguously and unavoidably upon the reader. Le Guin extends her sense of the mythic function of fantasy in her essay "Myth and Archetype in Science Fiction", where she suggests that the strength of mythic representation is precisely the fact that it necessitates action of some kind.

When the genuine myth rises into consciousness, that is always its message.
You must change your life.
The way of art, after all, is neither to cut adrift from the emotions, the senses, the body, etc., and sail off into the void of pure meaning, nor to blind the mind's eye and wallow in irrational, amoral meaninglessness - but to keep open the tenuous, difficult, essential connections between the two extremes. To connect. To connect the idea with value, sensation with intuition, cortex with cerebellum (1989 p. 65).

Le Guin elsewhere acknowledges that fantasy's "limitation or danger is that of extreme introversion: left to itself, the vision may go clear out of sight..." ("Do-It-Yourself Cosmology", 1989 p. 106). At the same time, any art has a supremely energising function, its value precisely because it provides some kind of linkage between the real and the ideal. Fantasy romance's dealings with a particularly extreme and polarised form of the ideal - the powerful magical threat, the beautifully magical land - in no way makes the real any less real.

The potential mythic function of fantasy romance is clear. Within this mythic function, its relevance to the awareness of environmental disaster can be easily traced. Together with the archetypes of hero, villain, monster and magician, fantasy romance offers a continuing and recurring image of the mythic land, an idealised vision of the healthy, beautiful environment which, like other archetypes, offers an essential and symbolic significance to the reader. The contrast between an overpopulated and technologised modern environment and the pristine beauty of the magical land, a contrast evoked in passing by both Card and Donaldson, points strongly to the tragic lacks in our own world. Kroeber, responding to Jackson's psychological view of fantasy as desire, insists that the wish-fulfilment of fantasy is not simply nostalgic, but invokes an impulse "to improve a present situation that has become intolerable through the obliterating of any otherness in a world human beings have come to dominate with frightening completeness" (1988 p. 7). The narrative presences of Shadowpeople, shapechanger, American Indian and waynhim all insist both on essential otherness and on the potential integration of such otherness with the human. Such conflicts are highly relevant to the racial and ecological problems of our time. Irwin's contention, that "fantasy strikes against convention with no zeal to alter or subvert" (1976 p. 183) is apparently untrue in the case of ecologically-aware fantasy. Despite the charge of nostalgia, Jackson herself notes that the marvellous and unrealistic in fantasy is at all times grounded in the real (1981 p. 19-20).

Fantasy romance thus potentially offers a new insight into the real, a depiction of other realities which may inform, inspire or indict our own. Its symbolic form may be seen as a strength rather than a weakness, enabling a clear-cut and unambiguous communication of meaning which challenges as well as fulfils. As a popular genre, fantasy romance may communicate serious ideas under the guise of entertainment, an apparently innocuous narrative which is in fact charged with values. Finally, as a speculative genre, fantasy romance attracts a certain kind of reader, in whom wish-fulfilment does not necessarily preclude intelligent enquiry. Orson Scott Card notes the challenges inherent in writing for a specific science fiction/fantasy audience:

... in many ways this is the best audience in the world to write for. They're open-minded and intelligent. They want to think as well as feel, understand as well as dream. Above all, they want to be led into places that no one has ever visited before. It's a privilege to tell stories to these readers, and an honour when they applaud the tales you tell (1990b p. 1).

The rising interest in speculative genres, science fiction and the fantastic as well as fantasy romance itself, suggests a growing awareness of the inadequacies in the linear, goal-directed and non-holistic tendencies of modern Western culture. Le Guin concedes the possibility that "it is because our culture is at long last turning inward into introversion in

an effort to restore balance that, within the last hundred years, some of these private worlds [of fantasy] have been ... like marvellous and fragile national parks, opened to the public" ("Do-it-yourself Cosmologies", 1989 p. 106). In the context of global ecological threat - pollution, overpopulation, the gradual extinction of wildlife and natural habitats - the magical land stands as an ideal, an inspiration and a record of loss, as well as a celebration of a beauty, health and balance towards which our culture badly needs to strive.

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