Blood Ties

and

'Kings. What a good idea': Monarchy in Epic Fantasy Fiction

Pamela Freeman

Doctor of Creative Arts

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Certificate of Authorship/Originality

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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Abstract

The thesis *Blood Ties* is a novel in the epic fantasy tradition. It is intended to be the first of *The Castings Trilogy*. A synopsis of the second and third books of the trilogy is also included.

The exegesis, "'Kings. What a good idea.': Monarchy in epic fantasy fiction", examines some of the reasons writers from democratic countries may choose to use monarchical political structures in epic fantasy novels. It considers evidence from folktale research, primate behavioural studies, literary traditions, both ancient and modern, and the effect of religious doctrine and history on the symbolic role of the monarch. Folktales are found to have had very little effect on the role of kings in epic fantasy, which has been influenced by a combination of literary traditions, including the Arthurian saga and the historical romances of Sir Walter Scott. More profoundly, the meaning of the king's role has been influenced by the Christian mythos in two ways: the king is a Christ surrogate who sacrifices his own safety for the good of the body politic and, in being successful against evil, restores a version of Paradise/Eden for his people.

'Kings. What a good idea.'
Monarchy in epic fantasy fiction

Part Two

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Royalty was like dandelions. No matter how many heads you chopped off, the roots were still there underground, waiting to spring up again.
It seemed to be a chronic disease. It was as if even the most intelligent person had this little blank spot in their heads where someone had written: 'Kings. What a good idea.' Whoever had created humanity had left in a major design flaw. It was its tendency to bend at the knees.
Terry Pratchett, *Feet of Clay*, 1997, p. 96

In writing *Blood Ties*, the novel which accompanies this exegesis, I was working within a genre, that of epic fantasy, the kind of book which is usually described by publicists as 'in the tradition of *The Lord of the Rings*'. It is a very specific genre, requiring a very long story, a pre-industrial society, a rampant and sometimes radical evil which threatens that society, a quest structure and a universe where magic works. It also often has a group working together to combat the evil, rather than one single hero working alone. It requires a 'secondary creation', as Tolkien put it, of a self-consistent world which differs from our own (Tolkien, 1964, p. 45). The genre abounds with secondary creations which are based on a monarchical political structure. In writing *Blood Ties*, one of my main concerns was with the representation of a political system that would satisfy the needs of the fantasy genre and yet escape or challenge the use of monarchy within it; solving this problem led me to consider very closely some fundamental aspects of the use and function of monarchy in the genre.

Like Terry Pratchett, I have a jaundiced view of kings. I am interested in history, and reading history gives you a cynical attitude to monarchy. The more you understand about the processes by which kings rule, the less you can believe in the concept of a 'good king'. I do, however, like epic fantasy fiction. I read it and I write it. But I am frequently mystified and frustrated by the insistence of modern epic fantasy writers – living in democratically ruled countries – to choose, *deliberately*, to present a secondary creation, an alternate fictional world, where the aim is to put a king on, or keep him on, his throne[1].

I felt this frustration sharply some years ago when I read Guy Gavriel Kay's trilogy *The Fionavar Tapestry* (Kay, 1996)*.* Kay is Canadian, and in the first volume, *The Summer Tree*, the story magically takes five young Canadian students from Toronto to another world, where they become involved in a fight against radical evil. In the ensuing story, two of his characters, young men – law students – go off on an expedition to another country with the young prince of the nation to which they have

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[1] Pratchett is the only fantasy writer I have encountered who really investigates the different aspects of kingship, but because his work is satirical it lies outside the scope of this exegesis. I have used quotes from his *Discworld* series as chapter headings because I like them.

been transported. On the way, a villager makes a comment that they'd all be better off if the old, decrepit king died and the young prince were to take over. At a nod from the prince, his lieutenant kills the man for treason. The two Canadians protest. They are told that, if the king's security forces had found out, the man would have been tortured and his family would have lost everything. This way, at least the family get to keep their house and goods and the prince will make provision for them. Do the Canadians then make a stand for equality under the law, the immorality of torture, the right to free speech or any of the other things two fine, upstanding young law students ought to believe in? No. They mutter the equivalent of, 'Oh, that's all right then,' and ride happily off with the prince, subsequently risking their lives to support the regime.

This scene seriously angered me, as it implied that Kay approved of the use of arbitrary justice within his fictional, monarchic world. But it also made me wonder – what *is* it about kings and their 'right' to the throne?   Guy Gavriel Kay is one of the older writers of fantasy, strongly influenced by Tolkien. I wondered if perhaps current writers, new writers, have abandoned the patriarchal monarchy in favour of other form of societies. To test this, I looked at the website of HarperCollins Australia, the biggest publisher of fantasy fiction in Australia. In the first ten pages of their 53 pages of fantasy listings, I found current epic fantasy books set in monarchies or empires by: Sara Douglass, David Eddings, Alma Hromic, Katharine Kerr, Fiona MacIntosh, George RR Martin, Karen Miller, Diana L Paxson, Jane Routley, Tony Shillitoe, Veronica Sweeney, Jane Welch and Sarah Zettel. Monarchy was overwhelmingly the choice as background political system, and in many (Eddings, Douglass, Miller, Hromic, for example), the aim of the quest was to put or reinstate the rightful ruler on the throne. I am sure the other 43 pages had many more examples.

Why do people in democratic societies want to read stories about royalty? For they do, not only in fantasy fiction, but in tabloids, gossip magazines, 'tell-all' books from behind the scenes, or even official press releases. When fantasy writers in the 21st century begin to create their fictional worlds, a patriarchal monarchy appears to be the default option.

I have used monarchy as a background for books myself, but these are books for children, written deliberately in a fairy-tale format and undercutting the sexism and class consciousness of those tales. Because I was trying to question the genre as well as tell an entertaining story, I felt that I had to stay, for the most part, with the traditional order (although Floramonde, my created world, is a constitutional monarchy rather than an absolute one; Freeman, 1994, 1995, 1998). Most fantasy writers for adults are not trying to question the genre, or undercut anything. So why do they continue to choose monarchy?

Is it, as King James I suggested, that the monarchical 'forme of government, as resembling the Diuinitie, approcheth nearest to perfection, as all the learned and wise men from the beginning haue agreed vpon; Vnitie being the perfection of all things'(Stuart, 1598, p.1)?

When I began the novel which is presented here, I wrestled with these questions in earnest. It was my first novel for adults and my first very long story. I had to wonder – were there good practical reasons for writers to pick this type of setting? As I considered the alternatives, it became clear to me that there were, indeed, practical advantages for a writer in choosing a monarchy as a political system.

The first is simplicity. Having a monarchy cuts down on exposition enormously. Because I was interested in the portrayal of kings in fantasy, I chose to present my world as one on the brink of monarchy. The country in which the story takes place is 'The Domains', a collection of fiefdoms run by warlords. They are united by a common language and common culture. One of the warlords, Thegan, has ambitions to unite the domains politically by becoming king. Explaining all this, slipping in the exposition amongst the action, making sure the reader understood how the domains operated in both large and small ways, was much harder than saying, 'The kingdom is ruled by a usurper.'

As Steve Rasnic Tem points out, 'In the Middle Earth of Tolkien and the Mercury of E.R. Eddison, the protagonists are enveloped by all manner of strange backgrounds and exotic figures, all of which tell us more exactly what sort of characters these are' (Tem, 1991, p. 8). Even better, it seems, is a strange background – that is, different to our own – but one which is familiar to the reader.

Readers know about kings. And queens. They know about their analogues, sultans and emperors and high chieftains. They know about barons and captains of the guard and palaces and courts. They know you can't trust a real courtier and the grand vizier is always evil. They know a great deal and they often expect to get more of what they know, which gives us the second main reason I believe writers (and publishers) use monarchies. They sell.

It is easy to market something 'in the tradition of *The Lord of the Rings'*. There is a contract between publisher and reader when a book is positioned in the market in this way. The cover has to have mountains on it. Maybe a horse. Some mist with a gleam of light in the distance. The impression of distance and wilderness. Perhaps a hooded figure or a group of travellers in cloaks. The reader (the consumer) knows what they are buying. The reader wants a long story, complex and exciting. The story must contain magic of some kind or another. The fight must be between good and evil. Good has to win. Lene Kaaberol, the Danish fantasy writer, says that she has

'signed a contract guaranteeing a happy ending' when she begins a fantasy novel (personal communication).

To create a fantasy world without a monarchy, or a world in which the existence of monarchy is the evil, is to stray from this clearly defined road. Perhaps the reader won't like it. More to the point for many writers, perhaps the *publisher* won't like it and it will never get published. Some writers, no doubt, take this into account when planning their next book. As all marketing people know, the familiar with a twist sells more than the strange or the innovative. In Chpaters 2, 3 and 4 I discuss the literary tradition which has given rise to the epic fantasy as commercial fiction.

It may also be that the landscape of epic fantasy is the landscape of the quest, which requires the physical effort of travel as an analogue for moral stature. Frodo and Sam from JRR Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, or Ged and Arren from Ursula Le Guin's *The Earthsea Sequence*, are heroes partly because they endure significant physical trials and yet persevere. The requirement that travel be physically demanding and take the hero into the wild puts us into a pre-mechanised world; and in our own world, that returns us to a time which is associated with monarchies. In fact, in our own world, pre-Industrial Revolution governments varied widely and included quasi-democracies, tribal councils of elders (both men and women), local elected governments, warlordships, empires and theocracies. But the tradition English-speaking writers draw upon is the British one, and monarchy has existed there (with brief interruptions) for a very long time. A particular level of technology – or perhaps more importantly, access to wilderness and unsettled lands – may be associated in the writers' and readers' minds with earlier times and so with monarchy.

Brian Attebery suggests that the choice of a pre-industrial landscape and political system is a way of presenting 'the other', a subversion of modern realist norms which allows a wider vision of humanity and the universe than the restrictions of mimetic fiction (Attebery, 1995, in Latham and Collins). I would like to think this is true, although I am not sure that monarchy is an essential part of such a subversion. Stephen Donaldson achieves much the same thing in his *Chronicles of Thomas Covenant* without a throne in sight.

But perhaps there are other, more fundamental, reasons why we like kings. Perhaps the need for a single male authority figure is rooted deeply in our culture, our psyches, even our genes. To explore this idea, I decided to examine primate studies regarding social organisation and to look at psychological theories which might throw light on this type of narrative sub-structure (Chapters 5 and 6). These theories, along with a great deal of the literary tradition, were influenced by the work of Sir James

Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, and I discussed that work at length in Chapters 7 and 8, along with that of other comparative mythologists.

It seemed necessary to me to do this because in my own writing, and in discussions with other fantasy writers over the years, it seemed to me that fantasy writers do not create the kind of worlds that they do mainly because of commercial considerations, but because they like them; because they find them deeply satisfying. Most fantasy writers started out as readers of fantasy in childhood: Narnia, Alice, hobbits, Borrowers, Chrestomanci were part of their mental world. A significant proportion 'discovered' fantasy in adolescence with *The Lord of the Rings* and became addicted – often to reading as well as to fantasy. (This is one of the reasons *The Lord of the Rings* is consistently voted the best book by book buyers – for many now adult readers, it opened the world of books to them for the first time.)

Get a group of fantasy writers around a dinner table, as I did recently, and they will talk willingly about trying to create in their own work the 'sense of wonder' they felt as a reader. (Although 'sense of wonder' is a term which has traditionally been used in reference to science fiction, it seems to be increasingly used among practitioners of fantasy as well.) Trying to pin the writers down about what 'sense of wonder' means is more difficult. One of my guests talked about a sense of space, a sense of wilderness; another of potential – anything can happen. This resonated for me with CS Lewis' description of his discovery of the 'Northern myths', the Scandinavian legends which shaped his adolescence and much of his writing (Lewis, 2002).

Fantasy may thus be described by its effects as well as its contents; a 'sense of wonder' may be how we know we are encountering strongly felt writing which uses a fantasy landscape to evoke particular feelings. Part of the sense of wonder, I think, must be a sense of 'heightened reality': that is, everything which occurs within the book matters. Every word, every action, counts towards the outcome. There is no such thing as a stray thought or a meaningless comment. Ursula Le Guin makes this explicit in her use of magic in *The Earthsea Sequence*. 'Think of this: that every word, every act of our Art is said and is done either for good, or for evil' (Le Guin, 1971a, p. 35).

A sense of heightened reality – greater than mimesis – is not confined to fantasy fiction, of course. All fiction partakes of it to some extent. But in fantasy, as in blockbuster thrillers, the stakes are very high: the life and often the soul of the world, or at least of one nation, is in the balance. Fantasy fiction takes us to a place where everything matters, nothing is mundane, nothing can be ignored, nothing overlooked

without grave consequences. And once we are there in this extraordinarily significant time and place, it gives us magic.

Magic, apart from its other attributes (fun, astonishment, the vicarious enjoyment of power), links the reader to a higher source of significance. Immanence, a higher being, Guidance, Destiny, Fate, Order, Equilibrium…magic occurs, in most fantasy fiction, within a theoretical framework which implies or explicitly requires the existence of power which is greater than human. God exists; the gods order our lives; something is in control of our destinies.

Which brings us back to kings, because often the fantasy narrative requires the 'rightful' king to be on the throne. The term 'rightful' within this context has less to do with patrilineal inheritance and more to do with destiny and the intentions of the Immanent, however that is portrayed within the created world.

Perhaps this is why kings are a popular trope; they lend themselves easily to a discourse based on immanence. Why that might be so, however, remains complex and will be discussed at length in Chapters 6 and 7.

What monarchists say

'But that's not right, see? One man with the power of life and death.'
'But if he's a good man-'Carrot began.
'What? What? OK. OK. Let's believe he's a good man. But his second-in-command – is he a good man too? You'd better hope so. Because he's the supreme ruler, too, in the name of the king. And the rest of the court… they've got to be good men. Because if just one of them's a bad man the result is bribery and patronage.'
.....
'Even so, a good man as king-'
'Yes? And then what? Royalty pollutes people's minds, boy. Honest men start bowing and bobbing just because someone's grandad was a bigger murdering bastard than theirs was.'
        Terry Pratchett, *Men at Arms,* 1993, pp. 69-70

Before I went exploring biological, anthropological, psychological and literary theories which might explain why kings are so popular in epic fantasy, I thought I should find out if they are still popular in reality, and why. That is, how many monarchists are there and why are they monarchists? Why, within constitutional monarchies, are efforts to create republican states often thwarted? What do the monarchists say is good about kings?

To do this, I looked firstly for surveys relating to monarchy and republicanism and then at the websites and publicity material of groups around the world who support the retention of constitutional monarchs.

There were some interesting figures from surveys conducted over the past few years. In 2002, the *New Statesman* found that just under one in four young Britons

(16-25 year olds) believed the monarchy should be abolished (April 29, 2002, p. 24), while *The Independent* newspaper found that only 12 per cent of Britons overall wanted the monarchy abolished entirely (*The Australian,* April 10, 2002). It is interesting that both these polls were conducted just after the Queen Mother's funeral. A poll a year earlier by *The Independent* had found 34 per cent wanted the monarchy abolished (*The Australian,* April 10, 2002).

In Australia, a referendum on becoming a republic in 1999 resulted in a vote of 55 per cent in favour of maintaining the current system. Polls in 2005 found the figures roughly the same, although support for a republic went up when people considered Prince Charles becoming the Head of State (Henry, 2005).

Why do people support monarchies? I examined the websites and manifestoes of various pro-monarchy groups, and found that their main themes seem to be that something which is working should be left alone, and a desire to ensure continuity with past traditions. Underlying this is a deep distrust of elected officials and party politics. Interestingly, this distrust is shown by politicians as well as by voters – Tony Abbott, currently an Australian cabinet minister, has made this argument forcefully (Abbott, 1995). In monarchist discourse, the monarch (in the cases examined, Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth) is said to represent all the people and to have their best interests at heart. This is a fascinating argument for anyone with even a modicum of historical knowledge. Historically, the monarchs of European countries have cared for their own interests first. They were not thought of as 'representing' anyone, except perhaps God. There appears to have been a magnificent sleight of hand which has whisked away a history of tyranny, oppression and exploitation and replaced it with a 'tradition' of pastoral care and concern. Why this has happened will be discussed later in this exegesis, but the fact that it has happened at all is the main point. For the monarchist, the monarch is a kindly, protective, apolitical figure, ensuring that today will be very much like tomorrow, protecting us from political machinations and sudden revolutions, from riots and violent protests, from *extremes* of any kind.

This version of the monarch is the version which is associated, in fantasy fiction, with 'the good king' or 'the rightful king'. We can see from the number of people who still support monarchy that the desire for this kind of ruler is not confined to readers of fantasy.

Chapter 2: Folktales

'…Obviously, as king, he would concentrate on those things traditionally associated with kingship-'
'Waving,' said Mr Sock.
'Being gracious,' said Mrs Palm.
'Welcoming ambassadors from foreign countries,' said Mr Potts.
'Shaking hands.'
'Cutting off heads-'
'No! No. No, that will not be part of his duties…'
Terry Pratchett, *Feet of Clay,* 1997, p. 228

Discussions of fantasy literature often refer to 'folk tale' or 'fairy tale' roots. Richard Mathews, for example, in his book *Fantasy: The Liberation of the Imagination,* states that as 'a literary genre, modern fantasy is clearly related to the magical stories of myth, legend, fairy tale and folklore from around the world.' (Mathews, 2002, p.1) When Brian Attebery, a pioneer in fantasy scholarship, speaks of 'the oral predecessors of modern fantasy' he is clearly referring to folk and fairy tales (Attebery, 1992, p.54).

Theorists have perhaps been encouraged to draw parallels between epic fantasy and folk or fairy tales by JRR Tolkien's famous lecture 'On Fairy Tales', in which his enthusiasm for narrative structures which provide what he terms 'eucatastrophe' – the 'Consolation of the Happy Ending' – is directed at modern works as well as traditional folk tales (Tolkien, 1964, p. 60). Indeed, most of what Tolkien says in this lecture can be applied to his own work; and it is perfectly clear that he meant it to be so applied. Tolkien would have had no difficulty in agreeing with Attebery when he suggests that in *Lord of the Rings* Tolkien's 'presentation of events is governed by the rhetorical structure of a folktale' (Attebery, 1992, p. 54).

The lecture on fairy stories has been quoted by almost every later fantasy theorist who has dealt with the creation of 'Secondary Worlds' (a term which originated in this lecture) such as Middle Earth (Tolkien, 1964, p. 45).   Its approach to narrative structure within such worlds is seen to be widely applicable by scholars. Colin Manlove is typical when, in dicussing the nature of fantasy fiction, he refers to Tolkien's lecture extensively (Manlove, in Schlobin, 1982). The most influential element of Tolkien's argument was the definition of eucatastrophe as being desirable and attainable within contemporary fiction; that modern writers could and should have 'happy endings', just as fairy stories do.

Does Tolkien's theory about narrative structures in fantasy fiction help us in discovering why monarchy is the preferred political system in modern epic fantasy? Perhaps it does, if a happy ending, a eucatastrophe, can only take place within

something which is *like* a fairy story or folk tale. Perhaps it is simply that fantasy novels are longer and more complex folk tales, using the themes and relationships of the tales and elaborating them with mimetic literary devices such as an emphasis on character or focalisation through one character's eyes.

Of course, folk tales and epic fantasy share many tropes: wizards, witches, animal helpers, elves, dwarves, objects of power, stark contrasts between good and evil, swords and sorcery. Perhaps more importantly, they share a landscape, a countryside rather than a cityscape, alternating villages with wilderness, a place where quests can happen. This is the most powerful trope of all in epic fantasy fiction. But does a sharing of tropes guarantee similar meaning? Asking the same question of a different genre may give a clearer perspective to this question. Both *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens and *The Turn of the Screw* by Henry James are ghost stories. They both include visitations from dead people to the living, in a setting of wealth and privilege, during the Victorian period. However, they are strikingly dissimilar books, although they use the same tropes. A simple correspondence of tropes does not, then, mean that the works are similar in meaning or impact upon the reader.

Perhaps a sharing of tropes does, at the least, imply a choice by the author to work within a known tradition. If this is so, do *all* the tropes need to be present? Must a writer choose a monarchy in order to stay within the tradition? Many writers have not chosen the monarchic political structure for their secondary creation but still write epic fantasy. The most obvious example is Stephen Donaldson's *The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant*, first published in the 1970s, now a classic in the field.

So what is the importance of fairy tales to epic fantasy? Referring to Tolkien's insistence on the eucatastrophic ending, perhaps the importance lies in the narrative structure of traditional tales, which leads the reader to the consolation of the happy ending. Kathryn Hume looks at stories from 'traditional societies', by which she seems to mean those where oral storytelling of indigenous stories was extant at the time when ethnologists first recorded the stories. She states that these stories present people either succeeding or failing to imitate or embody a mythic pattern. In modern fantasy writing, she suggests, the fantasy (that is, deviation from consensus reality, such as magic) 'serves to let [writers] copy the mythic pattern closely, and thus reinforces meaning' (Hume, 1984, p.33).

This allows us to test the proposition that epic fantasy writers use kings because it is 'traditional', and that this tradition 'reinforces meaning' for the reader. We can test the first part of this statement by examining how, when and for what purpose royalty appears in traditional tales and comparing it to modern epic fantasy novels.

Narrative structures in folk tales

If it is true that monarchy is merely a component within a fairy tale narrative structure, replicated by modern writers purely as part of the tradition, then we should be able to find strong echoes of modern fantasy plots about kings in earlier folk tales which have kings as characters, and we should be able to find kings in modern novels playing essentially the same roles that they do in the earlier tales.

We may find that the narratives structures do repeat the folk tale narrative structure, complete with the use of royalty; that they do not repeat it at all; or that they repeat only some elements of it. This may include making a different use of royalty. That is, the narrative structures of modern stories may repeat some or all of the folk tale pattern, but the role – or the meaning – of monarchy, and specifically of kings, may be different.

In order to compare the narrative structures, we need some way of analysing the folk tales to discover their treatment of royalty. Two main theorists are useful here: Vladimir Propp and Antti Amatus Aarne (and his translator, Stith Thompson).

The Russian structuralist Vladimir Propp in *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928) delineated a way of analysing fairy tales by examining their 'functions'; that is, units of action. He enumerated 31 functions which he claimed, following an analysis of 100 Russian fairy/folktales, contain all the elements present in all such tales. He presented a coding system by which these functions could be written as a type of formula which described individual tales, just as a chemical formula describes a substance.

More controversially, he claimed that these functions occurred in a set order and that this order never deviated (although he allowed that some sections could be 'inverted', he maintained that this did not constitute a deviation).

Using the 31 functions, he claimed to describe an underlying formula for all Russian folktales.   In this he paralleled comparative mythologist Joseph Campbell's claims about 'the hero's journey' which must also follow a specific pattern, the 'monomyth': 'A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man'. This 'monomyth' is a symbolic representation of the journey of the psyche to fruitful adulthood, and is therefore, according to Campbell, universal (Campbell, 1973, p.30, p.21).

Propp's claims for his formula are less encompassing than Campbell's, although he speculated that the underlying order it represented might be present in folktales across the world. Propp and Campbell have some common points of reference: leaving home, a magical helper, trials to be overcome, a reward at the end, and so on.

The notable difference is that the hero of Propp's formula does not necessarily bestow 'boons on his fellow man'. On the contrary, it is the hero who is accorded a boon at the end (marriage and wealth). Is this the difference between folk tale and myth, or merely two researchers reading the same material differently? Campbell does not list all his source material, so detailed comparisons are hard to make, but it does not seem that he and Propp were looking at the same type of story: Campbell has looked actively for mythic stories about 'a number of the world's symbolic carriers of the destiny of Everyman' (Campbell, p.36), including stories from many of the world's religions. Stories which did not fit the monomyth schema were excluded.

This preselection of which stories to analyse means that, although Campbell used some folk tales in illustrating his thesis, the concept of 'the hero's journey' may not be helpful in assessing the influence of the folk tale structure on fantasy writers' use of the particular folk tale trope of monarchy.

Propp, in contrast to Campbell's carefully winnowed selection, has simply used every Russian folktale he could find which fit into the Aarne-Thompson tale types 300-749; the tales that Aarne-Thompson describe as 'ordinary folk tales'. Aarne's *The Types of the Folktale* (translated by Stith Thompson in 1964) is a classification of traditional stories into 'tale-types' by virtue of the 'motifs' within them; classifying according to dominant motifs. As Propp points out, this is highly subjective, particularly in a complex tale where there is likely to be more than one strong motif. The construction of motifs is also variable: sometimes based on actions, sometimes on personality, sometimes on social position. Although Propp was dissatisfied with the Aarne-Thompson approach, he recognised that Aarne's classification system was widely used and the tale-types were recognisable to anyone interested in the subject.

The 'ordinary folk tales' (tale types 300-749) are the stories also known as 'marchen', and contain many of the stories we think of as 'fairy tales'. They were the source material for the 17th century French salon writers such as Charles Perrault and Catherine Bernard and for those who followed them in later centuries, such as English fairy story writer Andrew Lang, the compiler of the influential *Fairy Books* (Lang, 1950a-i). These tale types include familiar stories such as *Cinderella*, or *Cap o' Rushes*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Rapunzel* and *Rumpelstiltskin*. They also contain many less familiar stories, not all of which have 'happy endings'.

Kings in folk tales

Propp ignores the social position and gender of the characters in tales, claiming that they can be easily swapped for other characters as long as the function remains the same.

He makes an exception for kings as agents of matrimonial, monetary or social reward, however, giving an entire function (No. 31) over to 'The hero is married and ascends the throne' – the final function in his set (Propp, 1990, p. 63).

In delineating characters ('dramatis personae' in Propp's method) he suggests that tales do not have characters as such but rather 'spheres of action' and identifies the king and/or the king's daughter as possessing a sphere of action which involves:

- the assignment of difficult tasks
- branding (marking the hero either physically or by possession of some object)
- exposure (of the hero as the hero)
- recognition (ditto)
- punishment of a second villain/false hero
- agreeing to marriage to the princess.

It does not matter whether it is the princess (the 'sought-after person') or the father who carries out these actions. Similarly, it does not matter if the king is benevolent or not – what is crucial is the power he wields, which allows a particular set of narrative functions to occur.

Regarding heroes (who are often princes), Propp suggest that there are only two types: the seeker, such as the soldier in *The 12 Dancing Princesses*, and the victimised (often enchanted) hero, as in *The Frog Prince* (Propp, 1990, p.80).

Aarne-Thompson's index of the same type of tales (that is, tale types 300-749) lists 26 individual tale types and/or variants which relate to kings. Having looked at the narrative outlines of each of these tale types, I classified the king's role as:

Evil or tyrannical king:	5
Animal/bird king:	5
Deceived or imperilled king:	3
Testing/Rewarding agent:	3
Disguised king/robber:	3
King as father:	3
King taught a lesson:	2
King is bastard:	1
Innocent king:	1
Total:	**26**

This shows a wide variation – but is completely misleading. Even a cursory look at the 2411 tale-types show that kings appear in many more tales than those listed in the index. I read the narrative outlines of all the 2411 tales given in the Aarne-Thompson index and found many more of them included kings that the 26 tales

indexed under 'king'. In addition, many of them included queens, princes and princesses, which implies the existence of monarchy. Queens, interestingly, appeared *only* as the wife to a king, never as a princess who has inherited the throne.

Propp concentrated on the tale-types numbered 300-749, the 'ordinary folk tales' or 'marchen' tales. I read the narrative descriptions of these closely. The main role kings appear to play in these stories is as a testing/rewarding agent.

This usually relates to:

- a problem which the king cannot solve and for which he needs the hero's help
- a testing of the hero for suitability to marry the king's daughter (the test may be the solving of the problem)
- the king being impressed by the hero's qualities even if there is no problem and no daughter (much, much rarer).

All three roles end with the king as the agent of reward: matrimonial, monetary or social or, more commonly, matrimonial *and* monetary *and* social (that is, half my kingdom and my daughter's hand in marriage with an implied inheritance of the throne).

This result resonates with the findings of Gottschall *et al* (2003) that male protagonists in folktales are likely to be primarily motivated to gain social status and material wealth. Taking an evolutionary perspective, Gottschall *et al* assume this to be a strategy to acquire a mate.

In this approach the king may be described simply as the mechanism through which the protagonist achieves his goal – in Gottschall's terms, reproductive success symbolised by marriage. The social status and wealth acquired by the hero (even if acquired by that marriage) ensures the well-being of any children and therefore further enhances reproductive success.

Royalty is also represented by princes and princesses. Even when the king is not a specified figure in a tale-type, the presence of a prince or princess implies the existence of a king.

Looking more closely at the tale-types Propp used in his morphology (that is, Aarne-Thompson types 300-749), we can see that monarchy (rather than king as character) is present in many.

Excluding the variants on each tale type, there are actually only 333 tale types listed between numbers 300 and 749. Of these, 113 explicitly refer to at least one royal character; often several royal characters appear in the same tale (total 150 such characters). Below see a table listing the appearance of royalty in these tales according to the roles played (loosely based on Propp's 'sphere of action' description for these characters).

Appearance of any royalty		113	
King		**Prince**	
Hero	6	Hero	15
Villain	0	Villain	1
Father/agent of	**17**	Husband	1
reward	4	Rescued or is	**22**
Victim/Rescued	6	reward	**2**
Husband (= queens)	1	Other princes (ie	
Enemy	**34**	brothers of hero)	**41**
Total		**Total**	
Princess		**Queen**	
Hero	10	Victimised wife	**6**
Villain	2	and mother	
Bride	3	**Total**	**6**
Rescued/ becomes	**60**		
reward			
Total	**75**		

Table 1: Roles played by royal characters in tale types 300-749

The Aarne-Thompson set of tale-types shows that monarchy is used primarily as a scaffold upon which to dangle a reward. The greatest reward it is possible for an ordinary person to imagine within a monarchy is, of course, to ascend the throne, and this is the reward most often accorded to the heroes of folktales, both male and female. Princes and Princesses are merely the means by which this can happen, via marriage, whether that is to Cinderella, or to the country boy who makes the princess laugh for the first time. Whether it is the marriage or the throne which is the real goal is irrelevant to this discussion; in both cases it is the king who provides the reward.

It is worth nothing that there are many, many tales where these are not the rewards received by the hero; for example, the numerous stories about cheating death. However, where rewards are bestowed by human agency, that agency is likely to be royal.

Of course, the institution of monarchy underlies all the stories since almost all of them were composed, related or recorded during a monarchic period. Kings are taken for granted, but primarily as a representative of economic and political power. They are not represented as caring for their subjects or representing good against evil, although princes as heroes must often face evil embodied in a monster, dragon or witch.

Are the theories any use?

The idea of the king as a sphere of action is a useful concept, as is the idea of functions within a story.

Propp also emphasises the recurrent image of prosperity and peacefulness at the beginning of the tales he analysed; prosperity which is disrupted by the events of the villain. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

However, having gone over the Aarne-Thompson tale types in some detail, I found that Propp's idea that there is only one real folktale which has up to 31 parts (or 'functions') is clearly inaccurate. While it is undoubtedly useful for stories with a 'hero', not all stories have heroes. One example will suffice: the story of the fisherman who is given three wishes and subsequently wastes them, returning him to the status quo. There are many such stories where there is no journey away from home, no trials overcome, no special qualities of the protagonists and no real reward. Interestingly, these other stories rarely feature royalty, perhaps confirming the idea that in folk tales monarchy is about providing appropriate reward for dangers overcome.

If the hypothesis suggested earlier were true – if modern fantasy novels simplistically used folk tales as their basis, or had evolved from folk tales by applying modern literary devices to similar tales – then we should see, in contemporary fantasy novels, royalty being the scaffold from which reward hangs. Kings would therefore act as agents of reward and princesses or princes be given as rewards to the heroes.

This does occur occasionally. One can certainly point to instances of the story ending in royal marriages or betrothals (Aragorn marries Arwen in *The Lord of the Rings*; Lebannen becomes betrothed to Seserakh in *The Earthsea Sequence*; Rhapsody marries Ashe in the *Rhapsody* trilogy) although these are not marriages which reward heroes with princesses and thus prosperity and social rank. They are marriages between unknown heirs who have finally come into their inheritance and princesses or princes who are their equal in rank. However, there is no doubt that these marriages are rewards for the characters' courage, persistence, kindness, and so on, as revealed in the narrative. They are rewarded with a more modern prize than improved social class: romantic love.

Where the emphasis in the folk tale is on either the 'ordinary person' (the soldier, the cinderella) achieving high rank and status via marriage, or on the despised younger brother, the classic 'third prince', showing his worth and receiving due reward, in modern novels this socio-economic disparity is missing. The king is the romantic hero who bestows his hand, once he has established his hold on his kingdom, on an appropriate and beloved bride (who has proved her worth during the story, or whose worth is inherently greater than his).

Overall, therefore, what was most interesting in this analysis of folk tales was a gap. The story of the 'unknown heir' who comes to claim his kingdom (Arren, Ashe),

or the story of the secret heir who must fight to re-establish himself (Aragorn), both stock characters in modern fantasy fiction, are nowhere to be found in either Aarne-Thompson or in Propp.

These are later creations. If we are to find where the king in modern fantasy fiction comes from, we must look, not to the folk tale, but to the romance.

Chapter 3: The Missing Heir or, The Rightful King

> **Kings** *come in four kinds:…*
> *4Long-lost Kings. These are Kings who have been hidden or mislaid soon after birth. They are normally rather young and will be using the Tour to acquire both experience and various items of Royal regalia (SWORD, SCEPTRE, RING, CUP, etc.) which have been lost as least as long as they have. There is, however, a subsection of long-lost Kings who have been magically deprived of their Thrones. This will have been done either by the implanting of false memories or, in extreme cases, by transplanting the monarch to another body. In these cases the throne will be held by a usurper. Otherwise the same Rules apply. There is obviously a bit of an overlap between long-lost Kings and MISSING HEIRS, but you can generally tell the difference when you see one: a Missing Heir is almost inhumanly naive.*
> Diana Wynne Jones, *The Tough Guide to Fantasyland*, 1996, pp. 110-111.

The most influential missing heir story and the one most familiar to English writers is, of course, the Arthur legend, particularly as it appears in Thomas Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*. The influence of Malory's book on later romance and historical fiction and thus on fantasy fiction will be examined in Chapter 4.

All the Arthurian stories available to us are nostalgic, since the first stories about him were written several hundred years after the historic Arthur, if he existed, was alive. He appears first as an historical character in Nennius' 9th century *Historia Brittonum*, where he is credited with winning twelve battles, the last of which is *Mons Badonicus*. Gildas, writing about 540AD, dates this battle at 500AD, and says that the Britons here finally defeated their enemies the Saxons. If there was a historical Arthur, then, he was probably a 5th-6th century chieftain (Jackson, in Loomis, 1959, pp.1-3). Whether a Briton or a Welshman is unclear; certainly there is a large body of legend, folktale and bardic songs about Arthur from Wales which predates anything written about him in Latin or English (Black and Lloyd, 2000).

Nennius' skimpy reference to Arthur is not the prime source of our legends about him. They come from Geoffrey of Monmouth, writing in the 12th century. His *Historica Regum Britanniae* purported to be a history of Britain, which Geoffrey claimed was translated from 'a very old book in the British language'. Geoffrey's book established the characters of Arthur and Merlin, the fathering of Arthur by Uther Pendragon, Arthur's miraculous weapons, Mordred as enemy, and Merlin as the guide/wizard/mentor so familiar to us. However, the missing heir element is totally absent; Arthur is raised at court and is so well known and loved by his father's men that he is immediately crowned on Uther's death, although he is only fifteen (Geoffrey, 1978).

Geoffrey was translated into French by Wace, and the Arthurian stories found an eager audience in the European courts of the time (Wace and Layamon, 1977). Many

courtly romances followed, in a number of languages, including Latin (Haskins, 1961). The story of Arthur being taken by Merlin for safekeeping just after his birth appears first in the work of Robert de Boron, a Burgundian writing around 1200. His *Merlin* survives only in fragments, but a prose redaction of it is in the Vulgate Cycle of Arthurian stories, and a summary in the introduction to the *Suite de Merlin*, both French romances of the 13th century. In the Vulgate Cycle, Merlin puts Arthur 'into safe fosterage with Antor and in due course brings about his coronation as the rightful heir of Uter' (Micha, in Loomis, 1959, p. 321).

The 12th and 13th centuries saw a large number of verse and prose romances about Arthur, notably by Chretien de Troys and Marie de France, but most of these related to Arthur's actions after he had become king, and to the adventures of his knights, particularly in their search for the Holy Grail.

In English, the story appears first in both rimed and prose romances which are mostly adaptations or translations of the French stories (Ackerman, in Loomis, 1959, p. 481).

The Arthur romances were the first example in European literature of a long-established oral tradition fusing with contemporary mores to produce a sophisticated body of literature. Although other characters from the oral tradition, such as Robin Hood, became the hero of ballads and poems, the Arthurian saga is notable for its prose stories which combine heroic deeds with romantic love, sex, religion and evil to produce a robust, malleable literature with wide appeal and great influence, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

The Arthurian saga has given us a pattern for the missing heir trope as it appears in epic fantasy fiction.

Firstly, the throne must be either vacant or possessed by a usurper *and this is causing distress* – typically, a breakdown in law and public safety, although sometimes the malaise runs deeper.

Secondly, the heir must have been raised away from his family and/or birthright. The heir (almost always a male) may or may not know of his rights to the throne. Those rights may consist of blood inheritance or ordained destiny (selected by immanence). He usually lives under an assumed name or without his true patronymic.

Thirdly, the heir must be guided to claim the throne *at the right time*. This guidance is typically given by an older man/mentor, often a wizard.

Fourthly, the heir must be worthy of the throne, caring more for the good of the realm than for power or wealth.

Fifthly, he must show his commitment to right and to the realm through battle with the forces of evil. Occasionally this 'battle' does not include actual fighting, but is represented by some kind of physical and mental trial.

Sixthly, he is rewarded not only with the throne, but with an appropriate marriage.

While Arthur's story does not end with his marriage, the missing heir trope does, as story moves on to another kind of narrative, the quest. Before we look at how Arthur's story has affected modern fantasy writers, it is worth considering that the missing heir element of Arthur's story did not arise in a vacuum, but followed on from many early uses of the same trope, which may also have influenced modern writers.

Early missing heir stories

Missing heir stories go back a very long way. Perhaps the earliest example of a child raised by adoptive parents who returns to his birth-people to lead them to peace and glory is Moses.

Moses' mother hides him from Pharoah's edict that all Hebrew sons be killed at birth, sets him afloat on the Nile in a waterproof ark of bulrushes, and sends his sister to watch over the ark to see what happens to him. He is pulled from the river by Pharoah's daughter… 'and she had compassion on him, and said, this is one of the Hebrew's children' (Exodus 2:6). Moses is raised as Pharaoh's daughter's son; but is physically nurtured by his own mother who is employed as a wet-nurse. He is driven from home after Pharaoh finds out that he killed two Egyptians for 'smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren' (Exodus 2:11).

After various trials and tribulations in the land of Midian, Moses is told by God to return to Egypt and is given a magic 'rod' (the origin of the magic wand/staff of power? The dimensions of the rod are not given but it seems to be more like a walking stick than a baton). He returns to Egypt and is claimed as a brother by Aaron, who is also given a rod by God. Together they confront Pharaoh and demand the release of the Hebrews. What follows is the earliest description of a magicians' duel which we have, which ends only with the seven plagues and the release of the Hebrews, followed by the crossing of the Red Sea and the destruction of Pharaoh and his armies.

How closely does this correspond with the missing heir of fantasy fiction?

While Pharaoh is clearly the 'rightful king' of Egypt, he is not acting as a rightful king should to the Hebrews; they are oppressed by unreasonable demands. The public good is thus threatened. Moses was raised away from his own people, even though, through his sister's guile, he was cared for by his own mother. However, he did not know her as his mother until he returned to Egypt and was claimed as brother by

Aaron. Moses' guidance to claim the leadership of the Hebrews is given by God rather than a human mentor and is given at, presumably, the right time. Moses demonstrates that he is worthy of the throne by his actions in defending the Hebrews who were being 'smited' originally, and then later by his actions in the land of Midian where he again defends the helpless against violence. Moses and Aaron's battle with 'the forces of evil' in the form of Pharaoh is prolonged and bloody, ending in a great slaughter. One could argue that it is God rather than Moses who actually kills everyone, but it is Moses who chooses when to let the Red Sea come back onto its seafloor, wiping out the Egyptian army.

Moses is already married with children when this occurs, so cannot be rewarded in the traditional way with a suitable wife, but he is certainly given undisputed leadership of the Hebrews during the wandering in the desert which follows, exemplified by him being chosen to receive the Ten Commandments.

So far, then, the Moses story fits the narrative pattern. The differences are that Moses knows all his life that he is not biologically Pharaoh's daughter's son and that he is a Hebrew. The direct intervention of God is also a divergence – although fantasy fiction often has intervention by destiny, fate, or prophets/seers acting on behalf of gods. In some books, notably Guy Gavriel Kay's *Fionavar Tapestry* (the plot of which has a missing heir of a different kind)*,* there are even gods intervening in person – however, these are gods and goddesses of a pantheon, who acknowledge fealty to a Creator (known as the Weaver in the world of Fionavar). It is rare for the Creator to intervene directly.

There are other mythic missing heir stories, from a number of different traditions. From the Greeks, we have the story of Perseus, the son of Zeus and Danaê. Before his birth, an oracle foretells that Danaê's son will kill her father, Acrisius. Acrisius sets his daughter and the baby Perseus adrift in a chest to prevent this, but they are rescued by Zeus. Perseus is brought up by King Polydectes and later does kill his grandfather, by accident, when throwing the discus at the Larissan games (Graves, 1974).

Another early Greek story which has strong echoes of the missing heir story is that of Oedipus. According to Sophocles, Oedipus is born in Thebes to King Laius and his wife Jocasta. When a prophecy from Apollo's temple forecasts that the child will grow up to kill his father and marry his mother, Laius orders that the child be pinioned through the ankles and cast out on the mountainside to die. The shepherd to whom this task is entrusted is too soft-hearted to do it, and gives the child to another shepherd from Corinth. He is adopted by the king and queen of Corinth and is brought up as their natural son. As an adult, he learns of the prophecy and leaves home to protect his 'parents'. On the road, he meets Laius, has a road rage incident,

and kills him. He then proceeds to Thebes, which he saves from the Sphinx, and marries the queen, Jocasta, to cement his position as newly acclaimed king.   In the play, 'Oedipus the King', he discovers the truth of all this, puts out his eyes and awaits judgment. Jocasta hangs herself after the truth is revealed (Sophocles, 1973).

While eucatastrophe is definitely not the aim of this story – in fact, the opposite – it still bears some resemblance to the missing heir motif. I would argue that two elements of it and of the other examples quoted here have strongly influenced later writers. The first is the banishment of the child from the birth family and his raising by others, either to protect the child or to protect the parents or grandparents. The second is the establishment of a 'rule' of fantasy fiction: you can't beat a prophecy. Whatever you do to fight against it is exactly what is needed to bring it about. If Laius and Jocasta had bowed to the god's decree and brought Oedipus up as their own son, none of the tragedy would have happened. Disobedience to fate or the gods/God leads to disaster. If Pharaoh had listened to Moses' and Aaron's prophecies about the woe Egypt would feel if the Hebrews were not released, all would have been well.

Throughout medieval literature we find stories which echo these rules, or which show us again the prevalence of the missing heir motif, particularly in stories about heroes.

From Ireland, the hero-story of Fionn Mac Uail (Finn MacCool) has Fionn being sent away by his mother to be raised by druid foster-mothers to prevent him being killed by the killers of his father Uail. He is known as Deimne and is trained in combat by his foster-mothers. After many adventures he becomes the head of the warriors of Ireland and receives the submission of his father's killers (Rackham, 1995).

Also from Ireland, the familiar theme of trying to prevent a prophecy comes in the story of Deidre, who is sent away to live in seclusion by her father after a soothsayer predicts she will cause 'the greatest amount of blood to be shed in Erin since time and race began. And the three most famous heroes that ever were found will lose their heads on her account' (Jacobs, 1990, p.66). But the bloodshed cannot be averted by human intervention. As with other stories, if Deidre had not been sent away by her father the tragedy would never have happened – she would never have met Naois, her husband, or Connachar, whose desire for her caused the fight.

From Wales, the story cycle known as *The Mabinogion* has the son of Pwyll, Lord of Dyved, stolen at birth by a great clawed beast. His mother, Rhiannon, is blamed for his death and set a punishment. By accident, he is recovered by Teirnon Twrvliant, 'the best man in the world', when he is a baby, and brought up as his natural son until Teirnon hears the story of Rhiannon and realises that the child is

remarkably like Pwyll his father. Teirnon returns the child to Pwyll and Rhiannon and she is released from her punishment. The child is named Pryderi and grows up to inherit his father's kingdom and create a golden age (Jones, 1978).

By Elizabethan times, the missing heir motif is so familiar to audiences that it can be satirised in comedies such as Beaumont and Fletcher's *A King and No King* (Flores, 1993). The nineteenth century abounds with missing heir stories, the most influential of which will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Modern missing heirs

'Only the rightful king could do it, see,' said Nobby.
'Oh, right,' said Colon. 'I understand. Oh, yes. So what you're saying is, someone'd decided who the rightful king was before he pulled it out? Sounds like a fix to me. Prob'ly someone had a fake hollow stone and some dwarf inside hanging onto the other end with a pair of pliers until the right guy came along-'
Terry Pratchett, *Men at Arms*, 1993, p. 242

The most obvious example of a modern missing heir is that of Aragorn from Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. Aragorn, the last of the 'Kings of Numenor', was raised by his mother and Elrond the Half-Elven at Rivendell, half a continent away from the throne he claims in *The Return of the King*. There he was called 'Estel' which means 'hope'. He was guided by both Elrond and Gandalf the wizard (Tolkien, 1978a-c).

In the course of the story, Aragorn resumes his rightful name, reforges his ancestral sword, does battle with evil, reclaims his throne and, perhaps more importantly, is crucial in helping Frodo and Sam's quest, which enables the overthrow of Sauron, the Dark Lord. He is revealed to his subjects in two ways: by introduction from his mentor Gandalf, followed by battle, and by his possessing the 'healing hands' of a king.

Subsequently, he marries his long-standing love, Arwen Evenstar, and re-establishes the royal house.

So far, a classic missing heir story. Although Aragorn is not the 'hero' of *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien has made it clear that the resumption of the throne by the rightful king is crucial to achieving what he has called 'eucatastrophe', the happy ending, which is essential to this type of story.

In a letter to a friend, he writes: 'We are to see the overthrow of the last incarnation of Evil, the unmaking of the Ring, the final departure of the Elves, and the return in majesty of the true King, to take over the Dominion of Men, inheriting all that can be transmitted of Elfdom in his high marriage with Arwen daughter of Elrond, as well as the lineal royalty of Numenor.' (Tolkien, 1981, p 60).

Aragorn has always known his true identity. Other missing heirs are brought up in ignorance of their parentage. A striking example is the 1902 novel by Pauline

Hopkins, 'Of One Blood: or, The Hidden Self', about an African-American man who returns to Ethiopia and discovers (through magical means) that he is the true heir to that country's throne (Latham and Collins, 1995, p. 75).

Although not a king (although at the time of writing his eventual fate is yet to be determined), the most recent example of this type of missing heir is Harry Potter. Raised in obscurity, he is informed of his true, magic, inheritance by the classic wizard/mentor, Dumbledore, and returns to his rightful realm to battle the forces of evil. Potter has both genetics and destiny backing him; like all good missing heirs, he is the subject of a prophecy (Rowling, 1999).

The 'rightful king' may be made rather than born; or, rather, recognised as having been 'chosen' by immanent power. In Le Guin's *The Farthest Shore*, the third volume of the *Wizard of Earthsea* trilogy (now running to five volumes plus some short stories and known as *The Earthsea Sequence)*, Arren, Prince of Enlad, joins the mage Ged on a quest to restore the equilibrium of the Archipelago (Le Guin, 1971c). This is one of the fantasies where more is at stake than simply the rule of law or an evil overlord. Magic used by a rogue wizard has broken the barrier between death and life; death is winning by leaching all meaning from the living. Arren joins Ged in a journey through the lands of the dead. By doing so, he proves his fitness to take the throne of all the lands of the Archipelago. The throne has been empty for some hundreds of years and this emptiness is seen, in the story, to be connected with the malaise of the body commonwealth. Arren's ascension to the throne under his true name, Lebannen, is an act of healing.

The *Earthsea* books were originally written for children, but have been read far more widely. It is important to note that Le Guin intended Lebannen's ascension of the throne to be the end of the story of both Ged and Lebannen. Some twenty years later, however, she resumed the story in books clearly intended for adults. So far we have had *Tehanu* (1990)*, The Other Wind* (1999) and *Tales from Earthsea* (2001), books which interrogate some of the assumptions in the earlier books. Lebannen is trying, with limited success, to introduce a form of democracy to the Archipelago, and must marry a foreign princess to ensure safety abroad. It is all much more adult and complex than the quest he embarked upon with Ged.

And yet, at the end of *The Other Wind* the king becomes formally betrothed – the one element to the 'happy ending' which was missing from *The Farthest Shore*. In line with modern sensibilities, he marries a person rather than a figurehead; much of the book is devoted to the two royals getting to know one another and to the princess, Seserakh, showing her mettle. For eucatastrophe, we must have, not politically expedient marriage, but love. Tenar, the female protagonist from the second volume of

the series, *The Tombs of Atuan*, describes the final scene to Ged, who has stayed at home this time, on the island of Gont.

"Lebannen came and stood here, see, on my left, and then Seserakh came and stood here on my right. In front of Morred's throne. And I held up the Ring. … Lebannen took it in his hands and kissed it and gave it back to me. And I put it on her arm, it just went over her hand – she's not a little woman, Seserakh – Oh, you should see her, Ged! What a beauty she is, what a lion! He's met his match. – And everybody shouted. And there were festivals and so on. And so I could get away."
(Le Guin, 2001, p. 245).

This is the essence of eucatastrophe, modified by feminism and the disdain Le Guin's main characters feel for courts and secular power. Although the story is far more complex than a fairy tale, and is concerned primarily with human hubris and the fear of death, it ends in the classic way, thus completing Arren's journey to fully becoming King Lebannen.

Some 'missing heirs' are, in Diana Wynne Jones' term, 'long-lost kings' (Jones, 1996, p.110). Their function is the same – to regain the throne and take their rightful place. Valentine, in Robert Silverberg's *Lord Valentine's Castle*(1980), is one of these. His mind and personality have been magically switched into the body of a juggler so that his throne can be occupied by an impostor. The switch has wiped much of his memory, so that the first part of the book is about Valentine gradually recalling his past and coming to an understanding of who he is. The second, and far less interesting, part is about his reclamation of the throne. *Lord Valentine's Castle* is about class, power, ambition and love, and it ends, inevitably, with Valentine on his throne. He says to the assembled throng, 'Today we hold grand festival, to celebrate the restoration of the commonwealth and the making whole of the order of things….' (Silverberg, 1980, p. 503).

Part of the 'making whole' is the presence in the throne room of 'humbler folk' as well as dukes and princes; Valentine has learned, through his travels and travails, to be a real ruler, one who cares about the fate of the people under his care.

The most recent popular example of restoration of the throne combines the themes of inheritance and destiny. Elizabeth Haydon's *Rhapsody* trilogy ends – the third volume is actually titled *Destiny* – soon after Rhapsody publicly marries her true love Ashe, and they are revealed to be the 'Lord and Lady' of the land, who, although elected as head of a Council, are effectively rulers. Rhapsody, originally a farmer's daughter, has already been chosen as Queen to lead one of the world's races, the Lirin, and is chosen by acclamation to be the Lady over all the races of this commonwealth. Ashe, now named Gwydion, has a 'blood right' to the position of Lord.

These are only a few examples of the missing heir motif in post-World War II epic fantasy. There are many more. It is, for example, very popular in children's and young adult fantasy fiction, in books such as CS Lewis's *The Silver Chair* (1984f), Robin McKinley's *Deerskin* (1994), or Susan Cooper's *The Grey King* (1975) and *Silver on the Tree* (1977) in *The Dark is Rising* sequence.

If we accept that the missing heir is a powerful motif in epic fantasy, and perhaps underlies much of the use of monarchy as a political structure, since classically the missing heir reclaims a throne, we must ask two questions: why people like it, and where it comes from.

There seems to be two main themes carried by the missing heir story. The first is on the surface: the proper, patriarchal transmission of property. The missing heir must be the *rightful* heir, or the story goes awry. Twentieth century writers have played with this theme in many ways. Perhaps the most famous example is Josephine Tey's *Brat Farrar*, about someone who impersonates the missing heir yet who may, nonetheless, be a missing heir (Tey, 1949). There are many other examples. Popular writers such as Mary Stewart (*The Ivy Tree*, 1961) and Agatha Christie have used the trope as a basis for mysteries – in fact, in Agatha Christie's *Hercule Poirot's Christmas* (1938) there are no fewer than three missing heirs, two of whom are fake and one of whom is a murderer.

Inheritance and the rules of inheritance are central to patriarchy, and the reader's desire to see justice done gives a missing heir story considerable impetus, useful to a storyteller. But underneath this social, civilised meaning of the story there is another: the return of the child, the completion of the family, the rounding of the circle. This is a powerful image which speaks to our hearts and perhaps to our blood. The hunger to belong, to be part of, to connect to one's roots, is a real hunger, as many adopted children will testify, and relinquishing mothers speak eloquently of the gap in their lives left by the child given up for adoption (see, for example, three stories of families reunited in Campbell, 1999).

This theme carries the poignancy and heartache often expressed in missing heir stories, for the family may not be able to be completed – the child is often an heir because someone has died, or the revelation about blood ties may be unwelcome (as with Oedipus). But the underlying assumption here is that truth about family, about birth and birth status – noble or common, bastard or legitimate – is worth knowing; that the truth will set you free. There is a sense in many such stories that without this revelation, without the truth, the family, group or society is living in suspension, a kind of stagnation which, in fantasy fiction, is likely to bring about disruptions to the natural world, such as drought, famine or plague.

Since it carries such emotional weight, it is no wonder that the missing heir trope has been, and is, so popular with writers. When it is combined with the 'search for the rightful king' trope, as with Arthur, it is doubly potent and influential.

Chapter 4: Arthur, Sir Walter Scott, Tennyson and William Morris

Ah, thought Lord Rust, so he's that kind. Young Edward thinks the touch of a king was a cure for scrofula, as if royalty was the equivalent of a sulphur ointment. Young Edward thinks that there is no lake of blood too big to wade through to put a rightful king on a throne, no deed too base in defence of a crown. A romantic, in fact.
Terry Pratchett, *Men at Arms*, 1993, p.18

It would be hard to overstate the importance of Arthur's story, 'the Matter of Britain', on the latter reaches of English literature. It ranks with the St James' Bible and Shakespeare in shaping the tastes and subject matter of generations of writers, up to the present. Although Malory's influence was less in the 17th and 18th centuries, which had their own problems with defining and coming to terms with kingship, he became much more popular in the 19th century. As early as 1817 we have Robert Southey, the poet, translating Malory's *The Byrth, Lyf and Actes of King Arthur* (Faxon, 1989). It is interesting to speculate that nostalgia for the rule of an absolute king was only possible for people who had always lived peacefully under the reign of a constitutional monarch. Perhaps kingship only looks attractive when the king can *not* say, 'Off with his head!' or, perhaps more importantly, 'Give me your taxes!'

Scott and Tennyson

Sir Walter Scott, one of the first successful commercial writers of nostalgia, was influenced by the Arthurian saga, particularly in his presentation of chivalry and honour. While his opinion of Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* is unrecorded, we do know that Bishop Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry,* which includes four Arthurian ballads, inspired him so much that he began collecting Scottish ballads, later published in *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* in 1802-03.

Scott was the biggest selling novelist of the early 19th century, and arguably the century's most popular and influential. Interest in his books remains strong – at the time of writing, the Edinburgh University website devoted to him lists 15 books about his work published recently (www.walterscott.lib.ed.ac.uk/works/index.html.) Scott's use of supernatural themes, particularly prophecy, prefigures later fantasy novels. More significantly, his combination of crucial moments of history (such as Bonnie Prince Charlie's bid to regain the throne) with romance was extremely popular world-wide.

Later in the century, Alfred Lord Tennyson turned to Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* for inspiration for his own *Morte D'Arthur* of 1842. He added to this original poem until there were twelve *Idylls of the King*, the first four of which were published in 1859 (Tennyson, 1912). Tennyson began publishing poems in 1830, but

the bulk of his work was published between 1842 and 1885, during the long and very prosperous reign of Queen Victoria. He had grown up in the scandal-ridden and uncertain Regency period, a time of European war when the English king, George III, was not only unpopular but made insane by porphyria, while his son, the Prince Regent, was a byword for profligacy and adultery. Perhaps it is not surprising that in the *Idylls* he enthusiastically portrayed a king whose aim was peace, justice and godliness. His view of royalty was evidently appreciated by Victoria, as he was made Poet Laureate in 1850 and was awarded a baronetcy a few years before his death in 1896.

Tennyson was by far the most popular poet of his day and his work was widely read, studied and illustrated. The *Idylls* sparked a revived interest in all things Arthurian. Even Arthurian scholars who hated Malory, such as George Cox, responded to the increased interest in the subject by publishing popular versions of the legends (Cox and Jones, 1995). His 1871 introduction to *Arthurian Legends of the Middle Ages* begins 'The genius of a great poet has in our own time shed a new lustre of the story of Arthur…'. Whatever the literary merits of Tennyson's poem cycle, there is no doubt that it took a strong grip on the imagination of his contemporaries.

Tennyson, significantly, had a strong influence on the Pre-Raphaelite movement, of which William Morris was a leading member. Many of their paintings, such as Edward Burne-Jones' *The Beguiling of Merlin*, Dante Gabriel Rosetti's *Arthur's Tomb* or *The Damsel of the Sancte Grael,* or Morris' own *La Belle Iseult,* took Arthurian themes, often from Tennyson's work.

Southey's 1817 translation of Malory had led Rosetti, at least, to *Le Morte D'Arthur* some years before the forming of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (Faxon, 1989). The combination of Malory, Scott and Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* underlay much of the Pre-Raphaelite stance of nostalgia for the past and for the medieval relations of liege lord and vassal. Rosetti had begun writing his own Arthurian romances as early as 1840 (*Roderick and Rosalba: A Story of the Round Table*; Faxon, 1989, p. 33) but the only member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood to gain a real reputation as a novelist was William Morris.

Morris had read all of Sir Walter Scott's novels by the time he was seven and spent much of his childhood imagining himself into those stories, particularly the medieval novels of knights and chivalry (Daly, 1989). The entire Pre-Raphaelite movement, of which Morris was a leading figure, shows the influence of Scott's combination of history and romance. Called the writer of the 'first great fantasy novel ever written' by author Lin Carter in the introduction to Morris' novel *Water of the*

Wondrous Isles, (Morris, 1971*)*, Morris, along with his contemporary George MacDonald, created the tradition which was continued by JRR Tolkien.

Tolkien has acknowledged the influence Morris had on his own work. As early as 1914 he writes to his fiance: 'I am trying to turn one of the stories [from the Kalevala]… into a short story somewhat on the lines of Morris' romances with chunks of poetry in between…' (Tolkien, 1981, p. 7). In 1960, replying to a question about the influence of war on *The Lord of the Rings*, he says, 'Perhaps in landscape. The Dead Marshes and the approaches to the Morannon owe something to Northern France after the Battle of the Somme. They owe more to William Morris and his Huns and Romans, as in *The House of the Wolflings* or *The Roots of the Mountai.*' (Tolkien, 1981, p. 303). We may therefore trace a direct literary descent from Scott to modern fantasy fiction.

Scott's novels abound with missing heirs. In both epic poems such as *Rokeby* and novels such as *Guy Mannering* (1815), *The Antiquary* (1816), *The Heart of Mid-Lothian* (1817), *The Legend of Montrose* (1819), *The Abbot* (1820), *The Pirate* (1821), *Redgauntlet* (1824) and *The Talisman* (1825), the hero or someone close to him is revealed to be someone's heir (Barnaby, 2006). Sometimes they have been kidnapped at birth, rather than put into safekeeping, and usually the outcomes are happy when their identity is revealed. Often the revelation of his parentage is what is needed to ensure the happy marriage which is the hero's romantic due.

Scott was writing in a modified version of the gothic tradition which Jane Austen, writing at the same time, satirised in *Northanger Abbey* (1818). Melodrama rather than drama, Scott's novels were saved from mediocrity by his ability to create memorable characters (particularly minor characters), to bring history alive by the shrewd selection of details, and to keep the action moving.

During his lifetime, and beyond it, he was criticised for 'prettifying' history, for creating a market for nostalgia. At the time of *Ivanhoe's* publication, for example, one reviewer objected to the mixture of history and romance which became Scott's hallmarks (Croker, in Bradbury, 2006). The most trenchant criticism came from Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens) who claimed, in *Life on the Mississippi*, that where once the American South was a region of progress, practical industry and commitment to democracy,

Then comes Sir Walter Scott with his enchantments, and by his single might checks this wave of progress, and even turns it back; sets the world in love with dreams and phantoms; with decayed and swinish forms of religion; with decayed and degraded systems of government; with the sillinesses and emptinesses, sham grandeurs, sham gauds, and sham chivalries of a brainless and worthless long-vanished society. He did measureless harm; more real and lasting harm, perhaps, than any other individual that ever wrote.' (Twain, 2000, p.376)

If we are to believe Twain, even allowing for his characteristic exaggeration, Sir Walter Scott may be solely responsible for later writers 'in love with dreams and phantoms' (as good a description of fantasy writers as any) using monarchies in their books. Twain did what he could to offset the effects of Scott's work. His *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* was written deliberately to challenge Scott's nostalgia for the past (Twain, 1988).

Ursula Le Guin suggests that, 'We cherish the old stories for their changelessness. Arthur dreams eternally in Avalon, Bilbo can go "there and back again" and "there" is always the beloved familiar Shire. Don Quixote sets out forever to kill a windmill… So people turn to the realms of fantasy for stability, ancient truths, immutable simplicities' (Le Guin, 2001, p. xiv). She then goes on to be very scathing about the commercial exploitation of these yearnings.

Attebery believes, however, that nostalgia is not sufficient reason for fantasy writers to 'define their imaginative spaces by drawing on Medieval folklore and feudal institutions' (Attebery, 1995, p. 5). He suggests that, 'Something else is going on - something at least partly political,' and which may be that bringing older traditions into the present incorporates 'that sense of otherness... the sense that things have not always been as they are now, that our reality extends only as far as the social compact that upholds it' (Attebery, 1995, p. 6).

This was clearly Morris's intention. Morris's socialism called into question the value of 'progress' and industrialisation on humanitarian grounds. It could, like HG Wells, have pushed him towards science fiction rather than fantasy. The direction he took, towards describing an ideal set of power relations which belonged in the past, was no doubt influenced by his early reading and love of nostalgic romances. Mathews suggests that William Morris's stories established that a characteristic of fantasy writing is 'an intrinsic value placed on ancient ways of life' (Mathews, 2002, p.38) and strongly influenced later writers.

Modern treatments of Arthurian stories

Arthur is the pre-eminent missing heir and rightful king of modern English literature, and interest in his story shows no signs of diminishing. When Deepak Chopra uses a story as a basis for discussing 'the resplendent peace that each of us enfolds within our own hearts' (blurb, *The Return of Merlin*, 1995), we know that it has reached either a zenith or a nadir of popularity.

In the 20th century, the Arthur story was retold as a fantasy (TH White's *The Once and Future King*, 1939), as a pseudo-historical story (Mary Stewart's The Crystal Cave trilogy, 1970-1983), as a feminist retelling (Marion Zimmer Bradley's *The Mists*

*of Avalon,*1983), as a science fiction space opera (Patricia Kennealy's *The Celtiad*, 1984-present), as the background for a children's fantasy series (Susan Cooper's *The Dark is Rising Sequence*, 1961-1977), as a stage musical, (*Camelot*, 1960), as films – comedy (Monty Python's *Holy Grail*, 1974), drama (*Excalibur*, 1981*, First Knight*, 1995) and musical (*Camelot* again, 1967) – as a television miniseries (*Merlin*, 1996), as a comic strip (*Prince Valiant*, 1937-present) and as innumerable retellings of Malory. It has been popular in each incarnation.

Characters from the Arthurian saga appear in many books which do not deal directly with the Matter of Britain, from Merlin (ever-popular) in CS Lewis' *That Hideous Strength* (1945) to a recent Australian/Canadian television series, *Guinevere Jones* (2004) (with accompanying books by Sophie Masson and Felicity Pulman), where the main character is a re-incarnation of Arthur's queenMost recently, a children's animation series appears on TV: *King Arthur's Disasters*. Comedy for the early primary school child, it assumes a knowledge of kings, knights and quests.

There is also a surprisingly healthy market for non-fiction books about Arthur, often debating his historicity – for example, the competing theories that Camelot was *really, truly*, located at Cadbury (Alcock, 1972) or at Montgomery (Blake and Lloyd, 2000). The number of books about Arthur or Merlin or the Holy Grail continues to grow – Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* is a good example of how elements of the Arthurian story which entered the legend relatively late (such as the Holy Grail, or the character of Lancelot) still intrigue a modern audience (Brown, 2004).

In analysing Arthur, apart from the missing heir motif and the 'good king brought to ruin' theme, we also find the 'once and future king' idea. Where this comes from will be discussed more fully in Chapter 6. However, I will say here that it interests me as a focus for the religious or sacramental nature of Arthur's kingship, establishing him as both pagan king and Christ substitute.

The other fascinating part of researching Arthur is finding the variants in the legends. The 'good king' who cares for his people and brings the rule of law and great prosperity is also the king who sleeps with his sister and, because of a prophecy, puts to death a shipload of babies, so that her child, destined to destroy him, will be killed. These echoes of Oedipus are not accidental. Oedipus is also a good king, but, like Arthur, is destroyed because of unintentional unnatural congress with a family member. What can destroy even a good king? The gods, via hubris, expressed by pride, fear, violence against the helpless – and most importantly, by trying to prevent what the gods have ordained.

I have always been interested in this dichotomy in the legend of Arthur. Such inconsistencies are inevitable when a late understanding of a character is based on the

accretion of many folk traditions and from deliberately crafted literature, as Stephen Knight has shown so clearly in his study of the Robin Hood legend, which he calls 'a tradition [which] is multiple, mobile, many-layered and variable' (Knight, 1994, p. 6).

The Arthur stories are likewise taken from both rural, crude ballads and from the most sophisticated court writing of the time. Some of the earlier English ballads are bawdy in the extreme; the later romances emphasise chaste love as the ideal (although, it must be admitted, the ideal is rarely achieved). Whether there was an historical Arthur, and what he was like, has been fully obscured by the stories about him.

Keeping this in mind in crafting a 'back story' for *Blood Ties*, I was interested in creating an historical character whose real story, a thousand years later, was at least partly obscured; an Arthur-like character who was also a 'once and future' person; not a king, since the possibility of uniting the country under one king for the first time is part of the plot belonging to the 'present', but the next best thing to a king; and the precedent that the secondary villain, the aspirant to king-hood, cites as his justification.

I developed the character of Acton, who led the invasion of the area known now as the Eleven Domains a thousand years before the story starts. A hero to most of the population, he is thought of as the cause of oppression by the remnants of the original inhabitants. He was called the Warlord, and his rule gave the pattern for the warlords who now rule oppressively over the Domains. He was reputed to be irresistible to women, fierce and light-hearted, good at everything and blessed by the gods. He left, it was said, without warning, saying to the guard at the gate that he would 'be back before you need me', was never seen again, and, like Arthur, will return if the country is ever in dire need.

His legend is established in the first volume. In the part two of the trilogy, one of the main characters, Bramble, magically relives his life and we discover that many of the elements of his legend are false, misunderstood or exaggerated. Later in the story, his ghost is resurrected and plays a crucial role in the reconciliation with the ghost army which ends the story.

I wanted to use the Acton character to explore ideas about the partiality of history, the unreliability of legend and the truth about those who establish kingdoms. As Terry Pratchett puts it in *Interesting Times*:

'*Rite* of conquest, that's the thing. Blood. People understand blood. You just walk in and take over and no-one takes it seriously. But seas of blood.. Everyone understands that.'
'Mountains of skulls,' said Truckle approvingly.
'Look at history,' said Cohen… '…Yes, whenever you comes across a king where everyone says, "Oo, he was a good king all right," you can bet your sandals he was a great big bearded bastard who broke heads a lot and laughed about it. Hey?

But some king who just passed decent little laws and read books and tried to look intelligent… "Oh," they say, "oh, he was all *right*, a bit wet, not what I'd call a proper king." That's people for you.' (Pratchett, 1995, p. 324-325)

However, I was also writing a mainstream fantasy novel which, while it could explore and interrogate familiar ideas from the tradition, still had to play by the rules or disappoint its readers. I could twist the prophecy about Acton's return, since prophecies never come true the way you expect them to, but the force of prophecy had to remain. Acton therefore also plays another role in the story, the fulfilment of a different prophecy. A 'demon' in an inn prophesises that Bramble will 'love no human never'. But she can, and does, in the second book, fall in love with Acton through reliving his life, as in her time he is no longer human but spirit.

The tragedy of Arthur is that he has everything he sets out to achieve, and then sees that achievement disintegrate at the end of his life. Similarly, Acton is a character who has achieved everything he intended; in his return, however, he is brought to understand that what he did with such passion and lightheartedness, to protect and provide for his people, caused the destruction of another people. Death has given him the impartiality he could not have in life; he learns to accept and to regret his actions.

As I had found the echoes of Arthur so useful in creating my own story, it became even easier to recognise similar echoes in others. The Arthurian stories are part of the literary tradition of magic and heroism which was, until the 18th century, the mainstream, carried not only by prose but by verse, plays and songs. The treatment of adventure (particularly quests), heroism and magic in fantasy fiction can be seen to have their roots in this tradition. But the Arthurian works – as distinct from, say, the *Mabinogion*, the Greek and Roman myths, the Irish hero-tales or even the Charlemagne Legends – have a particular vision of kingship which has been influential.

As Richard Mathews, the Tolkien scholar, says of Aragorn's return to the throne in *The Lord of the Rings*:

The monarch's restoration at the novel's end seems politically anachronistic in the twentieth century; Tolkien's utopian vision is curiously neither democratic nor socialistic, but it is certainly Catholic, English, and even Arthurian. His New Age is like a reborn England in which divinely ordained kingship takes on its full significance. Although it is meet and right that the king assumes his throne, his ascension is a matter of affirming form and structure rather than of rewarding a hero. His position as ruler promotes himself far less than it does the restitution of order, which has been accomplished through the convergence of all the eccentric individuals of the Free People (Mathews, 2002, p. 78).

Arthur, similarly, is the wise and just ruler who applies the law equally to all, even when it means the execution of his own beloved queen. Arthur is the 'good king' *par excellence*, the *dux bellorum* who succeeds in war and then creates a precious peace which lasts for only a generation before it is torn apart by treachery and malice, the once and future king who, like Christ, will come again to save us all.

It is this last element in his legend that makes me ask: can the use of kings and monarchies be simply explained by the existence of a literary tradition? Do kings represent something other than just a way of telling a story? Do they bring something larger into a narrative, something from deeper in our mind and history, and is that why both writers and readers continue to find them compelling?

Chapter 5: Is it in the genes?

People kept on talking about the true king of Ankh-Morpork, but history taught a cruel lesson. It said – often in words of blood – that the true king was the one who got crowned.
Terry Pratchett, *Feet of Clay,* 1997, p. 65

In considering the seemingly unending fascination of kings for both the modern writer and the modern reader, it seemed necessary to ask the question: is it in our genes? Does the desire for a single (usually male) leader who is in charge of everything lodge in our blood and bones? And if it does, why is the enemy in so much fantasy fiction a single (usually male) figure who wants to be in charge of everything (aka the Dark Lord)?

Clearly, it is not just a king we want, it is a *good* king.

Does the desire for goodness also come with our primate genes?

To investigate this, I looked at the issue of dominance in primates, particularly in chimpanzees (*Pan troglodyte*) and bonobos (*Pan paniscus*), our nearest animal relatives. There are four currently recognised sub-species of chimpanzees, *Pan. troglodyte verus* and *P. t. vellerosus* in west Africa, *P. t. troglodytes* in the centre and *P. t. schweinfurthii* in the east, as well as *Pan paniscus*, the bonobo or pygmy chimp, south of the Congo River. An argument is currently occurring about whether a fifth sub-species should be recognised (*Pan troglodyte marungensis;* see *New Scientist* 3 July 2005). Most research has concentrated on *P.t. verus and P.t. vellerosus.* Unless stated otherwise, where the word 'chimpanzee' is used in this discussion it will refer to these subspecies. Bonobos are sometimes referred to as 'pygmy chimpanzees' and are chimpanzees taxonomically, but they differ so greatly from the other *pan* subspecies in behaviour that they must be discussed as a separate species. Reference will also be made to gorilla behaviour, as gorillas (*Troglodytes gorilla)* are the next-closest group of animals to humans, followed by orang-utans (*Simia satyrus)* and the various monkey species.

Estimates of shared genes between humans and chimpanzees/bonobos range from 96-98.5% (for example, see articles in *New Scientist*, 3 September 2005 vs 26 May 2004), and chimpanzees are increasingly being recognised as sharing many 'human' traits and abilities, such as language acquisition and the ability to lie (de Waal, 2001).

Primate responses are used in medicine, drug trials, psychology and anthropology to suggest 'baseline' human characteristics: perhaps they can also illuminate our propensity to create kings.

Are we genetically inclined to respond to a dominant leader?

The concept of dominance was first formulated by the Norwegian researcher Thorleif Schjelderup-Ebbe, who coined the term "pecking order" following his studies on chickens in the late 19th century (Conniff, 2003). The use of the term 'alpha male' in primate studies (and, unfortunately, in business studies) has led lay people to associate dominance with maleness, but the original concept came out of studying females – hens.

Dominance appears to occur in all animals which have evolved to live in groups; everything from chickens to wolves to kookaburras to kangaroos to horses to chimpanzees – the 'social animals' – all have hierarchies based on dominance which influence behaviour. Humans are, of course, social animals, and our reliance on hierarchical structures is too obvious to need substantiation here. However, dominance structures among social animals take many forms. Sometimes there are several animals at the top of the pyramid; in some species (such as elephants), females are dominant, either singly or in groups; and in some, males are dominant, again either singly or in groups.

All the African apes (to whom we are most closely related) except the bonobo operate on a social system based on single male dominance. Gorillas have one male (with perhaps one junior ally, usually a son) who mates with and guards several females. The four chimpanzee sub-species have a dominant male. Within these species, there is also a parallel dominance structure among females, so there is an alpha female as well as an alpha male (McGrew, 1996).

Bonobos have dominant female coalitions instead, with females mating with all non-related males (de Waal, 2001). As with chimpanzees, there is a parallel dominance structure, this time among males. While the female dominance structures among chimpanzees are largely independent of the male structures, male dominance in bonobos is directly related to the female structure – that is, the higher the mother's rank, the higher the son's (Furuichi, 1997). It is worth noting that even among chimpanzees, support from the mother is invaluable to an aspirant to dominance. (See de Waal, 1998, for an entertaining description of how this operates.)

The other thing all these apes, including bonobos, have in common is male philopatry and female dispersal – that is, males stay with the group they were born in while females join nearby groups as adolescents or adults. This is not always the case with other animals, even among primates. For example, in ring-tailed lemurs, females remain with their natal group while males emigrate to other groups. Interestingly, ring-tailed lemurs are female dominated, with strong alliances between mothers and daughters (Koyama, 2005).

Why are bonobos different from chimpanzees? The consensus is that bonobos have access to a greater variety and quantity of foodstuff than chimpanzees; thus females do not have to disperse during the day in order to find enough to eat (which would leave them alone and vulnerable to male aggression); so bonobo females can and do join together to protect themselves against infanticide and forced copulation. (The female philopatry of the lemurs, who live in a similarly fertile area, also encourages female alliance.)

One of the 'prices' of the bonobo system is that females mate with all males. It is thus not 'worth' the male the energy it takes to become dominant over the females, as this would not change his reproductive success enough to warrant the expended energy (see Kano in Mcgrew, 1996, and de Waal, 2001). It is still to the male's advantage, however, to become dominant over other males.

Dominance structures

For both the dominant and the subordinate individual, dominance appears to have some use. Ehlrich *et al* (1988) suggest that 'the birds at the top of the peck order benefited both by increased access to food and by avoidance of injuries (even bullies can get hurt in fights). The birds at the bottom, while having to wait until those higher up had eaten their fill, at least were not subjected to continuous fights that they were likely to lose' (Ehlrich *et al*, 1988). Clearly understood dominance structures work for social stability, reducing the number of fights ('agonistic episodes') and, since in the wild the physical fitness of each member of a group affects the well-being of the rest of the group, this improves the group's survival chances.

Ehrlich *et al* suggest that 'costs and benefits may more or less balance one another at each level in a dominance hierarchy, and evolution may favor the maintenance of the hierarchy itself, rather than just those near the top' (Ehrlich *et al*, 1988).

Where there is a single dominant animal (usually a male, except in certain polyandrous bird species), the advantages are clear: improved access to food and/or reproductive success. (Note that improved access to food, the goal of the 'pecking order' amongst hens, also improves reproductive success in the longer term).

Study after study has shown that dominant males get more sex and are therefore likely to have more offspring. Among some animals, such as gorillas, the dominant male is theoretically the only male who mates (female chimpanzees and gorillas often find ways to mate with other males, however, as discussed by Gagneux *et al*, 1999). Among other animals, he mates more often than other males, particularly with parous females (that is, females who have had offspring, proving their fertility).   Even among

bonbos, who appear to have sex all the time with every non-relative they can reach, the alpha male has an advantage. He does not have sex more often than other males, but he has sex more often with females at the peak of their fertility (Kano, 1996).

Dominant females gain in several ways. Increased access to food leads to improved survival, and also improves the survival chances of any offspring: firstly by helping to create a healthy baby, secondly by providing good quality nourishment while it is young, and thirdly (at least among primates) by improving the offspring's place in the pecking order. This third advantage is limited to animals which remember their offspring once the offspring are mature.

Bears do not recognise their offspring after two years, for example, but chimpanzees have a life-long relationship between mother and son. The daughters leave the troop when adult, but enjoy close relationships with their mothers until then. This recognition of offspring may be linked to the relatively long 'childhood' of primates compared to other animals. Chimpanzees in the wild, for example, may be 13-15 years old before becoming pregnant for the first time (Wrangham, 2004).

Boesch (1997) has found that the sons of dominant chimpanzee females have a higher survival rate than other males, and that the dominant females invest around two years more in raising a son, while non-dominant females invest eleven months more in raising daughters. He believes this is related to the chances of reproductive success among the offspring – since an alpha male is likely to have more reproductive success than other group members, it is worth while for dominant mothers (who are more likely to produce dominant sons) to devote extra time to the likely contenders. For other females, whose sons are less likely to become dominant (and who are therefore likely to be shut out of reproduction), it is more productive to devote time to daughters, since all fertile females have equal access to reproductive chances.

Among primates, there is also another 'pay-off' for dominance, which may be related to both physical and mental health. Higher ranks are groomed more often – that is, other members of the troop go through their fur and 'nit pick', pulling out any parasites such as lice. The higher the rank, the more grooming the animal receives (see, for example, Nakamichi, 2003). This has an obvious physical advantage; the fewer the parasites, the healthier the animal. However, among socially complex animals like chimpanzees and bonobos, grooming can have other benefits, such as relaxation, improved social relations and, importantly for dominance, the creation and maintenance of alliances (de Waal, 1998, Nakamichi, 2003, Mitani, 2000, among others).

In Darwinian terms, then, there is a large pay-off for a dominant animal and social animals may invest large amounts of energy in becoming and remaining dominant.

Subordinate animals gain not only surcease from attack, but also, in primates at least, a protector.

The 'control role' of the alpha male

The 'control role' of the alpha male is mentioned in much of the literature on dominance in primates (see de Waal 1998 and 2001, Boehm, 1992, or Ehardt 1992). de Waal says it is found in many primate species. An alpha male, it is suggested, has not only privileges but also responsibilities. It is his job to both secure the safety of the group (for example, among chimpanzees, by leading charges against rival troops) and to intervene between group members to prevent escalation of intra-group violence. The alpha male's role is to be the 'champion of peace and security and try to prevent conflicts escalating by supporting the losers' (de Waal, 1998, p. 118).

Ehardt suggests that the concept of a control role has changed over time, but has been thought of as the animal which will 'respond aggressively to sources of disturbance external to the group...and to control sources of disturbance within the group, particularly agonistic conflicts between group members'. While this is substantially the concept described by de Waal, interventions by female primates on behalf of kin, immature members and female allies are, in fact, more frequent than interventions by the dominant male. (Ehardt, 1992, p. 84) Ehardt was studying macaques. However, it appears from the bonobo and chimpanzee studies already cited that the degree to which females intervene varies from species to species.

More interesting than female intervention, which is easily explained in Darwinian terms, is the difference between the way the dominant male macaque intervenes compared to the non-dominant males. '[T]here are differences between the types of interventions made by adult females and adult males: females intervene on behalf of kin and immature macaques; males tend to join in with the participant likely to be the winner, usually the aggressor. The exception to this is the alpha male who may often intervene on behalf of the "underdog"'(Ehardy, 1992, pp. 86-87). Similar processes have been observed in chimpanzees (de Waal, 1996; Harcourt, 1996).

Here we get glimpses of the 'good king', who champions the weak and controls the bullying strong. Why would an alpha male primate act in this fashion? There are two main theories, which may be mutually inclusive.

The first is simple: if an alpha male chimpanzee or gorilla or macaque is responsible for most of the pregnancies in the group (and remembering that his first act on becoming dominant was probably to kill all the infants recently fathered by the deposed alpha male), then the 'young' and the 'weak' are likely to be either offspring or potential mates, and in protecting them he is protecting his reproductive success.

The second is more complex and relates to the fact that primates, in particular, have a complex social structure. de Waal suggests that '[i]t is conceivable that there is a connection between the protection offered by a dominant group member in his control role and the support he receives in return when his position is threatened…,.the control role of the alpha male is not so much a favor as a duty: his position depends on it' (de Waal, 1998 p. 118).

All descriptions of chimpanzee society make obvious the complicated, shifting alliances between group members. This is particularly true of males, who are constantly engaged in processes to improve or maintain their rank in the dominance structure. To do this, they engage in alliances, share favours, lie, cheat and sneak off with the females behind the alpha male's back.

Unlike most animals (such as horses, deer or seals), the alpha male chimpanzee may not be the physically strongest of the troop. The ability for what de Waal calls 'the canny and complex management of alliances' is the key to dominance in this species (de Waal, 1998, p. 205). Again, unlike many other species, alliances among primates, particularly chimpanzees, are not primarily between closely related kin (Mitani, 2000 or Muller, 2003 for descriptions of alliance formation in wild chimpanzees, and de Waal, 1998, for captive populations). Males ally according to pragmatism rather than kinship (remembering that, because of male philopatry, all male members of a chimpanzee troop are related in some degree).

Since alliances are so important, and include alliances with the most dominant group of females, an alpha male's position may depend on how much support he can muster when his position is challenged. A male who fails to perform his control role duty will receive far less support than a male who fulfils it well. While this process has only been observed in its entirety in captive populations (de Waal, 1998), enough elements of it have been observed in wild populations to make it a reasonable hypothesis (Mitani, 2000 and 2002; Muller, 2003; Gagneux, 1999; Harcourt, 1992).

This gives us not only an understanding of where the idea of 'good king' comes from, but perhaps also an idea of where we first find the 'Dark Lord' – the alpha male who is aggressive and cunning in achieving dominance, but then neglects his duty to protect and defend those under his control.

The gender of dominance

Among bonobos and some monkey species, older females are dominant. This dominance pattern, however, seems to be related to an abundance of food, allowing females to group together during food collection. (I was reminded, in considering this issue, of the cautionary tales: 'Don't go into the forest alone, little girl' is good

advice.) Species where females can gather food together may have dominant females; species where females must gather food alone or in much smaller groups have male dominance. (Perhaps feminism is the inevitable biological result of women being put together to work in factories and offices…? Gorillas, bonobos and chimpanzees practice female dispersion – that is primates have evolved so that females are adept at creating alliances with other females outside their family in order to survive. Give them the opportunity to make alliances and they will…)

Over our history as *homo sapiens*, humans have lived in such a variety of eco-systems that it is impossible to talk about the environment affecting dominance in any consistent way. But if we look at earlier, pre-human species, such as australopithicenes and *homo erectus*, we see that they inhabited a similar eco-system to chimpanzees (Fernanddez-Armesto, 2004). It may be that our tendency for patriarchy began then – or it may just be that males have been dominant historically among *homo sapiens* simply because they were physically capable of it.

There have been instances of females assuming the dominant role in a group of chimpanzees, but these have occurred in 'unnatural' situations – that is, within captivity where there has been no male strong enough to challenge the largest female. de Waal examines in detail the process by which an alpha female became the dominant animal in a group of captive chimpanzees, her struggle to maintain sufficient alliances to keep control, and her eventual violent 'dethroning' by a younger male (de Waal, 1998).

The process de Waal describes reminded me of the way in which women fantasy writers have dealt with the issue of monarchy – they have, on the whole, kept the political structure and simply substituted a queen instead of a king (see, for example, Anne Bishop's *Daughter of the Blood*, (2001) a good example of the type, or Alma Hromic's *Changer of Days* series (2001). At the most, they have a male/female couple in power (as in Elizabeth Haydon's *Rhapsody* trilogy, 1999-2001) or a group of women with magically linked abilities (as in Marion Zimmer Bradley's *Black Trillium*, 1991). Other women writers have kept the whole male/king package, although some, like Ursula Le Guin and Robin Hobb, have in their later works begun to question this. (See, for example, the difference in attitudes to monarchy between Hobb's *Assassin's Apprentice* series, 1996-1998, and her *Liveship Traders* books, 1999-2001.)

When I came to decide on the political structure to use in *Blood Ties*, my dissatisfaction with this solution led me to examine how I might both use the undoubted narrative benefits of a hierarchical society while still remaining uncommitted to a monarchy. It seemed to me that a society in transition from

baronies/fiefdoms to monarchy would be an interesting way to question our assumptions about kings, while still presenting readers with a familiar political structure which would not bog down the narrative.

Historically, like the young male who took power in de Waal's case study, those who achieve sole power in their own right have done so by force of arms; one need only think of William the Conqueror, Charlemagne, Alexander, Attila, and in more recent times Napoleon and Hitler, despite their eventual failure. Although Charlemagne's transition in his own lifetime from conqueror to wise ruler was incorporated into his legend, this is rare. Most founders of dynasties are remembered as warriors rather than rulers.

It seemed to me that someone who decided that he wanted to be king must almost certainly be an unpleasant person: ambitious, prepared for thousands of people to die so that he could achieve power, selfish to the ultimate degree – but that, like the chimpanzees making alliances to attain dominance, he must also be able to create and use personal relationships for his own ends. Words like 'personable', 'charming', 'charismatic' came to mind. I was reminded of Napoleon's effects on his troops after his escape from Elba. An army of French soldiers, intent upon catching him and returning him to imprisonment, approached him on the road. They wore white cockades in their hats to declare their allegiance to the newly-restored Bourbon king. Napoleon was backed by a smaller but dedicated army. Instead of throwing them into battle, he dismounted and walked forwards, throwing his arms wide. 'Men of the Fifth!' he declared. 'I am your Emperor! Know me! If there is one of you who would kill his Emperor here I am!' The troops immediately broke ranks, tore off their white cockades and rushed forward yelling 'Vive L'Empereur!' (Schom, 1998).

I needed to create a character who had both the charisma and the ruthlessness of Napoleon. It was instructive, in devising this character, Thegan, to remember the straightforward actions and rewards of dominance among animals: aggression and politicking lead to more food and more sex.

To return to our question for this chapter, however – are we genetically inclined to want a king? – the answer, rather depressingly, may be 'yes'.

We are primates. Primates all have dominance structures, usually with a single male at the top. The exception, bonobos, still have dominance structures and still allow the alpha male privileged access to reproduction. Where there is no dominant male amongst the other primates, a female may fill this role, but usually only until a sufficiently strong male arises.

However, while our evolutionary desire for an alpha leader may explain narratives which favour hierarchical political structures, it does not explain why the

heads of these structures have to be kings. 'President' implies a hierarchy with (usually) a male at the top as succinctly as does 'king'. So, if it comes to that, does 'chief' or 'headman' or even 'mayor'.   Why do writers from democratic countries ignore these options for hierarchy in favour of monarchy?

Chapter 6: It's all in the mind

'He found his council served him well, and people of power had come to respect it. Common folk did not pay much attention to it. They centred their hopes and attention on the king's person. There were a thousand lays and ballads about the son of Morred, the prince who rode the dragon back from death to the shores of day, the hero of Sorra, wielder of the Sword of Serriadh, the Rowan Tree, the Tall Ash of Enlad, the well-loved king who ruled in the Sign of Peace. But it was hard going to make songs about councillors debating shipping taxes.'
Ursula Le Guin, *The Other Wind*, 2001, p. 138.

Kings may be significant in fantasy fiction because they can carry an emotional or sacerdotal weight for the reader which cannot be carried by a political character in the modern mode, such as a president. In Freudian terms, any strong male authority figure calls up the *pater familias*, the longed-for father figure who is wise and strong and just (strong echoes here of the control role of the primate alpha male). But Freudian theory does not distinguish between types of male authority figures – an old wizard will do just as well or perhaps even better than a young king.

The young king searching for his birthright, throwing down the forces of darkness and ascending the throne in a blaze of glory, usually at the same time he marries, is interpreted by Freudians (notably Bettelheim, 1998) as the boy enacting an Oedipal fantasy of killing the father and marrying the mother. However, again, the boy does not have to be a king-in-waiting for the Oedipal drama to play itself out. Any boy, any powerful evil figure, any bride carries the same psychological weight. Freudian theory does not, therefore, help us to answer 'why kings?'.

In his essay, *Totems and Taboos,* Freud does discuss kings directly, but only in the context of taboos surrounding kings in 'primitive societies'. He concludes 'the ceremonial taboo of kings is *ostensibly* the highest honour and protection for them, while *actually* it is a punishment for their exaltation, a revenge taken on them by their subjects' (Freud, 1972, p. 51). The relationship between 'primitive people' and their king he sees to be a neurotic one, full of ambivalent feelings: loyalty and distrust, worship and hostility. Freud suggests, inevitably that 'much of a savage's attitude to his ruler is derived from a child's infantile attitude to his father' (Freud, 1972, p. 53).

Freud based this opinion on Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (Frazer, 1911). All his examples come from there and share Frazer's methodological problems*,* which will be discussed in Chapter 7. This does not mean, however, that his insight into the relationship between the ruled and their rulers is incorrect. Yet hero-kings in fantasy fiction are not ambivalent characters; we are not expected, as readers, to resent them and love them at the same time (although this feeling can arise when a feminist reads an enthralling but sexist story). Overall, our relationship to them is not neurotic.

Partly this may be because we are not, in fact, ruled by them. Equally important, I believe, is the fact that most readers are not really being ruled by kings or queens at all any more, even if they live in a constitutional monarchy. The key issues, are 'Who makes the laws that govern us? Who decides upon and collects taxes? Who commands the army?' We no longer need to resent our kings because they are no longer our rulers, and may thus carry the symbolic or sacerdotal weight of monarchy without the counterweight of government. This does not, however, help us to determine why kings continue to carry symbolic weight once governance has been taken away from them.

Archetypes

The proposition that any symbolic figure carries emotional weight without clear cause immediately suggests archetypes.

The notion of archetypes was popularised by Carl Gustav Jung, although he was not the first to use the word. The OED defines archetype as 'The original pattern or model from which copies are made; a prototype'. The word first reaches its English form with Bacon, who wrote: 'Let vs seeke the dignitie of knowledge in the Arch-tipe or first plat-forme, which is in the attributes and acts of God' (Bacon, 1605, I. 27). The connection with God is an interesting one, as there is much about archeype theory which echoes theological doctrines such as original sin.

Jung's original essay *Archetypes and the collective unconscious* (1959) sets out his basic theory that the unconscious part of the human psyche is composed of at least two levels: the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious.

> [The] personal unconscious rests upon a deeper layer, which does not derive from personal experience and is not a personal acquisition but is inborn. This deeper layer I call the *collective unconscious*. I have chosen the term "collective" because this part of the unconscious is not individual but universal; in contrast to the personal psyche, it has contents and modes of behaviours that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals…constitutes a common psychic substrate of a suprapersonal nature which is present in evey one of us…The contents of the collective unconscious… are known as archetypes (Jung 1959, p. 287).

Archetypes are described as inherited structures around which cultural images form and are, according to Jung, common to all humans, 'universal images that have existed since the remotest times' (Jung, 1959, p. 288).

The archetype itself, he suggests, can never be directly seen or understood, as it is a deep structure of the unconscious mind. Only its representation can be experienced, and this representation changes according to the culture of the person creating the representation. However, he does not allow the possibility that archetypes themselves may change over time, even when that time is measured in millennia. They are fixed

attributes of the human mind. While Jung was writing before the current popularity of social Darwinism, many of his ideas match that theory's emphasis on inherited characteristics influencing contemporary behaviour (Jung, 1967).

Jung's own understanding and emphasis on archetypes changed during his lifetime (Atmanspacher, 1998), but at no time did he ever propose a 'king' or 'monarch' archetype. This comes as something of a surprise. We have the 'wise old man' archetype so successfully embodied by the wizards of fantasy fiction, but nowhere is there a 'ruler' of any kind in Jung's schema of collectively inherited images.

Jung admits he has not described all the archetypes possible. In an essay in 1967, *Psychology and Literature*, Jung divided texts into two types: psychological and visionary (Jung, 1967). His descriptions of the two types of text make it clear that he would place all fantasy fiction in the 'visionary' category. 'Visionary' texts embody archetypes in culturally sourced characters. The king, as a type of character arising in this genre, would by Jungian standards be culturally sourced and embody *some* type of archetype. Take your pick of which one.

Leaving aside the interesting question of how any writer creates a character which is *not* 'culturally sourced', at first sight this sounds persuasive. The king is common in fantasy fiction because he carries information from the collective unconscious for both reader and writer. The king role is our cultural embodiment of something much deeper – perhaps, even, the role of the primate alpha male. We must then ask, what is the collective unconscious and how does it operate?

The collective unconscious is an idea of Jung's for which there is no experimental evidence. Jung's work talks about it at length, but nowhere is there any attempt to prove that it exists. It is an axiom from which all his arguments flow. The most interesting thing about the collective unconscious is how readily other theorists, psychologists, writers and readers have adopted the idea without a single shred of proof.

Memes and archetypes

Richard Dawkins, in his 1976 book *The Selfish Gene,* which described evolution as a competition between genes rather than between organisms*,* suggested another way that ideas can be shared in common across a culture. Just as genes compete for survival and are naturally selected for their fitness for the environment, so ideas ('memes') undergo a similar contest for survival, and this contest, which is as complex as natural selection is for organisms, dictates which ideas survive. He includes things like music and art as memes – 'abstract entities' as they have come to be called in memetics – the

building blocks of culture. Memeticists suggest that, 'there is a novel replicator-based process underlying the population-level, epidemiological dynamic that is culture change' (Augner, 1999).

Biologists, like detectives, ask 'cui bono?' – in their case about a genetic trait, in order to discover why a particular adaptation has survived and prospered in an environment. What is the benefit to the organism in having this particular trait? Dawkins suggested that when we ask 'cui bono?' about a meme, one may find that the answer is 'the meme', rather than the person or culture which transmits the meme (Dawkins, 1976). This has resulted in a theoretical focus on memes as independent of their hosts.

In memetics, 'the king' as a role or concept in fiction would be considered a meme, pursuing its independent existence through the medium of literature (as well as through other cultural entities like cinema, television, computer games and graphic novels).

The theory of archetypes is also a meme, and a very successful one. Memes and archetypes have some elements in common. Both are supposed to exist independently of their host. Both are subject to cultural change, not in their essence, but in their expression within a particular time and culture.

In fact, the meme theorists have tried to reconcile the two concepts, although with little success (Wheelwell, 1998). British psychiatrist CMH (Chris) Nunn suggests that 'Archetypes, as opposed to their representations, are the factors which predispose particular sets of memes to spread within a group of people and enter their awarenesses' (Nunn, 1998, p. 363). Nunn sees an archetype, therefore, to be rather in the nature of a widespread genetic predisposition to catch a certain disease. Harald Atmaspacher, a physicist who investigates the relationship between mind and matter, suggests that while Nunn's work is interesting, 'the difficulty is not only how to relate memes to archetypes, but also to distinguish that concept of archetypes to which memes relate from those to which they do not' (Atmanspacher, 1998, p. 355). He suggests a hierarchical arrangement of memes, where the 'top' or most successful memes have an archetypal basis.

In this interpretation, readers have an *innate* pre-disposition (the archetype) to like the king meme, and it is therefore popular among writers and readers. Is this helpful to our understanding? In my notes on this article I wrote in the margin 'looks like the marriage of two totally unsubstantiated ideas'. Without proof that the collective unconscious exists, it still looks like that to me. Memetics' weakest point is that it has no explanation for why humans have the innate pre-disposition in the first place. The problem seems to be that a perfectly good metaphor – that of ideas struggling to

survive and only the ones which best fit the culture succeeding – has been taken up as though it were a fact, as though there really were entities called memes which exist separately from their human hosts. If we treat memetics as an extended metaphor, the problems disappear and we can appreciate what meme theorists have to say about the transmission of culture.

For example, some meme theorists would see the concept of 'king as a symbolic character in fiction' to be a particularly successful meme in its own right, without any need for the intervention of archetypes. The philosopher Daniel Dennett (2001), for example, in discussing the success of certain musical types, suggests an origin for music: that certain tunes and themes just make us 'feel good', and that this is a biological function rather than a cognitive one, based on unspecified 'neural pathways'. Since the person who produces the pattern of (in this example) drumming and humming which draws most attention from others also 'feels good', competition is set up between the creators of patterns, and the most pleasing wins and is reproduced throughout the culture. This may also, although not necessarily, result in reproductive success for the successful creator, but the meme is reproduced anyway. This merely takes the question back a step – why do *these particular* abstract entities (whether they are music or ideas or art) make people feel good? The step back takes us to evolutionary biology and, perhaps, social Darwinism, topics far too complex to discuss in this exegesis. We must merely note that for Dennett's approach to be valid, there must be a biological reward for the adoption of particular memes.

As the meme grows more complex (that is, music takes on aspects such as harmony, counterpoint, etc) its creation becomes more intentional. However, memeticists suggest that creators are still just reproducing memes, that memes mutate and thus evolve through the conscious manipulation of the creator. Dennett states: 'There is no conflict between the claim that artefacts [including abstract artefacts — memes] are the products of natural selection, and the claim that they are (often) the foreseen, designed products of intentional human activity' (Dennett, 2001, p. 323).

In this view, presumably, kingship is a meme with which some creators have become infected (the metaphors of disease and parasitism are widespread amongst memeticists) and which they now consciously mutate in order to create a sensation in their audience – like the proto-drummers, in order to be the 'focus of attention' and to feel good. Kingship is clearly a highly infectious meme, with strong survival instincts.

Experimental proof

For both memes and archetypes, experimental proof is thin on the ground. Memeticists don't seem to attempt empirical research – perhaps because the theory is

still unclear on whether memes really do exist independently of their hosts. I could find only one attempt to experimentally prove the idea of archetypes. In 1999, Alan Maloney, an empirical psychologist, noted that 'Archetype Theory is consistent with the full range of empirical psychological research, yet has not itself been empirically studied' (Maloney, 1999, p. 101). He asked 151 subjects to rate their preferences for images representing archetypal themes and factor analysed their responses. The results were 'consistent with the hypothesis that archetypal themes determine affective responses in adults' (Maloney, p. 114); that is, people respond to archetypal images with stronger emotions. Maloney gives little detail about how the research team determined the content of the 'archetypal images', merely saying it was 'consistent with Jungian theory'. He also fails to make a valid distinction between archetypes and stereotypes – that is, standardised, familiar and culturally specific images – which advertising research has shown elicit much the same reactions.

The culturist James Trilling's work on the variations which a single 'archetypal' image can have across cultures, moreover, suggests that Maloney may not have taken cultural differences into consideration (Trilling, 1993). The 151 people used in the test were selected by convenience sampling, which means, among other things, that they were not selected to provide ethnic or cultural diversity, and the universality of archetypes – the theory's basic tenet – was therefore not tested.

Cognitive science has also tried to incorporate the idea of archetypes. JM Knox, a cognitive scientist interested in the concept of innateness in human behaviour, considered the nature of archetypes in the light of cognitive science research and proposed a minimalist mode, in which they can be likened to image schemas, that is, primitive conceptual structures that exist in a form which can never be experienced directly or indirectly (Knox, 2001). These archetypes are tantalising, elusive images, which nonetheless carry emotional weight. The writer and reader do not know *why* they find the image of the king compelling, but still they do… an explanation which does not help us.

The Finnish historian Petteri Pietikainen points a way out of the circle by suggesting that we divorce the idea of archetypes from the 'rather unfruitful discourse on the genetic inheritance of archetypes' (Pietikainen, 1998, p. 325). Archetypes can then be seen as symbolic forms, 'culturally determined functionary forms organizing and structuring certain aspects of cultural activity, namely those predominantly non-cognitive (for example, emotional, numinous, pathological) mental aspects of human life, which remain more or less unarticulated due to their non-discursive nature' (Pietikainen, 1998, 325). While this takes us back to the tantalising, elusive image, it neatly shells the archetype from its social Darwinistic immutability, and allows us to

discuss the content of the symbolic form as a product of culture, rather than of the collective unconscious.

Chapter 7: Kings and Culture

And when our kings have the same warrant as they had, whether it be to sit upon the throne of their fathers, or to destroy the house of the preceding sovereign, they will then, and not before, possess the crown of England by a right like theirs, immediately derived from heaven.
William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, 1765-1769, Book I, Chapter 3.

From a social science perspective, if kings are significant in 20th and 21st century fantasy fiction because they carry an emotional or sacerdotal weight for the reader, we should expect to find precursors to this in other cultural products or processes.

Historically, kingship goes back as far as written records and is closely associated with the production of such records, especially in early Babylonian, Egyptian and Middle Eastern cultures. The institution of kingship is thought to pre-date records by some millennia. Certainly, archaeologists have consistently interpreted particular types of Neolithic and Chalcolithic burials as proving the existence of 'chieftains' who exercised power within a goddess-worshipping culture. However, Maria Gimbutas, a renowned archaeologist who questions received wisdom about early societies, argues that within Europe patriarchal political structures did not arise until the invasion by Indo-European peoples in the 5th millennium BC and that political structures before this were characterised by 'gylany'; that is, both women and men exercised political and social power (Gimbutas, 1991).

No-one, however, disputes that the Indo-European cultures which swept over and dominated Europe during the Bronze Age were characterised by patriarchal dominance, demonstrated by such customs as suttee, warrior elites and chieftains. Fortifications appeared for the first time, indicating an organised response to organised attack (Gimbutas, 1991, Clark, 1977).

These civilizations, which gave rise to and influenced European culture, were familiar with the concept of the king/emperor who is either a god in himself, the ritual embodiment of a god, or someone of such significance to the state that he could, and should, be elevated to the pantheon on his death.

Many of the god-kings of the past are familiar to us: the pharaohs of Egypt in particular, but also the Babylonian kings who took the part of the god in the annual festivals, and the Roman emperors who extracted promises from their successors that they be declared gods immediately after their death so that they should not be punished for the excesses of their lives. The connection between absolute rulers and the gods seems to have been an accepted part of life. Even Tacitus, so critical of the Julio-Claudians and their habits, lets the deification of Caesar Augustus go by with a

simple, 'After an appropriate funeral, Augustus was declared a god and decreed a temple', although he describes the criticism made when Augustus *while alive* 'superseded the worship of the gods when he wanted to have himself venerated in temples, with god-like images, by priests and ministers' (Tacitus, 1971, p. 39).

Whether Augustus actually did this is unclear (Tacitus was very good at repeating gossip without committing himself to its veracity), but what is clear from that criticism is that godhood in Imperial Rome, at least, was dependent on the acclamation of the people and the clergy, rather than on apotheosis bestowed by an already worshipped deity. Augustus erred in forcing his worship on the people, not in believing that he could be worshipped. The pantheon was neither fixed nor particularly exclusive; and it was definitely open to dead emperors.

During this period (1st century AD), the Romans encountered peoples who had radically different views on kingship and godhood. The Celts, the Picts and the Germanic peoples whom the Empire was trying to conquer had a tribal concept of kingship rather than a national or imperial one. This had significant effects on the practice of kingship, not least being that the king was less secure in his position, since he had no Praetorian Guard or army to enforce his commands on his people – his people were his army, and he had to answer to them.

Much of what we believe about these early Europeans depends on the work on 19th and early 20th century scholars, among whom the most prominent is Sir James Frazer, whose ideas will be examined in Chapter 8. However, as well as the ancient concept of kingship as described by scholars, there has been an enduring, evolving concept of kingship which belonged to everyone – just as there is the common law as well as the statutes. This concept of kingship differed slightly from place to place and from time to time but, within Europe at least, remained remarkably stable until the Reformation.

Like most political concepts, it had its theory and its practice. In theory, everyone's position was decreed by God. This explained and supported the feudal system, the rights of the nobility to command and control the peasantry, the rights of the king to command and control the nobles (Kantorowicz, 1997). The idea of a divinely ordained hierarchy was entrenched not only in political theory, but also in religion. Christ's statement that 'the poor are always with us' (John 12:8) was interpreted as an endorsement of the class system rather than as a criticism of the human tendency towards establishing inequality (Baumer, 1966; Franklin, 1981).

An example of how entrenched this view of hierarchy was is the sumptuary laws, prevalent throughout Europe from the 12th to the 16th centuries, which set out what type of clothes each class was allowed to wear: fabrics, style, ornamentation, even

how long the toe of a noble's shoe was allowed to be. While the laws' avowed intention was to reduce excess and decadence among both nobles and the growing merchant class, their underlying assumption was that there was a distinct separation between nobles, merchants, commoners and serfs, and that this distinction should be apparent at first sight (an assumption which was also prevalent in the Roman empire, with its purple-edged senatorial robes). Cloth of gold was reserved for kings. In France, the last European state to abandon them, the sumptuary laws stayed in place until the French Revolution.

This approach to class, wealth and the inequalities of power reached its zenith in the doctrine of the 'divine right of kings', the theory that kings rule by divine permission and therefore have a religious as well as secular right to loyalty from their subjects. Surprisingly, perhaps, this theory in its full form is of relatively recent date, arising first in medieval times during struggles between monarchies and the papacy and coming to fruition during the Reformation.

It was not until 1598 that James I of England and VI of Scotland fully expounded the theory as doctrine in his *True Law of Free Monarchies* (as the Head of the Church of England, his pronouncements on this subject did, indeed, carry double weight). Eighty-five years earlier, Machiavelli had presented a very different view of royalty in *The Prince*, his pragmatic approach covering princes who had inherited their thrones, those who had acquired it by their own force of arms, by others' force of arms, by evil and cunning, by election (his preference) or by gift from God (a nod to the Papal States, very powerful at the time). Nowhere in this treatise is there any suggestion that secular princes should be considered specially favoured by God, or in any way connected with divinity. Although his book attracted much criticism for its 'amoral' stance, contemporary critics did not question the division between secular and religious heads of state (Machiavelli, 1979).

But James, beset by rebellious Quakers, occupying a throne he had not been born to, and scenting early on the dangers of Dissent, needed his people to believe otherwise, and went to the Bible (*his* Bible) for proof.

Kings are called Gods by the prophetical King *Dauid,* because they sit vpon GOD his Throne in the earth, and haue the count of their administration to giue vnto him. Their office is, *To minister Iustice and Iudgement to the people,* as the same *Dauid* saith: *To aduance thegood, and punish the euill,* as he likewise saith: *To establish good Lawes to his people, and procure obedience to the same* as diuers good Kings of *Iudah* did: *To procure the peace of the people,* as the same *Dauid* saith: *To decide all controuersies that can arise among them,* as *Salomon* did: *To be the Minister of God for the weale of them that doe well, and as the minister of God, to take vengeance vpon them that doe evill,* as S. *Paul* saith. And finally, As *a good Pastour, to goe out and in before his people* as is said in the first of *Samuel: That through the Princes prosperitie, the people's peace may be procured,* as *Ieremie* saith (Stuart, 1598).

This is a vision of a king which is easily recognisable – it is the alpha male in the control role, but it is also Arthur, the just king, and Aragorn, returned to his rightful place and ruling wisely. James compares kings to 'a loving Father and careful watchman, caring for them (his people) more then for himselfe'. But what remedy should a people have if their king turns out to be an abusive father and a careless watchman? '[P]atience, earnest prayers to God, and amendment of their lives, are the onely lawful meanes to moue God to relieue them of that heauie curse' (Stuart, 1598). In other words, just put up with it. Unfortunately for James' son Charles I, the British people did not take his words to heart, although the phrase 'the divine right of kings' passed into the language and, thus, into the hearts and minds of later generations of writers.

The 'good king' and the 'Dark Lord'

The High Priest of Blind Io was stumbling over his words. There had never been an official coronation service in Ankh-Morpork, as far as he could find out. The old kings had managed quite well with something on the lines of: 'We hath got the crown, i'faith, and we will kill any whoreson who tries to take it away, by the Lord Harry'.
Terry Pratchett, *Guards! Guards!,* 1990, p. 209

European history up until the Reformation offers a theoretical concept of kingship, enforced by strength of arms, which is based on a formal, unchanging hierarchy, where serfs are at the bottom and the king is at the top, next to God. The theory doesn't bear close examination in practice, despite James Stuart's desperate apologia for tyrants. Kings who supposedly had been placed on their throne by God were often deposed; their countries invaded by foreigners, or a coup executed by their own relatives. Princes, as Machiavelli pointed out, changed often, and as long as they didn't touch the people's cattle or families, the commonality got on with life just the same (Machiavelli, 1979, pp. 80-81).

The practice of kingship, then, has always been at odds with the theory. Perhaps, however, Chris Nunn was right when he suggested that an idea is more welcome to a mind which already has a similar concept embedded in it: centuries of the theory have left a mark; millennia of god-kings have worn a track in the human mind which we find it easy to follow. And perhaps we find it particularly easy to follow when the king in question conforms to particular behaviours which we, as a culture, recognise.

In 1948, George Dumézil, a trailblazer in comparative mythology studies, published *Mitra-Varuna*, a study of the similarities between the Sanskrit deities Varuna and Mitra and the mythical 'first kings' of Rome, Romulus and Numa. His hypothesis was that Varuna and Romulus embodied for their societies the generative, wild, violent, uncontrolled and tumultuous aspects of sovereignty. They were

responsible for the society's fertility, its victories in war and the security of the state. Mitra and Numa, on the other hand, embodied wisdom, law, fidelity, justice and control. Varuna and Romulus were bachelors, associated with secret male cults dedicated to excess and virility. Mitra and Numa were happily married, joined with their wives in leading the people to public worship. Varuna/Romulus was night, Mitra/Numa was day, and so on. Dumézil suggests that these are two essential aspects of the one god or conception of maleness; that one cannot exist without the other (Dumézil, 1948, p. 65).

Setting these ideas to work on primate societies, we can see them quite easily as the two elements of the alpha male's role. The violent, uncontrolled aspect is responsible for defending the troop against invaders and/or invading other territories for the good of the troop. The wise law-abiding aspect is the control role, protecting the young and weak while controlling the violence of others.

Dumézil further suggests that all Indo-European cultures have been influenced by these concepts. Early myths break the two aspects apart while insisting on the close relationship between the two entities (Mitra and Varuna are tightly entwined in Vedic literature). Interestingly, later mythic and semi-mythic conceptions of kingship have tended to combine both aspects in one person, while separating them over the person's life, ascribing the uncontrolled, tumultuous aspects to the youth of the king and the wise and law-abiding aspects to his maturity (Dumézil, 1948, p. 41).

We have, for example, Theseus, in youth a reveller and seducer, in age a wise ruler; or Odysseus, always virile and prone to sowing wild oats, but settling down in age to stable governance of his territory. In historical times, Charlemagne followed the same pattern.

Neither Romulus nor Varuna made this transition. Instead, they remained haughty and uncontrollable after they were established in power, and were destroyed by their hubris. Romulus was eventually poisoned by the people he ruled.

Examining Dumézil's Mitra-Varuna hypothesis in the light of primate politics leads us to consider the nature of kingship and the contradictory nature of the many roles a king plays. He must be aggressive to hostile outsiders and sufficiently aggressive to insiders to achieve dominance; yet once he achieves power, he must use that aggression (now cast as 'strength' and 'wisdom') for the benefit of the group.

It is fascinating, therefore, that the main difference between Mitra and Varuna is their marital status. The implication is that marriage (or, among other primates, having access to reproductive success) is the factor which changes the direction of the alpha male's aggression from hostility to protection. The priests who inherited Numa's role in the Roman religion (*flamines)* were married and were required to have children

in their household, preferably their own. Their wives were priestesses. Those who belonged to the cult associated with Romulus, the Luperci, were bachelors, although their behaviour was strongly linked with virility and fertility. In their mythic origins, they were responsible for curing the sterility of the Sabine women, who had been abducted by Romulus and his men, by whipping them. They re-enacted this scene each year, but otherwise had no public religious displays. It appears to have been a cult of young men (*iuniores*) dedicated to excess.

The Luperci are associated with the beginning of things, the *flamines* with their stable maintenance. In early Indian culture, a similar pattern is found in the adherents of Varuna (*Gandharva)* and Mitra (the brahman).

For an alpha male, therefore, in primate or human societies, the challenge is to yoke aggression to different goals at different times; the fact that it is difficult for one real person to embody the conflicting essences of Mitra and Varuna may explain how few 'good kings' are found in history.

(I found the recent media fascination in Australia with the marriage of Prince Frederick of Denmark to Mary Donaldson of particular interest, coming as it did during the writing of this exegesis. Not only was there the Cinderella aspect of the story, thoroughly dissected by the media, there was a subsidiary 'fairy story' about the Prince, who had been noted for his youthful excesses but had now 'settled down' and was ready to marry and *immediately* procreate. This fitted the Romulus/Numa pattern so well that it led me to consider the uses of such a pattern in creating a character; in my case Arvid, warlord of the Last Domain, a character who is referred to in *Blood Ties* but whom we do not meet until the second book of the series.)

How has fantasy fiction dealt with this sovereign theme of virility vs wisdom? Firstly, by using the time-honoured pattern of 'wild in youth, wise in age.' As outlined in Chapter 3, the Arthur story displays this pattern very clearly. In youth Arthur is the war-leader, the winner of battles, the boy who lies down with any girl who offers without asking questions (thus siring Mordred on his half-sister). Once he has secured the throne, however, he becomes the wise, just ruler: temperate, forgiving and, most importantly, the founder of the rule of law which applies equally to everyone in the kingdom, including him.

However, most fantasy fiction does not follow its young kings through their careers as the Arthurian saga does. The classic eucatastrophic ending is the overthrow of the Dark Lord/radical evil/usurper and the ascension of the throne, often accompanied by marriage of the king. Then the story ends. We do not have the opportunity to see the young, generative king transform himself into the older, wiser ruler.

But if Dumézil is right, then a full conception of sovereignty must have both Mitra and Varuna represented and linked together. Fantasy fiction has dealt with this by allotting the two roles to two characters: young king or aspirant to power, and wise old wizard.

JRR Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, Ursula Le Guin's *The Earthsea Sequence*, Guy Gavriel Kay's *The Fionavar Tapestry,* Susan Cooper's *The Dark is Rising Sequence*, Barbara Hambly's *The Darwath Trilogy*, all use this trope to greater or lesser extent.

The figure of the wise old wizard, the Merlin analogue, has become so popular that it has left sovereignty behind and now appears merely as a counterbalance to young heroes of any kind: witness the character of Albus Dumbledore in the Harry Potter books (Rowling, 1998-2005). It is so familiar that it is now open to parody and a recision from the stereotype (or archetype). Jonathan Stroud, author of *The Bartimaeus Trilogy*, speaking at the Sydney Writers' Festival in 2006, talked about how he had worked directly against the stereotype of the wise, good, old wizard in robes to construct his main character, by making his wizard young, stupid and wicked – and dressed in very boring clothes. However, the wise old magical mentor does exist in Stroud's work, in the form of the demon Bartimaeus. Stroud's use of Bartimaeus in this way is fascinating, because he does not act as a mentor for the main character, Nathaniel, who has summoned him by the use of magic and controls his power, making him an ancient wise servant instead of an ancient wise master. Nathaniel is too self-centred and too well brain-washed by older wizards to pay any attention to Bartimaeus's advice. We, however, who read the demon's account of the story, which speaks directly to the reader, as well as Nathaniel's version, can give his perceptions of the world their real value. He is therefore *our* mentor, not Nathaniel's, which is a wonderful twist of the role (Stroud, 2003).

Bartimaeus leaves Nathaniel at the end of Book 1 of the trilogy, allowing him to develop further alone. This is not surprising. In many fantasy stories, the wizard mentor dies or disappears at a crucial moment, sometimes for ever, sometimes, as with Bartimaeus and Nathaniel, merely for a time.

There is a specific change-over point in the Arthur stories which illuminates this. Arthur founds Camelot with Merlin's help, and then Merlin disappears. Up until this time Merlin has represented Mitra, the wise, powerful older man, the mentor, the guide to youth. With his disappearance, Arthur is free to – perhaps must – take on the role himself. It is no coincidence that Merlin disappears not long after Arthur's marriage. Marriage has always been the point at which young men were expected to stop roistering and 'settle down'; to move to the next stage of masculine development,

the provider and protector. Arthur is subject to this constraint in the same way as other young men. If we think of each family as a small primate group, we can then see this cultural requirement as an expression of the shift to the control role expected of the alpha male when he achieves dominance and/or reproductive success. It may even be argued that Arthur's inability to have children with Guenevere is necessary to his myth – that it frees him from the socio-biological requirement to protect his own offspring at the expense of others, and thus allows him to protect everyone in his kingdom; to truly become the father-king that James I describes. This balance lasts only as long as Arthur is in ignorance of Mordred's paternity; then he is dragged out of his, and the land's, equilibrium.

In many other stories, the death or disappearance of the wizard is the point at which the hero/king must find maturity in himself in order to fulfil the quest. He can no longer rely on the father figure to teach him about masculinity; he must become a man. Apart from Gandalf's 'death' in *The Fellowship of the Ring,* the second volume of *The Lord of the Rings* (Tolkien, 1978b), the best-known example of this is the first *Star Wars* movie. When Obi-wan Kenobi dies, Luke Skywalker must draw on his own resources in order to defeat evil.

The demonstration of maturity required of the young hero in the absence of his mentor prefigures the transformation of the Romulus/Varuna figure of the young king into the Numa/Mitra figure of the wise ruler. Therefore, although we do not, in most fiction, stay with the story long enough to see the full transformation, we may be certain that it will follow, particularly where the story ends with a marriage.

Recent fictions, both literary and cinematic, have combined the figures of wizard and young hero. There are examples apart from Harry Potter and Luke Skywalker. In Lian Hearn's *Tales of the Otori* series, Takeo, the main male character, is both wizard and hero (Hearn, 2002, 2003, 2004). Terry Goodkind's *Sword of Truth* series about wizard Richard Cypher is on its third book and is likely to continue (Goodkind, 2006). While Elizabeth Haydon's eponymous heroine Rhapsody is not a wizard in the stereotypical sense, she does control certain types of magic related to nature and perception (and, importantly, learns to do so safely through the instruction of an older mentor) (Haydon, 1999, 2001a, 2001b).

In all of these stories, the young wizard hero is striving for a safer life for everyone. His or her opponents are often also wizards; the fight is usually between black and white magic. We may be seeing in these stories a drift away from the hero as the holder of secular power towards a hero who holds personal power, expressed as magic. We are repeatedly told by the media that this is the age of the individual; that people in western societies preference personal good over common good. A shift to

the wizard hero may be an expression of this. While he (or sometimes she) fights for the common good, at the end of the story he or she is not expected to take responsibility for maintaining it in secular terms. A story about a king ends with the king swearing to serve his people; a story about a wizard ends with the world safe and the wizard free to do what he likes. Merlin goes after Nimue and is imprisoned in the crystal cave; Gandalf leaves Middle-Earth forever; Luke turns to the study of Jedi wisdom; Ged, shorn of magic, goes home to Gont and raises goats; Ingold finds true love with Gil – who knows where Harry Potter will end up?

Chapter 8: The Golden Bough and Fantasy Fiction

'...I know how it works. There's more to being a king than wearing a crown. The king and the land are one. The king and the queen are one. And I shall be queen.'
Terry Pratchett, *Lords and Ladies* 1997, p. 333.

First published in 1890, *The Golden Bough* by Sir James George Frazer was a monumental work of anthropological scholarship. The central conception was, according to Frazer in the preface to the 1911 edition (by then a total of 13 volumes), 'to explain the strange rule of the priesthood or sacred kingship of Nemi [a shrine of Diana in Italy] and with it the legend of the Golden Bough, immortalised by Virgil, which the voice of antiquity associated with the priesthood' (Frazer, 1911, p.16) [2].

Under the guise of examining what was then known about Nemi and its priesthood, Frazer reports on an extraordinary multitude of religions, customs, superstitions and rituals, all of which throw some light, however faint, on the central story of 'the slain god' who self-resurrects or is resurrected symbolically. He includes references to the Christian mythos although he avoids directly dissecting Christian dogma.

In a discussion of the prevalence of monarchs in fantasy fiction, the question of why people wanted to have monarchs in the first place is relevant. Frazer suggests that the path to kingship was via magic; that the first kings were magicians who could (or who convinced others they could) provide benefits such as rain-making to their communities. He acknowledges that this may not have been the only path to kingship but maintains that magician-to-king was a common evolution.

Frazer extrapolates both backwards and forwards from the magician/king to the god/king. He suggests that originally the powers of magic were believed to be widespread, available to all and practised daily in attempts to control everyday life: the success of hunting, the pains of childbirth. But, once it became obvious that most things in the universe could not be brought under the magical control of individual humans, people turned to inventing and then propitiating gods. The magician/king then became an incarnation of the god, usually a god of fertility, and/or the consort of the goddess of fertility (Frazer, p.53). The health, virility and hardiness of the king were believed to be intimately bound up with the prosperity of the tribe. This is the level of kingship often used in those fantasy novels which include the god/king or king/goddess connection.

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[2] For the convenience of the reader, I have used the 1978 abridged version, edited by noted anthropologist Mary Douglas, as the reference for this chapter, except where the 1911 version included relevant material which was not mentioned in the 1978 edition.

However, Frazer suggests that there was a price to pay for being the incarnation of a god – namely, that the earthly vessel of a god must be perfect and that therefore any king who showed signs of age or decrepitude was put to death; similarly, given an assumption about the health of the land being tied up with the god's satisfaction with his earthly embodiment, any time of scarcity or famine might prompt the king's sacrifice and the immediate acclamation of a new earthly vessel, one which the god would, with luck, prefer (Frazer, p. 102-110). A scapegoat or substitute sacrifice was sometimes used (Frazer, p. 111-114).

The concept of divine kingship eventually devolved into 'the divine right of kings', but originally, according to Frazer, meant that the spirit of the god descended into the king upon the death of his predecessor.

Frazer's examples and logic are not always convincing and the wide-ranging nature of his examples sometimes worked against his thesis – he would perhaps have been on firmer ground to have kept to European customs.

In a post-colonial age, one reads sceptically; Frazer reports customs as absolute fact 'the people of Central Angoniland…' do *this,* and *thus*. Knowing not only the poor quality of much of what passed for anthropology in the 19th century, but also how prone European explorers and missionaries were to take 'native customs' at face value and interpret them in a Eurocentric manner, we now understand that much of Frazer's material is suspect, and tainted with racism. A good example is his attitude to Australian indigenous people, 'cunning and malignant savages' (Frazer, p. 36). He would have based his opinion of indigenous peoples on the few field studies available to him, such as Francois Peron's *Maria Island – Anthropological Observations*, an early 19th century work which has been criticised as contributing to the racist views held by Europeans at the time (Anderson, 2001). Frazer's methodology and attitudes have been criticised by scholars such as Ludwig Wittgenstein (in Frazer, 1978, p. 13) and Edmund Leach (Leach, 2003). Mary Douglas, in her introduction to *The Illustrated Golden Bough*, an abridged work, sums up criticisms of Frazer: The main modern one is, first, that Frazer was 'insufferably arrogant about primitive mentality, and second, that he dealt superficially with deep matters' (Frazer, 1978, p. 12). She acknowledges both criticisms as valid, but maintains that Frazer was not 'racialist' in any meaningful way as he subjected his own past culture and European culture to the same scornful analysis (Frazer, p. 12).

Notwithstanding this, Frazer's theory of the development of kingship from magicianship is based on the idea that 'witch doctors' and 'shamans' are people of influence in 'native' society. He claims that 'the public profession of magic has been one of the roads by which the ablest men have passed to supreme power' (Frazer, p.

46). He does not, however, provide evidence of this. Even allowing for a shift in knowledge and interpretation since Frazer's time, it is clear that he selected his examples rigorously to support his case. He fails to mention the possibility of 'might makes right' or the need to defend home territory as factors in creating a king through warriorship, and ignores the historical precedents of new royal houses arising through conquest.

There is also an underlying assumption that the magicians who turned themselves into kings were knowing charlatans, playing upon the gullibility of their compatriots. Perhaps some of them were. But Frazer appears unwilling to accept that anyone of intelligence at any time in human history could have truly believed in magic. This is a failure of imagination on his part which is matched by his contempt for 'the primitive mind' (Frazer, p. 51).

There is so much material in *The Golden Bough* (looking through the 13-volume set is dizzying) that any one example can be excised without affecting the argument; it is possible that if one excised every suspect example the argument would be weakened beyond sustaining.

Does this matter? For a novelist, not at all. What is important are the ideas which Frazer put forward. There is no doubt that Frazer's concepts have influenced writers and it is the use to which those concepts have been put which is of interest.

Frazer and later writers

An abridged version of *The Golden Bough,* edited by Frazer's daughter was published in 1922. This edition became extremely influential among 20th century writers, including WB Yeats, TS Eliot, EM Forster, Thomas Hardy, F Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway (Steinberg 1988; Meyers, 1988; Radford, 2001; Vicery, 1973). Later writers, such as Michael Tippett, the opera librettist, have discovered Frazer through the modernists and been influenced in their turn (Robinson, 1990). That influence shows no sign of waning. In 2004, Patricia Wrede and Caroline Stavermer published the second book in their Regency fantasy series, *The Grand Tour*, which climaxed in a scene where one of the characters is magically transformed into the priest at Nemi, the priest of the Golden Bough (Wrede and Staverner, 2004). The rhetoric and rationale for the scene is lifted straight from Frazer.

Overall, the most striking thing for me in reading *The Golden Bough* is that there are no unfamiliar concepts in it. Although I am well-read in folk tales and in some folk-customs, I had not read widely in this area of anthropology before – but all of Frazer's concepts have become such common currency in fantasy novels that they are extremely familiar to me.

These ideas include 'primitive' beliefs about:

- divine kingship (where the king is the incarnation of the god, as with the pharaohs)
- the unity of the health of king and land
- the need for the king to be sacrificed if the land is in ill health (drought, famine, crop failure, etc.)
- the role of the king as sacred consort to the goddess
- all goddesses and gods as variations on fertility deities
- the need for the king to adopt particular taboos which either safeguard him from harm or safeguard others from an inopportune discharge of his power.

What is most interesting with regard to fantasy fiction is that a 'god/king', 'magician/king' or 'wizard/ruler' is so often portrayed negatively, as a despotic ruler – the original 'Dark Lord'. The need for separation of church and state seems to be alive and well in fantasy fiction, if nowhere else Sauron is the obvious example, but there are others, such as Ursula Le Guin's *The Earthsea Sequence,* which has 'God-Kings' ruling the Kargid lands. While never sighted, the rule of these 'God-Kings' is portrayed as totalitarian and stifling for their people.

Few fantasy writers have made their king an actual embodiment of a god (Terry Pratchett excepted, in *Pyramids*, 1990), but many have used the king/god or god/king idea and/or have used the king as consort to a goddess (or, more usually, the representative of a goddess, acting as her embodiment).

There are numerous examples.

Guy Gavriel Kay's *The Fionavar Tapestry* uses some of Frazer's ideas, especially the first volume, *The Summer Tree* (1996), where one of the main characters, Paul Schaeffer, offers himself as the sacrifice in the place of the king; he is bound to 'the summer tree', the oak which Frazer maintains has been central to the worship of the fertility god in Europe (Frazer, 1978, p. 67), and almost dies but is saved by the god because of his courage. He returns as a true incarnation of the god with the ability to call on the god's powers, but he is not the ruler of the country and plays a mostly positive role. There is also an inversion of this in the third book where one of the other characters takes on the role of Adonis, becomes the lover of the goddess and dies in the process, but redeems the world from a magically induced winter in the process.

Aragorn in *The Lord of the Rings* carries a faint echo of god-like powers in his ability to heal and his ability to command an army of the dead. Marian Zimmer Bradley in *The Mists of Avalon* (1983) and associated texts uses the king as consort to the goddess idea a number of times; referring to 'the sacred marriage' which will

ensure the health of the land. Similarly, Elizabeth Haydon in the *Rhapsody* trilogy gives a 'happy ever after' ending with a sacred marriage between two of the main characters in their roles as Lord and Lady of the land (in *Destiny, Haydon,* 2001b).

Diana Wynne Jones in *The Merlin Conspiracy* (2003) has echoes of this in the importance of the king to the realm and the personification of 'the land' as a female spirit. Anne Bishop, in a feminist version, ties the health of the land to the power and integrity of its queen – in *Daughter of the Blood* (2001), the fight between good and evil is for the as-yet uncorrupted soul of the adolescent queen.

In Le Guin's *The Farthest Shore* (1971c) and later books, it is made clear that the well-being of the people of the archipelago of Earthsea is dependent on there being a king, and the choice of king depends upon his willingness to undergo pain in order to save his people. .

According to Frazer, the king's connection with the divine required him to adopt particular taboos which either safeguarded him from harm or safeguarded others from an inopportune discharge of his power. Frazer suggests that the number and constriction of these taboos eventually rendered the business of ruling impossible, and that the divine ruler devolved into two branches of power: church and state, represented by priest and king, with the king basing his secular power on his selection by the gods.

The fact that these taboos are rarely adopted by fantasy writers is interesting, as it points to the usefulness of a king as an initiator or participator in action; the kind of taboos which Frazer discusses (for example, the king never touching the ground, or never being touched by others) would be death to most narratives in the genre.

It does raise the question, however, of where the priests are. Organised religions that are on the side of good are scarce in fantasy fiction. I considered this at some depth before writing *Blood Ties*. Did I want to create a religion? I decided that I did, as I believe that all human societies have created systems of belief which link them to immanence. If I wanted to create a truly believable human society, I needed some basis of belief. Tolkien solves this problem by having a beautifully worked out cosmology, religious mythology and belief system which underlies much of his characters' actions, but articulating it in *The Silmarillion* instead of in *The Lord of the Rings*.

Like him, I did not want to create a priesthood or an organised religion. There are practical reasons to avoid this: just as monarchy has become detached for readers from its despotic roots in modern times, so churches have become associated with repression and conservatism, as Phillip Pullman uses to good effect in *Northern Lights* (Pullman, 1995). This might not be an idea that is true for all readers, but it is certain

to be true for some. As someone raised in a very Catholic family, with a great deal of experience with the multi-faceted organisation of the Catholic Church, I think I knew too much about how a widespread organised religion really operates to want to include it as an ancillary feature in a large narrative. Furthermore, in sheer plotting terms, it adds another layer of politics, negotiations and power bases to the story. I already had a complex political landscape of eleven Domains, and did not wish to make that landscape more complex by adding further power players.

Yet I did want immanence. Not God, but the gods. My reading in mythology had left me with a profound distaste for mythology based on pantheons, which are so like soap operas with lightning bolts. No 'personalities', no 'archetypes'. So the gods in this story are local; not quite animistic, powers not fully defined, but definitely tied to the locale: the village, the forest, the town. To get away from priests, I made them approachable by all, especially (of course) by some of my characters. To make sure they took no part in selecting a king, I made them not very interested in human beings except when forced to take notice.

No doubt Frazer would think the religion in *Blood Ties* a poor, weak little thing, but I have made its roots strong, so that, as in real animistic societies, everyday actions are bound up with belief.

Frazer's description of how the king sacrifice degenerates into representations (Frazer, 1978, p. 116) in folk custom allowed me to 'place' my fictional world at a particular point in Frazer's cycle, and to add a hint of immanence to a practice (horse-racing) which is anything but sacerdotal in our world. The ritual of the Autumn Chase in *Blood Ties* is a degenerated version of the annual killing of the king substitute (Frazer, p. 112). A later section of the story is set in the past (1000 years ago) and the contrast between the 'contemporary' horse-racing and that of the past will add to the sense of authenticity of the created world.

It is possible, I believe, to trace how kings are sometimes used in fantasy fiction back to the ideas in *The Golden Bough*, sometimes directly, sometimes at second- or third-hand. But realising this does not answer our central question of why use kings at all? It gives us some possibilities: the god/king connection, if it is understood by the reader as well as the writer, allows the royal character to carry a sacerdotal role which is not available to other figures at the top of a political hierarchy. But this assumes that the reader is familiar with Frazer's ideas, or continues to be influenced by the remnants of the primitive god/king mythos in our culture. This is a big assumption, and there is a much simpler explanation for any such influences.

Christian representation of kings

Frazer clearly identifies the Christian mythos as fitting the pattern of the sacrificial figure who is symbolically reborn to ensure fertility. He stops short of saying that Christian beliefs are to be equated with 'primitive' superstitions, but the inference is plain. It is clear that his discussion of the dying and 'resurrected' king is intended to throw an unflattering light on Christian belief (Frazer, 1911).

Any discussion of the culturally persistent mythic pattern of a god, represented by a king who dies and comes back to life, is incomplete without the obvious addition of Christian theology. If the pattern persists in our own cultural artefacts, it is unlikely to be solely because of anthropological data revealed in the 19th century by a few scholars. The sacrifice who saves his people, the good king who rules with just, stable and loving governance, the one who embodies immanence, is far more familiar to us from Christian iconography than from Frazer's work.

Christ is often portrayed as a king, as the titles of a few well-known hymns remind us: *Hail, Redeemer, King Divine; Crown him with many crowns; O worship the King; All creatures of our God and King* (*The Book of Common Praise,* 1972).

As discussed earlier, European monarchs have made much use of the association with the divine, claiming a correspondence between Christ and his Church and the king and his subjects. All this history is an unstated and perhaps unconscious element in any portrayal of a king in fiction.

There is no need to belabour the parallels between Christ and the king who returns to his 'rightful place' and brings with him peace and prosperity, the eucatastrophe. When Tolkien defines 'eucatastrophe' in his essay *On Fairy Tales* as 'the Consolation of the Happy Ending' and suggests that it 'is the true form of the fairy tale, and its highest function', he goes on to link it to 'the Christian Story' and the eucatastrophe of Christ's birth (Tolkien, 1972, p. 62-63).

However, I believe there is another part of Christian iconography which has been equally influential in fantasy writing: the idea of earthly paradise, the Eden.

Tolkien, in a letter to his son, says '…certainly there was an Eden on this unhappy earth. We all long for it, and we are constantly glimpsing it: our whole nature at its best and least corrupted, its gentlest and most humane, is still soaked with the sense of 'exile'…As far as we can go back the nobler part of the human mind is filled with the thoughts of *sibh*, peace and goodwill, and with the thought of its *loss*.' (Tolkien, 1981, p. 110)

Vladimir Propp, as noted earlier, found that the initial situation in traditional Russian folk tales which centred around a hero was the disruption of the peace or prosperity of a realm (Propp, 1990). Eden lost, and restored at the end by the efforts

of the hero. The Golden Age ushered in by Aragorn's ascent of the throne, the golden year of 1620 in the Shire, are a reflection of Eden, of Paradise, and can only be attained by sacrifice and the wise and loving protection of a king. Similarly, Ursula Le Guin's *Earthsea* trilogy ends on the restoration of a king to his throne and the resumption of edenic peace. A minor character early in *The Farthest Shore* sets the scene: 'It's time there was a king again on the throne of Earthsea, to wield the Sign of Peace. People are tired of wars and raids and merchants who overprice and princes who overtax and all the confusions of unruly powers' (Le Guin, 1971c, p. 24). *The Farthest Shore* ends with the ascent of Arren to the throne and the promise of peace and safety. The ascent of Rhapsody and Ashe to the position of Lord and Lady in the final volume of Elizabeth Haydon's *Rhapsody* trilogy not only restores peace and plenty, but literally saves the world. The story is told inside a narrative frame where the couple's son, Meridion, is a Time Editor who influences events from outside space/time in order to prevent the wholesale destruction of life on the planet. In his timeline, Rhapsody and Ashe did not rule, and perdition was the result (Haydon, 2001b).

Even in Stephen Donaldson's *The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant, the Unbeliever*, which has no king to restore to the throne, the hero is 'resurrected' (on Easter Sunday!) by the direct intervention of a Creator and is then shown a vision of the Land he has saved, restored to peace and harmony (Donaldson, 1977c).

In all these narratives the hero, in order to be the saviour, must go out, like Adam and Eve, like Christ in the desert – leave the settled lands and enter the wilderness. The wilderness, that essential landscape of epic fantasy, here plays three roles. Firstly, it is a contrast to the earlier settled peace and prosperity, warning us of what might overtake the homeland if the hero is unsuccessful. Secondly, it provides opportunities for danger and thus growth, so that the hero can prove him/herself worthy. Thirdly, it is in wilderness (traditionally, in the desert) that God has spoken; the will of the immanent is made manifest in the wild places.

This all sounds suspiciously like Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey, and in some respects, since we are drawing on similar material, it is. But Campbell's hero returns to his tribe with wisdom, not with the re-establishment of peace. Anyone can be a hero in Campbell's schema (Campbell, 1973). Even a president.

But with a story of Eden lost and regained, we have a role for kings (and, in more recent books, queens) which cannot be performed adequately by presidents or mayors. Heroes may solve problems, confront evil and destroy it, but to regain Paradise Christian mythos tells us that the monarch – the Christ figure – must be on his throne, reborn by a baptism of fire, going before us into Heaven.

'In such stories when the sudden "turn" comes we get a piercing glimpse of joy, and heart's desire, that for a moment passes outside the frame, rends indeed the very web of story, and lets a gleam come through' (Tolkien, 1972, p.61).

Perhaps this correspondence between Christ and king-hero also explains how successful the Arthur stories have been. Arthur shares the Christ-like attribute of a Second Coming and, within the boundaries of his story, we wait for this in confidence that he will, indeed, come when the time is right. Arthur's story gives us eucatastrophe early, when he attains the throne, and then again when the Holy Grail is achieved by Galahad, but we are left at the end, not with redemption and Paradise, but with the promise of redemption still to come. So Arthur, like Christ, is both man and something more, living out of time and bodily mortality, but human in a way Christ is not, because Christ succeeded and Arthur failed – yet he has not deserted us, has not left the story. We don't like our favourite stories to end, so this promise of return, the promise of the second coming, is another reason for cherishing the Arthurian cycle.

How does this affect someone like me, writing fantasy without a king?

I have incorporated Christ-like attributes into one of my main characters, Bramble. She goes through a form of death and later becomes the Kill Reborn. In the final volume of the story, she will lead the dead, not to Heaven, but to a position from which they can be reborn. I did not make these decisions from a conscious desire to have a Christ-substitute in the story, or from a need for what Tolkein calls *evangelium*, that glimpse of immanence shining through eucatastrophe (Tolkien, 1972, p. 62). The decision to have Bramble undergo a symbolic death came very late, in the final draft, and was taken because the first part of the novel seemed a little flat to me, a bit pedestrian. Not enough sense of wonder. I had already established her as the Kill Reborn in an earlier draft, so it seemed to make a nice balance to have an action episode earlier (where she jumps the chasm) which would lead her through death. It also strengthened her motivation to keep riding the roan in the Chases even though he was not fully fit. Her fear that the 'half-death' would come back if she didn't keep chasing made her choice there more difficult and her decision more sympathetic.

The decision to make her the Kill Reborn came at a very early stage and was, I confess, influenced by reading *The Golden Bough*. In it Frazer describes the hunt and sacrifice of the king figure and discusses how this 'primitive' ritual degenerated over time to other rituals, such as the burning of the corn dollies, which were also believed to ensure fertility. The image of the hunt stayed with me and the idea that I could present the custom in its degenerated form in the first book and then in its original form in the second appealed to me.

Then, quite late in the planning process, I realised that at the end of the third book I would be left with an army of ghosts who had laid down arms but not been sent to their rest. I had not then read *The Other Wind*, where Le Guin is confronted with the same problem and solves it in only a slightly different way. I am glad I had not read that story when I planned the third book as I think this ending is the right one for this story, and I might have tried to make it significantly different to Le Guin's solution if I had read her version first.

The whole point of my narrative is the power of forgiveness and the uselessness of hatred and revenge. The ghosts must forgive their killers – but it seemed both psychologically and spiritually true that forgiveness is a boon for the forgiver first, even more importantly than for the transgressor. To demonstrate this, there had to be a change in the ghosts which would mirror their internal change. It is well established earlier in the story that one has to 'earn' rebirth; this had to become the external change that the ghosts went through.

I also had another problem which making Bramble the leader of the ghosts into true death solved for me. By the end of the story, she is in love with Acton, a ghost, and he with her. It is the strong love story in the narrative and for real eucatastrophe I needed a happy ending. But I couldn't have one while Bramble was still alive. So Bramble became the sacrifice, the Christ-figure, for a combination of reasons, some practical and some not so pragmatic.

The story thus reinforces the idea of the saviour/hero, but divorces this from the notion of monarchy, casting monarchy as an unwanted political development which is being proposed by an evil character. This is intended to challenge some of the anti-democratic ideas implicit in epic fantasy while maintaining the strong narrative drive and sense of wonder which is characteristic of this genre. Similarly, the incorporation of first-person stories from 'minor' characters will undercut the idea that only the main characters in the narrative are significant and worthy of our interest. This structure, giving voice to the ordinary and everyday as well as the magical and special, will reinforce the political philosophy described in the story as 'Valuing' (that is, egalitarianism and democracy). The 'Eden' to which the end of the narrative delivers us, as the Last Domain turns to Valuing, is one which has the hope of equality and prosperity for everyone, including the marginalised, rather than a prosperity which most benefits the powerful.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

Vimes went back to the rank in a gloomy rage. Say what you like about the people of Ankh-Morpork, they had always been staunchly independent, yielding to no man their right to rob, defraud, embezzle and murder on an equal basis. This seemed absolutely right, to Vimes's way of thinking. There was no difference at all between the richest man and the poorest beggar, apart from the fact that the former had lots of money, food, power, fine clothes, and good health. But at least he wasn't any better. Just richer, fatter, more powerful, better dressed and healthier. It had been like that for hundreds of years.

‘And now they get one sniff of an ermine robe and they go all gooey,’ he muttered.

Terry Pratchett, *Guards! Guards!* 1990, p. 157.

A writer working within the literary tradition of fantasy may well choose to use a monarchy as the political structure for their secondary creation simply because it is traditional; familiar to readers, easy to understand, quick in exposition, ‘fitting’ the type of tale they are about to commence, and strongly commercial.

Or they may do so for deeper, less conscious reasons. All social animals create dominance structures in their social groups. With the exception of bonobos, primate social groups have a single male at the top of the hierarchy. Even among bonobos, there is a male dominance structure which ensures that the alpha male has priority access to reproductive success. Perhaps, then, we use kings in fantasy fiction because we long for the single male leader who will assume the ‘control role’ of the alpha male, protecting the group against outsiders and protecting the weaker members against the bullies in the group. Perhaps our desire for a ‘good king’ goes back to this most basic of human social structures.   However, the alpha male gains his position by political guile and strength of will, rather than by inheritance (although having a dominant mother helps). There is no ‘rightful alpha male’. The process is much more like modern politics than it is like royal descent. Kingship enters human society later, exploiting our undoubted desire to have someone in charge.

We cannot truly know how kings first arose or what they meant to their subjects. We can be sure, however, of two things: they have been around a long, long time and they have almost always claimed some special relationship with the divine. Sometimes that relationship was direct: ‘I am a god, worship me!’ Sometimes it was based on revelation: ‘God has revealed to me only what we must do’ (as with Moses). Sometimes it appears to have been based on being the male partner of the fertility goddess, as represented by her priestess. Sometimes it was based on a claim that ‘God put me here and here I stay until He changes His mind’ (the divine right of kings). And sometimes, perhaps, it was based on becoming the incarnation of a god, with the

attendant danger of being sacrificed if it seemed that the god was not satisfied with that incarnation.

While few claim nowadays (even on the most fanatic monarchist website) that royalty is divinely appointed, nonetheless a crucial idea has been implanted in our culture: the idea of 'the rightful king', where 'rightful' has implications of 'ordained by God'. It also, of course, has implications of lawful, which is to say patrilineal, inheritance. Despite the sudden appearance of 'rightful queens' in fantasy fiction since the 1970s, the queens in question are all legitimate daughters of the royal family. Where patrilineal inheritance is not followed, the 'rightful' ruler is selected by Immanence: thus Arren, in *The Earthsea Sequence*, or Rhapsody, in Haydon's trilogy. The corollary to this idea is that when the ruler is not 'rightful', terrible things happen, either from malice and wanton greed on the part of the usurper, from decline and decay when a ruler is absent, or from the land itself (including the weather) reflecting the political unheaval. This goes well beyond the pathetic fallacy. While tyrants and usurpers generally make things unpleasant for those they rule, there are not usually earthquakes, droughts, incursions of demons, plagues or a suspension of the normal laws of physics, all of which can be found in epic fantasy and all of which portray a world in which proper governance is central to the stability of the eco-system. That is, 'the king and the land are one'.

'One what?' Terry Pratchett has a character ask, and the answer may be: one expression of immanence (Pratchett, 1989, p.31).

Comparative mythology has given us two influential views of sovereignty: the Mitra-Varuna pairing which translates in fantasy fiction to the wizard/young hero couple; and the king with links to the divine which we find in *The Golden Bough*. Both are well-represented in fantasy fiction, sometimes in the same book. However, a far more pervasive influence has been Judeo-Christian religion and its representation of the messiah/Christ figure who rescues a fallen and desperate people from death and restores for them the Eden which they had lost.

Despite its beginnings in William Morris's staunch socialism, epic fantasy fiction in the second half of the 20th century and in the 21st century is a genre imbued with 'a greater power', immanence, divinity, intention… Tolkien, influential in this as in so many ways, was deliberate in his creation of a quasi-Judaeo-Christian mythos for his secondary creation. Middle Earth is our world before Christ's appearance, and *The Lord of the Rings* is presented as history. For other writers who may not share Tolkien's deep faith, the use of a 'greater power' may be simply a plot device, or may add to the sense of wonder, of heightened reality, which both they and their readers enjoy.

The link between kingship and godhood, in the Christian tradition, allows access to another part of the Christian mythos: Eden, or Paradise. Both folktales and fantasy novels often begin the story with a disruption to the proper order of things; with the Fall. This may, as with Earthsea and Middle Earth, have happened long ago in the secondary creation, but that event is the true beginning of the narrative which is now unfolding.

The king may not be the hero of the story, but the return of the king, the reclamation of the throne by the rightful heir, must be part of the resolution of this type of story in order for it to partake of the force of myth, of true eucatastrophe. The rightful king, whether Arthur or Aragorn, then ushers in a Golden Age, a return to Eden which cannot occur unless the king is on throne.

Does this mean that a narrative without a king cannot achieve eucatastrophe? That without the king returned to his throne, Eden cannot be regained in the reader's mind? I suspect, like most literary effects, that this can be achieved by other means, but perhaps only if the writer is aware of how the tradition operates and the nature of the reward that the reader receives from the traditional story. Certainly, when I come to write the last book in the *Blood Ties* narrative, I will keep in mind the need for Eden in the resolution, for the promise, at least, of peace and plenty and rightfulness in the order of things.

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