

# Through the Portal and into the Quest: Robert Jordan's The Wheel of Time and China Miéville's Un Lun Dun

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Dissertação de Mestrado em Línguas, Literaturas e Culturas – Estudos Ingleses e Norte-Americanos Dissertação apresentada para cumprimento dos requisitos necessários à obtenção do grau de Mestre, realizada sob a orientação científica da Professora Doutora Teresa Botelho.

# **DECLARAÇÕES**

Declaro que esta dissertação é o resultado da minha investigação pessoal e independente. O seu conteúdo é original e todas as fontes consultadas estão devidamente mencionadas no texto, nas notas e na bibliografia.

O candidato,

Lisboall de Salembra 2017

Declaro que esta dissertação se encontra em condições de ser apreciado pelo júri a designar.

O(A) orientador(a),

Samptelle

Lisboa, 26 de Jetenhode 2017

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### Resumo

### **Abstract**

Através do Portal e para a Demanda: *The Wheel of Time*, de Robert Jordan, e *Un Lun Dun*, de China Miéville

Through the Portal and into the Quest: Robert Jordan's *The Wheel of Time* and China Miéville's *Un Lun Dun* 

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A presente dissertação consiste numa análise de duas obras do género literário da fantasia à luz de um teoria desenvolvida por Farah Mendlesohn em *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (2008) que se debruça sobre a divisão de múltiplas obras de fantasia em quatro categorias distintas. Os autores em estudo, Robert Jordan e China Miéville, apresentam obras que, numa primeira análise, se podem colocar na mesma categoria de fantasia. No entanto, uma análise que considere a taxonomia de Mendlesohn conclui que, enquanto *The Wheel of Time* (1990-2013), de Jordan, se mantém, na sua maioria, dentro dos limites da fantasia de portal e demanda, a primeira categoria da taxonomia, *Un Lun Dun* (2007), de Miéville, apresenta características transversais a todas as categorias de Mendlesohn. A previsão da dificuldade de colocar *Un Lun Dun* num só grupo serve de base à criação de uma quinta categoria na qual se inserem obras que subvertem os paradigmas das restantes categorias.

Esta dissertação, dividida em quatro capítulos, começará por um estudo sobre as várias definições de fantasia propostas ao longo dos tempos, desde Tolkien até aos académicos mais recentes. A partir deste levantamento, será proposta uma definição mais geral daquilo que o género da fantasia compreende. Também será feito um catálogo de várias obras de fantasia publicadas desde o século XIX até aos tempos modernos, bem como uma análise mais detalhada da taxonomia de Mendlesohn. O segundo capítulo vai

debruçar-se sobre a temática dos portais, um elemento fundamental da fantasia de portal e demanda. Este capítulo consistirá numa análise de diversos portais em várias obras de fantasia. O terceiro capítulo compreenderá a análise de *The Wheel of Time* e o quarto capítulo, seguindo uma estratégia semelhante, a análise de *Un Lun Dun*. Esta análise vai ter em consideração aspectos que se prendem com o herói e o destino, a profecia, o portal, a demanda, bem como aspectos relacionados com as técnicas narrativas usadas pelos autores para descreverem o mundo.

This dissertation consists of an analysis of two works belonging to the fantasy genre in light of a theory developed by Farah Mendlesohn in *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (2008) which entails the division of multiple works of fantasy in four distinct categories. The authors in question, Robert Jordan and China Miéville, present woks that, in a first analysis, can be placed in the same category of fantasy. However, a study that takes into consideration Mendlesohn's taxonomy concludes that, while Jordan's *The Wheel of Time* (1990-2013) is positioned, for the most part, inside the boundaries of the portal-quest fantasy category, Miéville's *Un Lun Dun* (2007) presents characteristics from all categories. The difficulty of placing *Un Lun Dun* inside one group serves as basis to the creation of a category that includes works that subvert the paradigms of the other categories.

This dissertation, divided in four chapters, will start with a study of several definitions of fantasy provided throughout the times, from Tolkien to the most recent academics. From these definitions, a more general explanation of what fantasy entails will be formulated. A catalogue of fantasy works published from the nineteenth century until modern times will also be provided, as well as a detailed analysis of Mendlesohn's taxonomy. The second chapter will focus on portals, which are a fundamental element in the portal-quest fantasy. This chapter will comprehend an analysis of various portals in different works of fantasy. The third chapter will comprise the study of *The Wheel of Time* and the fourth, following a similar strategy, the study of *Un Lun Dun*. This analysis will take into consideration aspects relating to the hero and destiny, prophecy, the portal, the quest, as well as aspects related to the narrative techniques used by the authors to describe the world.

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### Introduction

The genre of fantasy has been steadily increasing in the field of literature for a long time, and since J. R. R. Tolkien published *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955) and C. S. Lewis published *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950), the genre has known a period of expansion that has been continuous throughout the decades and that has spread to other media. Both authors were extremely influential for subsequent writers in the genre and their novels have set the parameters for what can be termed modern fantasy.

The genre gives particular emphasis to the imaginary and the improbable, featuring secondary worlds, created by the authors' own imagination, magic, supernatural creatures, magical portals that transport the characters from one setting to another, or dark lords bent on controlling or destroying the world.

With the extent of such impossible or very unlikely elements, the borders of fantasy have been very difficult to establish, especially taking into consideration how wide the genre can become. Similarly, developing a proper definition of fantasy that includes all the principles, rules, and elements of the genre has been very difficult for the multiple academics that have attempted to study the area.

The aim of this dissertation is to analyze two works of fantasy in light of a theory developed by the British academic Farah Mendlesohn in *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (2008), which sorts fantasy works throughout four very distinct categories. The first category is that of portal-quest fantasy, which can be described as a type of fantasy that implies the existence of a portal that is crossed by the protagonist as part of a quest, which can be, for instance, a search for an object or a journey to vanquish a threat. The other categories, immersive fantasy, intrusion fantasy, and liminal fantasy, have rules of their own and they differentiate themselves according to the way the fantastic enters the narrative (cf. Mendlesohn 2002, 171). The central category in this dissertation is the portal-quest fantasy.

The works chosen for this analysis are *The Wheel of Time* series (1990-2013) by the American novelist Robert Jordan and *Un Lun Dun* (2007) by British fantasy and science-fiction writer China Miéville. Due to the extent of *The Wheel of Time*, which comprises fourteen volumes and a prequel, the analysis will be focused mostly on the first

volume, *The Eye of the World* (1990). Therefore, the research question is the following: how stable is the paradigm of portal-quest fantasy? The intent of this question is to understand how works that apparently fit within the borders of this category can subvert it and stray to the other categories. That is the reason the corpus of analysis is so different. With the analysis of Robert Jordan's series, it will be shown how the portal-quest fantasy has firmly established rules, while the analysis of Miéville's novel will prove that the category can be subverted by a work that is in every outward aspect a portal-quest fantasy.

The reason for the choice of these novels is that *The Wheel of Time* is the perfect embodiment of the portal-quest fantasy, even if it diverges in some minor aspects from it, while *Un Lun Dun* only seems to fit in the category but subverts some of its most important rules. In addition, there have been very few theoretical readings of a series such as *The Wheel of Time*. Therefore, this is an opportunity to insert it in the academic debate.

This dissertation will be divided into four chapters. The first chapter will expound on the principles of fantasy, starting with a description of how Tolkien's ideas, developed in his essay "On Fairy Stories" (1947), have influenced subsequent fantasy authors. With that in mind, other theories proposed by multiple academics, like Brian Attebery, Tzvetan Todorov, Gary K. Wolfe, Farah Mendlesohn, among others, will contribute to a general idea of what the genre's main ideologies are as well as to conceive a definition of fantasy that suits the purposes of this dissertation. One section of the chapter will focus on the studies that have been done so far in the field. An account of these studies will contribute to a better understanding of how the genre has evolved and what theories are most prominent in this area.

In the same chapter there will be what can be called a "genealogy of fantasy" with the objective of trying to find some of the earliest accounts of fantasy literature, even though the dissertation will stress the works that came after Tolkien and Lewis. The intent of this section is to produce a timeline for the genre, which will include an account of how fantasy is organized in terms of diffusion and production, as well as what the field's main sources of influence are.

Lastly, the first chapter will also include a section consisting of an explanation and analysis of Farah Mendlesohn's taxonomy of fantasy, describing the four categories in detail, especially the portal-quest fantasy. This description will be accompanied with examples from different works of fantasy that illustrate the categories' rules and principles.

Because most fantasies, especially portal-quest fantasies, give an increased amount of importance to portals, it should be important to include a chapter that focuses particularly on this element. For this part of the dissertation a selection of various portals from some of the most recognized works of the genre will be analyzed, such as the portal in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, in *The Lord of the Rings*, in Ursula Le Guin's *The Tombs of Atuan* (1971), as well as some mythological portals. This study will include a description of how they can be used, where they may be found, what they symbolize, and how they influence the characters that cross them.

The third chapter will be the first part of the analysis of the selected corpus. Taking into consideration Farah Mendlesohn's category of portal-quest fantasy, the aim of the chapter will be to understand how Robert Jordan's *The Wheel of Time* is in accordance with Mendlesohn's taxonomy. The objective is to see whether the characteristics that form the portal-quest can be applied to Jordan's novels and how. The analysis will be especially focused on some of the most important aspects the category delineates, such as the type of hero and his relation to prophecy, the involvement of the fantastic in the narrative, or the part the portal plays in the story. In addition, it will be seen if and how the novels subvert any of the characteristics of the portal-quest or if there are any characteristics more suitable to another category of the taxonomy. However, the focus of the analysis will be on the portal-quest.

Finally, the last chapter will have a similar purpose as chapter three. The analysis will be of China Miéville's *Un Lun Dun* and it will be directed to the way in which this novel subverts the paradigm of the portal-quest. As in chapter three, there will be an emphasis on the hero, the prophecies, and the portal. The use of these elements in this study have the intent of finding where, in the four categories, Miéville's novel should be inserted, since it can be established beforehand that *Un Lun Dun* does not rigorously follow the principles of the portal-quest.

The aim of chapters three and four will be to determine whether the taxonomy presented by Mendlesohn in *Rhetorics of Fantasy* is stable enough to accommodate such

works as *Un Lun Dun* and *The Wheel of Time*, or whether the theory should be reimagined or expanded.

# I – Inside Fantasy: Limits, History, and Influences

## 1.1. Drawing the Borders of Fantasy

The first chapter of this dissertation is oriented towards the theory of fantasy literature. Divided into four distinct sections, the general aim of this chapter is to introduce fantasy in various perspectives. The first objective is to constitute a definition of fantasy according to a number of academics, from J. R. R. Tolkien to some more recent specialists on the field, like Farah Mendlesohn or Gary K. Wolfe. A description of the fantasy genre will be constructed after taking into consideration what several of these academics propose as what fantasy stands for.

Secondly, because it is an already extensive genre, it is important to understand how fantasy has evolved throughout the decades in terms of production, publishing, and diffusion. This will make for a better understanding of how fantasy has evolved. Similarly, there will be a section focusing on the studies of fantasy developed by multiple academics and how these ideas have contributed to a comprehension of how the genre works and what its limitations and capacities are.

An analysis of Farah Mendlesohn's *Rhetorics of Fantasy* will provide an understanding of the taxonomy of fantasy which she developed by grouping several fantasy works throughout four distinct categories. This understanding will be fundamental for the development of chapters three and four of this dissertation.

Fantasy literature has been ceaseless ever since J. R. R. Tolkien published *The Lord of the Rings*. Even though the genre already had some established ground before, Tolkien and C. S. Lewis had a major role in shaping the field and inspired other authors to follow in their steps. The age that followed the publication of Tolkien's and Lewis's novels can be broadly termed the era of modern fantasy.

Most modern-day academics recognize Tolkien's work to be a turning point in the field. Even though Brian Attebery considers modern fantasy to have started in the late eighteenth century (cf. 1992, 10), he seems to rely much upon Tolkien's or Ursula K. Le Guin's works to characterize the genre. Attebery enumerates a list of fantasy authors prior

to Tolkien, which includes Lewis Carrol, William Morris, and George MacDonald. But about Tolkien, he says:

Tolkien's form of fantasy, for readers in English, is our mental template, and will be until someone else achieves equal recognition with an alternative conception. One way to characterize the genre of fantasy is the set of texts that in some way or other resemble *The Lord of the Rings*. (14)

Richard Matthews starts his chapter about modern fantasy in *Fantasy: The Liberation of the Imagination* (2002) by saying that "Tolkien breathed new life into fantasy" (54) and dedicates the entire chapter to his works, making an analysis of his essay "On Fairy Stories" and of *The Lord of the Rings*. Even those who do not recognize the importance of fantasy acknowledge Tolkien's work as innovative in the field.<sup>2</sup>

So, it can be safely assumed that some authors before Tolkien may be considered modern fantasists. After all, many of those authors influenced Tolkien himself.<sup>3</sup> However, the impact of *The Lord of the Rings* makes the author one of the most important novelists in the genre.

As fantasy starts to expand after the 1960s, many academics have made attempts at defining the genre and studying how it differs from others. But the difficulties which they have met reflect on the unpredictability of fantasy in terms of its boundaries, especially because the corpus of the genre is so extensive. The intent of this section, therefore, is to see how definitions have evolved over time and to find an adequate one that incorporates the best characteristics inherent to fantasy, especially portal and quest fantasy.

In order to do that, it would be best to start with one of the very first academics to have studied the genre in depth: Tolkien. His essay "On Fairy Stories" is one of the first efforts in defining fantasy. It structures Tolkien's ideas of what fantasy is and what should and should not be regarded as such.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> These authors played an important role in shaping the concept of modern fantasy (cf. Attebery 1992, 10).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> "[Tolkien's] ambitious and highly skillful recombination of these elements into one long quest romance has effectively redefined the whole fantasy genre for the past half century" (Freedman 2002, 262).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The matter of Tolkien's main influences will be discussed in the second section of this chapter.

In the essay Tolkien provides a definition of fairy-stories that closely resembles that which is commonly known as a world of fantasy. It claims that fairy-stories are about the realm of Fairy, also known as Faërie. Fairies<sup>4</sup> are merely beings from this realm, along with "many things besides elves and fays, and besides dwarfs, witches, trolls, giants or dragons" (113). Faërie is a world that also contains other things besides living beings: "it holds the seas, the sun, the moon, the sky; and the earth, and all the things that are in it: tree and bird, water and stone, wine and bread, and ourselves, mortal men, when we are enchanted" (113).

Tolkien seems to reject the idea that fairy-stories are simply about fairies and returns to this later by adding that:

Most good fairy-stories [the ones with normal-sized elves] are about the *adventures* of men in the Perilous Realm or upon its shadowy marches. Naturally so; for if elves are true, and really exist independently of our tales about them, then this also is certainly true: elves are not primarily concerned with us, nor we with them. Our fates are sundered, and our paths seldom meet. Even upon the borders of Faërie we encounter them only at some chance crossing of the ways. (113)

Tolkien asserts that fairy-stories as described above are uncommon. In *The Lord of the Rings* the author seems to mingle both views: that those stories happen in Fairy and that they are also about elves. Firstly, Middle-earth holds all the elements he places in Fairy and, secondly, the elves are defined as beings that are not concerned with men and whose destinies are separated; they are leaving Middle-earth while Men stay and rule it. In the first installment of *The Lord of the Rings* Frodo and Sam's encounter with Gildor's party seems to be random and exactly as Tolkien defines it: "a chance crossing of the ways" (113).

Ultimately, Tolkien defines fairy-stories as something directly related to the realm of Fairy, which he also calls the Perilous Realm. However, the author refers to the limits of explanations given so far as "vague and ill-defined" (114).

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> A definition of fairies given on Tolkien's essay describes them as "supernatural beings of diminutive size" (Tolkien 2006, 110). Tolkien refers to fairies by using the modern English word, elves, and, at one point, ignores their minuscule size.

Nevertheless, it can be immediately and safely assumed that Tolkien's view of fairy-stories is a very basic definition of fantasy and that *The Lord of the Rings*, considered one of the most influential works inside the genre, fulfills the chief requisites that define fairy-stories. An element that can be found in fairy-stories is that of fantasy. A great part of Tolkien's essay is about fantasy and its constituents. Fantasy is, according to the author, "an equivalent of Imagination" (139). It is the art of sub-creation and is directly related to the unreal. This unreality belongs, therefore, not in what Tolkien calls the primary world, but to a secondary world, where things are to be explained in such a manner as to induce secondary belief (cf. 140). Tolkien considers secondary belief to be a form of enchantment in which the reader suspends disbelief in order to embrace the supernatural as real.

Tolkien's religious background may have influenced to some extent his opinion of fantasy, for he says: "Fantasy remains a human right: we make in our measure and in our derivative mode, because we are made: and not only made, but made in the image and likeness of a Maker" (145). From here, Tolkien comes with the role of the sub-creator. While God is a creator, humans are sub-creators.

There are two important elements in fantasy that Tolkien embraces as fundamental: escape and consolation. Escape is the tool that allows the writer and reader to evade certain problems or negative aspects of the real world. The author refers to things such as "hunger, thirst, poverty, pain, sorrow, injustice, death" as things to escape from (151), even though it's impossible because these are problems found in his own invented world. Therefore, one of the goals in this sort of fantasy is healing. One of the things that Tolkien tries to avoid in his works but finds he is unable is industry and the machine, which he seems to abhor and, therefore, gives it a darker meaning. In *The Lord of the Rings* Saruman's machines suggest fire and destruction, as can be seen in the following excerpt:

'When Saruman was safe back in Orthanc, it was not long before he set some of his precious machinery to work. [...] Suddenly up came fires and foul fumes: the vents and shafts all over the plain began to spout and belch. Several of the Ents got scorched and blistered. One of them, Beechbone I think he was called, a very tall handsome Ent, got caught in a spray of some liquid fire and burned like a torch: a horrible sight.' (1993, 591)

Escape offers, according to Tolkien, consolation. He calls this the "Consolation of the Happy Ending" or "eucatastrophe" (2006, 153). This must contrast with another term, "dyscatastrophe", which means sadness and, ultimately, failure. Only with the possibility of failure can the ending be truly joyous. Instead of the decline of the catastrophe, the eucatastrophe is the point in the plot in which the hero has a clear path to success. In The Hobbit (1937), this point is represented by the coming of the Eagles that turn the tide in the battle of the five armies and, in The Lord of the Rings, Gollum's fall on Mount Doom.

Tolkien's take on fantasy inspired many academics in the following decades to expand and offer new developments in defining fantasy. This helped create a broader field that includes many subgenres, as authors ventured into manipulating the tropes of fantasy. Nonetheless, Tolkien's essay is an essential starting point in the studies of the genre because of its superlative influence.

Determining the difference between the terms fantasy and fantastic is also important when studying the genre.<sup>5</sup> Tzvetan Todorov articulated a theory asserting that the fantastic is directly related to the supernatural. He refers to the events that are not in accordance to the laws of nature or the world either as illusions or as reality. Todorov states that the fantastic is: "that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event" (qtd. in Bould 2002, 54) Therefore, it is a moment of uncertainty between the uncanny, where strange happenings have natural causes or explanations, and the marvelous, where things have supernatural justifications.

Todorov's suggestion, which was developed in the 1970s, seems to have been well received by modern critics and academics. However, the term fantastic first appeared with a much broader meaning. Initially, it was used as a term for both fantasy and science fiction and later "for all forms of human expression that are not realistic, including fantasy and sci-fi, magic realism, fabulation, surrealism, etc." (Clute and Grant, "Fantastic" 1999, 335).

<sup>5</sup> In this dissertation the term fantastic will be used as the adjective of fantasy.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> John Clute's *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (1997) determines that science fiction is a genre that is distinct from fantasy but one that also has some correspondence. In science fiction there is space to speculate on the plausibility of its contents, while in fantasy, some elements are inarguably impossible.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> When reality is invaded by elements of fantastic nature. However, these elements seem to be regarded in a realistic way.

The continual association of fantasy to science fiction is important enough to merit a longer explanation. The main premise that separates both genres is that, while fantasy deals with that which is improbable, science fiction refers to what is plausible. A very early and basic definition of science fiction by Hugo Gernsback is presented in *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (1979). He refers to it as "scientifiction" and describes it as "a charming romance intermingled with scientific fact and prophetic vision" (311). Gernsback includes in his definition authors such as H. G. Wells and Jules Verne.

Another premise was later established regarding the genre - the fact that it should include the principle of a discovery that would be conceivable to science. So, there are two basic grounds irrevocably essential to science fiction: science and possibility. This place is, according to Darko Suvin, a novum. Suvin defined science fiction as "a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence of interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment" (qtd. in Reed 1981, 338), which is, again, the novum. When referring to cognition, Suvin appears to mean rational thinking; and estrangement is a certain distancing from something so that it seems recognizable but unfamiliar at the same time (cf. Clute and Nichols "Definitions of SF" 1999, 313).

Sometimes, the term science fantasy appears to describe science fiction as part of fantasy. This term was first used by science fiction writer Judith Merril. Gary K. Wolfe describes it as a series of fantasy elements that occur in a science fiction context (cf. "Science Fantasy" 1999, 843). Clute states that it is in science fantasy that "SF and fantasy as a whole are closest" ("Science Fantasy" 1999, 844).

Wolfe terms science fiction as fantasy's sister genre. According to the author, the intent was to treat fantasy "as a kind of alternative science, with its own rigorous but internally consistent rules and a minimum of mythological supernaturalism" (Wolfe 2011, 44).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> With some connection to magic realism, fabulation often seems to question the reality of a given world. It crosses the line between fantasy and reality in order to make the distinction more difficult.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Surrealism can be described as the movement of the unconscious, which, according to John Clute, achieves "its characteristic effects through the apparently irrational and unmotivated juxtaposition of realistic and fantastic images" ("Surrealism" 1999, 910). Therefore, it can be easily associated with magic realism.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Academic known for his attempt to define science-fiction as a literary genre. He also "introduced the term 'cognition' to sf criticism" (Clute and Nichols "Suvin, Darko" 1999, 1190).

Even if the line between science fiction and fantasy seems blurred sometimes, it can be asserted that fantasy begins when the probability of its elements being real are very low. In science fiction the degree of unreality should be kept to a minimum and what is possible should be justified as scientific. Novels in which these characteristics overlap should be termed science fantasy.

Many theorists who undertook the task of defining fantasy have presented very different views. In one of her theories Rosemary Jackson argues that fantasies, namely secondary world fantasies, are related to the primary world through metaphors. So, the real world is only dislocated. The result is, as she calls it, a paraxial realm, a place that she says is "'neither entirely 'real' (object) nor entirely 'unreal' (image)", but something in between (1981, 19). By "paraxis", Jackson means something that is dislocated and that "lies on either side of the principle axis, that which lies alongside the main body" (19). The validity of this theory can be confirmed by checking the abundant influences primary worlds have on the creation of secondary worlds.<sup>11</sup>

One theory proposed by Diana Waggoner suggests that the supernatural is and should be the "primary classifying category in any discussions of the [fantastic] genre" (Oziewicz 2008, 81). She inserts fantasy in a broader genre called speculative fiction and argues that fantasy establishes "realistic credentials [...] for the supernatural" (qtd. in 81).

For Waggoner, mythopoeic fantasy is one of the results of several author's perspectives concerning the supernatural. This form of fantasy can be described, in a broad sense, as a recreation of myth with an "interaction of mortal protagonists with the supernatural" (82), as well as a sense of seriousness, where the supernatural is to be believed because it is explained. One way Waggoner describes this form is through the example of a story that portrays "a journey to a spiritual goal, part of which is a struggle against the powers of evil" (82). The reverse, however, is also possible, but Waggoner labels it as heroic fantasy. Inspiration

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> For instance, Tolkien's Shire was inspired by certain parts of England; and mythological characters served as inspiration for some of his protagonists, like Gandalf, who was inspired by Odin.

Marek Oziewicz does not find the distinction between these two forms (mythopoeic fantasy and heroic fantasy) viable because their characteristics can be blended. The fact is that these forms seem very close and it is possible that one does not exist without the other.

The strong presence of myth in the works of Tolkien and Lewis leads Oziewicz to refer to them as "the founders of mythopoeic fantasy" (66). This is one of the differences between them and some of their predecessors, such as William Morris or George MacDonald. The notion of mythopoeic fantasy is applied to several other authors like Ursula K. Le Guin or Lloyd Alexander.

Even though fantasy has great proximity to myth, when defining the genre one of the things that should be made clear is that fantasy is not the same as myth. In a given culture, many legends were part of the religion and, therefore, were believed and seen as possible. What is considered myth should not be considered fantasy but, because it contains the fantastic, it should be regarded as a taproot text instead.<sup>12</sup>

A theory that proposes that the fantasy genre's rules have become clearer over time and that it brings about the attempt to create more texts that try to subvert and break these rules was offered by Brian Attebery in *Strategies of Fantasy* (1992). However, he states that there is a "temptation to accept as formula some prior fantasist's contributions" (11). This statement is helpful in explaining the huge amount of fantasy that derived from the Tolkien-Lewis influence.

For Attebery, fantasy focuses on a center that defines the genre and not its borders. He refers to fantasy as a fuzzy set, which he explains in his experiment, which consisted on rating works on a scale of one to seven in which one was pure fantasy and seven not fantasy at all.<sup>13</sup> The result placed *The Lord of the Rings* at the very center. Even though he claims no scientific value for this experiment, Attebery shows that there is a general acceptance of Tolkien's works as a center. Additionally, it helps to prove that there are no clear borders in fantasy and that it is a genre that expands and ultimately overlaps with other genres.

<sup>13</sup> The list included works by Ray Bradbury, Aldous Huxley, Mary Shelley, Ursula Le Guin, C. S. Lewis, Tolkien, Isaac Asimov, Lewis Carrol, and many others.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Taproot texts are not considered fantasy by modern-day standards but they contain elements of the fantastic. However, the presence of the fantastic was not the main drive of a taproot text. They can be found anywhere from Homer to Jonathan Swift.

The Encyclopedia of Fantasy terms these unclear borders as water margins. They designate "the unmapped and ultimately unmappable regions" and "surround a central land or reality, and fade indefinitely into the distance, beyond the edges of any map" ("Water Margins" 1999, 997). Texts that are not fantasy but are closely related to it can be found in the water margins. Myths and taproot texts, as well as science fantasy and science fiction, can be found in this place.

On occasion of a review for "The Year's Best Fantasy and Horror" Gary K. Wolfe wrote that "fantasy is evaporating" (qtd. in 2011, 50). The author goes on to explain in his work titled *Evaporating Genres* (2011) that this only meant that fantasy has grown to a state of great diversity, spreading from literature to other arts, becoming "a central part of the fabric of contemporary culture" (51).

The evaporation of the genre seems like a very interesting way of describing its changing status. Actually, it refers to the spreading boundaries of fantasy as well as science fiction and horror. Many authors attempt to subvert given formulas or to stray from the traditional paradigm of fantasy. That is one way of stimulating the genre. Some authors have been known to destabilize it, like Jonathan Lethem, who mixes fantasy, dystopia, and horror, Steve Cockayne and Roderick Townley, who subvert Farah Mendlesohn's proposal of taxonomy. <sup>14</sup> China Miéville also does this by combining elements of science fiction with fantasy, sometimes separately and other times in the same text, producing works that can be inserted in a genre called New Weird, which undermines the principles of traditional fantasy.

Wolfe places fantasy writers in three different groups. In one are the authors who obey the "rules" of the genre, avoiding straying too much. In another group are writers who use the genre only as reference. Finally, in the last group, are those who try to break from the limitations of the genre. Fantasy and science fiction, therefore, have broadened their limits to such an extent that they "transcend or supersede the old notions of genre" (53).

Wolfe's and Attebery's ideas are very current and fit the present-day situation of modern fantasy. Even though both academics reached different conclusions, there is a

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> The taxonomy developed by Mendlesohn will be discussed in future sections.

similarity in them and a general agreement that it is difficult to establish a clear and defined border for fantasy, asserting instead that the genre overlaps with others.

This section demonstrates the multiple views academics have proposed regarding the fantasy genre. Even though there are many definitions for the genre and different theories, the ones presented here show how the genre has developed. Tolkien's outline of fantasy with the creation of a secondary world where all the elements of Fairy are placed, along with the idea of the healing that occurs in the end, constitute one of the main characteristics of modern fantasy, followed by numerous authors.

The fuzzy set theory presented by Brian Attebery is also a very viable theory, for it proves how difficult it is to build borders for fantasy, especially because the genre has become so widespread of late. In addition, it helps to establish a close relation to science fiction by assuming the existence of an overlap between the two, termed science fantasy.

Lastly, Farah Mendlesohn makes a fundamental point in the studies of the genre by sorting fantasy into categories that focus on the way the fantastic enters in the narrative. This way, instead of accepting the fuzzy set theory, it defies it by proving that works that can be found in different sides of the set can actually fit in the same category. An analysis of Mendlesohn's theory will be developed later in this chapter.

Because fantasy has become varied over the years, there seems to be a tendency to follow certain theories in detriment of others. This is due, in part, to the area of fantasy one is working with. This is one of the reasons many theories have not been developed in this section, because the type of fantasy in analysis in this dissertation is the fantasy of portal and quest.

The evolution of fantasy throughout the years has made it important for an account of what has been published in the genre so far and how its distribution influenced other authors to follow in the same steps. That is, therefore, the subject of the next section.

### 1.2. The Genealogy, Diffusion, and Influences of the Genre

Descending from multiple types of narrative from fairytale to the literature of the supernatural, fantasy's history, even though quite recent, is already extensive. The main purpose of this section is to find a starting point in the genre and determine how it developed through the decades. Simultaneously, this section will also contain an account of some of the influences that inspired the earliest modern fantasy authors. It is also essential to expand on the various formats in which fantasy has appeared throughout the decades, as well as the type of diffusion it received.

As stated before, J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis had an important role in the founding of modern fantasy. In fact, *The Lord of the Rings* contains most of the elements that are representative of the field.<sup>15</sup>

However, fantasy already had an established ground prior to Tolkien and Lewis. Among some of the most important are George MacDonald and William Morris. MacDonald is considered to be an innovator in the field of fantasy literature, and in his novel *Phantastes, A Faerie Romance for Men and Women* (1858) he is contemplated by John Clute as an author "revelling in the literary freedom of fantasy" ("MacDonald, George" 1999, 603). Other novels by MacDonald that are of importance for the genre are *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872) and *Lilith* (1895), both of which are set in secondary worlds and include, in the first case, a quest, and in the second, a portal. <sup>16</sup>

What makes William Morris's novels important contributions to the genre is the element of the landscape, <sup>17</sup> which is an essential part of the quest. *The Well at the World's End* (1896) is one of Morris's most celebrated fantasy novels and Clute asserts that the plot "suggests fairytale simplicity" ("Morris, William" 1999, 665), portraying a quest for the fountain of youth, <sup>18</sup> the marriage in the end, and the victory over multiple evils that herald better times ahead. *The Water of the Wondrous Islands* (1897) and *The Sundering Flood* 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> The hero-quest in a secondary world, the presence of a Dark Lord who threatens the established order of the world, the companion who serves as a guide, and the existence of an object of power are some of the elements that form the genre.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> The portal is an element almost ever present in fantasy.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Landscape is as important for fantasy as a character. The main goal of landscape is to grant meaning to a place. Depending on its description, it can be guessed what type of mood the place tries to convey. A landscape containing thriving life may indicate an idyllic place whereas a place devoid of any animal or vegetal life can mean a dark and evil place.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> The fountain of youth contains the elixir of life, which grants the drinker an extension of his or her lifespan or it may restore the drinker's youth.

(1897), like *The Well at the World's End*, embrace the idea of the invented world, which Tolkien later termed as secondary worlds and would use for *The Lord of the Rings*.

Before Morris and MacDonald there were some novels that could be seen as fantasy. One of the first is from the late seventeenth century: John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678). In her analysis of the different categories of fantasy, Farah Mendlesohn considers Bunyan's novel to be one of the earliest portal-quest fantasies. The author uses a biblical allegory through the use of a vision that can be perceived as a dream. This does not convey the idea of the dream as unreal, like some fantasies of later times.

Like Bunyan's novel, many fantasies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were based on the idea of the crossing of the portal. This was, therefore, one of the most important elements in fantasy for a long time, and still is. Among the novels which employ this method are Lewis Carrol's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking Glass* (1871), MacDonald's *Lilith: a Romance*, Frank L. Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900), David Lindsey's *Voyage to Arcturus* (1922), among many others. *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, however, became the prototypical portal fantasy novel.

The difference between Lewis's novel and the previous ones, with the exception of Baum's, is that the world in which the protagonists enter needs restoration; there is a sense of wrongness<sup>19</sup> in the world (cf. Mendlesohn 2008, 30). Farah Mendlesohn describes that *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *The Lord of the Rings* "set the pattern for what Clute describes as the full fantasy: the novels presume a thinned world" (30). The concept of thinning relates to the idea of wrongness in the sense that it involves the action of an agent who causes the land to decay. Clute illustrates this with the example of "local thinning" in *The Lord of the Rings* when the elves start abandoning Middle-earth and with them, their magic (cf. "Thinning" 1999, 942).

Therefore, it is safe to assume that there has been a change in the paradigm of fantasy with Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. These have established the grounds for modern fantasy and have influenced

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> According to Clute, wrongness "is a recognition that the world is – or is about to become – no longer right" ("Wrongness" 1999, 1038).

many subsequent authors. Their success not only increased the production of more fantasy works, but also brought back the writings of classic fantasy novelists like William Morris, Lord Dunsany, Mervyn Peake, and David Lindsay.

The explosion of fantasy that occurred in the following decades led to the development of the genre in multiple ways. One of the ways in which it has branched is the categorization of fantasy into subgenres. Some of these include, among many others, urban fantasy, children's fantasy, or historical fantasy. The relevance of urban and children's fantasy for the purpose of this dissertation makes it necessary to have them developed further in the following paragraphs.

Before the advent of urban fantasy, the city had always been associated with science fiction and horror. But this subgenre, influenced by Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1765) with the concept of the edifice, has grown in the past decades (cf. Clute and Grant "Urban Fantasy" 1999, 975). Also of extreme influence to authors, critics, and readers is H. P. Lovecraft's novella *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* (1943).

Alexander C. Irvine refers to urban fantasy as "a group of texts [...] in which the tropes of pastoral or heroic fantasy were brought into an urban setting" (2012, 200). It expanded to the point of including "every work of the fantastic that takes place in a city or has a contemporary setting that occasionally incorporates a city" (200).

Therefore, there are two types of fantasy centered on the city. In one, the fantastic has a connection to a city of the primary world or a representation of it in a secondary one. Here, the fantastic is independent from the metropolis and collides with it. Such cases include Neil Gaiman's *Neverwhere* (1996), China Miéville's *Un Lun Dun*, Jim Butcher's *Storm Front* (2000), or Charles de Lint's books set in Newford. In the other type, fantasies are set in fictional cities and the fantastic is an expected presence. This type can be found in such novels as Miéville's *Perdido Street Station* and *Iron Council* (2004), Brandon Sanderson's *The Final Empire* (2006), or K. J. Bishop's *The Etched City* (2003).

<sup>21</sup> Even though it may not be perceived entirely as urban fantasy, a great part of Robert Jordan's *The Wheel of Time* series is set in the city.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Urban fantasy should not include novels that only take place in cities for a brief period, like Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* or Le Guin's *Earthsea* books (1968-2001).

Having had its origin some centuries ago, children's fantasy has had a very firm role in literature. Unless they portrayed a moral message, this type of story was not well received and was thought of as subversive (cf. Clute and Grant "Children's Fantasy" 1999, 184).

In John Clute's *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, Sara Coleridge's *Phantasmion* (1837) is regarded as the "first original CF in novel form in English" ("Children's Fantasy" 1999, 184). The novel is set in a world similar to Faërie and is regarded by critics as a fairytale. Novels by George MacDonald, Edith Nesbit, Frances Hodgson, J. M. Barrow have also been very influent for subsequent authors.

Mainstream modern children's fantasy includes, among others, C. S. Lewis's Narnia books (1950-1956), Ursula Le Guin's *Earthsea* series, J. K Rowling's *Harry Potter* (1997-2007), and Phillip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* (1995-2000). The theme in most of these is the passage from childhood into adulthood.<sup>22</sup>

During the 1960s children's fantasy maintained the use of the following formula: the child would be of the middle-class who arrives at the adventure by contacting "with a mysterious place, object or person" (Butler 2012, 224). Normally, there would be a problem threatening the established order and it was the protagonist's mission to restore it (cf. Butler 2012, 224). This is the case with Alan Garner's *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* (1960) or, more recently, Terry Brook's short story "Imaginary Friends", featured in *Once Upon a Time: A Treasury of Modern Fairy Tales* (1991), edited by Lester Del Rey and Rita Kessler.

Social changes operated since the 1960s have led to a change in thinking and, thus, in the mode of constructing children's fantasy. Fantasies set in secondary worlds exclusively or in which the protagonists are transported to them have become more common. Several of these examples include N. M. Browne's *Warriors of Alavna* (2000), Catherine Fisher's *Darkhenge* (2005), or Diana Wynne Jones's *Archer's Goon* (1984).

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> The first two *Earthsea* novels are illustrative of this case. In the first novel Ged is only a youth, and when he is found by Tenar in the Tombs of Atuan he is already a fully grown man. Harry Potter is only eleven years old in *The Philisopher's Stone* and seventeen, when wizards come of age, in *The Deathly Hallows* (2007).

One of the aspects that has helped the expansion of fantasy since early in the twentieth century is the distribution the genre experienced as well as the format in which it was published.

In the United States the diffusion of fantasy was largely helped by the publication of pulp magazines, which comprised mostly short-fiction. Pulp magazines began in the second-half of the nineteenth century and readers could find horror stories, science fiction, and fantasy. The name comes from the type of paper, pulp paper, from pulp wood, used for printing these magazines (cf. Clute and Grant "Pulps" 1999, 792).

The first pulp magazine that started printing fantastic and weird stories was *The Argosy*<sup>23</sup> (cf. Clute and Grant "Magazines" 1999, 612). However, one of the most important magazines for the fantasy genre was *Weird Tales*, starting in 1923. It was there that Robert E. Howard published some of the first Conan stories, giving rise to the sword-and-sorcery subgenre of fantasy.

Later, the increasing interest in fantasy that followed the publication of the paperback edition of *The Lord of the Rings* in 1965 brought along the publication of a new magazine called *Worlds of Fantasy* (1968-1971). Edited by Lester Del Rey and Ejler Jakobsson, the magazine experienced some success and had among its main publication Ursula Le Guin's *The Tombs of Atuan*.

By the late nineteenth century, magazines of this sort were already common in the United Kingdom, having started in the eighteenth century. Some of these include *New Novelists Magazine* (1786-1787), published in two volumes, *The New Monthly Magazine* (1814-1884), edited by Henri Colburn. Another one, *Household Words* (1850-1859), was edited by Charles Dickens. These magazines, except *New Novelists Magazine*, contained primarily fantasy and supernatural stories.

However, magazines in the United Kingdom were more specialized in horror and gothic fiction. By the time pulp magazines were proliferating in the United States, there weren't many magazines focused particularly on fantasy (cf. Clute and Grant "Magazines" 1999, 613). However, *Fantasy*, <sup>24</sup> published between 1946 and 1947, was revived as *Science* 

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> The magazine was founded in 1882 and only started publishing all-fiction issues in 1896.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> A different magazine with the same name was published in 1938-1939 in three issues.

Fantasy in 1950. According to Clute, this magazine "was the only significant UK market for fantasy in the late 1950s" ("Magazines" 1999, 613).

It was the publication of mass-market paperback books that marked the beginning of an important era in the diffusion of fantasy. However, compared to horror and science fiction, the explosion came later. As mentioned above, the publication of the paperback editions of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy in America caused the genre to become more widespread "as its authors began to discover that the Tolkien quest formula was but one expression of the genre's potential, and not a totalizing definition of it" (Wolfe 2011, 24).

This has helped outlining the format in which books were published. Aside from Tolkien, the trilogy format also became very popular following the publication of Katherine Kurtz's *Deryni Books*, <sup>25</sup> between 1970 and 1973. Clute recognizes the potential in Kurtz's novels as it shares some elements similar to *The Lord of the Rings*. Both are set in a secondary world and the *Deryni Books* seem to draw a lot from Tolkien. In addition, Clute refers to the author as "a very early visitor to Fantasyland, whose fixed parameters she after all helped establish" ("Kurtz, Katherine (Irene)" 1999, 550).

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed an explosion of stories in this type of layout and the trilogy became the favored method of publication. Another technique employed by many writers is trilogies that come by sets. They are set in the same universe but sometimes function as prequels or sequels of the original set. Authors such as Robin Hobb, <sup>26</sup> R. A. Salvatore, <sup>27</sup> and Stephen R. Donaldson have engaged in this system, writing, in some cases, multiple trilogies set in the same universe. This has been ongoing since the 1980s and is still in practice today.

Even though the trilogy seemed to dominate the world of fantasy for a time, the series format also became very common. In fact, this set-up has been present since Robert

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Published as a trilogy, it consists of *Deryni Rising* (1972), *Deryni Checkmate* (1972), and *High Deryni* (1973).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> The Realm of the Elderlings contains, so far, four trilogies: *The Farseer Trilogy* (1995-1997), *Liveship Traders Trilogy* (1998-200), *The Tawny Man Trilogy* (2001-2003), and *The Fitz and the Fool Trilogy* (2014-present).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> The world of Forgotten Realms contains five trilogies: *The Icewind Dale Trilogy* (1988-1990), *The Dark Elf Trilogy* (1990-1991), *Paths of Darkness* (1998-2001), *The Sellswords* (2000-2006), and *The Hunter's Blade Trilogy* (2002-2004).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Published The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant in two trilogies and a tetralogy. These are *The First Chronicles* (1977-1979), *The Second Chronicles* (1980-1983), and *The Last Chronicles* (2004-2013).

E. Howard's Conan stories, which started appearing as early as the 1930s, and C. S. Lewis's Narnia books.

Since then, there have been some fantasy series with worldwide recognition. Among them, Le Guin's *Earthsea*, Rowling's *Harry Potter*, Robert Jordan's *The Wheel of Time*, George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* (1996-present), and, more recently, Brandon Sanderson's *The Stormlight Archive* (2010-present).

Needless to say, the success of the fantasy genre in recent years has been largely aided by the adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Harry Potter* books to the big screen early in the beginning of the twenty-first century (cf. Miéville 2002, 40). The HBO production of George Martin's *Game of Thrones* also increased the readership and, therefore, the production of more fantasy. Thus, it is safe to assume that fantasy has by now established a secure place in literature.

It is undoubtedly true that many fantasy authors since the 1960s have been inspired by Tolkien and Lewis. It seems of interest to expand on other main sources of influence for the authors that succeeded them, but also to see where both Tolkien and Lewis found their inspiration.

Aside from fantasy authors already mentioned here, such as William Morris and George MacDonald, Tolkien and Lewis were fond of the fairytales collected by the Grimm brothers and Andrew Lang. While they both were fond of Icelandic sagas, Tolkien favored mostly Norse mythology and Lewis Greco-Roman. Tolkien preferred the study of the languages of the early Middle Ages and Lewis found his inspiration in the romances of the later Middle Ages (cf. James 2016, 67).

Lewis's interest for Greco-Roman mythology can be found in his retelling of the myth of Cupid and Psyche in *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold* (1956). Characters such as Mr. Tumnus or the trees that report to the White Witch in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* are possibly inspired by the fauns and the dryads, respectively. In *The Magician's Nephew*, the winged-horse Fledge can be associated with the mythological Pegasus, the horse ridden by Perseus and Bellerophon.

Tolkien's liking for the sagas is reflected, for example, in the dwarf characters he created for Middle-earth, whose names are directly taken from the Eddas. Additionally,

Tolkien's runic alphabet, the Cirth, is very similar to Anglo-Saxon runes, which are derived from the Elder Futhark, the Nordic system. One of Tolkien's interpretations of the *Kalevala* (1835)<sup>29</sup> has resulted in *The Story of Kullervo* (2015), the tragic tale of a man seeking vengeance for the murder of his father. This story is the base for another of Tolkien's stories, *The Children of Húrin* (2007).<sup>30</sup>

The Arthurian Legend is also found among Tolkien's sources of inspiration. The symbolism of Excalibur, that, among other things, grants Arthur the right to rule, can be found in *The Lord of the Rings* with Andúril, the sword that brings the return of the king to Gondor and Arnor. Tolkien also wrote some retellings of Arthurian myths, one of which is *The Fall of Arthur* (2013).

Marion Zimmer Bradley's *The Mists of Avalon*, published in 1983, is a retelling of the Arthurian myth through the point of view of female characters. *The Fionavar Tapestry* (1984-1986) is a trilogy by Canadian author Guy Gavriel Kay where some characters of the British folklore can be found.

However, there were other influences for later authors of fantasy. For instance, Ursula Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea* (1968), which was very well received by the audience and is considered a work of extreme importance within the genre, standing alongside *The Lord of the Rings*, draws deeply from eastern traditions. The word Atuan, from the title of the second *Earthsea* novel, is derived from Atua, the word for gods from some of the islands of the Pacific.

Also influenced by Oriental cultures and the Arthurian Cycle is *The Wheel of Time* series. Spanning fourteen books and a prequel, Jordan's novels comprehend over two thousand characters. Jordan used East-Asian culture to create the Seanchan Empire, while mixing it with the Arthurian myth by placing Artur Paendrag<sup>31</sup> as the founder of the empire from which the Seanchan descend. Many of the main characters are also inspired by characters of the British folktale.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> The national epic poem of Finland.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> An earlier draft of the story was featured in *The Silmarillion* (1977).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> A reference to Arthur Pendragon.

Even though fantasy has evolved into a very mixed blend of subgenres and categories, it is undeniable that there is a strong pillar at the center of the genre that influences new authors, who either use it as a formula or adapt it to their own vision of fantasy.

Because fantasy is such a widespread field, it is difficult to make a catalogue of all categories and describe them, especially because some are very similar. Nonetheless, this section's intent was to illustrate the evolution of the genre and to show some of its major works.

Academic studies in the field of fantasy have been developed throughout the years. Before describing which studies have been frequent in the genre, it is essential to highlight Farah Mendlesohn's categorization of fantasy, which will be fundamental for the next chapters.

# 1.3. Categories of Fantasy: A Taxonomy Presented by Farah Mendlesohn

As the vastness of fantasy literature makes it difficult to define it, a new proposal suggests a taxonomy instead. Presented by Farah Mendlesohn in *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, this taxonomy divides fantasy into four major groups: portal-quest, immersion, intrusion, and liminal<sup>32</sup> fantasy. Mendlesohn asserts that many definitions of fantasy are limited. She prefers to offer "an understanding of the construction of the genre that provides critical tools for further analysis" (2002, 169).

Mendlesohn's proposal is to deconstruct fantasy beyond the margins presented by Brian Attebery. Her goal is to place works from different centers and different areas of the fuzzy set and prove how close they can be.

What separates these categories is "the means by which the fantastic enters the narrated world" (171). And for each of the four groups Mendlesohn says the following: "[i]n the intrusive fantasy the fantastic enters the fictional world; in the estranged fantasy

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Mendlesohn also refers to this as estranged fantasy.

the magic hovers in the corner of our eye; portal fantasies invite us through into the fantastic; while the immersive fantasy allows us no escape" (171).

Portal-quest fantasies have as inevitable elements the portal and the journey. Both portal and quest fantasies can be seen separately, but in most cases a portal or threshold is present and the protagonist has to cross it. It is rare not to find a portal or threshold in quest fantasies.

W. A. Senior summarizes some of the characteristics of quest narratives, which can be portrayed by various adventures. The author of the essay "Quest Fantasies" (2012) describes the events in this kind of story as follows: "simplest confrontations and dangers [that escalate] through more threatening and perilous encounters" (2012, 190).

According to Mendlesohn, this form of storyline assumes "two movements: transition and exploration" (2008, 2). The transition is the crossing of the portal. The protagonists are plucked from the primary world, which is familiar to them and in which they lead normal lives, to a secondary one, where they are overwhelmed by fantastic elements. Here, they begin the exploration; they come in contact with the fantastic, which leads them to, eventually, be able to manipulate the secondary world (cf. 2).

For instance, in *The Lord of the Rings* Frodo Baggins is able to use the One Ring to escape notice without yielding to its evil power, if only barely; the same happened with Bilbo for an even longer time. In *The Wheel of Time* series (1990-2013) Egwene al'Vere's experience with the One Power is sufficient for her to rediscover the lost weave for Travelling.<sup>33</sup> An even better example would be Ged's, from Le Guin's *Earthsea* books; his ability to discover a person's true name is enough for him to have control over that person should he choose to.

Portal-quest fantasies are most often a struggle between good and evil. Normally, evil is depicted by the figure of the Dark Lord bent on ruling or destroying the world. Senior describes this figure and his dwelling as "a satanic figure of colossal but warped power [...] who lives in a dead land, often in the east or north, surrounded by a range of forbidding mountains or deserts" (2012, 190).

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Using the One Power, Egwene was able to create a gateway to travel instantly from one place to another.

In this regard, both Tolkien's and Jordan's novels are once more the perfect embodiment of quest fantasies. Mordor, Sauron's realm, located in the east of Middle-earth, is surrounded by almost impregnable mountains and the land itself is dry: "all seemed ruinous and dead, a desert burned and choked" (Tolkien 1993, 958).<sup>34</sup>

Shayol Ghul, where the Dark One's prison is situated, is surrounded by the Blasted Lands, a desert where nothing grows, and the Great Blight, where the flora is deadly and the creatures of the Shadow abound. This area is positioned to the north of the Westlands. While Sauron intends to rule over the world, the Dark One wants it destroyed so he can fashion a new one.

There are cases in which this paradigm is subverted. In Brandon Sanderson's *The Final Empire* the Lord Ruler's palace is in a city in the center of the land. It is not geographically impenetrable; on the contrary, the city is the capital of the Final Empire. The ash falling from the various volcanoes around the city makes the land look so dead that people do not believe that plants can grow green leaves (cf. Sanderson 2009b, 162).

Quest fantasies normally end with a direct confrontation between the hero and the Dark Lord, and it is frequently accompanied by a great battle which is directly linked with the encounter between protagonist and antagonist. The hero's victory over the Dark Lord assures the outcome of the accompanying battle.

This link between the two battles is especially visible in Robert Jordan's *The Great Hunt* (1990). Rand al'Thor's duel against Ishamael, which can be witnessed in the sky above the city of Falme, also reflects on the outcome of the battle happening below: "[s]uddenly he knew that the two battles were linked. When he advanced, the heroes called by the Horn drove the Seanchan back; when he fell back, the Seanchan rose up" (665).<sup>35</sup>

Senior also enumerates the elements that can be found in a quest fantasy, some of which include the reluctant hero, the presence of a guide and the journey to a world filled with things unknown to the hero and where the influence of the Dark Lord is much more

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Mordor also means dark land in Sindarin, one of Tolkien's invented languages.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> It should be noted that Ishamael is only a representative of the Dark One and that the Seanchan, who are conquerors from a different continent on the other side of the ocean, are not in the service of the Shadow.

intense. Again, *The Lord of the Rings* fits these characteristics, and even more so because the protagonist, Frodo, comes from a place of safety to a world that is overwhelming.

Immersive fantasies differ from portal fantasies in the sense that there is no portal to cross because the protagonist is already part of the fantastic world. Any fantastic element encountered by the reader in an immersive fantasy is seldom explained because the characters, through whose eyes the reader observes the world, are already familiar with it. Therefore, the reader must try to sense the meaning of things as the narrative goes on. <sup>36</sup>

This category is very close to science fiction. What establishes a difference is the fact that some of these fantasies take place in secondary worlds that have medieval characteristics. (cf. Mendlesohn 2002, 176). One other thing that helps distinguish portal-quest fantasy from immersive fantasy is the part thinning plays in a certain work. For instance, *The Lord of the Rings* shows the reader a thinned world in which the main goal is to heal and restore it. In an immersive fantasy thinning is "the dominant mood" (Mendlesohn 2008, 61).

Mendlesohn considers China Miéville's *Perdido Street Station* (2000) an immersive fantasy that borders on science fiction because of the relation between magic and science. In fact, one of the topics in Miéville's work is the creation of a science of the fantastic. This seems like an attempt to make fantasy rational and to immerse the readers even more in the world they are reading about. One aspect of this type of fantasy is the ability the characters have to question the world they are in by asking why something has to be the way it is. It is very unlike portal-quest fantasies, where the protagonists only explore the world in order to discover its rules, and ultimately, they only scratch the surface.

In cases where characters have enough knowledge of their own world to question its rules and try to alter them to some extent, these characters may become antagonists. According to Mendlesohn, this can occur in different levels; it could be "about the nature of politics or about the nature of physics" (68). Mendlesohn returns to Tolkien to illustrate this, asserting that the hobbits have enough knowledge of the Shire to defy some of its rules (cf. 68).

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> "Immersive fantasy [...] must assume that the reader is as much a part of the world as are those being read about" (Mendlesohn 2008, 59).

The third category that Mendlesohn proposes is that of intrusion fantasy. These fantasies often take part in the primary world. As the name suggests, fantasy is an intruder in this world and there is a very clear distinction between the fantastic and reality. Normally, it disrupts the order of things and, therefore, the ultimate goal of an intrusion fantasy is restoration.

One interesting aspect raised by Mendlesohn regarding this specific category is the possibility that Dark Lords featured in fantasy are intruders (cf. 114). For instance, Tolkien's Sauron is not originally from Middle-earth; he is one of the Maiar, and about them, Tolkien writes: "[w]ith the Valar came other spirits whose being also began before the World, of the same order as the Valar but of less degree. These are the Maiar, the people of the Valar, and their servants and helpers" (Tolkien 1999, 48). The same is true for C. S. Lewis's White Witch. She is originally from a different world and was brought by Digory Kirke to Narnia in *The Magician's Nephew* (1955). So, by association, it can be expected that all evil related to Dark Lords can be intrusions.

The intrusion is something that cannot be ignored and must "be negotiated with or defeated, sent back to where it came from, or controlled" (Mendlesohn 2008, 115). In addition, the way the readers deal with the fantastic follows a certain trajectory; it goes from a refusal to an acknowledgement to an acceptance of its existence. As the intrusion goes on, it escalates. For instance, and going back to *The Magician's Nephew*, when Jadis arrives in London she disrupts things in Digory's house by attacking Miss Ketterley. By the time she comes back to the house, things have escalated to a riotous point, which involved the police and Jadis confronting and attacking people.

Intrusion fantasies can also imply a return of the fantastic after normality is reestablished. In *The Philosopher's Stone* (1997) Voldemort can be considered an intruder in Hogwarts. Taking a close look at how things escalate, it starts with Harry's scar hurting during the sorting ceremony, then the Troll in the dungeons during the Halloween feast, and ultimately with Voldemort, making use of Professor Quirrell's body, trying to steal the Philosopher's Stone.<sup>37</sup> Voldemort is defeated in the end and the intrusion seems to have

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> An escalation of bigger dimensions can also be found in the whole sequence. In the first book there are no apparent consequences, except the destruction of the Stone and, therefore, the deaths of Nicholas Flamel and

been dealt with. However, a second attempt is made in *The Chamber of Secrets* (1998), as Voldemort makes use of a diary to try and gain new life, and normality is again disrupted. So, what happens here is that "the fantastic is [successively] sent back to its own world, if only temporarily" (Mendlesohn 2008, 148).

The fourth category in Mendlesohn's taxonomy is liminal fantasy, also called estranged fantasy. Just like intrusion fantasies, they usually take place in the primary world, as opposed to portal-quest and immersive fantasies. Mendlesohn says that this distinction between categories "clearly map onto the conventional divisions of high and low fantasy" (2002, 172). Therefore, intrusion and liminal fantasies are considered low fantasy, for they are set in the primary world, while portal-quest and immersive, located in secondary worlds, are high fantasy.

There is a similarity between liminal and intrusion fantasies in the sense that the fantastic is regarded as an intrusion. However, its presence is very faint or is regarded as casual; there is no sense of wrongness if fantasy intrudes. This is also a fantasy of refusal where "the fantastical is often denied" (180). While in quest fantasies there is no choice for the protagonist, in this category there is space for choice and rejection of the quest.

The fact that the fantastic is seen here with some degree of normality approximates this category to immersive fantasy. Still, it is the relationship the protagonist has to the fantastic that makes a distinction, especially because it contrasts with the way the reader sees magic. Mendlesohn demonstrates this with a story called "Yes, But Today is Tuesday" (1953) where "[w]e place the absurd in different moments, but doubt because the family seems to question whether anything truly fantastical has happened at all" (2008, 182). There are other characteristics that describe liminal fantasy, but this will be discussed in more practical terms in chapter four of this dissertation, along with the other categories.

Because there are works of fantasy that do not fit the characteristics of the four categories, Mendlesohn prevents the impossibility to categorize these novels by having a fifth category, which she terms "the irregulars." Therefore, this category includes fantasies

his wife. In the second book multiple students are petrified, almost causing the school's closure. Finally, the intrusion reaches its peak with Voldemort assuming physical form and, later, with the battle at Hogwarts.

that do not obey the principles of the portal-quest, the immersion, the intrusion, and the liminal fantasies, or even those works which could be placed in more than one category.

This summarizes somewhat the taxonomy projected by Farah Mendlesohn in *Rhetorics of Fantasy*. As this section was dedicated to the study of the taxonomy of fantasy, the next part will be focused on other studies that have been relevant for the genre.

# 1.4. Studies of Fantasy: State of the Art

Tolkien's contribution to the field of fantasy makes him a great influence for other academics who decided to study this literary genre. It is in his essay "On Fairy Stories" that the author of the *Lord of the Rings* develops his definition of fantasy. Tolkien describes how fantasy is an element of fairy-stories, based on the idea that it is synonymous with imagination and thus, the act of sub-creating. The essay is described by critics as an important work that "should be placed first on any required reading list for students of the genre" (Zahorski and Boyer 1982, 57).

The idea of imagination and fancy, terms that Tolkien worked with, had already been tackled by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in his *Biographia Literaria* (1817). The poet redefined the concept of imagination and referred to it as "the living Power and prime Agent of all human perception" (qtd. in Wolfe 2012, 9), and fancy was only a mode of memory. Later, George MacDonald returned to this difference and gave it a new perspective: imagination is the product resulting from "new embodiments of old truths" and fancy is what comes from inventions (9).

Prior to this, in the early eighteenth century, Joseph Addison mentioned imagination and fancy when referring to poetry and drama. David Sandner, author of fantasy novels and a critic of the genre, "has argued that Addison could be regarded as the 'first fantasy critic of the fantastic" (7), even though he wasn't discussing fiction.

These earlier ideas that constituted the fantasy genre have been recovered by Tolkien to develop them further. Therefore, his main notions concerning fantasy are that it takes place in a Secondary World and that it offers escapism and consolation. C. S. Lewis,

Tolkien's contemporary, and Ursula K. Le Guin, who came in the following decade, also studied the genre.

Le Guin's *The Language of the Night: Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction* (1979) relates, among other things, the importance of the imagination and the reasons why fantasy should not be downgraded. She also criticizes what she calls "commodified fantasy" by saying that "it invents nothing, but imitates and trivializes" (2012a, XV). Therefore, there is no change. But she claims that as time changes the authors' and readers' minds, so do the invented worlds of fantasy.<sup>38</sup>

Before McDonald had his take on fantasy the genre was regarded as superstitious and lacking in morality. Even though there was a general change of opinion, this negativity lasted through the twentieth century and onwards with certain theorists regarding fantasy as lacking any social, economic, or historical relevance. Such ideas came from Marxist academics and have been developed by Darko Suvin in his work *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (1979). Arguing that fantasy lacks any educational function, Suvin praises science fiction instead, referring to its importance in terms of social development.

Fantasy has also been discussed in the symposium Marxism and Fantasy as part of the journal *Historical Materialism*. In some of the essays published, fantasy is rendered useless in contrast to science fiction and it is argued that the creation of worlds of fantasy, using Tolkien's as an example, is poorly done. Carl Freedman calls Middle-earth "a thin and impoverished world: it is miles wide but only inches deep" (2002, 263). It is his understanding that elements of interest to Marxist theory, politics, economy, ideology, are "silently erased, to be replaced by the dominant obsession of the [...] abstract and essentially vacuous metaphysical battle between good and evil (263-264).

By the early 1980s, fantasy studies were underway and there was already an understanding between scholars on what the genre entailed exactly: it was agreed that it was "the literature of the impossible" (qtd. in Wolfe 1982, 1). Among the scholars that

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> This was part of the author's explanation on why she wrote *Tales from Earthsea* (2001): to prove that time passes by in secondary worlds just as much as it passes in primary worlds.

endorsed this proposal were W. R. Irwin, Eric S. Rabkin, C. N. Manlove, and Roger C. Schlobin. However, each of these academics pursued their own visions of the fantastic.

The difficulty for literary theorists to define fantasy has been illustrated by Gary K, Wolfe, who used as an example Mervyn Peake's *Titus Groan* (1946). Peake's novel, already considered a canonical fantasy work, violates the principle of the impossible. Wolfe says that "it is not explicitly an impossible world, and the events of the novel are not explicitly supernatural events" (2011, 32). Subsequently, he says that the "fact that few readers seem to notice this, or be bothered by it, suggests that the overwhelming tone of the novel carries enough of the fantasy affect to override mere concerns and plot setting" (32).

Distinguishing fantasy from the fantastic and differentiating five classes within fantasy, <sup>39</sup> Irwin, in his work *The Game of the Impossible: A Rhetoric of Fantasy* (1976) has also defined the genre and excluded the Secondary World from it. Colin Manlove has published *Modern Fantasy: Five Studies* (1975), *The Impulse of Fantasy Literature* (1982), *The Fantasy Literature of England* (1999), among others. He has studied fantasy authors such as Tolkien, Lewis, and MacDonald to sustain his theory of the fantastic, which, he claims, needs "an irreducible element of supernatural or impossible worlds, beings, or objects" (qtd. in 1).

A theory that interprets fantasy as "provocative but not always rigorous" has been presented by Rabkin in *The Fantastic in Literature* (1976) (Nicholls "Rabkin, Eric S." 2017, 987). Rabkin has contributed to the field with several works related to fantasy and science fiction. In addition, he refers to how fantasy tries to escape certain social norms and, by identifying which rules an author tries to violate, he can learn from the author's own society. However, his work is seen as "thin and sketchy" as a result of trying to include a great variety of topics (Marshall 1977, 83). In *Fantastic Worlds: Myths, Tales and Stories* (1979), an anthology comprising of various forms of fantasy, as well as science fiction and horror, Rabkin demonstrates how fantasy fulfills the reader's need to detach him/herself from the real world.

Several definitions of fantasy can be found in Roger Shclobin's *The Aesthetics of Fantasy in Literature and Art* (1982). Some of the essays settle on the principle that fantasy

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Metamorphosis, impossible societies, organized innocence, parody and adaptation, and the supernatural.

is a genre that represents the impossible, like Wolfe's "The Encounter with Fantasy" and Manlove's "On the Nature of Fantasy." Zahorski and Boyer address the theme of the secondary world in "The Secondary Worlds of High Fantasy," describing the differences and similarities "between what Tolkien has called primary worlds (literary mirrors of our own familiar reality) and secondary worlds (the exotic other worlds of fantasy)" (Tatar 1984, 692).

Of extreme influence to the aforementioned academics is Tzvetan Todorov's *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1973), labeled by Rosemary Jackson as "the most important and influential critical study of fantasy of this post-Romantic period" (Jackson 1981, 5).<sup>40</sup> Todorov set some parameters which the fantastic<sup>41</sup> must accomplish, and the most important is probably its positioning between the marvelous and the uncanny.

There has also been an attempt to continue Todorov's theory in Jackson's *Fantasy:* The Literature of Subversion (1981) (cf. Jackson 1981, 5). The study consists of a theoretical part concerning the fantastic as a mode and an analysis of fantasy works according to the theory she develops. Jackson claims that secondary worlds are metaphors of the real world and that fantasy is "a literature of desire, which seeks that which is experienced as absence and loss" (qtd. in Bould 2002, 60). 42

Some criticism of fantasy includes the genre's relation with myth. Andras Sandor's article "Myths and the Fantastic" (1991) reflects on the close relation of myth and fantasies, as if the latter was a follow-up of the former. In a somewhat similar perspective, Marek Oziewicz's One Earth, One People: The Mythopoetic Fantasy Series of Ursula K. Le Guin, Lloyd Alexander, Madeleine L'Engle and Orson Scott Card (2008) refers to mythopoeic fantasy as a genre which laid its foundations upon mythic tradition. Even though some critics include works such as myths of creation (Hesiod's Theogony or the Edda) within

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> By post-Romantic period, Jackson refers to literature from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Critics have transformed Todorov's term fantastic into fantasy, making it seem as if one was synonymous with the other (cf. Bould 2002, 56). In fact, some theories develop around the difference between both terms. <sup>42</sup> Tolkien's Shire reflects, to some extent, Jackson's idea. The industrialization that occurred there by the end of the Third Age was inspired by the expansion of industry to some parts of rural England. Thus, it symbolizes Tolkien's loss of some of his childhood places and also an attempt to restore them.

modern fantasy, others make clear that myth corresponds to belief, and therefore, to those believers, reality, and fantasy should be connected with the unreal.

One of the most important academics in the field of modern fantasy is Brian Attebery, who proposed the theory of the fuzzy set, regarding the borders of the genre. Despite maintaining that this theory lacks scientific value, it is still a source of influence for other researchers. The fuzzy set was developed in Attebery's *Strategies of Fantasy* and also brings into the discussion the matter of the overlap between fantasy and science fiction. <sup>43</sup>

Being an admirer of Tolkien's work, Attebery uses *The Lord of the Rings* to apply modern theories of the genre. Therefore, Attbery proves that Tolkien's work is groundbreaking in the genre by showing it is different from earlier works. Another aspect of Attebery's work concerns his take on women writers and heroines, where he shows how different the female protagonists in fantasy are from other works of more realistic fiction.<sup>44</sup>

The Encyclopedia of Fantasy, edited by John Clute and John Grant, contains definitions for various types of fantasy as well as a vast amount of terms related to the genre. In addition, it has information on multiple authors and their works, magazines and anthologies of fantasy, information on comic-book magazines as well as many entries on movies related to the genre. From this encyclopedia, it is possible to find some of the most ancient roots of fantasy with entries related to mythology, fairytales, and other taproot texts. There's also a vast amount of material regarding genres connected with fantasy, such as horror and science fiction. 45

More recent studies include *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy* (2012), edited by Farah Mendlesohn and Edward James. This compilation of essays addresses modern fantasy, fantasy before the nineteenth century, and multiple subgenres, from urban fantasy to children's, or historical fantasy. An entire chapter is dedicated to Tolkien and Lewis and how the genre exploded and influenced subsequent generations of authors.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> This is a result of the fuzzy set theory.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> The heroine in fantasy experiences a coming of age that results in her becoming a role model, instead of the type of heroine who "often descends to madness, commits suicide, or remains in despair (Parkin-Speer 1992, 223). Tenar from *The Tombs of Atuan* is an example of the fantasy heroine described above.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Concerning science fiction, there is *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (1997), edited by John Clute and Peter Nicholls.

Also by Farah Mendlesohn is *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, which explains the author's taxonomy of fantasy. Instead of trying to define the genre, Mendlesohn places different fantasy works into four distinct categories. These are: portal-quest fantasy, liminal fantasy, intrusion fantasy, and immersive fantasy. Each has its own characteristics and Mendlesohn describes them by focusing on how the fantastic is approached in the narrated world.

In his work, *Evaporating Genres*, Gary K. Wolfe comments on the inclination for fantasy to extinguish its boundaries because it became so diverse over the years. Wolfe also refers to authors who try to subvert the rules of the genre and places them in three different groups: those who follow the paradigm installed by Tolkien, <sup>46</sup> those who go against it, and those who only use it as a reference. In fact, the evaporation of the genre can be seen in close relation with the fuzzy set theory applied by Attebery, for both academics seem to agree that there is an expansion of fantasy that overlaps with other genres.

On what concerns portals, there have been some studies focused on it since Lewis published *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, for this is regarded as the archetype of the portal fantasy. However, and unrelated to Lewis but more focused on myth and fairytales is Joseph Campbell's *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* (1949), which reflects the changes operated in the landscape and the narrative when the hero crosses a portal, more commonly referred by Campbell as thresholds.

The essay by Zahorski and Boyer featured on *The Aesthetics of Fantasy Literature* and *Art* also discourses on the various types of portals that make the crossing between primary and secondary worlds. The authors mention some of the portals that lead to Narnia but point out that one shouldn't think "that all conventional portals lead into attractive secondary worlds" (65).

Farah Mendlesohn's study of portal-quest fantasies also emphasizes the importance of portals and their mechanics and establishes a set of characteristics that define their nature. For instance, in a portal-quest fantasy, the portal must not let the fantastic leak into the primary world; otherwise it would be an intrusion.

What can be determined from the ongoing studies of fantasy is that there is already a large amount of material attempting to define the genre, which is becoming more difficult

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> Attebery had already referred to Tolkien's form of fantasy as a model to be followed by other authors.

as the field is in constant expansion. The tendency in more recent times has been to divide the genre into yet even more subgenres, which also proves to be a difficult task due to the easiness with which these subgenres blend together.

## II – Portals of Fantasy

Fantasy stories usually take place in two main settings: in the primary world, in a secondary world, or in both. In some fantasies the events occur in a secondary world and do not involve the existence of a primary one. Others can ensue solely in a primary world that is invaded by elements of a secondary one without the need to cross to the other world. In another possibility, fantasies can take place in both worlds and involve the crossing of a portal between them.

The aim of this chapter is, therefore, to understand what portals are, what they entail, and to see how different they can be according to the scenarios presented above. Taking into account certain widely recognized fantasy novels as well as some mythological ones, the analysis will focus on how the portals influence the heroes' adventures and their way of thinking and acting in the secondary world and how these gates to the worlds of the fantastic can be worked. This chapter will also include other types of passages or places that share characteristics with the portals.

In fantasy a portal is usually seen as a passage between worlds. They can assume many different forms and be located in the most unlikely places. Many of them are physical, but there are also figurative portals that symbolize something<sup>47</sup> for the people who cross them. Instead of enumerating the forms in which portals present themselves, this chapter will analyze the workings of portals in different fantasy stories.

However, before starting, it should be noted that there are other types of crossings that are not exactly portals. In addition to the portals there are the thresholds. According to Clute and Grant, they "may be physical [...] or metaphorical" like the portal (1999, 945). One difference between the two is that the portal is always a threshold but the threshold doesn't necessarily include a portal. A threshold is also closely related to the crossing of a frontier while the portal is a crossing between worlds. It should be noted that portals that separate a primary world from a secondary one are also thresholds that establish a frontier. The meaning of frontier in a threshold is much wider because it may be present anywhere

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> This can be a transition, a rite of passage, the magnifying of danger, a new awareness of the character's possibilities and/or limitations.

in a primary or secondary world. That is one of the reasons why thresholds are more frequent than portals. Because the relation between portals and thresholds is sometimes unclear, in this chapter both will be considered as having the same function.

One other element that should be distinguished from thresholds and portals is the polder, which may include thresholds to define its frontiers. Clute and Grant refer to this place as "an active microcosm, armed against the potential wrongness of that which surrounds it" and explains that they are defended "only when a liminal threshold must be passed to enter them" ("Polder" 1999, 772). To illustrate this, Clute and Grant use an example in *The Lord of The Rings*, particularly Tom Bombadil's dwellings in the Old Forest. The dangerous forest can be the supposed threshold that protects Bombadil's peaceful place. However, the forest may be the danger which the house needs protecting from, and Tom Bombadil's powers may be the protectors of this minuscule realm.

Another example can be found in Robert Jordan's *The Eye of the World*. In a place where wrongness and thinning are intensified (the Great Blight), there is polder (the garden of the Green Man) where the Eye of the World is located. Even though the Blight is a place associated primarily with the Shadow and the Dark One, it could serve as protection against those who seek to find the Eye of the World. Additionally, the polder offers protection against anything that dwells in the Blight.

A different polder exists in Jordan's work that has no threshold, which is the Ogier *stedding*. These places are the homes of the Ogier race and any creature in service of the Dark One is very reluctant to enter. The characteristics of the *stedding* make it impossible for anyone to use magic (the One Power),<sup>48</sup> as remarked by Egwene al'Vere when she enters an abandoned *stedding*: "I feel as if I lost something'" (433). Egwene didn't realize that she had lost the ability to use the One Power, but, as with all channelers, she felt uncomfortable. However, there is also a sense of safety associated with the *stedding*, and that is one of the reasons why it can be seen as a polder; wrongness does not enter it.

So, even though polders are related to portals and thresholds, because they usually are present when there is one, the latter are much different. While the polder is an actual

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Certain objects of the One Power, called Wells, can store the Power itself and be used in places like the *stedding*, but very few people possess one.

place, the portal or threshold, which can also be physical and occupy a determined amount of space, is a passage between places.

Portals have been known to exist in literature since very early on. Accounts can be found in taproot texts relating to ancient myths of various cultures. And even though these crossings were not made between primary and secondary worlds, they may have had great influence in the creation of portals in fantasy literature.

One account of Mesopotamian mythology involves the crossing of several portals by the goddess of war, Ishtar. In each one, the goddess, who is trying to conquer the underworld, which belongs to her sister Ereshkigal, is stripped of her personal objects by the gate-keeper. In order, she is robbed from her crown, her earrings, "the beads around her neck", the "toggle pins at her breast", her belt, her bracelets, and her clothes (Dalley 1991, 156-157). By having lost her objects, Ishtar lost her powers, giving her sister power to defeat her and imprison her in the underworld. When she returned from there, Ishtar went through the seven gates again and in each she received her belongings back. This type of portal is, therefore, one that strips one of their powers and possessions as payment to enter the world of the dead.

Clute refers to the crossing of some portals as a trial which needs to be completed in order to determine if the one undergoing the test is worthy of crossing. Such is the case of Oedipus, who faces the Sphinx in the city of Thebes. The creature asks him the answer to a riddle that goes as follows:

There exists on land a thing with two feet and four feet, with a single voice, that has three feet as well. It changes shape alone among the things that move on land or in the air or down through the sea. Yet during periods when it is supported by the largest number of feet, then is the speed in its limbs the feeblest of all. (qtd. in Bagg and Scully 2011, 339)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> This is the Akkadian version. In the Sumerian version Ishtar is called Innana and she claimed she was going to the underworld to attend the funeral of Ereshkigal's husband.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> This is a ritual that symbolizes death. When a person dies, she loses what possessions she had in life.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> Dumuzi, Ishtar's husband, traded places with the goddess and went to the underworld so Ishtar could be freed.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> This has some similarities with the Greek price of passage. The bodies are buried or burned with coins to pay Charon, who will lead the dead to the underworld.

By giving the correct answer, Oedipus proves himself worthy of crossing the portal. In fact, in the version presented by Sophocles, Oedipus killed the Sphinx. The Sphinx is one example of "threshold guardian" (Campbell 2008, 64) and represents the kind of portal that crosses from a thinned world (the city devastated by the creature) to a healed world (the city ruled by Oedipus). These are only some examples of portals and thresholds in ancient mythology and they are fairly similar to those found in fantasy.

One of the most famous portals in fantasy literature can be found in C. S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Consisting of a wooden wardrobe, this portal is one of the passages between England (the primary world) and Narnia (the secondary world). Its location is possibly not a random one. For once, the mansion where it is located "was the sort of house that you never seem to come to the end of, and it was full of unexpected places" (2008a, 5). The house implies mystery and a desire to explore, especially if the characters involved are children. However, despite the dimension of the house, this portal was meant to be found and crossed.

The passage seems to open to those who enter the wardrobe accidentally or not expecting to find a portal. As a matter of fact, entering Narnia does not happen expectedly, as the Professor who owns the house explains: "don't try to get there at all. It'll happen when you're not looking for it" (138). But, if entered by the right people with no intention of going to Narnia, it will open as it did to the four Pevensie children, Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy.

Narnia is a world suffering from thinning due to the actions of the White Witch and therefore, it needs healing. A prophecy in Narnia states that "when two Sons of Adam and two Daughters of Eve sit on those four thrones, then it will be the end not only of the White Witch's reign but of her life" (60). So, the fact that the children were able to cross the portal was not a mere coincidence, but the work of prophecy.

Another characteristic of the wardrobe is that it does not seem to relate in any way to the time difference in both worlds. In *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* it is stated that "time may move at different rates in these different worlds, especially in tales where thresholds are sharply demarcated" ("Crosshatch" 1999, 237). This is true for *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, where Lucy finds her brothers and sister only moments after having entered

the wardrobe into Narnia, where she claimed to have spent hours.<sup>53</sup> The Professor expresses no concern at all when confronted with the matter of time, stating that it is a possibility that other worlds exist where time moves differently (cf. 37).

More about the wardrobe is explained in *The Magician's Nephew*. The wardrobe was made from the wood of a tree whose seed originated in Narnia. As it grew as a tree in England, it seemed to retain some magical property that linked it to Narnia, for the author explains that:

[I]nside itself, in the very sap of it, the tree (so to speak) never forgot that other tree in Narnia to which it belonged. Sometimes it would move mysteriously when there was no wind blowing: I think that when this happened there were high winds in Narnia and the English tree quivered because, at that moment, the Narnia tree was rocking and swaying in a strong southwestern gale (2008b, 138).

Therefore, the wardrobe is, for the most part, an invisible portal that crosses between a primary and a secondary world. It also prevents the fantastic from crossing to this side, which is remarked, for instance, by the changing of clothes when the children return; they are back in their old clothes. And it could be said that this portal found the children or wanted to be found by them, since it was linked to a prophecy.<sup>54</sup>

Portals and thresholds do not establish only crossings between worlds, as was already exemplified with Oedipus. There is one type of secondary world that can have another world inside it. For instance, there is no primary world, but one of the worlds could be a plausible primary one where elements of the fantastic are merely dormant, as Zahorski and Boyer explain (cf. 1982, 78-79).

These worlds can be presented with portals that are amulets or objects of power, or even human agents that awake the world and link it with the secondary world in full. These almost primary worlds are usually places of safety for the protagonists and are often disrupted by some supernatural event or presence that turns it into an unsafe place.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> "I've been away for hours and hours" (19).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> Clute writes: "it is very often the case that a character who finds a portal has in some sense been found by that portal" ("Portals" 1999, 776).

The Shire in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* can be considered a "world-within-a-world." As part of Middle-earth, the Shire bears some resemblance to England, as previously mentioned. However, the hobbits live detached lives from the rest of Middle-earth: they don't worry with outside problems and rarely do they receive visits from outsiders, except Gandalf and a few others. They get little news from the outside and their borders are protected by the Rangers of the North.

It can be argued that Bilbo Baggins's expedition in *The Hobbit* may have been the cause for the instability that the Shire experienced later. By bringing the One Ring with him, Bilbo created an inevitable link with the safe "world-within-a-world," that was the Shire, and the secondary world, that is Middle-earth. It is then through the One Ring, and with the aid of Gandalf, that magic awakes in the Shire, and the borders, which could be regarded as a portal, are open to those who wish to enter. The coming of Saruman, under the guise of Sharkey, proves that the Shire is no longer a "world-within-a-world" but part of the secondary world altogether.

However, the healing of the Shire and the planting of the trees, whose seeds were given to Sam Gamgee by the Lady Galadriel, sees the return of magic to the realm of the hobbits:

So Sam planted saplings in all the places where specially beautiful or beloved trees had been destroyed, and he put a grain of the precious dust in the soil at the root of each. [...] The little silver nut he planted in the Party Field where the tree had once been; and he wondered what would come of it. [...] Spring surpassed his wildest hopes. His trees began to sprout and grow, as if time was in a hurry and wished to make one year do for twenty. In the Party Field a beautiful young sapling leaped up: it had silver bark and long leaves and burst into golden flowers in April. It was indeed a *mallorn*, and it was the wonder of the neighbourhood. In after years, as it grew in grace and beauty, it was known far and wide and people would come long journeys to see it: the only *mallorn* west of the Mountains and east of the Sea, and one of the finest in the world. (Tolkien 1993, 1061)

In addition, King Elessar's offer of the Shire as a gift to the hobbits reestablishes this place as a "world-within-a-world."

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> The expression is used by Zahorski and Boyer.

The magical agents in the Shire, which are Gandalf and the One Ring, open a portal that widens the connection between worlds. The departure of the characters from this safe haven restores, to some extent, the separation that existed before the arrival of the agents. It should be noted, though, that there where repercussions in the Shire with the coming of Saruman.

Similar to the Shire is the Two Rivers in *The Wheel of Time*. The geographical isolation of the region makes it a perfect place for a "world-within-a-world." The only outsiders that go into the Two Rivers are the occasional peddlers, and the natives rarely leave. Much like the hobbits, the Two Rivers people live apart from world problems. But, just like the Shire, there is thinning, though much less accentuated. But this particular portal will be analyzed in chapter three more thoroughly.

A portal that is both similar and different can be found in the *Harry Potter* sequence. The difference is that it is located in the primary world but does not lead entirely to a secondary one, as Hogwarts is located in the United Kingdom. Hogwarts is, to some extent, a version of the Shire and the Two Rivers set in the primary world, and here lies the similarity between them. What could be considered a portal in the *Harry Potter* books is the platform nine and three-quarters in King's Cross station in London. Hidden in a stone pillar between platforms nine and ten, wizards cross this portal to get to the Hogwarts Express, and thus, to the school.

Even though the magical community coexists with the non-magical community in the same world, the lines that separate them is sometimes very thin and Muggles can become involved with magic, whether through marriage or birth. For the most part Muggles do not notice magic the same as wizards do. Hogwarts is such an example, as Hermione Granger explains:

'But Hogwarts *is* hidden,' said Hermione, in surprise. 'everyone knows that ... well, everyone who's read *Hogwarts: A History*, anyway.'

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> The Mountains of Mist to the West, the Mire to the East, the Forest of Shadows to the South, and the river Taren flowing in the North and East constitute the borders of the Two Rivers. The only way to enter or leave the region is by crossing the Taren in the village of Taren Ferry (cf. *Eye*, 55).

'Just you, then,' said Ron. 'So go on — how d'you hide a place like Hogwarts?'

'It's bewitched,' said Hermione. 'If a Muggle looks at it, all they see is a mouldering old ruin with a sign over the entrance saying DANGER, DO NOT ENTER, UNSAFE.' (Rowling 2014, 141)

From this excerpt, one could consider that Hogwarts is a sort of polder. And it may be so. At some point, the school is protected by charms against the followers of Lord Voldemort, marking the safety of a place protected against thinning. In addition to wizards not being able to Apparate or Disapparate in any part of Hogwarts, <sup>57</sup> any electronical devices fail within the range of the school:

'All those substitutes for magic Muggles use — electricity, and computers and radar, and all those things — they all go haywire around Hogwarts, there's too much magic in the air.' (Rowling 2014, 462)

So, Rowling's books involve a portal that lets one into and out of different dimensions of the same world, as well as a polder that has a magical threshold represented by enchantments that hide it and protect it from those who should not enter or see it.

Another portal as similar and discrete as the passage into platform nine and three-quarters can be found in China Miéville's *Un Lun Dun*. The characters Zanna and Deeba are lured by an umbrella to the portal that takes them both from London to UnLondon. This portal they cross is quite mechanical for it does not work on its own, like the portals seen above, even though Zanna seems to work it unconsciously: "[b]ut slowly Zanna shuffled forward. She looked like a sleepwalker" (*Un Lun Dun*, 26).

The contraption that makes the portal work consists of pipes and gauges in which the needles move and wheels can be rotated (cf. 26). Unlike the portals already analyzed above, this one *moves* from London to UnLondon across the Odd, which is "the membrane between the city and the abcity" (406).

Even though there is a direct relation between London and UnLondon, there seems to be a time warp that causes the "phlegm effect." Deeba learned that "[t]he phlegm effect

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> "you can't Apparate anywhere inside the buildings or grounds" (Rowling 2005, 52).

was why when her mother and father stumbled sleepily in to breakfast, they cheerfully greeted Deeba as if she hadn't been missing for three days" (160-161). However, this effect gets stronger after one stays too long either in London or in UnLondon. After a period of nine days in UnLondon, there is the risk of a person being forgotten in London (cf. 278).

The prophecies in UnLondon demand the presence of a heroine called the *Shwazzy* (Chosen), so it is natural that Zanna and Deeba found it and worked their way to the *abcity*, just like Deeba managed to do later with a different portal. The portal used first no longer worked for Deeba, so it can be assumed that, like the wardrobe to Narnia, it only works once.

On her second trip to UnLondon Deeba climbed a bookshelf in her school library in London that led to the Wordhoard Pit of UnLondon. In the dialogue between Deeba and Margarita Staples it is implied that the bookshelves are paths to many other places (cf. 189).

The book that contains the prophecies of UnLondon gives Deeba the clues to find the portal through a note with a few words. Therefore, prophecy is again at work and, even though Deeba finds the portal, it is the portal that actually finds her. This also happened the first time; the portal had a way of being found. At the same time, the second portal was a trial to test the heroine's worthiness of entering UnLondon again, even if Deeba is not the Shwazzy.

A portal also symbolizes a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood (cf. Mendlesohn 2008, 1). Many fantasy novels that involve children or adolescents have thresholds or portals that represent an understanding and growth. In Ursula Le Guin's *The Tombs of Atuan* one can find a portal that corresponds to a rite of passage. When Ged is with Ahra in the Labyrinth of the Tombs of Atuan he gives her a choice:

'You must make a choice. Either you must leave me, lock the door [...] or, you must unlock the door, and go out of it, with me. Leave the Tombs, leave Atuan, and come with me oversea. And this is the beginning of the story. You must be Ahra, or you must be Tenar. You cannot be both.' (Guin 2012b, 272)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> "Brick wizardry and the pigeons at all, but only to regret it ficult to get in, and no easi enter by booksteps, on storyladders unlike any other" (*Un Lun Dun*, 162).

When Ahra decides to accept and leave the labyrinth with Ged she becomes Tenar. The crossing represents a coming of age for the child Ahra, who becomes the adult Tenar. Leaving the Tombs also marks the beginning of a new life for her; she is no longer priestess, the temple is destroyed by an earthquake and she leaves Atuan and the Kargad Lands. When she is seen next she is already a middle-aged woman living in Gont. The Ring of Erreth-Akbe may have worked some sort of fascination on Tenar and may have influenced her decision to leave. <sup>59</sup> It was said that when the Ring of Erreth-Akbe was restored and brought to the city of Havnor the lands in Earthsea would know peace.

This analysis of portals, thresholds, and polders shows how different kinds exist in fantasy literature and, to some extent, how influenced they were by mythology. These crossings can assume different forms, be located and hidden in the most unlikely places, and be crossed in very different circumstances. However, there seems to be something connecting these passages, and it can be narrowed down to the word *need*. In the novels seen above there was a sense of need behind each portal: the need to deliver Narnia from the evil of the White Witch, the need to take the One Ring from the Shire in order to save it, or the need to save UnLondon against the Smog.

Additionally, each portal has a strong symbolic nature for those who cross it. For instance, Harry Potter learns his true origins and Tenar learns what lies have been fed to her all her life. For these characters, crossing a portal involves an awareness of themselves that they didn't have before. So, the portal represents both a physical and a spiritual crossing, and that is one of the reasons they are so frequent in hero-quest fantasies.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> Tenar later became known as Tenar of the Ring, for she was the one who delivered it in Havnor.

# III – Reading Robert Jordan's *The Wheel of Time* as a Portal-Quest Fantasy

## 3.1. The World of the Wheel and Narrative Techniques

The categories of fantasy developed by Farah Mendlesohn in *Rhetorics of Fantasy* present various aspects associated with different types of fantasy. Taking into consideration her taxonomy, this chapter aims at understanding how the characteristics of Robert Jordan's *The Wheel of Time* are in accordance with Mendlesohn's model of portal-quest fantasy.

This chapter, divided in two sections, will first introduce the work and the author in question. It will be important to comprehend how the narrative is developed in terms of the construction of the world and the characters in order to make a better interpretation of the works in light of Mendlesohn's taxonomy. The first section will also focus on the narrative techniques used by the author to describe the world to the reader. Due to the extent of Jordan's series, *The Eye of the World* will be the main source for the analysis. However, because the narrative of this volume is very constricted, other works will also be used, even though to a lesser degree.

The second section and main bulk of the chapter will concentrate on the analysis of *The Wheel of Time* according to Mendlesohn's taxonomy. The analysis regarding the first category in *Rhetorics of Fantasy* will focus on its most essential aspects, specifically the portal and the quest, and the aspects relating to the type of hero in such forms of fantasy.

Robert Jordan was born James Oliver Rigney Jr. in South Carolina in 1948. He was an American author best known for *The Wheel of Time* series and for having written seven novels of *Conan the Barbarian*, between 1982 and 1984. He died in 2007, after the publication of *Knife of Dreams* (2005), the eleventh book in the series. *The Wheel of Time* was published between 1990 and 2013 and consists of fourteen volumes and a prequel. After the author's death, Brandon Sanderson, known for his *Mistborn* series and the *Stormlight Archive*, was chosen by Jordan's widow, Harriet McDougal, to complete the series, co-authoring the last three novels. All books since *The Path of Daggers* (1998), the eighth volume, were number one in the *New York Times* Best Seller list and the full series was nominated for a Hugo Award in 2014.

Known history in *The Wheel of Time* starts with the drilling of the Bore during the Age of Legends. 60 The following is said about this event: "[w]hen the Bore was drilled into a place outside the Pattern, a dark presence used the opening to touch the world. This presence, which named itself Shai'tan, had been imprisoned outside of time and creation by the Creator of the universe" (Jordan and Patterson 1998, 59). This was followed by the War of Power, which led to the assault on Shayol Ghul and the imprisoning of the Dark One<sup>61</sup> and the Forsaken<sup>62</sup> at the hands of Lews Therin Telamon.<sup>63</sup> This resulted in the tainting of saidin and the beginning of the Time of Madness and the Breaking of the World. 64 From the reconstruction after the Breaking rose the Ten Nations, all of which fell one thousand years later, during the Trolloc Wars. New countries were formed and were unified under Artur Hawkwing after another thousand years. The death of Hawkwing resulted in the division of the empire and the formation of the current nations, which are still standing after a thousand years. The city of Tar Valon, founded right after the Breaking by the remaining Aes Sedai<sup>65</sup> in the land, is one of the only places in the Westlands to have survived the past three thousand years. Therefore, the White Tower is one of the most important institutions in the Westlands and the Amyrlin Seat the most powerful person in the known world.

The story of *The Eye of the World* starts with an attack ordered by the Dark One on the village of Emond's Field, in the Two Rivers. After this, Rand al'Thor, the main protagonist finds out that he, along with his friends Mat Cauthon and Perrin Aybara, are being hunted down by the Dark One himself, for reasons unknown to all. Rand and his two friends depart the Two Rivers in the company of Moiraine and Lan, an Aes Sedai and her Warder, respectively, Thom Merrilin, a gleeman who had come for the spring festival, and

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 $<sup>^{60}</sup>$  The second age of the world. It was a time of peace and great technological advance. Most knowledge about this time was eventually lost.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> The Dark One is the antagonist and symbolizes all that is evil. His true name is Shai'tan but he is known by many different names.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup> The Forsaken were Aes Sedai that served the Dark One. The thirteen most powerful of the Forsaken were trapped in Shayol Ghul when Lews Therin led the assault against the Dark One, in an attempt to seal him for good.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup> Lews Therin was a man known as the Dragon and who reincarnated as Rand al'Thor.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> The taint on *saidin* caused all men who could use the One Power to go mad and start destroying the world through natural catastrophes and almost wiping out any traces of civilization. All male channelers have to be found and severed from their contact with the One Power.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>65</sup> Aes Sedai are one of the groups of people who use the One Power. During the Age of Legends, Aes Sedai were both men and women. But with the taint on *saidin*, all remaining Aes Sedai are women. Their seat of power is the White Tower, in the city of Tar Valon, and their head of state is the Amyrlin Seat.

Egwene al'Vere. They are joined later by Nynaeve al'Meara, the village Wisdom<sup>66</sup> who attempts to take the youngsters back home. Events in the first novel reveal Rand as the Dragon Reborn, the hero of prophecy who is meant to face the Dark One in the Last Battle.

The rest of the series revolves around the five people from Emond's Field, Rand, Mat, Perrin, Egwene, and Nynaeve, who follow seemingly independent courses, but whose adventures are connected by the need to unite the nations of the Westlands against the Dark One's imminent attack.

As the narrative draws to a close, the group is reunited and ready for the Last Battle. Rand, with Moiraine and Nynaeve, confronts the Dark One in Shayol Ghul, while Perrin protects the entrance to the mountain in a different plain. And the general of the forces of the Light, sees to the battle strategy in the Field of Merrilor, while Egwene, as the Amyrlin Seat, leads the White Tower against the army of Dreadlords that cause devastation on the battlefield. The struggle finishes with Rand resealing the Dark One in his prison permanently.

The world of *The Wheel of Time* was constructed based on the idea that it is set in the primary world and not in a secondary world. The author explains the following about this world:

It exists in our past and our future. These were our legends, but because time is a wheel—according to Hindu legend—we are the seeds of their myths. Because it is a real world in my books, they have certain degrees of technology. The time in which the characters live is our future and our past. Part of what I'm exploring here is what the nature and source of our myths might be. (Jordan. "Starlog Interview," Jan. 1991)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>66</sup> A Wisdom is a woman who deals with matters of healing and knowledge of the weather, among other things. For each village there is a Wisdom and her power is equal to that of the Mayor, at least in the Two Rivers.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> This is the World of Dreams, a place that is a mirror of the waking world. At the time of the Last Battle the layer that separated both worlds was so thin that Perrin, from the World of Dreams, could see Rand in the waking world.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup> The designation given to channelers sworn to the Shadow after the Breaking of the World.

Taking this into consideration, it is natural that the world of the Wheel<sup>69</sup> is so culturally diverse because it encapsulates a vast number of world traditions. These include, for instance, an Asian-based culture found in the Seanchan continent and in the Borderlands, a strong influence of the British tradition in the nation of Andor, the Aiel, inspired by Apache, Bedouin and Zulu cultures, and many others. However, as this is a matter of speculation and hypothesizing, this will be considered a secondary world.

Geographically, the world is made of three main landmasses: the largest includes the Westlands, the Aiel Waste, <sup>70</sup> and Shara, the second is the Seanchan continent, and the third is an island to the south, of which very little is known. The Westlands, the most important portion of land is divided into fourteen very distinct nations and are bordered by the Aryth Ocean to the west and the Sea of Storms to the south. In these seas are also located the islands of the Sea Folk. To the north, this land is bordered by the Great Blight, where the Dark One's touch is strong, and to the east by the Spine of the World. Beyond the Blight is Shayol Ghul.

Aside from humans, the land is populated by a race called the Ogier, who are pacifists and live apart from other people in places called *stedding*. In the Blight also dwell the creatures of the Dark One, the majority consisting of Trollocs,<sup>71</sup> Myrddraal,<sup>72</sup> and Draghkar.<sup>73</sup>

Throughout *The Wheel of Time* there are multiple ways in which information is gathered, allowing the reader to choose what to believe or not, depending on the source. One of the techniques employed is the use of characters that deliver great amounts of information, which are, most of the time, histories from the distant past or information contained in prophecy. In *The Eye of the World* this information is provided by Moiraine, especially when she tells the villagers of Emond's Field about the nation of Manetheren or when she talks about the fall of Aridhol, the city that became Shadar Logoth. Manetheren and Aridhol were two of the Ten Nations mentioned above.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup> World of the Wheel is a term commonly used to refer to the world created by Robert Jordan.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> This desert is inhabited by the Aiel, a warrior people from whom the Dragon Reborn descends.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup> Half-human and half-animal creatures used for war.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> Eyeless creatures that control the Trollocs.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup> The Draghkar are bat-like beings who, with their crooning, attract people and consume their souls.

This technique is also visible, for example, when Moiraine explains to Egwene how the One Power works:

'The One Power [...] comes from the True Source, the driving force of Creation, the force the Creator made to turn the Wheel of Time." [...] "Saidin, the male half of the True Source, and saidar, the female half, work against each other and at the same time together to provide that force. Saidin [...] is fouled by the touch of the Dark One, like water with a thin slick of rancid oil floating on top. The water is still pure, but it cannot be touched without touching the foulness. Only saidar is still safe to be used.' (Eye, 168)

From this dialogue and from clues gathered along the text, the reader perceives that the Dark One tainted *saidin* when an attempt was made to seal the Bore and cut the link between the Shadow and the world made by the Creator.

There is also a common saying people often use when referring to the Dark One: "[t]he Dark One and all of the Forsaken are bound in Shayol Ghul, beyond the Great Blight, bound by the Creator at the moment of Creation, bound until the end of time. The hand of the Creator shelters the world, and the Light shines on us all" (14). Even though it is inaccurate regarding the Forsaken, it is known that the Creator locked the Dark One in a place beyond creation.

So, the delivery of such amounts of information happens through what Mendlesohn terms a "download" (cf. 2008, 13). These deliveries occur often enough in the narrative and have the purpose of presenting the world to the readers.

Another way of showing the world is through the use of the map. This is an extremely common element in fantasy. According to Mendlesohn, "the very presence of maps at the front of many fantasies implies that the destination and its meaning are known" (2008, 4). Rand's intended destination is the city of Tar Valon to seek protection among the Aes Sedai. But, as Mendlesohn points out, it is only an implication. Therefore, the deviation from the original target can only be seen as common. Still, the map functions as a tool to delineate a course or to list places that will certainly be visited (cf. Clute and Grant 1999, 624). The map in *The Wheel of Time* fits this description, for the vast majority of places featured in it are visited at some point. The map of the Westlands seen in the

beginning of each of Jordan's books is only a map that portrays where the main events of the story take place.<sup>74</sup> However, there are other maps that show the whole world.<sup>75</sup> So, while the first map serves to illustrate the story, the world map is to enhance that same world (cf. Maj 2015, 85).

Each book in the series starts in a similar way, with a wind that travels the land. Its course is described in detail and gives the reader an idea of where each place is located in relation to others, as well as a description of the landscape. About the Wheel of Time, the following is said: "[t]he wind was not the beginning. There are neither beginnings nor endings to the turning of the Wheel of Time" (Eye, 1). This is due, in part, to the very nature of the Wheel, which "is composed of seven Ages, each with its own distinct patterns; the cycle begins again once all seven Ages have been lived" (Jordan et all 2015, 23).

The World of Robert Jordan's The Wheel of Time, by Teresa Patterson and Robert Jordan, is a guidebook that contains all information about how the world was created, about the Age of Legends and the drilling of the Bore, the events that led to the current events, as well as a description of the lands and peoples of the world. According to the authors, the book is meant to be a compilation of documents gathered by an unknown scholar in the series and, therefore, information contained in it may not be entirely reliable: "we wrote it as a "living" history—in other words, we wrote it from the point of view of a learned scholarly person living during Rand's generation who had some unusual access to rare books, relics, and materials" (Patterson. "Dragonmount Interview with Teresa Patterson," Feb. 2005).

Another way to impart information is through the rumors and news that can come from various sources. These work, for instance, through conversations overheard throughout the narrative (cf. Mendlesohn 2008, 46). These sources of information are scattered everywhere from innkeepers to spies. Most of the time, rumors and news prove very unreliable and the dimension rumor takes in *The Wheel of Time* is sometimes almost mocking, which can be seen, for example, in the end of *The Great Hunt*:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> See Appendix A.<sup>75</sup> See Appendix B.

Other tales spread, of a column that rode from the sinking sun across Almoth Plain. A hundred Bordermen, it was said. No, a thousand. No, a thousand heroes come back from the grave to answer the call of the Horn of Valere. Ten thousand. They had destroyed a legion of the Children of the Light entire. They had thrown Artur Hawkwing's returned armies back into the sea. They were Artur Hawkwing's armies returned. (*Great*, 680)

In a case such as this one, the reader knows what really happened and often he can differentiate rumor from fact because he follows multiple characters, collecting information from various places.

Still another is one which delivers sealed information, giving the protagonist no opportunity to question it. Mendlesohn refers to the example of Rand's father's fever dream when he mumbles and implies that Rand may not be his son. The way in which such information is given feels very much like rumor because it's so uncertain since Tam could have been hallucinating. Another bit of information delivered in this way can be found in *The Eye of the World* with the story the Tinkers<sup>76</sup> tell Perrin and Elyas<sup>77</sup> about the Aiel who claimed the Dark One intended "to blind the Eye of the World" (*Eye*, 375). Because the Aiel in question died after speaking these words, there is no possibility of finding answers. However, the tone in which this news is delivered is too serious for it to be dismissed as rumor. In addition, a similar story is told by Loial<sup>78</sup> later, confirming the Dark One's intentions as true instead of mere speculation.

Finally, there is one other way of learning without having to resort to the aforementioned techniques, which is spying on conversations. Even though it is seldom used, in *The Eye of the World* one of the most important bits of information is gathered this way. This happens because the narrative in the first book is narrow in terms of point-of-view-characters. Therefore, the reader sees Rand spying on Moiraine and Egwene, which helps him learn about the One Power, the Aes Sedai, and the Age of Legends.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup> The Tinkers, or Tuatha'an, are travelling people who refuse to engage in any violent behavior. They are searching for a song which has been lost since the Age of Legends.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>77</sup> A man who can communicate with wolves.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup> An Ogier who accompanies Rand's group when they depart the city of Caemlyn.

All these techniques require that information pass through the protagonist or the point-of-view-character and, thus, to the reader. This characteristic follows what Mendlesohn has stated regarding reader position in portal-quest fantasy. According to Mendlesohn, the reader is "tied to the protagonist [and is] dependent upon [him] for explanation" (Mendlesohn 2008, 1). He does not have access to any information unless it is being given or witnessed by the character through whose perspective the reader is viewing the world.

#### 3.2. The Wheel of Time and the Boundaries of Portal-Quest Fantasy

As the name indicates, and as described in chapter one, portal-quest fantasy implies the existence of a portal and a quest. A portal can be found in the border of the Two Rivers, which, taking into account its geographical characteristics, described in chapter two, and its relation with the rest of the world, can be considered a "world-within-a-world." The people live so apart from the outside world that they do not know they are part of a larger nation, as observed by Morgase, the queen of Andor, when she reminds Rand that "'[t]he Two Rivers has not seen a tax collector in six generations, not the Queen's Guard in seven. I daresay they seldom even think to remember they are part of the Realm" (*Eye*, 611).

However unfamiliar they are with their connection to the rest of the world, they are aware of the catechism about the Dark One, Shadowspawn, or the Forsaken, even if they have never seen anything that might relate to the Shadow. Any fantastic elements linked to the Shadow or the One Power also seem to be dormant in the Two Rivers.

Some characteristics of the region make it seem the primary world. For instance, there is a great predominance of English-derived names among the inhabitants of Taren Ferry, like Hilltop, Stoneboat, or Hightower.<sup>79</sup> In general, Andor has a great number of towns whose names come from the English language (Four Kings, Watch Hill, Whitebridge).

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup> Many people in Andor, the nation to which the Two Rivers belong, have English-derived names as well.

The events that link the Two Rivers to the secondary world are the coming of Shadowspawn, Trollocs and Myrddraal, as well as the arrival of Moiraine to Emond's Field. The apparent safety and stability of the place are shattered completely. In fact, Rand refers to the abnormality of the place the morning he went to the village, something that should never have happened to a character who knows the place to be safe. When the battle ensues and Moiraine uses the One Power against the Shadow, she also rouses the powers that were dormant in the region.<sup>80</sup>

According to Mendlesohn's taxonomy, a portal-quest fantasy doesn't let the fantastic leak through the portal. Such occurrence would make this fantasy an intrusion (cf. 2008, 2). If elements that are external to the Two Rivers, such as the One Power and the Shadowspawn, can be considered fantastic within the region, then this aspect should be regarded as part of an intrusion fantasy. The fantastic events that occurred in the Two Rivers may have destroyed the division that made the region a "world-within-a-world." On the other hand, when the characters leave, the portal may have closed again. This situation is similar to what happened with the Shire, which was explained in chapter two.

Still, there is a portal or threshold that marks a difference between the Two Rivers and the rest of the world. As soon as it is crossed, some of the characters remark on their expectations regarding small differences between one side and the other:

The first farm he saw—a large frame house and tall barn with high-peaked, thatched roofs, a curl of smoke rising from a stone chimney—was a shock.

'It's no different from back home,' Perrin said, frowning at the distant buildings, barely visible through the trees. People moved around the farmyard, as yet unaware of the travelers.

'Of course it is,' Mat said. 'We're just not close enough to see.'

'I tell you, it's no different,' Perrin insisted.

'It must be. We're north of the Taren, after all.' (Eye, 176).

The crossing of the Taren marks a change in how things are perceived. This is, in fact, one of the characteristics of a threshold. As they move on, they start feeling the signs of a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>80</sup> When they leave, Rand, Egwene, and Nynaeve also start to channel the One Power.

thinned world, especially with the passage through Shadar Logoth and the Ways<sup>81</sup> and the frequency with which they encounter creatures and people in service of the Dark One.

So, thinning in the Two Rivers is much less accentuated than in the rest of the Westlands. The magical agent, which is the One Power through Moiraine, opens a portal that widens the connection between worlds. The departure of the characters from this safe haven restores, to some extent, the separation that existed before the arrival of the agent. It should be noted, though, that there were repercussions in the Two Rivers, with the return of Shadowspawn and Aes Sedai. 82

The quest in *The Wheel of Time* consists of a hero whose task is that of defeating the Dark One. The Dark One's influence started spreading to the world when the Bore was drilled, but he was defeated. However, it was not a permanent defeat and prophecy states that the hero, the Dragon Reborn, must face the Dark One again.

In *The Eye of the World* there is no visible quest at first, only the need to abandon the Two Rivers and go on a journey to Tar Valon in order to evade the Dark One. Only when information about the Eye of the World reaches Moiraine, does the journey transform itself into a quest, and even then it is unclear who the main protagonist is. Moiraine knows it's either Rand, or Mat, or Perrin and that "[t]hey are the ones who will fight the battle at the Eye of the World" (*Eye*, 718). Even though this battle was only against the Forsaken, it exposed Rand as the Dragon Reborn (cf. 782). It also revealed that the quest in this first book in the series can actually represent the end of Moiraine's quest and the beginning of Rand's. The Aes Sedai's quest started the moment Rand was born and Gitara Moroso died. The real quest in *The Wheel of Time* starts with Rand beginning his fight against the Dark One and fulfilling prophecy along the way. On the other hand, his fight had begun in

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>81</sup> Shadar Logoth is infested by Mashadar, a fog that kills, and the Ways by the Black Wind, which consumes the souls of those it touches.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>82</sup> This occurred in *The Shadow Rising* (1992). The Shadowspawn attacked the Two Rivers and the Aes Sedai found more women who could channel the One Power.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>83</sup> Gitara Moroso was an Aes Sedai who could foretell future events. She foretold Rand's birth just before she died and Moiraine was one of the only surviving people to know the Dragon was reborn. So, she tasked herself with finding him.

The Eye of the World, where he had to find his way to the One Power and refuse to bow to Ba'alzamon<sup>84</sup> and serve the Dark One.

Before the quest is delivered and the portal crossed, there are elements that should be taken into account, particularly the protagonists' surroundings before they acknowledge the disruption that is or will be taking place in their respective worlds.

In the beginning of *The Eye of the World* the main character notices that "[i]t was an awkward morning, made for unpleasant thoughts" (2). This suddenly turns into a disruptive situation as "[n]ot more than twenty spans back down the road a cloaked figure on horseback followed them, horse and rider alike black, dull and ungleaming" (3). The rider's presence feels as unsettling as his sudden disappearance. Such signs make the characters notice the world that surrounds them with closer attention and, therefore, describe it to the reader, making it more familiar.

Therefore, seeing through Rand's eyes, the reader gets a glimpse of the space as well as the character's feelings regarding certain situations. Mendlesohn refers that:

One of the defining features of the portal-quest fantasy is that we ride with the point of view character who describes fantasyland and the adventure to the readers as if we are both with her and yet external to the fantasy world. What she sees, we see, so that the world is unrolled to us in front of our eyes, and through her analysis of the scene. (2008, 8)

The situation in *The Eye of the World* is in accordance with a fundamental characteristic of portal-quest fantasy, namely the fact that the environment in which the protagonists start, which is familiar to them, is usually disrupted by an element that turns the world from stable and known to the complete opposite, and Mendlesohn writes that "[s]uch defamiliarization is necessary in order to justify the explanation of the world to the reader, and prepares us for the process of familiarization that takes place throughout the novel" (*Eye*, 8).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>84</sup> Believed at first to be the Dark One himself, Ba'alzamon is the name of the most powerful of the Forsaken, Ishamael.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>85</sup> It is later found that the creature, a Myrddraal, was only spotted by young men of a certain age.

An important part of portal-quest fantasy is the existence of a guide who leads the hero through several stages of the adventure. Moiraine, as the group's guide, reveals a great deal of secrecy throughout the narrative. Because the reader does not get to see the world through Moiraine during the majority of the first book of the series, the mystery seems to increase. Throughout *The Eye of the World* the party is distrustful of Moiraine because she seems to be hiding something, which she really is. <sup>86</sup> Only when she discovers Rand's ability to channel the One Power does she reveal the extent of her plans. However, Tam's words about Aes Sedai: "[they] are tricksome. They don't lie, not right out, but the truth an Aes Sedai tells you is not always the truth you think it is" (*Eye*, 126) and Thom's mistrust of them add to a complete suspicion towards them, especially in the three boys' opinions. <sup>87</sup> However, Moiraine does bring protection against the Shadow, through the use of the One Power, and her knowledge of the world reveals great wisdom and leadership.

Mendlesohn's theory concerning the type of guide in this category is very similar to how Jordan describes Moiraine. The guide "although [...] mysterious, [...] is usually comforting, offering guidance and wisdom" (Mendlesohn 2008, 24). The meeting with the guide in *The Eye of the World* is one of the very first encounters and it occurs before the departure from the Two Rivers. This is a characteristic often found in quest fantasies and is important for the next part of the quest, the call to adventure.

When Rand is tasked with leaving the Two Rivers and journey to Tar Valon, there isn't any possibility for argument, as Moiraine makes clear: "[y]ou will no doubt leave at the same time we do" (*Eye*, 111). It is also no happenstance that the Aes Sedai decides to tell Rand this when there is no one else present, other than Lan, and that he tells no one. By having no one else to counter-argue Moiraine, Rand is unable to question the Aes Sedai's words.

When Nynaeve finds the group in Baerlon and tries to counter Moiraine's earlier discourse on the quest it's already too late and even the Wisdom is pulled into it. Thom also gives Rand and Mat an opportunity to stray from the mission:

<sup>86</sup> Moiraine has knowledge that the Dragon is reborn and that he may be one of the three Two Rivers men.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>87</sup> Even Nynaeve and Egwene, who later become Aes Sedai, are regarded with suspicion by those who have always known them.

'Things have changed. You listen to me. No matter what this innkeeper says, when a Myrddraal stares at him, he'll tell all about us down to what we had to drink and how much dust we had on our boots.' Rand shivered, remembering the Fade's eyeless stare. 'As for Caemlyn.... You think the Halfmen don't know you want to get to Tar Valon? It's a good time to be on a boat headed south.' [...] 'Think, boy. Illian! There isn't a grander city on the face of the earth. And the Great Hunt of the Horn!' (392)

However, neither of them accepts the offer.

Mendlesohn states that "portal-quest fantasy by its very nature needs to deny the possibility of a polysemic discourse in order to validate the 'quest.' There can be only one understanding of the world: an understanding that validates the quest" (2008, 12-13), which is, in this case, Moiraine's. Rand's impossibility to question the reliability of the Aes Sedai's words can also show how "in the portal fantasy [the hero] accepts whatever he is told (especially when it contradicts what he has been told before)" (26). Rand does accept what he is told by Moiraine, but certain things he is told by Ba'alzamon make him question the Aes Sedai's intentions, even if only slightly.

The fact that Rand and the others refuse any way out of the quest can be related to the idea of the type of hero from portal-quest fantasy and how destiny plays an important role. In *The Eye of the World* the hero is conditioned by destiny, which has to do with Rand, Mat, and Perrin's nature as *ta'veren*.<sup>88</sup> Moiraine's common saying "[t]he Wheel weaves as the Wheel wills" (*Eye*, 418) illustrates this situation perfectly; it's the Wheel of Time that weaves each person's destiny and it is impossible to avoid it.

In *The Wheel of Time* it is seen several times how the hero cannot escape his destiny. Mat's case is the most evident because of his many attempts to evade fate. On In one occasion, he is found trying to escape a battle outside the city of Cairhien. By the time the battle is ended, Mat had slain the enemy commander and had become the leader of an army. This is, therefore, one type of fantasy that does not allow the hero to roam freely.

In *Rhetorics of Fantasy* Mendlesohn describes this idea of fate in portal-quest fantasy as something that conditions the protagonist's actions and decisions, stealing his

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>88</sup> Being *ta'veren* means that the most important events revolve and unfold around such people. Rand, as the Dragon Reborn, is a very strong *ta'veren* because he is tied to the fate of the world.

free will. She states that the "hero does not have free will in a narrative driven by prophecy" (2008, 42).

This follows more or less what Mendlesohn has stated, prophecy is heavily shrouded in mystery because it is so enigmatic. Still, there are cases in which some types of prophecy are understood in full. Some, like those found in *The Karaethon Cycle*, <sup>89</sup> make the goal known but the process and the outcome mysterious and extremely ambiguous. Others, like Dreams <sup>90</sup> and Foretellings, may be very clear. For instance, some of Egwene's Dreams are easy for her to understand and there is no hidden meaning involved, while Elaida's <sup>91</sup> Foretelling in Rand's presence only focuses on his importance, but doesn't give any detailed information. So, prophecies and other predictive abilities give precious bits of information about the objective, "so that in fact the goal is 'known' even though its meaning is not understood" (Mendlesohn 2008, 41-42).

In *The Wheel of Time* Rand seems to monopolize the role of hero, not out of arrogance, but as a sacrifice, so he can leave a better world for humanity. However, at some point, there is a friendly discussion between him and Mat to determine which of the two is a better hero. Having unwillingly rescued Moiraine, <sup>92</sup> Mat wins the contest, and Rand reflects on Mat's heroism later: "[i]t was about a hero who insisted with every breath that he was anything but a hero" (*Memory*, 897). A similar situation happens when Egwene scolds Rand for stealing the role of hero from others, as she says "'[a]m I not allowed to be a hero, too?" (892).

Therefore, it can be determined that the role of hero is performed by multiple characters and that change is operated by all of them, breaking the struggle to preserve the past. This is due, in part, because of the intricacy of the plot and the number of characters in the narrative. For example, in the White Tower custom is sometimes said to be stronger than law (cf. *New*, 104). When Egwene is raised Amyrlin she opens the novice book to all

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>89</sup> The book that contains the Prophecies of the Dragon.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>90</sup> For some people, called Dreamers or Dreamwalkers, Dreams have prophetic meaning. Very few people possess this talent, but Perrin and Egwene do.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> Elaida was the Aes Sedai advisor of queen Morgase. Elaida led a rebellion against Siuan Sanche, the Amyrlin Seat, and usurped the position, causing a division in the White Tower that led to the election of Egwene as Amyrlin in exile.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>92</sup> At the end of *The Fires of Heaven*, Moiraine disappears through a portal to a different world, where she is trapped. She is rescued by Mat, Thom, and the legendary Jain Farstrider, the author of a book about his adventures. Trying to deny at all times that he is a hero, Mat reluctantly rescued the Aes Sedai.

women, <sup>93</sup> breaking with White Tower tradition held for millennia. This is viewed by many Aes Sedai as unnatural:

There was nothing disrespectful in Sharina's demeanor, but despite novice white, with her creased face and gray hair in a tight bun on the back of her head, she looked exactly what she was, a grandmother. [...] Sixty-seven and a novice! [...] [Her name] should never have been allowed in the novice book in the first place. (*Knife*, 501-503)<sup>94</sup>

So, preservation of the customary past is not maintained. It could be argued that these changes accompany the circumstances of present times and the necessity of change. For instance, Aviendha's second test to become a Wise One<sup>95</sup> plays an essential role concerning the future of the Aiel. After seeing her past, Aviendha goes through the test again and sees the lives of her descendants and the fall of the Aiel. This knowledge leads the Aiel to forsake their nature as a fighting people and to sign the Dragon's Peace.<sup>96</sup>

Even though these changes are not directly connected to the Dark One's defeat, they demonstrate the changes that can disrupt tradition. However, Moiraine, as a side character, is directly involved in the sealing of the Bore and the victory of the Light; <sup>97</sup> an even less significant character, the scholar Herid Fel, discovered the solution to remake the Dark One's prison. <sup>98</sup> Still, the greatest change is that performed by Rand when he defeats the Dark One.

Mendlesohn states that "[t]his kind of fantasy is essentially imperialist: only the hero is capable of change" (2008, 9) and that change operates against a struggle to preserve

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>93</sup> No women over eighteen were allowed to enroll as novices in the White Tower.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>94</sup> Before this, women over eighteen could not be enrolled as novices. Because Aes Sedai show very little signs of aging, Sharina, at sixty-seven, looks older than some of the oldest Aes Sedai, who are well over two hundred years old.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>95</sup> Aviendha is an Aiel with the channeling ability. All female channelers among the Aiel become Wise Ones and have to go through two tests. In one, they are presented with the outcome of their future actions. In the second, they relive moments of some of their ancestors in order to learn their own history. Only the clan chiefs and Wise Ones know the true origins of the Aiel.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>96</sup> The Dragon's Peace is a document devised by the Dragon Reborn just before the Last Battle that requires all nations of the Westlands to hold their current borders for one hundred years after the Last Battle and not to make war.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>97</sup> Linked in a circle with Rand, the two Aes Sedai provide the needed amount of *saidar* to defeat the Dark One.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>98</sup> Fel discovered that to reseal the Dark One the seals made by Lews Therin must be destroyed: "*Have to clear rubble before you can build.*" (*Lord*, 901)

the past (cf. 9). For instance, the appearance of the Dragon Reborn is a factor that causes great changes in the world, as can be observed in a bit of prophecy revealed by Moiraine:

"The unstained tower breaks and bends knee to the forgotten sign. [...] There can be no health in us, nor any good thing grow," Moiraine quoted, "for the land is one with the Dragon Reborn, and he one with the land. Soul of fire, heart of stone. [...] In pride he conquers, forcing the proud to yield. [...] He calls upon the mountains to kneel [...] and the seas to give way [...] and the very skies to bow. [...] Pray that the heart of stone remembers tears [...] and the soul of fire, love." (Memory, 177-178)

Nonetheless, the other main characters, namely Mat and Perrin, who are *ta'veren*, are as important as Rand in influencing world events. Therefore, *The Wheel of Time* is in accordance with Mendlesohn's idea that the narrative is imperialist, but does so by having five main heroes, instead of one.

The characters in *The Eye of the World*, particularly Rand, Egwene, and Nynaeve, become experienced enough in the secondary world to have the ability to control it in later stages of the series. Egwene rediscovers the way to make *cuendillar*, <sup>99</sup> becomes the Amyrlin Seat and creates a weave to counter balefire. <sup>100</sup> Rand's understanding of the One Power and of the world enable him to cleanse the taint on *saidin* with the help of Nynaeve, to find the song sought by the Tuatha'an, and to find the solution to defeat the Dark One. Nynaeve has also had sufficient practice with the *saidar* to be able to heal Siuan Sanche's and Leane Sharif's <sup>101</sup> stillings and Logain Ablar's gentling. <sup>102</sup> Additionally, she was able to heal the madness caused by the taint on *saidin*.

So, after a long time outside the "world-within-a-world," these characters are in perfect control of their abilities and are no longer dependent on guides. Their fitting outside

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>99</sup> An indestructible substance that is only made stronger if anyone tries to break it. The seals holding the Dark One's prison are made of *cuendillar*, also known as heartstone.

Balefire is a weave of the One Power that erases the target completely from the Pattern, as if it never existed. The weave that counters it is called The Flame of Tar Valon. (cf. *Memory*, 877)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>101</sup> Siuan and Leane were illegally deposed from the positions of Amyrlin Seat and Keeper of the Chronicles, respectively.

<sup>102</sup> Stilling and gentling are the terms used for women and men who were severed from the True Source (One Power). This feat is especially remarkable since not even during the Age of Legends this was thought possible. Logain Ablar, a man who claimed to be the Dragon Reborn, was gentled by the Aes Sedai.

the Two Rivers is such that going back is no longer an option. Rand is faced with that fact not long after he departed Emond's Field, when Bayle Domon<sup>103</sup> tells him that "'[t]he world will put a hook in your mouth. You'll set off chasing the sunset, you wait and see . . . and if you ever go back, your village'll no be big enough to hold you" (*Eye*, 357). This also implies the unwillingness of the characters to return home.

One of the characteristics of portal-quest fantasy refers to this control the characters have over the secondary world gained from experience. The constant contact with the fantastic enables them to manipulate the world and have a greater independence in comparison with their former mundane lives (cf. Mendlesohn 2008, 2).

A very visible characteristic in *The Wheel of Time* is the gradual escalation of danger. In *The Eye of the World* it starts with an attack on Rand's farm and the village of Emond's Field, which is serious enough, considering Lan's words about the Trolloc attack: "'[t]hat was as hot a raid last night as I'd expect to see in Shienar, or any of the Borderlands'" (*Eye*, 113). Later, after the group is separated, Perrin and Egwene are pursued by a flock of ravens<sup>104</sup> and captured by Whitecloaks, a society bent on capturing associates of the Shadow. Rand and Mat are trailed multiple times by Darkfriends who try to murder or capture them. However, when they are reunited and the news about the Dark One's intentions regarding the Eye of the World is revealed, the danger intensifies, for it might mean the Dark One's release from his prison. <sup>105</sup> The journey through the Ways and then the Blight present new dangers that reach a peak when the group is confronted by two of the Forsaken, Aginor and Balthamel. Their defeat and Rand's victory over Ba'alzamon afterwards also decides the course of the battle occurring in Tarwin's Gap at the same time.

Throughout the series, danger is seen in a much larger scale as the land deteriorates due to the Dark One's influence. This decay can be observed in the weather or in the food that is very easily spoiled. In addition, the weakening of the Dark One's prison has allowed

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>103</sup> The owner of a ship who sheltered Rand, Mat, and Thom after events in Shadar Logoth.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>104</sup> Ravens are said to be servants of the Dark One, thus the importance of it.

The importance of this danger can be seen in the sudden change of Moiraine's plans: "This news concerning the Eye of the World changes much. [...] We cannot remain in Caemlyn. [...] Whether this is a trap or a timely warning, we must do what we must, and that is to reach the Eye of the World quickly. The Green Man must know of this threat." (*Eye*, 644-645)

the Forsaken to escape and cause dissidence in the Westlands and civil war across the entire Seanchan continent.

In Jordan's novels danger is evidenced as a series of events that progress until they reach a climax. This is also common in fantasies of this type. This has been explained by another theorist, W. A. Senior, in an essay called "Quest Fantasies". This contributes to the notion that there are other characteristics essential to portal-quest fantasies aside from those proposed by Farah Mendlesohn.

The protagonist's victory brings a reward that is moral rather material, which is very common in portal-quest fantasy. In *The Eye of the World* Rand is rewarded with conscious control of the One Power, which is in itself a material gift. Aside from this, the reward is fundamentally an immaterial one. The temporary defeat of the Shadow, which ends the Dark One's hold over the weather, seems to be the most important recompense for the quest. Only his downfall in the end can symbolize the healing inherent in a portal-quest fantasy. In *The Wheel of Time* the Dark One represents one aspect of power, which is, in essence, the True Power. <sup>106</sup> Rand's access to the One Power in the end of *The Eye of the World* gives the appearance that his journey had been a quest for power. However, he is ultimately free of it in the end of the series (cf. *Memory*, 1003-1004). Therefore, Mendlesohn's statement that "*The Lord of the Rings* is not a quest for power, but a journey to destroy power" (2008, 4), can be applied to Rand's quest as well.

At this point, it is undeniable that Robert Jordan's *The Wheel of Time* corresponds to the paradigm of portal-quest fantasy delineated by Farah Mendlesohn. Even though there are more characteristics that constitute this category, some of the most important are described above. It is remarkable that with the range of Jordan's sequence, spanning multiple volumes and including hundreds of characters, the story does not seem to diverge from the main precepts of Mendlesohn's theory.

However, there are aspects that constitute an innovation on Jordan's part. For instance, the Dark One can be considered an intrusion, and, therefore, stray from the main

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>106</sup> While *saidin* and *saidar* come from the True Source, the True Power comes from the Dark One himself. This source of power can only be accessed by the Dark One's permission and it has dangerous effects. Ba'alzamon's eyes and face when he appears before Rand is a result of the use of the True Power. (cf. Jordan, et al 2015, 763)

idea that *The Wheel of Time* belongs in the category of portal-quest fantasy. The Dark One is very unlike other Dark Lords, such as Sauron, especially because, while the latter belongs to Arda, the world created by Ilúvatar, the former does not belong to the world made by the Creator. This is evidenced in *The World of Robert Jordan's The Wheel of Time*, where it is mentioned that the Dark One is a force from outside of the Pattern and, thus, the world. Therefore, the Dark One, and the True Power by association, is an intruder in the world, causing a disruption that must be healed. According to Farah Mendlesohn, the principles of an intrusion fantasy defend that when an intrusion takes place, "the world is ruptured by the intrusion, which disrupts normality and has to be negotiated with or defeated, sent back whence it came, or controlled" (2008, 115).

Rand's initial plan had been to kill the Dark One and get rid of the intrusion for good. However, he learned that the best way to deal with it would be to send it back. So, that's what he does when he seals the Bore; the hole that separates the world made by the Creator from the Dark One is closed and he is locked again outside of time with no influence whatsoever over the physical world.

It can be concluded that *The Wheel of Time* follows a certain set of characteristics that have already been in use since before Tolkien and that constitutes what Mendlesohn calls portal-quest fantasy. There are ways in which the novels stray from this category, as can be seen in the last example given. The aim of this example is to understand that Jordan's novels can subvert the taxonomy and find characteristics from other categories. This chapter shows that this work is undeniably a portal-quest fantasy by Mendlesohn's standards. In addition, there are other theorists whose approach introduces other characteristics to quest fantasies.

Even though there are characteristics that seem to place *The Wheel of Time* beyond the principles of a portal-quest fantasy, the series is strongly positioned within the boundaries of this category.

## IV – Defying Categorization with China Miéville's Un Lun Dun

### 4.1. The Story and the *Abcity*

While the objective in chapter three was to understand how Robert Jordan's *The Wheel of Time* fit into the paradigm of portal-quest fantasy developed by Farah Mendlesohn, in this chapter the aim is to see how China Miéville's *Un Lun Dun* defies the same paradigm. Seemingly belonging to the portal-quest fantasy, Miéville's novel subverts the taxonomy and strays from this category. But doing so doesn't mean that it fits fully into any of the other of Mendlesohn's categories. Therefore, this chapter will provide an analysis of how *Un Lun Dun* can be inserted in the four groups and how it subverts the portal-quest fantasy.

Following the same strategy as in chapter three, this chapter, also divided in two sections, will start with a brief introduction of the author in question and his works, with particular focus on *Un Lun Dun*, as well as an explanation of the novel as an imaginary world and how it was created.

The second section will focus on the analysis of *Un Lun Dun* in light of Mendlesohn's taxonomy. First, there will be an examination of the aspects that relate to the category of portal-quest fantasy, since, at first sight, it might be seen as one. Only then will the investigation of Miéville's novel be focused on the aspects in which the narrative deviates from the principles of the portal-quest. The study will regard certain characteristics related to the nature of prophecy and how it relates to the heroines and the quest, as well as an analysis of the nature of evil, portrayed by the Smog.

China Miéville, born in 1972, is an English writer best known for *Perdido Street Station*, *The Scar* (2002), *The City & the City* (2009), *Embassytown* (2011), among others. *The City & the City* received a Hugo Award for Best Novel, one of the most important awards in fantasy and science fiction. Another four of his books were nominated for the same category. *Un Lun Dun* was published in 2007 and received the Locus Award for best Young Adult Book. <sup>107</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>107</sup> As part of his political activism, Miéville has also written some works, namely *Between Equal Rights: A Marxist Theory of International Law* (2005) and *October: The Story of the Russian Revolution* (2017).

The story of *Un Lun Dun* relates the adventures of the teenager Deeba Resham in a place called UnLondon. When strange signs lead her and her friend Zanna to the abcity<sup>108</sup> of UnLondon, the counterpart of London, Zanna discovers that she is the prophesied hero who must save UnLondon against the Smog, a cloud of smoke that is threatening all life in the abcity. However, upon finding out that the prophecies are wrong and that Zanna, known as the Shwazzy, will not be fighting in the war that threatens UnLondon, it is Deeba who tasks herself with the role of the heroine and the burden of defeating the Smog. Deeba discovers that Brokkenbroll, 109 one of the supposed allies of the Propheseers, who are overseeing the war against the Smog, is in league with the enemy. She flees from both Brokkenbroll and the Propheseers, who do not believe Deeba, and tries to find a way to defeat the Smog. Skipping the steps required to get to the weapon that will overpower the Smog, called the *UnGun*, Deeba employs the help of an array of characters that include, for example, Hemi, a half-ghost boy, Yorick Cavea, 110 a man with a birdcage for a head, and a book of prophecy that no longer has any reliable information in it. When the war is reaching a peak and with very little time to save the *abctiy* and the world, Deeba retrieves the *UnGun* and imprisons the Smog inside it, assuring the victory of an unchosen heroine.

One of the characteristics of a portal-quest fantasy that has been addressed in chapter three is the presence of the map. *Un Lun Dun* lacks one, and, therefore, there is no known destination and the reader does not have a sense of where the protagonist might go. Alternatively, Miéville's work features various illustrations of multiple elements. These could work as a map or, at least, as clues, so the reader can grasp the sense of the place. For instance, most illustrations appear when the protagonists are in contact with the elements portrayed in them. In certain novels of *The Wheel of Time*, there is a map of a city or area that signals important events happening in that place in that particular novel. In *A Memory of Light*, it is the Field of Merrilor, which is where the majority of the narrative takes place. The illustrations in *Un Lun Dun* can be seen as having the same function, that of mapping the area where an event is taking place, which seems a rather uncommon feature for traditional portal-quest fantasies.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>108</sup> The *abcity* of UnLondon is an alternative place that coexists with London, but it's uncertain where it's located in relation to the city (cf. *Un Lun Dun*, 60).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>109</sup> Brokkenbroll is the creator of the *unbrella*, who can defend UnLondoners against the Smog's attacks.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>110</sup> See Appendix C.

Without the map, any bits of information given throughout the narrative are important to get a sense of how the world is constructed and how it works. According to Krzysztof Maj,

[i]t is no coincidence that fictive maps, dictionaries, diagrams, quotations, genealogical trees, illustrations, and many other types of paratexts have already become a hallmark of fantasy and SF novels. World-building has always been regarded as a major part of fantastic narratives and it is no wonder that designing plausible, credible, and relatable universes has become the very first priority of any aspiring writer. (2015, 88)

The explanations about this world that would place the reader in a comfortable position are very lacking. This makes the story feel uncertain and the reader has to try to understand the meaning of some aspects of UnLondon on his own. It is interesting to see that Miéville relies solely upon illustrations in his world-building process. He uses the drawings as one of the ways of explaining the world, hinting at a perspective that denotes the characteristics of a portal-quest fantasy, which makes the landscape a big part of the narrative. <sup>111</sup>

To strengthen his created world, Miéville draws a very close connection between the city and the *abcity*. It is said ideas flow back and forth between both places, which is the case of the UnLondon-I. This device is a reflection of the London Eye, as Joe Jones explains:

'The UnLondon-I,' Jones said. 'It's what gave them the idea for that big wheel in London. I saw some photos. Ideas seep both ways, you know. Like clothes—Londoners copy so many UnLondon fashions, and for some reason they always seem to make them uniforms. And the I? Well, if an abnaut didn't actually come here and see it, then some dream of it floated from here into their heads.' (*Un Lun Dun*, 72)

Marie-Laure Ryan presents two possibilities regarding the connection between an actual world and a possible one:

[In one] the actual world differs in ontological status from merely possible ones in that this world alone presents an autonomous existence, which

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>111</sup> This can be seen in the buildings made of moil. See Appendix D.

could mean: exists physically. All other worlds are the product of a mental activity, such as dreaming, imagining, foretelling, promising, or storytelling. The other [...] says that all possible worlds are equally real and that all possibilities are realized in some world, independently of whether somebody thinks of them or not. (2006, 645)

So, according to the theory of Possible Worlds, UnLondon would be placed in the second type of world due to its close connection to London. If it were to belong in the first type, the fact that ideas go both ways would question the validity of both London and UnLondon as real. However, the name of the *abcity* implies a place that is not, in fact, other *abcities* contribute to this argument. For instance, other names include Parisn't, Romeless, Helsunki, Baghdidn't, Hong Gone, or Lost Angeles, <sup>112</sup> all of which add to the idea that it is a non-place. But that is part of the wordplay on which *Un Lun Dun* relies to create a narrative based on the distorted reflection ideas and words take when crossing from the city to the *abcity* and vice-versa. In addition, the novel focuses on the personification of objects, like the umbrellas or the garbage bins.

So, taking into account this wordplay, it is natural to find places like Webminster Abbey, <sup>113</sup> the UnLondon-I, or the Talklands, where words gain life as living creatures. The same holds for certain creatures whose construction combine very unlikely elements, such as the *binja*, <sup>114</sup> which are rubbish bins who are also ninjas, or the Black Windows, frames with spider legs that move like actual spiders.

It is also interesting to see how language in this created world drives the narrative, especially through the distortions that occur when words or expressions cross the Odd into the *abcity*. The *Armets*, who were a secret group, fought the Smog with the *Klinneract*, a sort of magic weapon. When researching to help UnLondon, Deeba discovers the *Armets* are the RMetS<sup>115</sup> and the *Klinneract* the Clean Air Act.<sup>116</sup> This discovery is what makes

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>112</sup> These are *abcities* mentioned in Miéville's novel.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>113</sup> The Webminster Abbey is an equivalent of Westminster Abbey.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>114</sup> See Appendix E.

<sup>115</sup> The Royal Metereological Society.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>116</sup> The Clean Air Act was an act of the British Parliament to deal with London's Great Smog of 1952. The Act consisted of a plan to reduce air pollution.

Deeba suspicious about Benjamin Unstible, <sup>117</sup> which contributes to her decision of going back to UnLondon (cf. *Un Lun Dun*, 168).

### 4.2. Breaking the Boundaries of Portal-Quest Fantasy

There are many characteristics in *Un Lun Dun* that invokes the tropes of the portal-quest fantasy, and, even though the purpose of this chapter is to see how Miéville's novel defies the boundaries of categorization, it is still important to see how the basis of this fantasy bears some similarities to Mendlesohn's first category.

In terms of reader position, *Un Lun Dun* assumes the form that is common in the portal-quest, where the reader accesses that which the protagonist knows and witnesses. Most things the protagonists see that seem out of the ordinary, such as what seems to be an umbrella observing Zanna's window or a cloud of smoke enveloping Zanna and her friends, are met with shock and disbelief because they are seeing things from a world they don't belong to. Deeba tries to find an explanation for the wandering umbrella: "[s]o it was some sort of remote control thing, innit?' Deeba said as Zanna looked around in the smelly dark. 'And maybe...I dunno, maybe it had a camera or something...and...'" (*Un Lun Dun*, 23). Therefore, the reader has to ride with the protagonist and wait for an explanation for the umbrella, which is, in fact, an *unbrella*<sup>118</sup> and the cloud's attack, which was actually the Smog.

Other signs of abnormality also include the animals that pay attention to Zanna, like "a fox behind the climbing frame. And it was watching" (5). Even stranger is the stillness of the animal as Zanna approaches it. Afterwards, a succession of hints stress the oddness of the whole situation, like the clouds in the sky, the graffiti on the walls, the stranger in the cafe that greets Zanna as the *Shwazzy*, <sup>119</sup> as well as the letter she receives with the key to reach UnLondon. On the other hand, the girls' reaction to these strange signs does not seem to be one of complete incredulity. <sup>120</sup> In fact, these signs are all quite possible within the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>117</sup> Unstible was the man who was killed trying to find a solution to defeat the Smog. Afterwards, the Smog took his shape so he could trick the Propheseers.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>118</sup> See Appendix F.

Only in French class do the girls discover the meaning of the word *Shwazzy*, which is a distortion of the word *choisi*, which means chosen in French and comes from the verb *choisir*, which means to choose.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>120</sup> In London, only the *unbrella* triggers a sentiment of abnormality.

laws of the primary world<sup>121</sup> and could be taken as almost ordinary coincidences. This situation is somewhat unlike the appearance of the hooded figure that shows itself to Rand in The Eye of the World and that can only be seen by certain people. The rider could have been taken as ordinary had the circumstances in which it appeared been different. And the fact that it instilled a great amount of fear contributes to the notion that there is a disturbance and an unfamiliar feeling about that particular environment. Zanna and Deeba are much less perturbed with the appearance of the *unbrella*.

Still, this constitutes a disruptive aspect in London that is "necessary in order to justify the explanation of the world to the reader, and prepares us for the process of familiarization that takes place throughout the novel" (Mendlesohn 2008, 8). The key factor is the appearance of the unbrella, which propels the protagonists to UnLondon in order to obtain the explanations about the world, which is also a technique to inform the reader of the secondary world.

The escalation of danger that has been analyzed in the previous chapter can also be found in Miéville's novel and it starts with Deeba and Zanna being attacked by a pile of rubbish just as they entered UnLondon. Afterwards, the attack on the bridge that knocks Zanna out of the battle takes a more serious tone and shows the extent of the Smog's power. When Deeba returns to the abcity and takes the featherkey from Parakeetus Claviger<sup>122</sup> she loses Diss, <sup>123</sup> and in Webminster Abbey Rosa<sup>124</sup> is taken by one of the Black Windows. As Deeba's quest advances, so do the Smog's attacks throughout UnLondon and "Deeba's heart sank when she looked at the map. There were miles to go. Some of the areas they would have to cross were inhabited, some were empty—and now some were smogmires" (Un Lun Dun, 338). This shows the progress of the Smog's campaign; it leaves some areas uninhabited as it passes and others completely

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>121</sup> The clouds assuming the shape of Zanna's face can be either a coincidence or just a matter of perspective.

<sup>122</sup> The feather is one of the "seven jewels of UnLondon" and it is one of the objects required in the process of getting the UnGun (*Un Lun Dun*, 277).

123 Diss was an *utterling*, a word spoken by Mr. Talker that gained life and decided to follow Deeba.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>124</sup> The bus driver that helped take Deeba and Zanna to the Propheseers.

inhospitable.<sup>125</sup> By the time Deeba reaches Unstible's factory, war in UnLondon is reaching its peak:

But that night, UnLondon was also flickering in the illumination of many fires. There were the flashes of combustion and the glowing beams of torches from the streets, from the dark cut of the river, where they danced with their reflections, and coming down from the sky from aircraft and other flying things, racing in all directions. [...] Below the rising and falling roofscape of the floors below them, they could see the factory forecourt. It was full of a huge fight. Behind the walls and thrown-up barricades and on roofs to either side, battalions of smombies threw missiles. Stink-junkies pumped smoke and fire. (456-457)

The outcome of Deeba's fight against the Smog sees the latter defeated and Deeba and UnLondon victorious. Because the story is much more fast-paced than in *The Wheel of Time*, the escalation of danger seems more intense. So, in light of what Senior describes in "Quest Fantasies," *Un Lun Dun* appears to correspond to the following statement: "a series of adventures experienced by the hero and his or her companions that begins with the simplest confrontations and dangers and escalates through more threatening and perilous encounters" (190).

Deeba's travels in the secondary world grant her enough experience and knowledge for her to be able to skip steps in the process of defeating the Smog, so she can outsmart Mr. Speaker, <sup>126</sup> by making him aware of the multiple meanings of words, <sup>127</sup> to give the *UnGun* a different use than it was meant to, to transform the *unbrellas* into *rebrellas*. These actions point to a learned character that has the ability to negotiate with the secondary world and, eventually, manipulate it (cf. Mendlesohn 2008, 2).

Ultimately, *Un Lun Dun*, seemingly trapped within the boundaries of the portal-quest fantasy category, subverts a number of its characteristics, stepping away from the limits of the taxonomy developed by Farah Mendlesohn. This subversion is

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>125</sup> "[Jones] handed Deeba his telescope. Peering through it into those boroughs where Smog filled the streets, she could see dim shapes moving like malevolent fish below the smoky surface. 'All kinds of things mutating into life in there,' he said." (*Un Lun Dun* 229)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>126</sup> The tyrannical ruler of the Talklands.

<sup>127 &</sup>quot;The thing is,' Deeba said, eyeing Mr Speaker, 'you could only make words do what you wanted if it was just you deciding what they mean. But it isn't. It's everyone else too. Which means you might want to give them orders, but you aren't in total control. No one is." (*Un Lun Dun*, 297)

concentrated mostly on the characteristics of the heroine, which is all but paradigmatic, and the nature of prophecy, which doesn't follow the model frequently seen in portal-quest fantasies.

Un Lun Dun gives the reader two very different kinds of heroine. The first is Zanna, a heroine of prophecy who seems destined to defeat the Smog and save UnLondon. Zanna's profile corresponds to the typical heroine. In addition to all the signs that pointed to her being the *Shwazzy*, she is seen turning the valves that transported her and Deeba to UnLondon as if instinctively and, during the *stink-junkie* attack on the bridge, she "ran towards the fight" where "[s]he raised her right hand, with its club-wand-splinter, and a wave of wind swept through the fight, and made the stink-junkies stagger" (124). Even Deeba shows awe toward her friend. However, Zanna cannot stand up to the task of defeating the Smog, as "[a] stink-junkie shoved through the cordon of binja and smacked Zanna on the back of the head" (125), making her faint.

The grounds for a portal-quest fantasy are shaken with Zanna's failure. The same is true for prophecy, which is directly linked to the heroine's fate. In fact, the inaccuracy of the book is even more serious, considering the fact that prophecy is supposed to be fulfilled. It seems to suit this story that prophecy is wrong, especially taking into account the fact that it's almost impossible to have a different interpretation than the one presented, as can be observed when the book describes the *Shwazzy*: "'[t]all for her age, blond hair,' the voice went on. 'Let me have a good look...Decent-enough aura, brustly at the spectrids. Resonating in at least five or six dimensobilities'" (104).

It is possible that prophecy fails for not obeying the mystery that is required in these sorts of fantasies. Mendlesohn describes prophecies as something that "allow knowledge to be imparted, so that in fact the goal is 'known' even though its meaning is not understood" (2008, 41-42). The Propheseers take the knowledge contained in the book as fact, undermining the notion that prophecy can and should have a fuzzy meaning.

When evidenced that Zanna will not be able to fight for UnLondon, there seems to be no hero or heroine. When confronted with the slightest reference to the *abcity*, Zanna's attitude can be seen as one of refusal to acknowledge her role as the chosen heroine and, thus, a refusal to cross the portal: "Zanna frowned with concentration. She opened her

mouth and nothing came out; a look of great alarm, even fear, crossed her face and she began to cough violently. *She doesn't want to remember*, Deeba realized, patting her friend's back" (*Un Lun Dun*, 163). What is interesting about Zanna's reaction is the fact that it is the Smog that made her forget all about UnLondon in order to keep her from going back. It seems that Zanna's relation to the fantastic at this point is one of alienation.

So, with the intention of subverting the category of portal-quest fantasy, it is natural that *Un Lun Dun* will not obey Mendlesohn's principle of a hero who "does not have free will in a narrative driven by prophecy" (2008, 42). Therefore, instead of a heroine chosen by prophecy, UnLondon gets a heroine who is singular in every aspect. First, the book only refers to Deeba as a companion of the *Shwazzy*, more specifically, "the funny sidekick" (Miéville 2001, 275). But because the prophecies about Zanna were wrong and there are none concerning Deeba, the future is unknown, which gives Deeba a certain leeway to manipulate events as she wills. Second, Deeba seems much more predisposed to be the heroine than Zanna. One the one hand, she is able to disclose the message in the glove sewn by Obaday Fing (cf. 162). On the other hand, Deeba volunteers for the task of helping UnLondon save itself, which shows that she is not conditioned or forced by prophecy like other heroes, such as Rand al Thor.

Deeba is completely independent to have her own quest, delineated by her own parameters. This, according to Cassandra Bausman, "represents a significant break with both the expectation of the Shwazzy narrative as represented by the Book and its Propheseers and [...] with the generic expectations of formulaic portal fantasies" (2014, 38). With this role, Deeba is able to question the discourse proffered by the book regarding the steps to get the *UnGun*, the weapon that will defeat the Smog:

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'Well, as I say, the squid-beak clipper's supposed to hold on to something in the tearoom—'
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'Forget it,' Deeba said.

The book hesitated, then continued. 'The bone tea's refreshing—' 'No.'

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>128</sup> It should be noted, though, that Zanna is still a heroine. She is, after all, UnLondon's *Shwazzy*. And Deeba did not usurp the position, becoming, instead, the Unchosen One.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>129</sup> One of UnLondon's couturiers who offers Deeba and Zanna some guidance.

'But...we need it to give to the aleactor, to send him to sleep when we play ludo, so we can take the teeth-dice—'

'I said no.' (*Un Lun Dun*, 332-333)

Since there are no prophecies about Deeba, she can bend the only existing ones to her will, showing how the protagonist conditions prophecy and not the other way around. Deeba is told by the book that she "can't pick and choose bits from a prophecy" (335). The fact that she does it also remarks on how prophecy has to adapt to the circumstances, breaking the hero from the restraints of fate. Therefore, her choices represent greater autonomy.

One of Mendlesohn's ideas is that "portal-quest fantasy by its very nature needs to deny the possibility of a polysemic discourse in order to validate the 'quest.' There can be only one understanding of the world: an understanding that validates the quest" (2008, 12-13). Deeba is seen here giving a new alternative to the standard quest:

'Alright. Right now we haven't got much to fight the Smog with. We need a weapon, and the Smog's obviously scared of this one.

'So that's what we're going to do,' Deeba said. 'We'll skip the rest of the stuff. Save us some time. We'll go straight to the last stage of the quest. Let's go get the UnGun. Then we can deal with the Smog, and I can go home.' (*Un Lun Dun*, 334)

There seems to be an implication that if the book was wrong about the *Shwazzy*, it would also be wrong about many other things. As an important part of the quest, the knowledge contained in the book can still be important, as Deeba reasons (cf. 258). However, it's the inexactness of the book that gives Deeba freedom to bend prophecy and skip the steps to get the *UnGun*. It's ironic that after the book finds out it's wrong, it admits that there is a mistake in it that was found before, as can be read in this passage:

'It says in me, 'The Smog's afraid of nothing but the UnGun.' [...] 'Well to be honest it actually says 'nothing *and* the UnGun,' but we realized that must be a misprint.'

'You're kidding me,' Deeba snapped. 'So you *did* know there could be mistakes in you?'

'It was three letters,' the book said forlornly. 'We didn't think anything of it...' (333-334)

The irony rests with the fact that, even before finding out the full extent of its mistakes, the book recognized that it had something wrong in it and that that mistake turned out to be the truth: "It's no mistake! she thought. In the book! It's not 'Nothing but the UnGun' the Smog's scared of, it is supposed to be 'Nothing and the UnGun'" (495).

The idea that the guide is both mysterious and comforting (cf. Mendlesohn 2008, 24), which has already been referred in chapter three, does not seem to apply to *Un Lun Dun*. It's very possible to find that in Miéville's work the guides are less mysterious, less comforting, and less wise than the ones in *The Wheel of Time*. Obaday Fing and conductor Jones do offer comfort to both Deeba and Zanna and they are very secretive until the protagonists reach the Propheseers and the book. All that is revealed is that Zanna is the *Shwazzy* and that she is in danger. The book and the Propheseers should become the real guides. Their only function, though, is to provide the Smog's backstory using the "download" strategy. And because their knowledge and beliefs of their world are so clear and firmly established, when they find most of it is wrong, they become less wise and less comforting, but then the narrative acquires an enigmatic tone because no one knows what is right and wrong anymore: "[n]ot everything went how it was supposed to, but that doesn't mean there's nothing useful in you" (*Un Lun Dun*, 258). This proves to be true as the book contains information on how to navigate through the *abcity* and how to defeat the Smog.

Normally, it is the guide that propels the hero into the quest. However, the book was forced into the role of guide by Deeba, and it showed outrage at having been stolen: "You had no right to take me,' it replied. 'This is booknapping!'" (269). The fact that the book does not contain very reliable information also seems to defy the idea that: [i]n the hierarchy of quest fantasy [...] information given by a guide is very reliable (Mendlesohn 2008, 44). Additionally, the book's "booknapping" shows again Deeba's control over the narrative.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>130</sup> The information in portal-quest fantasy is given in two ways: "[w]hile much information about the world is culled from what the protagonist can see (with a consequent denial of polysemic interpretation), history or analysis is often provided by the storyteller who is drawn in the role of sage, magician, or guide" (Mendlesohn 2008, 7). This has been seen in *The Wheel of Time*, where these two types of delivery are most prevalent, even considering the others techniques that were mentioned in chapter three. In *Un Lun Dun* the illustration process also adds to these two forms described by Mendlesohn.

Most portals of fantasy are very singular and peculiar, and the one that leads Deeba and Zanna to UnLondon is much more so. While most that were observed in chapter two do not need to be operated, the one in the basement with the valves and wheels needs the characters to activate it, but, once started, seems to move on its own, transporting the girls to the secondary world, which can be seen by Deeba's observation that

[t]he noise of cars and vans and motorbikes outside grew tinny, like a recording, or as if it came from a television in the next room. The sound of the vehicles faded along with the glow of the main road. Zanna was turning off the traffic. The spigot turned off all the cars and turned off the lamps. It was turning off London. (*Un Lun Dun*, 27-28)

It is rather unconventional to find a portal this mechanical in a portal-quest fantasy. However, there are multiple means of finding one's way to UnLondon. Deeba's second trip to the *abcity* shows a less complicated portal. Conversely, it is through wit that Deeba gets to UnLondon, when she deciphered the message in the glove, as seen above.

In addition to these two passages, there are many others. One way to go through the Odd<sup>131</sup> is for things to become *moil*, which means "Mildly Obsolete in London" (64). Whatever is discarded in London as rubbish may find its way to UnLondon, just like the umbrellas that became *unbrellas*. Conductor Jones also states that "[i]f you find just the right manhole you can get here" (64), which seems to imply that there are a number of entrances to UnLondon. The bridge of the Pons Absconditus also represents a portal, as it was used to get Deeba and Zanna home during their first trip to the *abcity*. Lastly, there is the elevator in the Environment minister's office, which serves as a way to communicate with UnLondon.

So, there seems to be many more portals that connect the primary world and the secondary world. That is possibly one of the reasons both worlds are so alike in certain aspects, like the names of places, for example. Jones remarks on the connection between both worlds with the UnLondon-I and the *UnSun*: "Some people say,' Jones said, 'that the

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>131</sup> The layer that separates the city from the *abcity*.

bit missing from the middle of the UnSun was what became the sun of London. That what lights your days got plucked out of what lights ours." (72-73)

The book also sheds some light on this, saying that "'[a]bcities have existed at least as long as the cities,' it said. 'Each dreams the other'" (109). Such an open connection would probably allow the fantastic to leak to London. The Smog is, undoubtedly, the fantastic element in *Un Lun Dun*.

In the first few chapters of the book the Smog "emerged in drifts and tendrils, reaching through the metal grilles of the drains like growing vines or octopus legs" (16). It is discovered later that the Smog attacked and killed Benjamin Unstible in London and the Smog itself threatens to invade all the *abcities* and cities of the world, proving that it can move across the Odd. This clearly violates one of the principles of portal-quest fantasy, which states that "[a]lthough individuals may cross both ways, the fantastic does not" (Mendlesohn 2008, 2). Continuing in the same line of thought, Mendlesohn states that "[s]uch an effect would move the fantasy into the category of *intrusion*" (2).

However, the Smog is referred to as having been created in the primary world; a consequence of industrialization in London, where "factories were burning everything and letting off smoke from chemicals and poisons" (*Un Lun Dun*, 109). Eventually, the smoke gained a mind of its own and started to think and kill. When London defeated the Smog with the *Klinneract* the Smog found its way to UnLondon. This is in accordance with the idea that a Dark Lord can be an intruder and, like Robert Jordan's Dark One, the Smog in *Un Lun Dun* can be regarded as an outsider in the *abcity*, for it originated in the primary world.

Either from London or UnLondon, the Smog is an intruder as it invaded UnLondon once, and is also able to find its way to London to kill Unstible and attack Zanna, Deeba, and their friends. Mendlesohn specifies that "[i]n a few cases the intrusion wins but there is always a return of some kind" (2008, 115). The Smog does not win, but the possibility of a return is not discarded. This is due to the nature of the *UnGun*, which sucks the Smog into the chambers where bullets should go. If it does so, then firing the *UnGun* will possibly release the Smog. This possibility can be observed when some concern arises about what to do with the *UnGun* (cf. *Un Lun Dun*, 508-509).

By creating a heroine only in name, Miéville strays from Mendlesohn's notion that the heroes in portal-quest fantasy are the only ones skilled enough to perform change (cf. 2008, 9). This could only have happened if Zanna had accomplished her role as *Shwazzy*. She can still be considered a hero because she still remains the *Shwazzy*, but Deeba, as the Unchosen One, is the one that actually implements change. What Miéville shows with this narrative is that it does not take a hero chosen by prophecy to save the world and that it can be saved by those most willing to do so, which is Deeba's case, who decided to volunteer for the quest out of love and concern for her friends in both London and UnLondon.

Ultimately, Deeba's success in her quest seems much more fulfilling than Zanna's would have been because, on the one hand, Zanna's quest was prewritten, and on the other, Deeba did not need to follow the rules imposed by prophecy. Deeba was successful in her quest due, in part, to her disregard for the book's guidance. Her skipping of tasks buys her time that, spent otherwise, would probably have granted the Smog victory before she could find the *UnGun*. This corresponds to the idea that the "journeyman succeeds or fails to the extent he listens to those wiser or more knowledgeable than him (Mendlesohn 2008, 4). Deeba can make a distinction between the useful bits of information given by the book and those she thinks are not as reliable.

In conclusion, it can be argued that the element of disruption comes from London, and not UnLondon. In fact, it can be said that this element is Deeba herself. Even with prophecy in UnLondon not following the mysterious characteristics it usually does in other fantasies, the subversion still comes from Deeba's part. Her actions in circumventing the book's directions and the steps to acquire the *UnGun* were destabilizing in a narrative that would have followed the protocol of a true portal-quest fantasy had Zanna not been knocked out during her fight in the bridge. Therefore, it can be asserted that the city of UnLondon follows certain principles of portal-quest fantasy, but Deeba doesn't.

In fact, instead of overlapping the four categories of Mendlesohn's taxonomy, *Un Lun Dun* is based, especially, on a subversion of the paradigm of the portal-quest fantasy, even if some of its characteristics are found in the remaining three groupings. Still, there are many features in the narrative that place Miéville's work in the portal-quest. But this seems to be a fuzzy set as well, since the novel cannot be placed at the center of the

category, but very near the frontier. If Mendlesohn's four categories of fantasy were to be considered as eight different centers of a fuzzy set, one for each category and four more for their respective subversions, then *Un Lun Dun* would be placed equidistantly between the portal-quest and its subversion.

Even though there are many traces of immersion, especially when the reader is groping for the meaning of something left unexplained, or intrusion, with the Smog invading London and attacking Zanna and her friends, the novel is, in general, much closer to portal-quest, even if it ends by subverting the paradigm. Zanna's refusal to acknowledge the fantastic can also show some hints of a liminal fantasy, which alienates the protagonist from fantastic elements.

Even if it seems a portal-quest fantasy, Mendlesohn's taxonomy provides the alternative category, "the irregulars," for fantasies which are not limited by the boundaries of the other categories. This group describes fantasies that "do not fit comfortably into [Mendlesohn's] design (2008, 246). For a story such as *Un Lun Dun*, "the irregulars" seems to be an adequate classification, but because this type shows only how the rules are broken, it is hard to find a true categorization for Miéville's work. So, *Un Lun Dun* can have many readings according to Mendlesohn's taxonomy, journeying through all categories, but finding a strong footing in the portal-quest while subverting it at the same time.

### Conclusion

This dissertation had the objective of answering the question of whether the category of portal-quest fantasy had stable boundaries. Taking into account the analysis of the selected novels, it can be concluded that the paradigm is indeed stable. However, the result of the analysis of Miéville's *Un Lun Dun* also establishes that the portal-quest fantasy can be subverted and its rules bent.

The investigation done throughout the course of this dissertation helped demonstrate how the field of fantasy literature has evolved over the years and how, in recent years, that expansion has transformed in an increasing production of fantasy fiction, which has also been augmented with the help of other media.

In terms of a definition for the genre, it can be concluded that with an area where the imagination thrives and with the enlarged scope the genre encompasses, it becomes difficult to establish a clear definition. However, the division of fantasy in different subgenres has been valuable in order to try and achieve a better understanding of the genre in general. Therefore, taking into account the several definitions of various academics and experts in the field that were presented in the first part of chapter one, it should be easier to establish some borders for fantasy, which, sometimes, tends to overlap with other genres. So, in general terms, fantasy comprehends that which is implausible, or very nearly impossible, especially with fantasies that take place in a secondary world.

The range of the genre has also helped determine that there are many different approaches to the studies of fantasy, which gives rise to multiple disagreements concerning the development of definitions to comprise the larger part of it, which is, in itself, already very extensive.

With Farah Mendlesohn's taxonomy of the genre, developed in *Rhetorcis of Fantasy*, a new proposal for the categorization of the field has contributed to a grouping of a very large section of the field, which includes a long list of fantasy works scattered throughout four distinct categories. This categorization assembles the novels according to sets of characteristics that vary according to the way the fantastic enters the narrative.

Therefore, it can be seen how apparently very different works can be grouped in the same category, as is the case of *The Wheel of Time* and *Un Lun Dun*.

The analysis of the portals in chapter two served as a basis for understanding how differently they can be presented in fantasy. Additionally, chapter two contributed to comprehending how portals influence the way in which the fantastic travels in either the primary or the secondary worlds, which helps to determine the nature of a certain fantasy according to Mendlesohn's taxonomy, which relies heavily on portals and their function. For instance, if the novel is a portal-quest fantasy, the characters travel from a primary to a secondary world, where magic is firmly trapped, like in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, or in novels that contain an intrusion, like *Un Lun Dun*, the fantastic can invade the primary world through a portal.

Studies of portals in fantasy are already an established field of research. But it is an area that could profit from more investigation in other fantasies, but instead focuses on more classic works like the Narnia books, *The Wizard of Oz*, or *Alice in Wonderland*, or *The Lord of the Rings*. A study of portals in more modern works would contribute to a more diversified idea of what portals entail and how quests in fantasy can be shaped and limited by the existence of a portal.

Chapter three presented an analysis that places *The Wheel of Time* firmly within the boundaries of the portal-quest fantasy category, even if Robert Jordan seems to slip slightly to other categories, like intrusion. Taking this into consideration, Mendlesohn's taxonomy and her outline of the characteristics of this category seems to have strong precepts regarding fantasies that follow the same structure as Jordan's novels.

On the one hand, the fitting of Jordan's novels into the portal-quest category demonstrates the accuracy of Mendlesohn's theory regarding the taxonomy. On the other hand, it shows how *The Wheel of Time* follows the line of fantasy started by J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis, precursors of the genre, in the 1950s, which is now regarded as a classical type of fantasy, as opposed to fantasies which subvert this paradigm.

A further line of investigation regarding Jordan's series could involve the nature of the Dark One as an outsider, and therefore, an intruder, and expand the analysis of the novels in order to see more aspects of the intrusion fantasy, which was more limited in this dissertation. Furthermore the Dark One's relation with the created world should be taken into account and how that relation can influence events and people, increasing the antagonist's likelihood to achieve victory, as opposed to those who belong to the world of the Wheel.

The analysis of China Miéville's *Un Lun Dun* in chapter four demonstrates that it's very difficult to categorize it in light of Mendlesohn's taxonomy. At one point, it seems a very good example of a portal-quest only to have that theory completely destroyed by a subversion that sees both the reader and the characters not knowing what happened exactly, demonstrating that there are essential parts of the novel belonging to immersion fantasy. This shows how astute Miéville can be in trying to stay away from the sort of fantasy that has been established by fantasists such as Tolkien and Lewis. Additionally, Miéville's subversion of the rules has to take into consideration the rules themselves. Only by being aware of how a certain paradigm works can the author consciously create a work that destabilizes the principles of the same paradigm.

Similar to *The Wheel of Time*, the analysis of *Un Lun Dun* can also bring further lines of investigation. One can relate to the connections between the city and the *abcity* in terms of language and how important this is in fantasy. This relation could also establish a comparison between *Un Lun Dun* and other works of fantasy which rely much on prophetic speech. In addition, the type of heroine found in the novel, the unchosen heroine, can be analyzed and compared to other heroes of fantasy or fairy-tales, which could contribute to a different perspective from the one proposed by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, which forms an archetype of the hero.

The existence of a category such as "the irregulars" in *Rhetorics of Fantasy* raises the question of whether the whole taxonomy should be reimagined in order to accommodate a larger number of works, or whether the creation of new categories should be included in the taxonomy. The truth is that the genre will always defy categorizations such as Mendlesohn's or Attebery's because of the scope fantasy stories can reach. Works like *Un Lun Dun* do not exactly question or subvert Mendlesohn's whole taxonomy, as "the irregulars" provides a solution that foresees such subversions. However, it should be noted that such a category is expected to include a great number of novels.

And yet, it should be noted whether these subversions are done deliberately so as not to be categorized in a certain group. This demonstrates how "the irregulars" are important in the taxonomy and how this prevents loopholes in the theory. "The irregulars" could actually work as disruptive mirrors of the other categories. Therefore, this is an alternative to the idea of having eight different categories that would describe the rules presented in *Rhetorics of Fantasy* for each of the four main groups and their respective subversions.

So, the analysis of *The Wheel of Time* shows that the category of portal-quest is stable for works whose predominant characteristics follow those of Robert Jordan's novels. The study of *Un Lun Dun*, which consists of a successful attempt to subvert the paradigm of the portal-quest by frequently including various elements from the other categories, shows, one the one hand, the possibility to stray from a given paradigm and, on the other hand, Mendlesohn's anticipation to such attempts.

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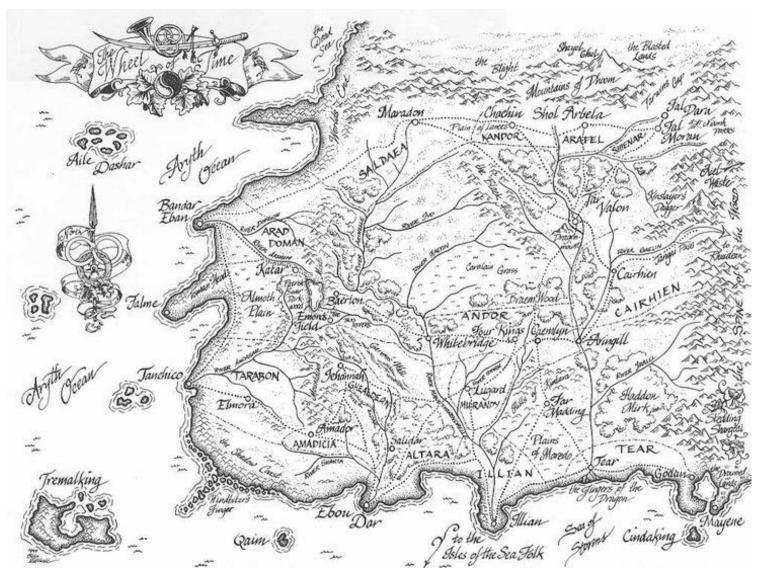
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# Appendices

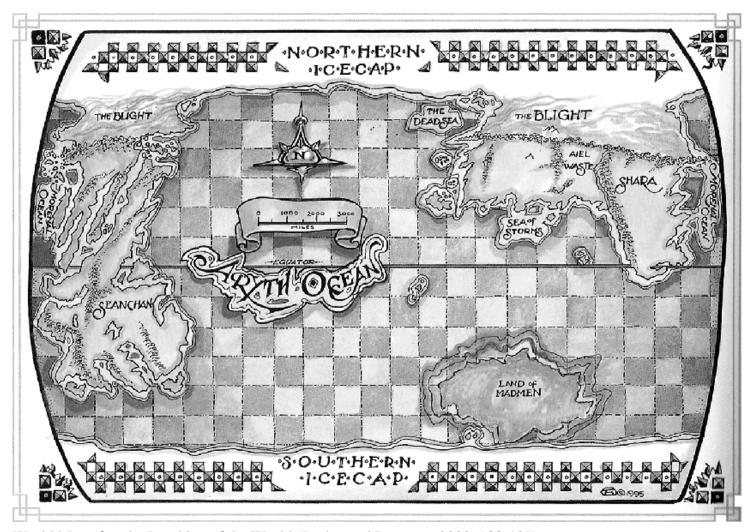
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### Appendix A



Map of the Westlands (Jordan and Patterson 2000, 286-287)

### Appendix B



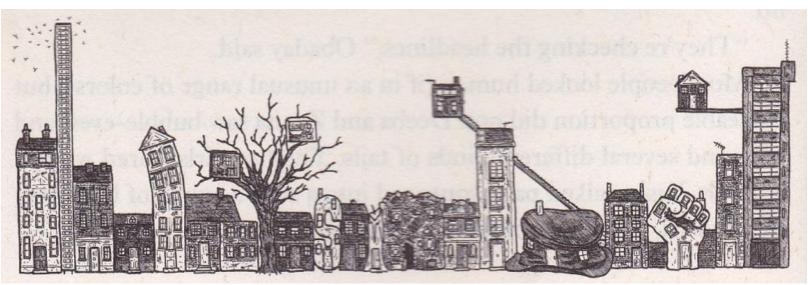
World Map after the Breaking of the World (Jordan and Patterson 2000, 188-189)

## Appendix C



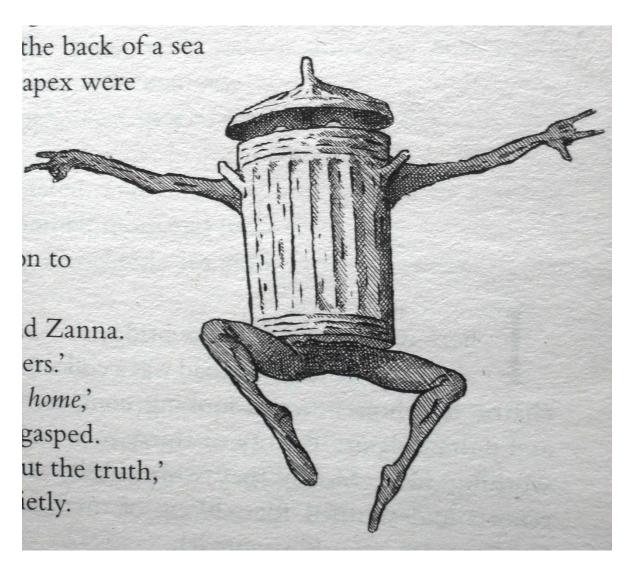
Yorick Cavea (Miéville 2011, 304)

## Appendix D



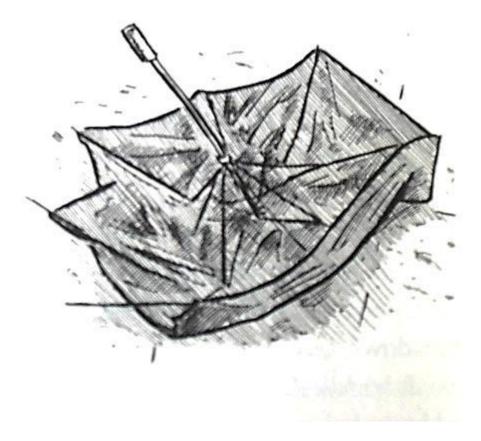
Buildings made of moil (Miéville 2011, 54-55)

## Appendix E



Binja (Miéville 2011, 101)

## Appendix F



Unbrella (Miéville 2011, 22)