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Stress and Trauma of the Hero in the Selected Works of J.R.R. Tolkien and Robert Jordan

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ABSTRACT AND KEYWORDS

This paper analyzes the depiction of stress and trauma effects on the main protagonist of *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Wheel of Time*. Focusing on the external dialogue and internal thoughts of each respective character, the aim is to identify which factors contributed to the change and fates they end their stories with. The findings show that the lack of locus of control, environmental factors, diminishing resources, and degradation of the social support structure directly affect the protagonists' developing stress and trauma. In addition, the study contributes to the field further by discussing the evolution of fantasy as a genre. Beginning with fairy tales for children into the current paradigm able to depict human characters with realistic struggles in an otherwise unrealistic setting.

Keywords: *Tolkien, Jordan, fantasy, stress, trauma*

INTRODUCTION

“‘Light forgive me!’” He did not believe it could come, forgiveness. Not for what he had done. But he shouted to the sky anyway, begged for what he could not believe he could receive.” (Jordan, 1990, *Eye of the World*, p.15). Clearly, something terrible happened here. The character in this passage has done something that he believes is incapable of being forgiven, yet wails in futility to this world’s deity. One could hope that it is merely an ineffectual plea by the villain of a story at the forefront of his defeat by a triumphant hero. However, this is unfortunately not the truth. This man, the character begging for forfeited salvation, is the hero, the Chosen One. He has failed and cries over the corpses of his friends and family by his own hand, all the while the villain laughs. Out of these ashes, the new Chosen One must climb.

The Chosen One narrative is a prominent feature of fantasy stories across multiple decades and authors alike. A lone hero destined to undo all the wrong done by an evil force. Although very often interpreted in various ways, they still play on a human desire to see the best of us projected into one figure who then vanquishes that which is a manifestation of the worst humanity can bring. While a generally simplistic notion, I believe that it is due to this simplicity that a foundation is set to postulate complex questions. Especially as children, we imagine ourselves heroes of a story; destroying evil, saving a farflung kingdom, and sometimes finding true love. Through fantasy, we are immersed in this type of setting and in doing so, are treated to pondering as well as observing a key factor often forgotten when reading of outlandish creatures or stunning magic.

Fantasy has been pervasive throughout the human experience. We lend ourselves to telling outlandish tales of mystical lands and fantastical creatures. On the surface it would seem

all superficial, a genre only for whimsy and the unreal. Some people would agree, I however, fiercely disagree. Rather, I believe that fantasy is an outlet where under the fantastical elements lies the opportunity to explore the most sincere and authentic human emotions and stories. In my opinion, many authors have succeeded at just this.

The name J.R.R Tolkien is known throughout the English speaking world and is synonymous with fantasy. After all he is often coined as the Father of Fantasy himself. For decades the story of *The Lord of the Rings* has fueled the imaginations of readers and authors alike. Robert Jordan was spurred by the notion of how he'd react if a wizard swooped in and informed him of his role to play in the destruction of evil and therefore must leave his home. From this Jordan would write his own fantasy series *The Wheel of Time*. Although growing beyond his original scope, the first three novels; *The Eye of the World*, *The Great Hunt*, and *The Dragon Reborn* carry most from its Tolkien inspiration and conclude the first arc of the story.

What does being a messianic figure in a fantasy setting realistically entail? How would a journey of world-shaking magnitude accumulate and weigh on a young adventurer and their party? Although these stories lack the modern vocabulary when it comes to diagnosing or labelling their condition, through dialogues between characters and inner monologue we as readers are able to identify or deduce how they're feeling and what is affecting them. Using the texts *Understanding Trauma* edited by Caroline Garland and *Stress: Perspectives and Processes* by Dean Barlett, in conjunction with excerpts from the novels themselves, the analysis will attempt to make sense of the mental hardships of the main characters, how they are portrayed, and its effects the other characters and the world around them.

This study's aim in contribution toward the academic scholarship in literature is to add to the discourse around fantasy as a genre. A complaint J.R.R. Tolkien brought forward in his essay

On Fairy Stories centers on the idea that due to the contents, magical elements, make believe, and plots historically geared towards children, that it is something to be discarded once a reader comes of age. Decades have passed since this original observation and this attitude amongst many still holds. Even with the maturing and growing popularity of the genre, an example seen in the success of the series *A Song of Ice and Fire* by George R.R. Martin. It appears many readers or general consumers of media hold onto the premise that in order for a book or series to have a realistic impact the entirety of it must be realistic, world and all. The existence and presence of books such as *1984* by George Orwell in the cultural zeitgeist should immediately disprove this. However, it can be argued that *1984* isn't fantasy, but as Michael Livingston quotes from Gene Wolfe, "all novels are fantasies. Some are more honest about it." (Livingston, 2022, p. 23). Is it the mere presence of dragons and magic that immediately condemns a work to being less than another? This study provides an alternative perspective, showing that some of the most real and human characters put to page, grounding their otherwise impossible tasks with real consequences, may come from worlds with dragons and magic but that are still completely our own.

The aim here is to examine two fantasy hero's journeys, their progression, and its depiction of the resulting stress and trauma.

The subject of the paper are the two main protagonists, Frodo and Rand al'Thor, from *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Wheel of Time* respectively.

The objectives of this paper are:

1. Give an overview of fantasy and its origins and how it affected the depiction of character
2. Analyze the narrative journey of Frodo and Rand al'Thor in their stories

3. Examine the similarities and differences between their beginning and ending state
4. Based on these depictions, conclude whether stress, trauma, or both are present and how it culminated in their final decisions

The research method used is qualitative.

The outline of the paper. First, the paper will define what exactly is a fantasy story and how it grew out of the original fairy story. Precisely why fantasy lends itself to telling realistic characters. The second chapter is where it will delve into the two authors being analyzed, their inspirations and aims in writing their respective stories. Chapter three begins with *The Lord of the Rings* then continuing with *The Wheel of Time*, each of the novel's narratives will be briefly explained. With this context it will lead into exploring the main character, how they begin their stories, how they grow, and where they arrive. In the final chapter the paper will compare and contrast the two protagonists journeys; seeing how each portrays their character's growth and change through their struggle to be a hero. Conclude whether these characters have exhibited growing stress and or trauma throughout or by the end and how it impacts the end of the story.

1. LITERARY REVIEW

1.1. DEFINING FANTASY

In the first chapter, we will explore the genre of fantasy through its definition, origin, and current status. As well as distinguishing it from the fairy story.

1.1.1. What is a Fairy Story?

When J.R.R. Tolkien first wrote his paper *On Fairy Stories* in 1947, there was no clear definition of what exactly a ‘fairy story’ was. Today, in the Oxford English dictionary, there is an incredibly short entry that merely contains “fairy story = fairy tale”. If someone were to search in the Merriam-Webster English dictionary, there is still no specific entry. Instead you are directed to the entry for ‘fairy tale’ which is defined as “a story (as for children) involving fantastic forces and beings (such as fairies, wizards, and goblins)”, “a story in which improbable events lead to a happy ending”, and “a made-up story usually designed to mislead” (*Merriam-Webster.com.*). Each part of these definitions are generally vague, however there are specific characteristics that can bring more clarity into what makes up a fairy story.

While the modern iteration of fantasy literature is generally longer and has grown out of the old fairy story, they are shorter and have their foundations in myth. They “have their roots in archaic society” (Nikolajevna, 2003, p.138) and hold a place in society firmly occupying a space of tradition. When Tolkien describes a fairy story, rather than solely interacting with the ‘fairy’ in question or other magical creatures, but instead “upon the nature of Faërie: the Perilous Realm itself, and the air that blows in that country” (Tolkien, 1948, p. 5). He, however, admits he

himself cannot exactly explain what that in it of itself means. Many cultures and civilizations have their own version of ‘fairy’, i.e. a fantastical being tied to the lore of the land. Myth, folk traditions, and the separation between what was and is fuel the fairy story and give it the whimsy it portrays.

One lament towards the fairy story that persists into its descendant is the idea of it all being “merely fantasy”. The first collections of fairy stories centered around mystical beings and far flung worlds, which as we see is still a prevalent figure in the genre today. However, another factor is that these stories in a large portion are aimed towards a younger audience. By that extent, a lesser craft than other genres. Could it be, as a general statement, these stories have simple prose and narrative, or that adults are drawn to realism?

“If fairy-story as a kind is worth reading at all it is worthy to be written for and read by adults. They will, of course, put more in and get more out than children can.” (Tolkien 1948, p.22).

Though the fairy story has a plain description, typically has an uncomplicated plot, simplistic yet heroic characters, and containing a magical element in its world, a certain concrete base persists as it evolves into its new form. Although fantasy inevitably inherits these features, as time has passed it has done so superficially in many cases.

1.1.2. What is Fantasy?

The current iteration of fantasy literature is the predecessor to the fairy story and fairy tale. While the fairy story is a finished genre, Nikolajevna argues, fantasy is a still growing and dynamic field. Unlike its forebearer, fantasy is divorced from the ambiguity of the sacred due to its modern roots. As Tolkien injects, fantasy is where “Faerie begins; Man becomes a sub-creator” (Tolkien, 1948, p. 11). It is a “conscious creation” (Nikolajevna, 2003, p.139) of man and not limited to a specific inspiration. As previously stated, fantasy is still evolving, constantly having new stories being given as new events and technologies are discovered in our world. It is not content with just what it has now, it hungers to consume and challenges the new that has been consumed. Nikolajevna articulates this best:

“From a limited, positivistic view of the world humankind has turned to a wider, more open view of life. We have thus become sufficiently mature to accept the possibility of the range of phenomena that fantasy deals with. . .” (Nikolajevna, 2003, p.140)

While in her writings she goes on to detail the addition of separate worlds, time distortion, and scientific advancement that modern fantasy has brought us; it is in the realm of character in which will be further explored. Fairy stories usually don’t have the capacity to delve into the intricacies of character due to its narrator dominated prose. Even as first person perspective began to be utilized, its potential was hindered by a clear moral compass; a hard divide between good and evil. Because fantasy is heavily influenced by postmodern developments in addition to more thoroughly engulfing itself with the first person, this rigidity in morality can be challenged and explored. In a self fulfilling prophecy, interrogating the

traditional hero and villain dichotomy lends itself to not only the thoughts of the protagonist, but secondary characters as well.

A key point of growth for the genre is from this underlying attribute; the true manifesting into the real. Indeed, a fairy story must convince its reader that its whimsical world can exist in space and time, following its established rules of magic, it exists on the periphery of existence. The world the characters inhabit, although existing for them, is very clearly in our minds still a story. There is the presence of distance, we are situated “in a clearly detached timespace, readers are not supposed to believe in the story” (Nikolajevna, 2003, p.153). As fantasy embraces the real, a confused morality, a hero that can fail, we can believe in the story. The hero in a fairy story is wondrous beyond imagination, while a fantasy protagonist is flawed and challenged but can succeed, just as anyone can.

1.2. STRESS AND TRAUMA

1.2.1. Stress

The study and understanding of stress as a concept has evolved and changed throughout the decades, expanding to include various definitions and “the number and variety of phenomena that people have come to associate with increased levels of stress is staggering” (Bartlett, 1998, p. 2) ranging from the benign to the extreme. Many have tried to create a concrete definition for the term, one example from Hans Selye as quoted being “stress is a non-specific response of the body to any demand made upon it” (Selye 1974, p. 5)” ().

The first chapter of *Stress: Perspectives and Processes* by Dean Bartlett outlines the various perspectives and models used to study stress. Several definitions put forth include

stimulus-based, reaction-based, and a more hybrid interactional definition. The latter being the primary definition used here, as it offers a less simplistic outlook on what causes stress. The interactional one being “a fusion of the stimulus and response models and labels as stress the whole process from encountering stressful stimuli in the environment, through to the response of the body and its accompanying physiological changes and the phenomenological experience of stress.” (p. 7). The perspectives on stress identifiable for the study include; the discursive, adaption, conservation of resources, behaviourist, and cognitive perspectives.

Firstly, the discursive perspective is built upon that individual’s personal view of what stress is. The core behind this approach is that it “emphasizes the need to take account of the individual’s own experience, understanding, interpretation, and perception of stressful events” (p. 15). Initial stressor plus how the one experiencing stress copes is fundamental to this method.

In regards to coping, the adaptation model is in direct relation to “a threatening or changing environment and the resources drawn upon during the process of adapting to those changing environmental conditions” (p. 17). Further delved within this perspective is what’s known as the life change-health change paradigm. This describes that regardless if positive or negative, life changes in themselves stressors that affect the individual. Unlike other models described in the chapter, this paradigm is “specifying that the most important element of a stressor is that of a change in circumstance, rather than the absolute level of stress in a person’s environment.” (p. 17).

The conservation of resources model is the most straightforward in its description as it deals with the lack of or instability of resources. This encapsulates not only tangible items but “personal skills and characteristics” (p. 17). This model, unlike the others, is a response-based

definition, stress being the result of one of the following; possibility of loss in resources, real loss of resources, or the dwindling of resources following an active investment (p.17).

The behavioral perspective has some overlap with the coping process in trauma as will be discussed later. This model is predicated on the ability that “individual organisms learn to moderate their stress response to an appropriate level” (p. 19). The theory proposes that due to repetitive or constant exposure to a stressor, an individual will be able to learn and mitigate any unregulated or unwarranted response.

A final perspective is the cognitive, also pertaining to the individual’s interpretation and reaction to the stressor. In particular, the core refers to the “decision-making and information processing strategies that describe and explain the perception, experience, interpretation and resulting effects” (p. 19) of the stressor. An equilibrium can be found when the individual’s expectation and the occurrence, however “stress arises as a result of disparity between preconceived expectation and perceptions” (p. 19). Once this disparity coalesces and stress occurs, the individual’s “perceptions are distorted and problem-solving ability is impaired.” (p. 19). It is always important to bring attention to the notion that each of these models cannot be the sole arbiter to identify stress entirely.

With the perspectives outlined above, that last consideration are the various personal variables that contribute to the stress experienced by a given individual. These can include “differences in skills or cognitive capacities and differences in the goals and motivations which propel people into different kinds of situations” (p. 65). Other variables that are considered in the analysis are; locus of control, hardiness, sense of coherence, self-efficacy and negative affectivity, and environment.

The locus of control, as elaborated on within the trauma portion of the literature, is regarded as an individual's perception that what is affecting them is within their influence. The following variables as well touch on whether the stressed person perceives their situation as within their grasp as something that can be altered. Hardiness is described as "resistance resources available to the individual which can neutralize the otherwise debilitating effects of stress (Kobasa 1979; Kobasa *et. al* 1982)" (p. 70). The fallout of this correlates to a moderating effect when coping with the stress. Sense of coherence is the culmination of three other factors that affect perception; comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness. Overall, whether the stimuli is explainable, the individual has the effects to deal with the stimuli, and that dealing with these stimuli is worth the cost (p. 71). Self-efficacy is defined as "the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior necessary to promote a desired outcome" (p. 72) and that one can organize themselves through mental and physical resources to have control over their situation. From this stems to modes of thought; dispositional optimism, as in positive thinking that the outcome will be good, or negative affectivity, pertaining to low view of self and higher rates of anxiety (p. 73).

The last variable for this analysis is environmental. Several factors at once can influence the stress at hand particularly the amount and type. These can include the basic change to an unfamiliar location as well as the type of environment that replaced the previously known one. In addition, the lack of structure or social support can directly affect or soften the stress that can be experienced in this change.

1.2.2. Trauma

The opening statement in the introduction of Garland's book *Understanding Trauma: A Psychoanalytical Approach* is "trauma is a kind of wound" (Garland, 2013, p. 9). This is apt as while it can be managed and treated, trauma does not merely go away. While not all traumatic events are created, quite a few strike at an individual's very being as sometimes "the mind is flooded with a kind and degree of stimulation that is far more than it can make sense of or manage" (p. 10). There is a lot of overlap between the indicators of stress and trauma, and similarly the symptoms can compound over time.

In Dr. Stephen Brock's chapter about identifying those at risk for psychological trauma, he poses one idea in relation to the manifestation of trauma in an individual through "the interaction among the crisis event, the individual's unique crisis experience, and personal resiliency and vulnerability" (Brock, 2002, p. 367). It is important to note that variations between all of these factors can change how a traumatic event affects a person in addition there is "no simple cause-and-effect relationship" (p. 367) to attach to a person.

In relation to the crisis event at hand, further variables break down into "crisis exposure, relationships with crisis victims, crisis reactions, and perceived threat" (p. 368). For this analysis, the crisis exposure and crisis reaction are most relevant. Within the exposure variable, both proximity and duration; "The closer the individual is to the crisis and the longer the duration of exposure, the greater the traumatization" (p. 368). When it comes to the reaction to the crisis event, Brock references that "Specifically, McFarlane and Yehuda (1996) found that "enduring exaggerated startle response, hypervigilance, increased irritability, sleep disturbance, and disturbed memory and concentration" (p. 172)" (p. 370) are all common amongst those who have a more severe reaction to their crisis event due to "the immediate response to a crisis influence

the capacity to respond adaptively” (p. 370). Indicating that part of the individual’s internal rationalization or destabilization can affect their mental outcome.

Finally, perhaps the attribute with the most amount of influencing variables is the individual’s personal resiliency and vulnerability. Further broken down into both external and internal.

The external factors that can affect a person’s resiliency encapsulate “the individual’s environment and include familial, social, and financial resources” (p. 371). When applying these to the two heroes, the ones most pertinent are; social and financial resources. Social resources revolve around the relationships built between individuals and groups. While financial resources refers to general financial stability or the influence of poverty.

There are even more pertaining to internal factors, but those poignant for the analysis are; coping strategies, self-regulation of emotion, and locus of control. Coping strategies are further separated into either active or avoidance. Active strategies “include thoughts and actions that focus directly on problems (e.g., positive thinking, positive reappraisal of the stressor, making problem solving decisions, and taking some direct action)” (p. 375) while avoidance “include thoughts and actions that attempt to focus away from a stressful situation (e.g., to stop thinking about and/or dealing with the stressor)” (p. 375). The research overall shows that active coping strategies lead to an overall reduced chance of negative mental health outcomes, however not for all scenarios, particularly “extremely high-stress situations” (p. 375). Leading into this is the self-regulation practiced by the affected individual, a calmer reaction being an indicator for better results. Finally, the locus of control pertains to how much a person believes they have direct effect over, and those with a stronger internal locus “are better able to cope with stressful life events” (p. 378).

2. TOLKIEN AND JORDAN

This chapter explores both Tolkien and Jordan's influences in their writing, the aim in their narratives, and the elements of fantasy that are found in their stories.

2.1. Tolkien

J.R.R. Tolkien, full name John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, has been bestowed with the moniker “the Father of Modern Fantasy” for several decades. A linguist and professor, Tolkien set the foundations for the tropes we see today in the modern iteration of the genre. Having translated *Beowulf* and popularizing the fairy-story, his magnum opus would be his writings in Middle-Earth as a folk origin for England. Tolkien's writing popularized fantasy tropes still in use throughout the genre; wise old mentor or the long perilous journey.

2.2. Jordan

Robert Jordan, born James Oliver Rigney Jr., is referred to by Michael Livingston, the author of the book *Origins of the Wheel of Time*, as the “American Tolkien”. His reasoning behind the label was because, as he believes, in order “to understand what he was doing in The Wheel of Time - and how he was doing it - is to understand what Tolkien had done in *The Lord of the Rings*.” (Livingston, 2022). As individuals, Jordan and Tolkien share quite a few similarities; being raised in the country, having served in war, and writing a fantasy story taking

place in a version of our own world. His work purposefully lures in readers with a comfortable introduction.

“In the first chapters of *The Eye of the World*, I tried for a Tolkienesque feel without trying to copy Tolkien’s style, but that was by way of saying to the reader, okay, this is familiar, this is something you recognize, now let’s go where you haven’t been before.” (Jordan, 2002).

There are many similarities, however his Chosen One and the characters that join him on his journey, are not as adventure bound as Frodo when he leaves the Shire. In an interview with Audio Renaissance in 1997, Jordan was asked why he chose to begin writing the story that would become *The Wheel of Time*, he answered:

“I wondered what it was really like to be tapped on the shoulder and told you were born to be the savior of mankind. I didn't think it would be very much the way it is in so many books where someone pops up and says, "Hi, I was born to be the savior of mankind, and here's the prophecy," and everybody says, "Oh well, let's go then." I thought self interest would play a big part.” (Jordan, 1997).

While for the main protagonist his prime challenge is coping with being the chosen one, other personal qualms, ones realistic in our world, help ground his struggle for us to catch a glimpse of what it might be to be in his place. As Livingston states, “Jordan creates characters who must make one difficult decision after another.” (Livingston, 2022, p. 112).

3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The foundational sources for the research were the three *Lord of the Rings* novels; *The Fellowship of the Ring*, *Two Towers*, and *The Return of the King* and the first three books of *The Wheel of Time*; *The Eye of the World*, *The Great Hunt*, and *The Dragon Reborn*. The reason for the exclusion of the following twelve novels in *The Wheel of Time* series is due to the scope of the narrative. Following the third installment, *The Dragon Reborn*, the story begins to expand geographically as well as increasing the amount of point of view characters. This leads to the primary protagonist, Rand al'Thor, having varying degrees of relevance and space until towards the final book. In addition, because of the series' length, characters complete various arcs throughout the story and for Rand, his first arc is completed at the end of *The Dragon Reborn*.

All six novels were read and appropriate dialogue and descriptions were marked. The criteria for archiving text was based on if they were; a protagonist's inner dialogue, description of the protagonist relating to physical or emotional change, a secondary character's observation, dialogue from the protagonist relating to how they are thinking and feeling, text related to the threat to the characters and world, and text describing the hero's task. Details that were repeated throughout each narrative were also marked.

4. THE LORD OF THE RINGS

This chapter will start with a brief background overview of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Followed by a recount of Frodo's journey in each book, detailing the struggle he endures.

4.1. The Narrative

In the Second Age of the world, the races of Elves and Men came together to destroy the forces of Sauron, an evil entity that wished to conquer all of the realm of Middle-Earth. To do so he forged several Lesser Rings through which he could subjugate the wearers with his One Ring. In the last confrontation, a man by the name of Isildur cut the One Ring from Sauron's hand, leading he and many others to believe he was vanquished for good. Thousands of years passed, the Second Age became the Third, and the Ring was lost. Now, evil forces begin to stir again, Sauron's armies are growing, and the One Ring has been found. In the hands of the most unlikely of beings, the hobbit Frodo and his gardener Sam must trek across dangerous terrain while avoiding allies of the Enemy to reach Mount Doom, where Frodo will either destroy the Ring, or succumb to it.

4.2. Series Structure

Each of the three novels are divided into two parts called ‘books’. Frodo has point of view portions in both books in *The Fellowship of the Ring*. However, in the other two novels, his point of view is only present in one of the ‘books’.

4.3. Fellowship of the Ring

4.3.1. Book 1

Frodo’s story begins in his home of Hobbiton in the Shire, an agrarian and virtually isolated region of Middle-Earth. Immediately upon opening the book, we are told the history of ‘hobbits’, such as how they live and how their society functions, as well as their general character. Described as loving “peace and quiet” (Tolkien, 1954, p.1) and are not known for going on wild adventures. So, the previous of Bilbo Baggins, Frodo’s uncle and parental figure, was an anomaly. Bilbo’s adventures and eleven hundred and eleventh birthday are both the catalysts for Frodo eventually leaving the Shire himself. As during his feast, Bilbo uses the One Ring, disappearing. Unbeknownst to Frodo, he had made a plan to leave the Shire and stay with the Elves so that he may finish his book. Having already gone, Frodo laments that he would give up everything “if I could get Bilbo back and go off tramping in the country with him” (p. 40). Unlike his kindred, Frodo does have a call to adventure.

Now the owner of the Ring, Frodo’s youth seems to be extended. Outside of the Shire around this time, the world around them begins to change and it begins to make its way to the Shire. Gandalf reappears after years away, having suspicions, he has come to confirm that the Ring is in fact, a Ring of Power. The first risk posed to Frodo was longevity of youth as previously mentioned. If he continues to have the Ring, and use it, eventually “he *fades*: he

becomes in the end invisible permanently, and walks in the twilight under the eye of the dark power that rules the Rings.” (p. 46). Tossing it into the fire, with the famous script, it is declared as the One Ring, forged by the Dark Lord Sauron. His initial reaction to being in the presence of something of pure evil is fear and confusion.

“Frodo sat silent and motionless. Fear seemed to stretch out a vast hand, like a dark cloud rising in the East and looming up to engulf him. ‘This ring!’ he stammered. ‘How, how on earth did it come to me?’ (p. 49-50)

Here, Gandalf sets the objective Frodo will have to complete, that “he must *not* get it” (p.49), afterwards which Frodo echoes for the first time the sentiment he will hold throughout the novel. ““I wish it need not have happened in my time,”” (p. 50). Gandalf will go on to explain the journey of the Ring and how it ended up as Bilbo’s property. Frodo asks if it is possible to destroy it, but it has already begun to dig its claws into the hobbit as he is unable to toss it.

“When he took it out he had intended to fling it from him into the very hottest part of the fire. But he found now that he could not do so, not without a great struggle. . . and then with an effort of will he made a movement, as if to cast it away - but he found that he had put it back in his pocket.” (p. 59)

The fate of the Ring is already beginning to set and intertwine with Frodo. It is important to note, however, that while taking up the task in bringing the Ring out of the Shire, he believes it temporary. ““But I hope that you may find some other better keeper soon.”” (p. 61) but, as it is

his responsibility, Frodo is brought out of the Shire to ensure its safety. This decision, leaving his friends, and having to sell the Baggins' historical home weighed on his heart (p. 67), the longing for return being a constant while on the journey. Frodo's first thought once setting off is not knowing if they will ever return, Frodo asks himself "I wonder if I shall ever look down into that valley again." (p. 70). Part of the plan was to buy a fake house at the edge of the Shire to hide his departure, where he wishes he could just "settle down in quiet retirement" (p. 98) and Sam even sees that his Master wishes that Frodo wishes he "could have gone on living quietly at Bag End." (p. 97).

During this first portion of their journey leaving the Shire, another danger enters, the threat of the Black Riders. A figure draped in a black cloak riding a horse of the same color. The first urges to use the Ring arouse at the sight of it, as well, it appears that in doing so would attract the ominous creature. "The desire to get it out of his pocket became so strong that he began slowly to move his hand." (p. 73-74), already after a short time control over the Ring is fleeting. As they continually come upon these Black Riders, it appears that the urge to wear it becomes stronger (p. 77) each attempt.

The Black Riders are the primary danger in the first book of *Fellowship* until the Council and the existential threat is established. It is a cloud over the hobbits, constantly thinking about them (p. 89) especially after learning that they can speak and are looking for Frodo by name.

The group of hobbits meet various allies across Middle-Earth throughout their journey. One being Gildor, who states clearly the worries Frodo will carry throughout the rest of the story. Telling him that he can tell:

“you doubt that you will find what you seek, or accomplish what you intend, or that you will ever return. Is not that so?” (p. 81).

Just this short start to his journey has Frodo miserable, having to leave when he doesn't want to (p. 101). However, one mitigating factor is the surprise that, along with Sam, the other two hobbits, Merry and Pippin, will join in, giving him a familial support structure for his journey. Due to the ever lingering fear of the Riders in addition to other enemies they encounter, they are forced into combat, something they had not anticipated for their adventure as “not before occurred to any of them” (p. 143).

A long and exhausting beginning journey gains some reprieve when they finally arrive at the Prancing Pony tavern in the city of Bree where they hope to rendezvous with Gandalf whom they still have not heard from. Unfortunately, he is not there. During the time in the tavern, Frodo worries greatly that the name *Baggins* will be spoken, as he's using a pseudonym. This anxiety causes Frodo to interact with the Ring subconsciously. Strangely, it doesn't seem natural but “somehow, as if the suggestion came to him from outside, from someone or something in the room.” (p. 154). After Frodo accidentally uses the Ring and joins with Strider, the alias for Aragorn, the task ahead has already affected him but has clear perception of the danger:

“‘I'm sorry I can't explain it all,’ answered Frodo. ‘I am tired and very worried, and it is a long tale. But if you mean to help me, I ought to warn you that you will be in danger as long as I am in your home. These Black Riders. I am not sure, but I think, I fear they come from—’

‘They come from Mordor,’ said Strider in a low voice.” (p.165)

The hobbits along with Strider flee Bree, leaving a distraction for the Riders in the tavern. They traverse the land and find an old ruin in which to rest in where they are ambushed by several of the Black Riders. Although Strider returns to save them, Frodo is wounded by one of the Rider's. This wound makes him unable to walk and is his first near death experience.

“Frodo dozed, though the pain of his wound was slowly growing, and a deadly chill was spreading from his shoulder to his arm and side.” (p. 193)

While Frodo is being rushed to Rivendell in an attempt to have him healed before he succumbs to the Rider's wound, the elf transporting him, Glorfindel, suggests leaving behind the others to make haste. Frodo argues that he will not leave his friends in danger to which Glorfindel responds; ““It is you Frodo, and that which you bear that brings us all in peril.”” (p. 206). He is confronted with the uncomfortable knowledge that his friends volunteered willingly to aid his quest, and yet Frodo puts them in perpetual danger.

4.3.2. Book 2

Frodo awakens in Rivendell in the House of Elrond, a temporary refuge where he was healed. Gandalf is there waiting for him, finally able to tell him who the Riders were, agents of Sauron hunting the One Ring. In addition, he explains how close Frodo was to being lost to his wound and what would become of him, a wraith. The fate of the Ring has still not been decided and is still in Frodo's possession however, he hopes his portion of the quest is finished.

“But so far my only thought has been to get here and I hope I shan’t have to go any further. It is very pleasant to rest. I have had a month of exile and adventure, and I find that has been as much as I want.” (p. 215)

Once the Council of Elrond commences, the fate of the Ring is debated. After much deliberating, the Council decides the Ring must be taken to where it was forged, Mount Doom in Mordor, so it can be destroyed forever. The topic then shifts into discussing who shall carry the Ring into Mordor. They sit in silence for a time before Frodo speaks and volunteers to take it (p. 264). It is important to remember that Frodo could’ve walked away here, but chose to, perhaps because nobody else would or his moral character. The decision is so great that Elrond must reassure him as it is a heavy burden “so heavy that none could lay it on another. I do not lay it on you. But if you take it freely, I will say that your choice is right.” (p. 264). Once the Council has concluded, Merry and Pippin comment in jest at Sam and Frodo being “rewarded” for their outbursts and Sam sneaking into the meeting when he wasn’t permitted entry. At this statement Frodo makes his feelings known to them. There is no glory yet to celebrate.

““I can’t imagine a more severe punishment. You are not thinking what you are saying: condemned to go on this hopeless journey, a reward? Yesterday I dreamed that my task was done, and I could rest here, a long while, perhaps for good.”” (p. 265)

The Fellowship is formed, and while they attempt to pass a violent mountain pass, Gandalf also postulates that their only options are either to turn back to Rivendell or continue on.

While some of the hobbits are jubilant thinking of returning to the elves, Frodo is not so, rather turning back is akin to surrender to the Enemy. Questioning if there was another way, “how can I return without shame” (p. 287), so for not the first or last time, Frodo chooses to march forward.

They enter Moria, the Dwarven Kingdom, exploring the empty caverns discovering the dwarves are gone but enemies have taken their place. They are swarmed upon by orcs and whilst attempting to flee, are then confronted with a Balrog, a dark, gargantuan creature. Gandalf attempts to stop it, however when it falls into the chasm, it takes Gandalf with them. After they exit and are confirmed to be safe outside the mountain, “grief at last wholly overcame them” (p. 323), many begin to weep or stand in silence. Gandalf was a stable respite from confusion and danger, as well as being a friend, and so Frodo states that “our grief is great and our loss cannot be mended,” said Frodo.” (p. 346).

One important task on Frodo, now that Gandalf is gone, is deciding the direction they will travel. Before, Gandalf had laid the choice to turn towards Moria on Frodo, and now Aragorn does the same. Bestowing another burden onto him explaining “your own way you alone can choose. In this matter I cannot advise you. . . .Most likely it seems that if he [Gandalf] were here now the choice would still wait on you. Such is your fate.” (p. 387). But this is a sudden shift in the structure as well as having lost a friend. Frodo, unlike Gandalf and Aragorn, is not a leader and so the pressure mounts

“Frodo did not answer at once. Then he spoke slowly, ‘I know that haste is needed, yet I cannot choose. The burden is heavy. Give me an hour longer, and I will speak. Let me be alone!’” (p. 387)

“‘For I know what I should do, but I am afraid of doing it, Boromir: afraid.’” (p. 388)

Sam has previously been able to in story observe Frodo, noticing the changes in Frodo's demeanor the most throughout and anticipates his decisions from it. Sam knows that Frodo wishes to return home more than anything, but it cannot be done. It is up to him and that prospect is terrifying.

“‘He’s been a bit queer lately, to my mind. But anyway he’s not in his business. He’s off to his home, as he always said; and no blame to him. But Mr. Frodo, he knows he’s got to find the Cracks of Doom, if he can. But he’s *afraid*. Now it’s come to the point, he’s just plain terrified. That’s what his trouble is.’” (p. 394)

Unfortunately for the Fellowship, Frodo is never able to decide their direction. The malicious influence of the One Ring has exerted itself over Boromir's desires, exploiting them to compulse him to betray Frodo and the Company. Once Frodo is away and alone, his decision to split from the Fellowship is now steadfast.

“A great weariness was on him, but his will was firm and his heart lighter. He spoke aloud to himself, ‘I will do no what I must,’ he said. ‘This at least is plain: the evil of the Ring is already at work even in the Company, and the Ring must leave them before it does more harm. I will go alone. Some I cannot trust, and those I can trust are too dear to me.’” (p. 392)

Frodo attempts to take a boat alone and head off on his quest, however is intercepted by Sam before he can leave. Sam almost drowns attempting to swim to Frodo's boat, but is saved. He refuses to let Frodo go on this journey all by himself. They begin to paddle down the river, reassuring themselves that Aragorn will take care of the others as Frodo laments "I don't suppose we shall see them again." (p. 397). So the two hobbits head east towards the Lands of Mordor, with the knowledge they may never see their home or friends again and that they indeed may fail.

4.4. The Two Towers

4.4.1. Book 4

Three days have passed since Frodo and Sam have left the Company, traveling across unforgiving and barren lands. After they survey the horizons from a cliff, they finally lay eyes on the Lands of Mordor, a darkness on the landscape that even penetrates nightfall. Rather than relief at the arrival of their destination, instead Frodo wishes to rush there, "I wish I could come there quickly and make an end!" (p. 589). During this arduous trek they realize they are being followed and confront the creature known as Gollum, whom Gandalf had warned Frodo. He had told him Gollum had possessed the Ring for hundreds of years and was the one who told the Black Riders the name *Baggins* now had the Ring. They debate ending him, but Frodo rebukes, pointing out he hasn't harmed them yet (p. 600). Reminded of Gandalf's words about pity and mercy, "*Many that live deserve death. And some die that deserve life. Can you give that to them?*" (p. 601), he decides that he does in fact have pity. However, there is still much distrust, as it is implied he will betray them later.

One issue that arises amongst the two hobbits concerns their current rations. When staying with the elves, they were given supplies including *lembas* bread, able to sustain a single man in a small bite. Whilst resting for the evening, they discuss what exactly the plan is for when they make the journey back to the Shire, if it were to happen at all.

“‘About the food,’ said Sam. ‘How long’s it all going to take us to do this job? And when it’s done, what are we going to do then? . . . I reckon we’ve got enough to last, say, three weeks or so, and that with a tight belt and a light tooth, mind you. We’ve been a bit free with it so far.’

‘I don’t know how long we shall take to - to finish,’ said Frodo. ‘We were miserably delayed in the hills. . . I do not think we need give thought to what comes after that. To *do the job* as you put it - what hope is there that we ever shall? And if we do, who knows what will come of that? If the One goes into the Fire, and we are at hand? I ask you, Sam, aer we ever likely to need bread again? I think not. If we can nurse our limbs to bring us to Mount Doom, that is all we can do. More than I can, I begin to feel.’” (p. 610)

Their troubles begin to compound the closer they get to Mordor and the more they travel. Never returning home, Gollum’s untrustworthiness, a concern over food, and now the worry comes to Frodo himself. We see again through Sam the first signs of his changing behavior, and we’re left to wonder if it is merely temporary or the beginning of something more severe.

“Frodo seemed the most weary of the three, and slow thought they went, he often lagged.” (p. 612)

“Sam looked back and found that Frodo had lagged again.” (p. 613)

“Frodo seemed to be weary, weary, to the point of exhaustion. He said nothing, indeed he hardly spoke at all; and he did not complain, but he walked like one who carries a load, the weight of which is ever increasing; and he dragged along, slower and slower. . . In fact with every step towards the Gates of Mordor Frodo felt the Ring on its chain about his neck grow more burdensome. He was now beginning to feel it as an actual weight dragging him earthwards.” (p. 616)

The three arrive at the Gates of Mordor, and Gollum tells them that he cannot enter. An altercation ensues, what was the point of traveling and suffering all the way only to be denied at the Gate? Frodo, invoking the promise Gollum had made to him, threatens him to show them an alternate way forward. Sam, seeing a hobbit he did not recognize, “there was a look in his face and tone in his voice that he had not known before.” (p. 626) nothing of the kind man he remembered.

They hear many warnings from Gollum, specifically about the Tower and fortress along one of the paths. Frodo recognizes the names of the locations but at that moment is not sure how to proceed. His mentors, Gandalf and Aragorn, are not there to help him. It is important to remember, Frodo does not yet know Aragorn’s triumph at Helm’s Deep or Gandalf’s return. Even Boromir’s redemption and sacrifice. So the Ring bearer seems very much alone and starts to carry thoughts of hopelessness.

“But for this choice he could recall no counsel. Indeed Gandalf’s guidance had been taken from them too soon, too soon, while the Dark Lord was still very far away. . . And here he was a little halfling from the Shire, a simple hobbit of the quiet countryside, expected to find a way where the great ones could not go, or dared not go. It was an evil fate. But he had taken it on himself in his own sitting-room in the far-off spring of another year, so remote now that it was like a chapter in a story of the world’s youth. . . This was an evil choice. Which way should he choose? And if both led to terror and death, what good lay in choice?” (p. 630)

Although the landscape around them begins to become more verdant and vibrant, hunger and mistrust still plague them. While Sam allows himself to plan for the journey’s end and even postulates that they might have enough food for the way back. However, upon looking at Frodo, the weight of both the burden and Ring has made its mark on the hobbit. Seeing that he has become “thin and drawn” and “was struck most by the leanness of his face and hands” (p. 639).

Sam and Frodo are found by a group of men and brought to their commander Faramir, Boromir’s younger brother. The two hobbits are interrogated vigorously, the Men attempt to learn why they had left the elves and if they had betrayed Boromir. Frustrated with being delayed any further, Frodo asks to be let free. No longer referring to the Ring as a ‘burden’ but rather “where my doom takes me” (p. 653). Blatantly stating his weariness and fear, having to ignore it as he does “have a deed to do, or to attempt, before I am too slain.” (p. 653), treating his demise as inevitable. When not lamenting his destined fate, Frodo is quiet and lost in his thoughts.

Important it is to note while traveling through the Marshes and into the mountains, the hobbits are still being followed by the Riders, whom they now know are Ringwraiths. Men who

had possession of the Lesser Rings and now have stretched their lives thin, who's purpose now is to find their Master Ring. Gollum spotted them flying overhead in the Marshes and it is assumed they are still hunting the Ring Bearer. This fear still lingers over Frodo, as when Faramir wakes him in the morning, "old fears seized him and he sat up and shrank away." (p. 668).

After warning Frodo of his mistrust of Gollum, Faramir allows Frodo and Sam to continue on their journey to Mordor. They were warned that the path they've chosen is fraught with danger, but it is their only option. As stated previously, the closer they are to Mordor, the more the Ring affects Frodo and increases their melancholy. They travel with heavy hearts "no longer able to care greatly about their peril." (688). In the presence of an ancient tower conquered by Mordor, Frodo once again is overwhelmed by the Ring's compulsions, he fought the desire that was on him to run up the gleaming road towards its gate. At last with an effort he turned back, and as he did so; he felt the Ring resisting him, dragging at the chain about his neck; and his eyes too, as he looked away, seemed for the moment to have been blinded." (p. 689).

As they climb, below in front of the fortress, Frodo lays his eyes on the Lord of the Nine Riders, commander of those hunting him and had given him his wound that almost took his life. In addition to being influenced to reach for the Ring, this is the first instance of the wound giving Frodo discomfort since his healing in Rivendell. "The old wound throbbed with pain and a great chill spread towards Frodo's heart." (p. 691).

After viewing the Riders and the army that marched from the fortress's gates, Frodo's mind goes to Faramir, wondering if he succeeded in his own quest. From there he begins to spiral into despair, believing it naught all matters and his quest has failed.

“I am too late. All is lost. I tarried on the way. All is lost. Even if my errand is performed, no one will ever know. There will be no one I can tell. It will be in vain.’ Overcome with weakness he wept.” (p. 692)

During their travels, Sam and Frodo discuss when they will find clean water again and the foul nature of the land they are in. Sam then mentions his original view of adventures in the old tales, believing it was something adventurers looked for. The adventurers with them may have opportunities to change their mind, but not doing so, hence the tale being told at all. With this idea, he asks Frodo what kind of ending he thinks their tale will have. He states that he doesn’t know “and that’s the way of a real tale. Take any one that you’re fond of. You may know, or guess, what kind of a tale it is, happy-ending or sad-ending, but the people in it don’t know.” (p. 696)

Unbeknownst to Sam and Frodo, Gollum had indeed betrayed them, and led them into the lair of a giant spider named Shelob. Frodo is poisoned and taken by orcs, but he is alive. Sam is now in the possession of the Ring, and after some inner turmoil in risking the quest, chooses to go and save Frodo. As he tells himself that although the plans have gone awry, he cannot continue without his master, for he “can’t be the Ring-bearer. Not without Mr. Frodo.” (p. 718).

4.5. The Return of the King

4.5.1. Book 6

Sam takes the Ring and temporarily becomes the Ring-bearer and immediately feels the pressure of the Ring upon him. He eventually finds Frodo stripped and laying on the floor. He

wakes him, ensuring he is unharmed and can walk and confirms to Frodo that he indeed has the Ring. After hearing this, Frodo's demeanor suddenly changes. Going from grateful, to aggressive and possessive, yelling at him to "Give it me at once! You can't have it!" (p. 890). At this, Sam offers to share his burden, as it takes its toll on Frodo. The Ring seems to seize him, snatching it from Sam accusing him of thievery. However, he immediately comes to, and explains not wanting to corrupt his friend with the Ring.

"What have I said? What have I done? Forgive me! After all you have done. It is the horrible power of the Ring. I wish it had never, never, been found. But don't mind me, Sam. I must carry the burden to the end. It can't be altered. You can't come between me and this doom." (p. 891)

Low on food, out of water, and now evading swarms of orcs; the two hobbits continue to lumber closer to Mount Doom. Frodo wears light armor in case of ambush, but as they make way closer to the Mountain, it only adds to the weight consistently pressing on him; the physical and mental as he doesn't have a hope left (p. 897) but continues to be grateful for Sam's support. But "The Ring is enough" (p. 897) of weight to carry. No daylight or water, his mind drifts to when he was imprisoned, dreaming of home. But he can't even remember home anymore, not after everything he's been burdened by not being able to see them anymore. On top of all of this, the Riders are still over them (p. 898).

While hiding from the Rider crouched and quiet behind a boulder, they can see far in the distance the Battle of the Pelennor Fields, where the others lead the armies of Gondor and Rohan against the forces of Mordor. Even from this great distance, they hear the deathcry of the Lord of

the Ringwraiths. Sam celebrates the battle going well, feeling hope that the alliance of good will prevail over Sauron. However, Frodo does not feel any hope, for he still has his doom to carry, seeing it in his “mind all the time, like a great wheel of fire” (p. 997).

Finally they make it to the summit of Mount Doom, but the trek is far from over. While judging the distance in which they would have to climb, a final realization hits Sam, one which Frodo had long come to terms with. The Ringbearer’s one source of hope dies here, that being from Sam, his only support. They would not have enough food or energy to make their way back west and would never see home again.

“But the bitter truth came home to him at last; at best their provision would take them to their goal; and when the task was done, there they would come to an end, alone, houseless, fondness in the midst of a terrible desert. There could be no return.” (p. 912-913)

It only takes a few more miles of traveling before the pressure of the Ring begins to multiply on Frodo. He would only seem to react by raising his hand to hide from the Eye of Sauron. They still have miles upon miles more to go, Frodo had not spoken and “his eyes no longer saw the way before his feet.” (p. 914). A few days pass and the weight of the Ring finally becomes too much. After shivering and stumbling the last few stretches, trying to stand after a night’s rest, Frodo falls back to the ground. In order to complete the quest and help his Master, Sam lifts Frodo and carries him on his back towards Mount Doom.

“Whether because Frodo was so worn by his long pains, wound of knife, and venomous sting, and sorrow, fear, and homeless wandering, or because some gift of final strength was give to him, Sam lifted Frodo with no more difficulty than if he were carrying a hobbit-child pig-a-back in some romp on the lawns or hayfields of the Shire. He took a deep breath and started off.” (p. 919-920)

On top of the strain of carrying Frodo and climbing up the mountain slope, Sam must comfort Frodo who believes Sauron has spotted him, asking him to hold his hand and decrees “this is the end of ends” (p. 921). After crawling and dragging themselves forward, they finally make it to the Gates to the Crack of Doom. Frodo stumbles into the Mountain to destroy the Ring. However, once standing over the precipice, Frodo turns to Sam, and claims the Ring for himself.

“Then Frodo stirred and spoke with a clear voice, indeed with a voice clearer and more powerful than Sam had ever heard him use, and it rose above the throb and turmoil of Mount Doom, ringing in the roof and walls.

‘I have come,’ he said. ‘But I do not choose now to do what I came to do. I will not do this deed. The Ring is mine!’ And suddenly, as he set it on his finger, he vanished from Sam’s sight.” (p. 924)

Once Frodo put on the Ring, Sauron became aware of Frodo and the remaining eight Ringwraiths now come upon Mount Doom. At the same time, Gollum rushed past Sam, tackling Frodo and biting off his finger which wore the Ring. In his possession once again, Gollum

dances jubilantly, but he missteps and falls into the Cracks of Doom, perishing and destroying the Ring along with himself. With the Ring gone, it seems old Frodo has returned, although still wearing the trails of their journey, Sam sees “in his eyes there was peace now, neither strain of will, nor madness, nor any fear. His burden was taken away. . . The burden was gone. His master had been saved; he was himself again, he was free.” (p. 926). However, while Sam can celebrate Frodo’s success, Frodo makes it a point to Sam, who detested him throughout the journey, that if it weren’t for Gollum, he, Frodo, would have failed.

“But for him, Sam, I could not have destroyed the Ring. The Quest would have been in vain, even at the bitter end. So let us forgive him! For the Quest is achieved, and now all is over.” (p. 926)

While Gandalf and Aragorn and the armies of Men celebrate the completion of the Quest and the Ringbearer’s victory, Sam and Frodo share no such jubilation. They still sit in the heart of the Land of Shadow, exhausted, tired, and with no provisions to make the journey back. They know they cannot go on anymore and wait at the summit of the Mountain. Sitting there Frodo merely states “‘hopes fail. An end comes. We have only a little time to wait now. We are lost in ruin and downfall, and there is no escape.’ (p. 929) waiting for the flow of the volcano to take them.

But they are saved, as far away Gandalf sends the mystical Eagles to fly in and lift the two hobbits to safety in Gondor. Now, Mordor is defeated, Aragorn is crowned King, and the hobbits, after being honored for their sacrifice, prepare their journey home. It takes them a year to journey from Gondor back to the Shire, and in that time Frodo still suffers, as “The wound

aches, and the memory of darkness is heavy on me.” (p. 967). as they stop in Rohan, Isengard, and Rivendell so Frodo can visit Bilbo once more. Although life seems to continue for many members of the Company, Frodo wonders if he can ever truly move on.

‘Alas! There are some wounds that cannot be wholly cured.’ said Gandalf.

‘I fear it may be so with mine,’ said Frodo. ‘There is no real going back. Though I may come to the Shire, it will not seem the same; for I shall not be the same. I am wounded with knife, sting, and tooth, and a long burden. Where shall I find rest?’

Gandalf did not answer.” (p. 967)

The answer to whether he can find rest, seems to be not very soon. When they return to the Shire, they learn that the evil wizard Saruman, who imprisoned Gandalf and sided with Sauron, had taken over their home, denying food flow and destroying portions of the land. While Sarumon is eventually defeated and Hobbiton free, the hobbits had thought that they finally returned to their home which should have been safe, but instead it seems Mordo had its works there too (p. 994).

More time passes, Hobbiton is rebuilt and the hobbits go about their lives. Some become local heroes, Sam settles down and gets married, while Frodo retires. Some days Frodo is in better spirits than others, but one constant is his wound which he had received from the Riders.

“He was very pale and his eyes seemed to see things far away. . . ‘I am wounded,’ he answered, ‘wounded; it will never really heal.’ (p. 1002)

Frodo wishes to travel to Rivendell to visit Bilbo again, but before they can even leave the Shire, they encounter the two elves, Elrond and Galadriel, and with them Bilbo. They join them traveling west to the port city known as the Gray Havens, where the three of them including Gandalf plan to sail West. This would mean entering the Undying Lands, from which elves originate and where they can live out the rest of their lives in tranquility and peace, never to return to Middle-Earth. Unknown to the three hobbits; Merry, Pippin, and Sam, who joined Frodo to visit Bilbo, Frodo is going with them. Bewildered, Sam thought Frodo would finally be at peace in the Shire, to which Frodo explains their journey had caused him too much pain.

““So I thought too, once. But I have been too deeply hurt, Sam. I tried to save the Shire, and it has been saved, but not for me. It must often be so, Sam, when things are in danger; some one has to give them up, lose them, so that others may keep them.”” (p. 1006)

After a sorrowful goodbye, the three other Hobbits return back to the Shire and the world is ushered into the Age of Men. Frodo boards the boat with Gandalf and the others, sailing West so that he can hopefully live with the pain of his mental and physical wounds eased. Never seeing his friends or home again.

5. THE WHEEL OF TIME

This chapter begins with a brief narrative overview of the story of *The Wheel of Time*. Followed by a recount of Rand's journey in each book, detailing his struggles and fear.

5.1. The Narrative

Three thousand years prior, in the Second Age, the Age of Legends, both men and women wielded and channeled the One Power, creating magnificent cities, technologies, and making discoveries that advanced humankind like never before. However, Shaitan, also called the Dark One, was released, imprisoned by the Creator, and wrecked chaos across the world with His armies and malice. The Dragon, Lew Therin Telamon, and his Hundred Companions, attempted to recapture the Dark One with Seven Seals. They succeeded, but the Dark One lashed out as a final attack, tainting the male half of the One Power, called *saidin*. From this moment, all male channelers, those who could wield the One Power, would go mad, breaking the world further, ruining the landscape itself. The Dragon himself would go mad, kill his family, and then himself. While there have been some conflicts afterwards, in the last few hundred years there has been relative peace. However, twenty years prior to the story, an Aes Sedai, a woman who can channel the One Power, received a prophecy that the Dragon was reborn. Now she must find the boy before the Dark One's armies as they stir again, for the Dragon Reborn will either save the world or destroy it forever.

5.2. The Eye of the World

The story begins on the evening of Bel Tine, a festival celebrating the arrival of spring. Rand and his father, a sheepherder named Tam, are traveling into the village known as Emmond's Field. While keeping watch, he turns and sees that behind them, they are being followed. A figure cloaked in black on horseback, just from seeing him, Rand feels nauseous and although unable to see his face he felt "hatred for him most of all, for him above all things." (Jordan, 1991, p.23). Meeting his friends Mat Cauthon and Perrin Aybara once arriving in the village, he has also seen the rider, agreeing that it is weird to have a stranger in the village and Rand saying "He scared me too. I could swear he hated me, that he wanted to kill me." (p. 32).

There are even more strangers in the Two Rivers, however less hateful, a lady named Moiraine, who is taking interest in the boys, and Padan Fain, who visits the village often to bring wares and news from the outside world. Fain tells the villagers that there is war in the south, because a man claiming to be the Dragon has rallied followers. The crowd begin to panic, claiming that the Dragon is "Just as bad as the Dark One!" "The Dragon broke the world, didn't he?" "He started it! He caused the Time of Madness!"(p. 52). If the Dragon is reborn, they must deal with the superstition around being an omen of death. Rand believing it himself thinking "what they had done was bad enough. Whole nations torn by battle, and cries and towns put to the torch. . . The world would end, so some said, when the real Dragon was born again." (p. 52) later also musing that if they needed the Dragon's help, "as well ask for help from the Dark One." (p. 56).

We are also told blatantly what befalls not just the Dragon, but all men who can use the magic system, called channeling.

““He’ll go mad and die! In the stories, men who channel the Power always go mad, and then waste away and die. Only women can touch it.” (p. 53)

Two other villagers join the boys, the village Wisdom, who acts as a healer, Nyneave and Egwene, a childhood friend and romantic interest for Rand. Egwene mentions to Rand wanting also to be a Wisdom and maybe seeing the places in the tales someday, asking Rand if he ever considered the same, responding““Of course I have. I daydream sometimes, but I know the difference between daydreams and what’s real.”” (p. 60), perfectly content with life here. When listening to tales from the gleeman Tom Merrill, a storyteller, Rand, thinks that enjoying adventure stories is different from actually living them, and “the world outside was no place for Two Rivers folk” (p. 67).

After returning back to their farm, Rand and Tam are ambushed by large monstrosities called Trollocs, a half man half beast that lives to kill. Rand escapes as Tam holds them off with a sword, but returns in order to gather bandages to mend his father’s wounds. However, he comes face to face with a lone Trolloc, who tries to convince Rand to come with him confirming the horsemen are Myrddraal, also called a Fade, a general of the Dark One’s armies that travel through shadows. Known to be basically unkillable, making Rand’s current threat “pale by comparison” (p. 88). The Trolloc then suddenly charges at Rand. He desperately lifts the sword in which the Trolloc impales itself, killing the monster. This is the first time he has ever killed something. Although a monster, he still “swallowed hard to keep from being sick” (p. 88) but is lucky to be alive.

Rand builds a makeshift litter for his father, who was injured in the ambush, so that he can bring him to Nynaeve to be healed. The wound from the Trolloc makes Tam sweat and mutter incoherently, speaking of seemingly random instances from his past. However, as his father is talking, he tells the story of finding a woman who gave birth in the snow, dying in childbirth, and him taking the baby home as his own, naming him Rand. Saying that Rand is not his biological son. This forever shakes the core foundation of his familial ties and view of self.

“Suddenly Rand’s legs lost the little strength they had. Stumbling, he fell to his knees.

Tam moaned with the jolt, and the strip of blanket cut into Rand’s shoulders, but he was not aware of either. If a Trolloc had leaped up in front of him right then, he would just have stared at it.” (p. 99)

Rand finally makes it to the village where sees it was also attacked by Trollocs. He finds Nynaeve who tells him she cannot save him. In desperation he continues on to the inn where he is told that the Lady Moiraine is in fact an Aes Sedai, and helped protect the village. He asks her to help heal his father, at any price, to which she agrees. Although he will be on bedrest for weeks, Moiraine successfully heals Rand’s father. However, once she does, she informs Rand he must leave with her. He freaks out, saying nobody ever leaves and they need to rebuild. Stating bluntly “I don’t want to go anywhere.” (p. 119).

Moiraine and her warder, a warrior bonded to an Aes Sedai, Lan, explain that only specific farms and homes were attacked; his, Mat, and Perrin’s. The Trollocs and Fades were looking for them because they were all the same age, born weeks apart. The Dark One wants one of the boys and the Trollocs will come back. Rand understands that this is precisely why he

needs to leave, “the Trollocs won’t come back if I am not here” (p. 122) meaning that he would be “leaving the Two Rivers. Leaving his home and his father. . . He tried out a laugh that sounded hollow.” (p. 122). Rand hopes he can at least wait for his father to wake to say goodbye, but this cannot happen. He will need days of rest and the group needs to go by nightfall. Rand is left with his father to rest, eat, and prepare to leave his home.

“Not until that very minute had he realized that Emond’s Field was a part of him as much as he was a part of it. He realized it now because he knew that was what he had felt tearing loose. He was apart from the village, now.” (p. 123)

Rand attempts to stay awake until his father wakes as well, but falls. He is brought to the stables where they will saddle up and head out, where the reality of his departure hits him. But in order to steady himself ready, even though having no choice, he promises himself that “he would come back to Emond’s Field, however far or long this journey was.” (p. 141).

The group leaves the Two Rivers; Rand, Mat, Perrin, Moiraine, Lan, with Egwene and Thom the gleeman, joining them as well. They are immediately chased by Trollocs, Myrdraal, and another creature called a Drakhar, a bat-like creature that can stun then consume a person’s soul. Crossing a river, sinking the boat behind them, Moiraine shows how desperate she is to keep the boys out of the Dark One’s hands. Only a few days have passed since they’ve set off, and Rand is already thinking of home. Dreaming of tending sheep again and the next Bel Tine festival (p. 176). They make it to Baerlon, their first proper city where unlike Elrond to Frodo, Moiraine makes it clear to them that all they can do is run and hide.

“And short lives they would be. You must remember that, when the journey becomes hard. You have no choice.”” (p. 185)

After exploring the city and bumping into the Children of the Light, the group settles in the Stag and Lion inn for the night. Rand has another nightmare with the same voice he heard before, seeing that Ba'alzamon, the Dark One, has been entering his dreams. The same happens to Mat and Perrin as well. While debating telling Moiraine, they again wonder if they'll return home, to which Rand chastises that type of thought, saying “of course we'll get home” (p. 210). In the city, he meets a girl named Min who can see the future in vision, who foreshadows the “sword that isn't a sword” (p. 214) and his funeral pier, further emphasizing Rand's lack of control in his fate.

To the surprise of the group, Nynaeve followed them all the way from Emond's Field to Baerlon. She attempts to convince the four Two Rivers folk to return with her. Rand refuses, Nynaeve commenting on how Rand would previously never argue with her decision, stating that “I can think of a time when you would not have questioned where I chose to go or what I chose to do, wherever or whatever it was. A time just a week ago.” (p. 234). An important revelation she brings is back in the village, Moiraine was looking for a boy who potentially was born outside of the Two Rivers. Nynave refuses to say he *was* born there, confirming the truth and shattering Rand's sense of self.

“He tried to think of something to say, but his tongue felt like a piece of leather. *She knows*. She was the Wisdom, after all, and the Wisdom was supposed to know everything about everyone. *If she knows, it was no fever dream. Oh, Light help me, father!*” (p. 235)

Whilst returning from the kitchen in the inn, Rand turns the corner and comes face to face with a Fade in the hallway, defeated by Lan. Now fleeing the inn, Mat asks Moiraine if she believes that Trollocs will come to Baerlon, but she informs the boys that there are more than those hunting them. Darkfriends, men and women who have given themselves to the Dark One and spy for him. And they can be anywhere, not hiding as monsters but “can be found in the shops and streets of every city, and in the highest councils, too.” (p. 244). It wasn’t until they were determined far enough away from the city before they were allowed to stop and rest, the boys lamenting that even within city walls and across a river they aren’t safe (p. 251). This is indeed true as they are still chased by armies of Trollocs, their first proper battle.

Arriving in the cursed city of Shadar Logoth, Rand muses that Mat might be the Dragon because he can speak the Old Tongue. Thom tells Mat he now knows his blood, while most only they have a father, to which Rand thinks “some of us can’t even be sure of that” (p. 269). Highlighting the mere mention of family rocks his inner monologue. Another motif that begins here that Rand carries throughout his belief he could always do better. When the group is separated, fearing the worst for Egwene, he mournfully thinks “I should have tried harder” (p. 299) repeatedly.

Now with only Mat and Thom, they continue to Whitebridge in the hope to reunite with the others. On the boat, the captain of the boat mentions to Rand he’s already mentioning home again but maybe he will outgrow his village now that he’s seen the world, not having thought about home in however long, but still determined to return and raise sheep like his father (p. 340). As they approach, Mat and Rand argue if the others are still alive. While Mat believes them gone, Rand is steadfast in his belief that they will find them. If so, he thinks if he will live happily ever after, “some of his stories don’t end that way. Sometimes even heroes die” (p. 359).

Death was far off, right now only concerned with wondering if “if he would ever see Tam again. Or home? Home.” (p. 361) or he’d just have to run forever. Even alone if he has to. Reminding Thom that “they’ll find us wherever we go” (p. 371). Thom stays, having sympathy for the boys due to his nephew Owyn, who was killed by the Aes Sedai due to being a channeler. The two boys reassuring themselves that won’t happen to them, “not like us, I guess” (p. 374), they couldn’t be further from the truth.

Unfortunately, they are attacked by a Fade, Thom tells the boys to run for it as he tries to distract it. The boys believe he’s dead. Now on their own, the first resource they come low on is his kindness, seeing how Rand treasures a gift from a farmer as his mental list of acts of generosity would not “get much longer” (p. 428). Every now and then, Rand would look down the road hoping he’d see Thom running to catch up, but “Hope faded as the days passed.” (p. 429). Along the road they traveled, many would pass them with carts or horses heading to the city of Caemlyn, their next destination, reminding them of the threat of the Myrddraal. They avoided men on horseback, and “when they spotted even one rider in the distance they scrambled off the road and hid until he was past.” (p. 429). Reminders of home haunt them as well, passing thatched roofs and farms, intrusively filling Rand’s head with thoughts of his father and now disrupting his view as Emond’s Field as ‘home’.

“No matter what it looks like, a small voice whispered in his mind, it isn’t really home. Even if you go into one of those houses Tam won’t be there. If he was, could you look him in the face? You know, now, don’t you? Except for little things like where you come from

and who you are. No fever-dreams. . . One place is as good as another when you aren't from anywhere. . . You will never see home again.” (p. 429-430)

The three primary resources for human survival; shelter, food, and water, are also now inconsistent and fleeting. They must sleep outside on the road, unable to start a fire due to danger, and many meals being only water from a stream. Rand suggests selling Mat's ruby dagger, starting a heated argument. Eventually apologizing for snapping at him, saying "it's only that I'm hungry and my feet hurt." (p. 431). Arriving in the rundown town of Four Kings, now Rand considers selling his father's sword to mitigate attracting attention from townsfolk and Fades. He eventually decides that "he was reluctant to stop wearing it. Tam had given it to him. His father. As long as he wore the sword, there was still some connection between Tam and him, a thread that gave him the right to still call Tam father." (p. 441). Performing at the inn for food and board results in them being trapped, a realization that would've had Rand laugh "if he had not been on the point of throwing up" (p. 447). Their enemies are able to take advantage of the few refuges for shelter and food.

The trap is sprung, a merchant in the tavern who had watched them perform is revealed as a Darkfriend, forcing them to flee. An escape is handed to them when lightning shatters the inn's wall, temporarily blinding Mat and Rand becomes ill. As they catch rides in farmers' carts to lessen the walk, Rand has to reassure himself that "not everyone is part of it. It can't be everybody." (p. 458). Ba'alzamon still appears in their dreams, Rand cradling Mat although he is afraid himself. The first mention of putting his loved ones in danger unknowingly, thinking "what protects you makes you vulnerable. I am going mad." (p. 461).

With the little money they had left, they entered another inn and began scarfing down the food they could afford. They purposely pick a table against a wall across from the inn's entrance, watching who enters and leaves pretending "to keep his eyes on his plate, but he watched the door intently. Those who came in or went out all looked like farmers, but it was enough to quiet his fear." (p. 464). However it isn't enough, a village youth is identified by Mat as a Darkfriend. When he attempts to stop their leaving, grabbing Rand, "images spun in his head. The Trolloc, Narg, leaping at him in his own home. The Myrdraal threatening at the Stag and Lion in Baerlon. Half-men everywhere. . . Darkfriends everywhere" (p. 467) causing Rand to punch him and flee with Mat in tow.

Continuing the journey, the farmers driving the wagons tell them rumors of multiple Darkfriends in multiple villages. Arriving at another inn called The Queen's Man, Rand unintentionally compares the size to the Winespring Inn, the one back in Emond's Field, "he realized that nothing would look the same to him when he got back home. *If you ever do.*" (p. 469). Entering another inn, the exhaustion of all the worry hits them, physically aching, "it's all catching up. All the running, all the looking over your shoulder." (p. 469) but hopes that this time they're safe.

Rand suddenly becomes ill, Mat taking him to the stables, he begins hallucinating. Mat tries to take his sword as Rand starts swinging it around at the shadows, causing a panicked response, screaming "no. No. I have to keep it. He's my father. You understand? He's m-my f-father!" (p. 472). The visions continue of several others; Egwene, Moiraine, Lan, Perrin and many more stand over him, taunting him. Reminding him of his fate with the Dark One, that Darkfriends lurk in every corner, and people he knew being killed by Trollocs.

“But the worst was Tam. Tam stood over him, frowning and shaking his head, and said not a word.

“You have to tell me,” Rand begged him. “Who am I? Tell me, please. Who am I? *Who am I?* he shouted.” (p. 475)

Rand and Mat try to sleep in the stable, but another Darkfriend enters and they are forced to run as she taunts them a Fade is on its way. Rushing out, passing throngs of people, Rand can’t help but wonder if any of them were also Darkfriends (p. 477). It isn’t long after leaving this village that Rand is no longer able to walk, and Mat must help him. A wagon driver heading to Caemlyn sees them and offers them a ride. Their worries now are scrounging enough food and hoping there are no Darkfriends or Fades waiting for them along the way. It seems so far they haven’t been able to gain ground on their hunters, “why should they chase now, when they’ve been waiting for you to come to them so far?” (p. 485). This thought ends up to be a correct assumption, as at the next town inn, a Fade is already waiting for them. Hitching another ride, passing out of the village, Rand is still on edge as clearly the distance they seem to gain does not matter, “it could be out there anywhere.” (p. 487).

Upon finally laying eyes on Caemlyn, an enormous city, they continue to wonder how they can hide with all of the people there, anyone can be a Darkfriend. In addition, same as Baerlon, they aren’t safe in the walls “nobody’s safe anymore. Maybe they are all dead. What do you do then?” (p. 496). The idea that his friends are gone, makes him tremble and taste bile in his throat (p. 496). Finding the friendly inn Thom had told them about, the innkeeper recommends to Rand not carrying the sword, something he considered but “he would not—could not—take Bunt’s advice to stop wearing it, not his link to Tam. To his father.” (p. 498). Although arriving

in Caemlyn, their final goal is still Tar Valon to learn why the Dark One wants them to which Rand refuses to give up.

A small reprieve from the dangerous and foreign landscapes and cities they've had to endure is the inn's library. Examining the bookshelves that carry some of his favorites book, Rand stumbles upon books his father wished to read. He imagines Tam content, reading by the fireplace, causing "his own hand tightened on his sword hilt with a sense of loss and emptiness that dampened all his pleasure in the books." (p. 509). He meets an ogier, creatures known for their longevity and living in forest communities called *steddings*, he tells Rand about his home invoking more homesickness. During this conversation is the first time Rand is mistaken for an Aiel, a desert dwelling warrior people. The significance presents itself later as another server to Rand's previous life. Being able to tell Loial all he's been through eases some of his worry and "the fear that they might be Darkfriends" (p. 515) fades briefly. Loial also explains that Rand is a *ta'veren*, meaning the Pattern of the world turns around him for an unknown purpose, another notch of control ripped from him.

Rand is again left worrying about the fate of his friends, "his throat too tight to speak" (p. 517) but a quick bout of hope comes when he's told someone is looking for him. But the hope is fleeting, the fear that a Darkfriend has learned his name (p. 541). Rand accidentally finds himself on the Palace grounds and is brought in for an interrogation by the Queen and her Aes Sedai, Elaida. She asks where he is from, but doesn't believe him, his red hair and gray eyes don't match Two River's folk. Rand again confronted not being his father's son and his home not being so. He will use this mantra often in the future to ground his view of himself.

“I was born in Emond’s Field,” he said stiffly. “My mother was an outlander; that’s where my eyes come from. My father is Tam al’Thor, a shepherd and farmer, as I am.” (p.566)

During his interrogation, Elaida has a Foretelling, a brief view of the future in the Pattern, and tells Rand he will cause pain and division (p.568). The Queen believes Rand’s story and has him escorted out of the Palace. However, being confronted again about his origin and fate are at the front of his mind, their words repeating “you have not the look. This man stands at the heart of it.” (p. 570). Before he bids goodbye to Prince Gawyn, he asks why he questioned he was from the Two Rivers, nobody believing him, and similarly to Loial, Gawyn thought he was an Aiel(p. 572). Reminding himself again “I’m Tam a’Thor’s son, even if I wasn’t born in the Two Rivers. I am? I’m Two Rivers blood, and Tam is my father.” (p. 574).

The group finds each other and is reunited. Lan and Moiraine warn that the Fades and Trolloc numbers are growing, almost enough to enter the city to find them. Proving again a city is never safe. Perrin echoes the boy's thoughts that maybe it would be “better we were all dead” (p.584). The origins of Mat’s aggressive behavior climaxes as it's revealed he’s been cursed by the dagger from Shadar Logoth, Rand deciding he doesn’t “want anymore adventure” (p. 589).

The boys tell Moiraine about all their dreams, this plus the lack of time, the need to go to the Eye of the World. Moiraine lets them decide and Rand, pacing and anxious, agrees to go, thinking of home once again, not liking the choice while knowing he’s risking it all.

“Tam, and the farmhouse, and the flock in the pasture. It had been a good life, he had never really wanted anything more. There was comfort—a small comfort—hearing Perrin and Mat add their agreement to his. They sounded as dry-mouthed as he.” (p. 601)

The group sets off towards a Waygate to travel to the north, Rand telling Loial when this is over he'd like to visit his home. Loial makes him consider what makes him “believe that it will ever be over?” (p. 624). They learn the peddler Padan Fain, from their village, is a Darkfriend. He tells them the seals on the Dark One's prison are weakening. Moiraine must bring the boys to the Eye of the World as almost all of the boys have the Old Blood in them. Her language was deliberate and Rand noticed, “Almost all.” (p. 662).

Entering the Blight, a land of sickly and dangerous plants and animals, Rand attempts to remember home to distract from their current predicament, but it doesn't last, “it isn't like home at all.” (p. 671). Several creatures attack them, even troubling Moiraine, and Rand realizes how trapped he is.

“Light, what's up ahead that can scare what's behind? Light help me, I've never been so afraid. I don't want to go any further. No further! Seeking the flame and the void, he railed at himself. Fool! You frightened, cowardly fool! You can't stay here, and you can't go back. Are you going to leave Egwene to face it alone? . . . Light help me, I can't go on. Light help me!” (p. 681)

They are saved by the sanctuary of the Green Man, an ancient being who has been around for thousands of years. Upon seeing Rand, he directly refers to his connection to the Dragon, the

first character to do so, commenting on his clothes and him wearing a sword, which Rand doesn't understand (p. 682). Moiraine brings the boys to the Eye of the World, which is revealed to be a pool of pure *saidin*, the male half of the One Power. Using this, a man can channel without the touch of the Dark One. With this, Moiraine hopes to see which of the boys can channel. All of the boys cower in fear.

Before being able to test it, the group is confronted by two Forsaken, Aes Sedai from the Age of Legends who gave themselves to the Dark One and were sealed in his prison. Unbeknownst to Rand, he absorbs the *saidin* and confronts Ba'alzamon once again, but with defiance instead of fear, "tired of running. . . tired of you threatening my friends, I will run no more." (p. 700).

In an attempt to turn him, Ba'alzamon tortures a visage of Rand's mother. Instead, Rand strikes a mysterious cord and seemingly destroys him. He awakes after some time with a foggy memory of what transpired. Before going trying to remember what he'd done, he checks for the sword, reassuring himself with "yes. Tam. My father" (p. 705). Rand finds his friends alive. He tries to tell them everything he had seen and done but in doing so realizing he in fact used the Power and he is a man who can channel.

"The One Power. I wielded the One Power. No man can. . . . He licked his lips that were suddenly dry. A gust of wind swirled fallen and falling leaves around them, but it was no colder than his heart." (p. 707)

Egwene and Nynaeve now know that their lifelong friend is a male channeler, so he will eventually go mad and die. Egwene cries and tells him she's sorry and assures him she doesn't

care. Nynaeve on the other hand is already accepting that her friend is lost. Rand worries about how the other two boys will react to what he is, wondering if “they turn their faces the way Egwene did? Will they scream and run away like I’m a Fade?” (p. 708). He promises he won’t touch the Power again and risks going mad (p. 708) but will also not blindly follow the Aes Sedai as he still deeply mistrusts them.

Returning to the city of Fal Dara, Rand continues to practice the sword that Lan had begun teaching him. Lan tells him to take it slow in becoming a blademaster, as the heron-mark denotes one as such, but Rand doesn’t care much about this, he just wants Tam to be his father (p.720). Rand plans to leave the others, afraid of using the Power as he wonders “what if I can’t stop? I never tried to wield it, not even at the Eye. What if I can’t stop?” (p. 721). But due to this new danger, although longing for it more than anything, he cannot return home, “not ever home” (p. 721).

5.3. The Great Hunt

Rand is still in Fal Dara training with the heron-mark sword. It has been a month since he would have left, but he has stayed. He still struggles with his identity, his thoughts consisting of “I was a shepherd. What am I know?” (Jordan, 1991, p. 30) and Tam is my father, no matter what anybody says” (p. 30). Still carrying the heron-marked blade believing that as long as he does so he has the right to call Tam father (p. 31). The reason he has stayed is due to Mat and Perrin, who he worries he’ll never see again. His plan is already thwarted when the Amyrlin Seat, the head of the Aes Sedai, has come and he knows it's because of him.

Last book, Rand was set on not letting the Aes Sedai control him, but he returns to his room to find all of his clothes replaced with expensive alternatives; one with a red and gold dragon embroidered on it. He worries if someone sees him in these, he'll be killed for it. While packing to finally flee, he finds Thom's cloak and harp, which he never touched so as to not be reminded of his loss. In the courtyard, the Amyrlin briefly lays eyes on him, making him panic that she recognized him but putting it up to "your bloody imagination" (p. 45). However, he does pass some people who recognize him, pushing him into a run.

Rand goes gate to gate trying to find an exit but "he refused to give up" (p. 51). While navigating the halls and guardtowers of the fortress city, he contemplates what it'd be like to be caught. Asking himself "would it be so bad, to have it all over? Really over?" (p. 51) but he remembers that men who are gentled eventually "stop wanting to live" (p. 51). The paranoia starts to get to him, wondering if the servants or even children will tell on him. He starts to feel like there are eyes watching him, movement in the corner of his eye. Thinking if someone would betray him either by accident or on purpose (p. 53). Is it stress or he wonders if he's already going mad, begging "please not yet" (p. 52).

He finds Loial, Perrin, and Mat who notices Rand's physical state, trying to calm him down with words of reassurance about Moiraine's intentions. This change in Mat's demeanor towards Aes Sedai has him reflect on if he hadn't left home. Thinking maybe ignorance would be bliss, "if I was home and still alive, would I still be what I am now?" (p. 56). In order to separate himself from his friends, Rand says rude and abrasive insults at all of them, causing them to leave. Although he believes he's saved them, was it the right decision? It appears that the one area he tries to exert control is over his coming madness.

“I will be dangerous just to be around. Blood and ashes, I’m going mad, and. . . No! No, I won’t! I will not use the Power, and then I won’t go mad, and. . . But I can’t risk it. I can’t, don’t you see? But the voice only laughed at him.” (p. 58)

Rand attempts to use the same strategy with Egwene becoming angry as he speaks with her, seeing she no longer keeps her hair braided as all Two Rivers women do. Thinking she is too eager to forget home. Projecting the fact that “I want to go home and can’t, and she can’t wait to forget Emond’s Field.” (p. 59). She helps hide him, but wakes with Nynaeve in the room, who is also afraid of him now. Still determined to not harm those he loves. As they speak they hear an alarm ring out, at first Rand thinks it’s for him, but is actually for Egwene, whom he takes responsibility for protecting saying anything evil “is supposed to come to me” (p. 105). Entering the dungeon, bodies of guards that cause Rand to vomit (p. 108) he sees blood smeared on the wall from Padan Fain saying that they’ll meet again and “it is never over, al’Thor” (p. 109) which Rand scrubs to try and hide.

But he cannot hide from the Amyrlin, as Rand is officially summoned. She states fully to Rand that he is the Dragon Reborn. Moiraine gives an account of his backstory, all the while Rand only hears his father’s voice from the fever-dreams, repeating his name and that Tam al’Thor is his father.

“The void rocked. The world rocked. Everything seemed to spin around him. He concentrated on nothing, and the emptiness returned, the world steadied. “No, Mother. I can channel, the Light help me. . . You can gentle me, or kill me, or let me go, but I will not be a tame false Dragon on a Tar Valon leash.”. . .

“You are not a false Dragon,” the Amyrlin said firmly. “You are the true Dragon Reborn.”

“I am a shepherd from the Two Rivers, Mother.” (p. 139)

The three boys along with some Shienaran soldiers and a man named Hurin, head off to track down Padan Fain, who stole Mat’s dagger and without which Mat will die. As they travel Rand attempts to speak to Perrin and Mat, who refuse as they remember the things Rand had said to them. One of the soldiers dislikes Rand due to looking like an Aiel, to which Rand laments “Everybody thinks I’m somebody I am not. I am from the Two Rivers, Ingтар. I grew tabac with—with my father, and tended his sheep. That is what I am. A farmer and shepherd from the Two Rivers.” (p. 177). The captain, after Ingтар, the soldier in charge, tells Rand he is his second and gives him the Dragon Banner, the flag of the original Dragon. Even though he’s trying to avoid Aes Sedai influence, he can’t escape, “I did not ask for it. I don’t want it.” (p. 197).

As the group settles down for the night, Rand doesn’t eat and has trouble falling asleep. He questions a vision he had seen, wondering if the madness has already begun and if he should leave. He decides to stay to help Mat, wondering if he’s going mad. While sleeping next to a Portal Stone, an ancient artifact, Rand accidentally channels the One Power and transports himself, Loial, and Hurin to an alternate reality. He is then put in the position where he must try to channel again, “I can’t do it. Channel the Power. I don’t want to. Light, there has to be another way.” (p. 220). He also fears that he won’t be able to get them back at all. After another dream with Ba’alzamon, who calls him the Dragon Reborn and Rand is branded with a hero like the prophecies, he grounds himself repeating “I am not the Dragon! My name is Rand al’—!” (p. 239).

Throughout traveling and especially when using his sword or bow, Rand uses the meditative technique his father taught him. But this just fills him with “a sense of loss and emptiness” (p. 249). Having seemingly accepted that Tam isn’t his father, asking why it couldn’t be the case (p. 256). They meet Selene, , a woman they saved on the road, she suggests that once found, Rand should blow the Horn of Valere which will call heroes from the past to fight for who blows it but Rand makes it known to her that “I don’t want anything to do with legends.” (p. 265). Even though in the first book, he was running from Darkfriends at least “I was happy then.” (p. 278) due to the ignorance of his powers.

They find Fain’s camp littered with Trollocs. Rand is able to steal back the Horn and dagger, making a run for it. During the chase, *saidin* is constantly trying to seduce Rand into channeling, a sensation that does not abate. Thinking if he used it, he’d “better dead than that. If I were dead, it would be done with.” (p. 285). Something he reiterates later, “If I die before I go mad, at least I won’t hurt anybody else. But I don’t want to die, either.” (p. 417).

They travel to a stedding, home of the Ogier, to find a way to travel quickly to Toman Head, the location Fain is waiting. There they encounter three Aiel women who are searching for He Who Comes With the Dawn, their name for the Dragon Reborn. Due to his appearance they also think him an Aiel, and although saying he isn’t he follows up with “maybe I don’t belong to anyone. But the Two Rivers is the only home I know.” (p. 479).

Their last resort is using a Portal Stone, the same object that transported Rand, Loial, and Hurin before. Which requires Rand channeling the power to use, detrimental to their success, but he cannot shake the fear and temptation of *saidin*. He was ashamed, but on the other end he feared “the eagerness that leaped inside him at the thought of channeling again.” (p. 490), describing it like he wanted it like “a starving man for food.” (p. 494).

Verin, an Aes Sedai, helps Rand navigate in which symbol to channel the Power. However, something goes wrong, and rather than traveling to their destination, everyone in the group lives multiple versions of their lives. Everytime Rand relives one, he is referred to with the name of the original Dragon. In each life, he is the Dragon Reborn.

“He was a soldier. He was a shepherd. He was a beggar, and a king. He was farmer, gleeman, sailor, carpenter. He was born, lived, and died an Aiel. He died mad, he died rotting, he died of sickness, accident, age. He was executed, and multitudes cheered his death. He proclaimed himself the Dragon Reborn and flung his banner across the sky; he ran from the Power and hid; he lived and died never knowing. . . And at the end of every life, as he lay dying, as he drew his final breath, a voice whispered in his ear. *I have won again, Lews Therin.*” (p. 500)

While they travel to Falme, the city where Fain waits, Rand is still fighting the urge to use saidin, which is constantly there tempting him, which he must constantly suppress. As well as fighting the constant pushing from the Aes Sedai, saying to himself “*I am not the Dragon Reborn.*”(p. 547). He has another nightmare from Ba'alzamon, calling Rand by the Dragon's name, again having to repeat his true name (p. 550). As they get closer to their destination, Rand uses whatever free time he has to practice with the sword, to be prepared and to keep from thinking (p. 576). The group enters the High Lord Turak's home to steal back the dagger and the Horn. He challenges Rand to a duel, as both men carry heron-marked blades. Rand wins, the first time he kills a man.

As they begin to escape, the people following begin to close in. Ingtar, the soldier that led the others and was most eager to get the Horn, admits to Rand he was a Darkfriend, aiding in the Trolloc attack and suicide attempt in Fal Dara. The threat had even infiltrated those he trusted most. Surrounded on both sides by enemies, Mat blows the Horn of Valere, bringing back legendary warriors from the past to fight for him. When they see Rand, they refer to him as Lews Therin, and tell him that they can only go into battle under the Dragon banner, which Rand has been carrying with him. When they charge into battle, Ba'alzamon appears before Rand, asking if the Heroes of the Horn confirmed who he is. Rand questions if they'd lie for he doesn't want to be the Dragon reborn (p. 618).

Ba'alzamon taunts Rand again, saying he can only be saved if he joins the Dark One. Words from various of his friend's fill him as well as the memories of his past lives. Proving to him that while he can channel in every life, he always stays in the Light. Rand is then branded again with a heron on his palm, his sword is destroyed, and wounded on his side, which he is told "There is . . . something wrong with your wound. You will have to wait for it to heal naturally." (p. 627).

Rand awakes to Min and Moiraine with him. Moiraine tells him that his fight with Ba'alzamon was seen by everyone in the city, many people making paintings of it. He wants the pages burned but she says it has already spread to outside villages, as will news of the Dragon's rebirth.

"I won't. Light, the Dragon is supposed to Break the World again, to tear everything apart. I will not be the Dragon." (p. 629)

He gets up and sees the broken remains of his father's sword for the first time since the battle. There is nothing left except the hilt, and with that he abandons "the hope that he would discover Tam really was his father." (p. 630). Finally stepping outside, Rand sees the Dragon Banner flying above the camp, no longer able to hide. His friends tell him they will stay with him and the other Shienarans pledge themselves to Rand. He is asked if he will leave the world to fight the Last Battle alone. Rand remembers what Lan told him, "*Death is lighter than a feather; duty heavier than a mountain.*" He made his decision." (p. 631) and Rand allows the Dragon Banner to fly.

5.4. The Dragon Reborn

Rand is declared the Dragon Reborn and he and the other Shienarans are hidden in a camp in the mountains. Since then he has been arguing with Aes Sedai and has few friends to rely on; that being Perrin, Min, and Loial. His lodging is hidden "away from all the rest." (Jordan, 1991, 47) and isolates himself. After seemingly another argument with Moiraine, Perrin goes to comfort his friend. Perrin mentions wishing he was still just a blacksmith and asks Rand if he could have remained a shepherd. Rand doesn't see that he has a choice so no reason to wish. In addition, he vents that already people are dying in his name but is being held back, saying he owes them something (p.49) for their dedication.

"The Dark One is stirring. The Last Battle is coming. And the Dragon Reborn has to face the Dark One in the Last Battle, or the Shadow will cover everything. The Wheel of Time broken. Every Age remade in the Dark One's image. There's only me." He [Rand]

began to laugh mirthlessly, his shoulders shaking. “I have the duty, because there isn’t anybody else, now is there?”” (p. 48)

He is also clearly unable to control the One Power, accidentally causing a small earthquake. Telling Perrin, that the temptation is always there for him to use it. Sometimes it doesn’t work and worries “what if that happens when the Last Battle comes? What if I reach out and catch nothing?” (p. 50). Rand, along with not living amongst the others, isn’t eating with them. In the night, everyone is woken by an attack by Trollocs and Fades, where Rand’s worry is realized as when trying to channel, nothing happened, instead the fight was “against myself. To keep from burying us all under the mountains.” (p. 75). Rand’s wound sustained in Falme also breaks open once again, wishing that he could just hurry the end of the world so there’d be “no more dying. No more dreams. No more.” (p. 77). Offering to help heal the wound with *saidin*, Lan rebukes because of his lack of control, Rand perceiving it as him not being trusted. The last Dragon “killed everyone close to him” (p. 78) after all. The next morning, Rand is discovered gone. He left a note under Moiriane’s door, explaining his departure.

“What I do, I do because there is no other way. He is hunting me again, and this time one of us had to die, I think. There is no need for those around me to die, also. Too many have died for me already. I do not want to die either, and will not, if I can manage it. There are lies in dreams, and death, but dreams hold truth, too.” (p. 81)

We catch Rand’s flight through glimpses, where he is constantly using the Power, wishing he could just “lie down and die” (p. 116), only persisting so he can confirm the truth he

is the Dragon Reborn and there is finally an end to something. Through other characters, it seems Rand might already be succumbing to the madness, such as in the World of Dreams where he attacks Egwene. Implying Ba'alzamon is sending visages of his loved ones against him.

In another dream, he attacks Perrin which could harm him in the waking world. Rand, constantly repeating *I have to be careful. No mistakes* (p. 366, 367) kills and arranges the corpses of eleven Darkfriends to kneel before him, adding credence to the theory madness has already taken him. Standing in front of the kneeling, headless corpses he asks "if I am the Dragon Reborn," he told them, "that is the way it is supposed to be, isn't it?" (p. 367).

Rand finally makes it into the Stone of Tear, where he plans to fulfil the prophecy claiming the Sword That Isn't A Sword, proving he is the Dragon Reborn. Chaos erupts around him and his wound opens again but he is desperate to finally know the truth for certain. Eagerly waiting the end; "The dreams, finished. The baiting, and the taunting, and the hunting. I'll finish it all!" (p. 554). There is one last fight with Ba'alzamon, Rand claims the Sword and he appears to kill him for good and believing the Last Battle is over. He then proclaims himself to all watching, swearing to end any more suffering.

"I have done it, he thought. I have killed Ba'alzamon, killed Shai'tan! I have won the Last Battle! Light, I AM the Dragon Reborn! The breaker of nations, the Breaker of the World. No! I will END the breaking, end the killing! I will MAKE it end! . . . "I am Rand al'Thor!" he called, so his voice rang through the chamber. "I am the Dragon Reborn!" (p. 578)

6. DISCUSSION: THE TWO HEROES

6.1. Frodo Baggins

In Livingston's book *Origins of the Wheel of Time*, in the chapter comparing the works and methods of Tolkien and Jordan, he references that "I've written elsewhere about Frodo is almost certainly suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder" (Livingston, 2022, p. 54) and as Carol Jeffs writes "even victory is is defeat for its heroes." (Jeffs, 1984, p. 5). Indeed, rather than a triumphant return home to a happy life, Frodo is burdened with his mental and physical wounds from being the Ring bearer and sails West for some semblance of reprieve.

Frodo begins his story with the spirit of adventure and with the assumption that another person will deal with the Ring. However, the burden becomes completely his, and the physical and mental corruption of the Ring is his alone to bear. The wound taken on Weather Top being a physical reminder of his brushes with death and the task at hand. Even his home is foreign to him as he has outgrown it. He cannot enjoy the fruits of victory, "but Frodo's resignation was not caused by just one single incident; it was compounded. In one short year. Frodo has been heaped with troubles that the Elves have had three ages to assimilate and even they, who were used to the burden, find it difficult to cope with and constantly long for the Sea." (Jeffs, p. 7).

The primary stress placed on Frodo is being the Ring bearer, knowing that if he fails to destroy the Ring his home and all of Middle-Earth will eventually fall victim to armies or orcs and Sauron's rule. There are very few if any opportunities to incorporate coping mechanisms, except the reminiscing of the Shire. However, this is temporary, as the journey continues, Frodo slowly abandons the Shire as a place for which he will return. Overall, especially once returning

to the Shire following the destruction of the Ring, Frodo employs primarily avoidant behaviors towards what has happened to him. But as mentioned before, he has a physical reminder in his wound on his body.

The physical landscape that Frodo and Sam journey through compounds both the environmental and lack of resources paradigm of stress and trauma. The Lands of Mordor is without sun, has swamps littered with the dead, and the air rank with a foul stench, adding to the depression and sense of doom. As they get closer to their final destination, the ability to forage and hunt become ever more scarce. So much so that the lack of food and water for their return journey is what leads Frodo to decide to succumb to death on the slopes of Mount Doom once the Ring is destroyed.

While the rest of the Fellowship supports Frodo's struggle through their battles with Sauron's forces, they are not physically there to aid in the mental strain the Ring places on him. Nobody other than Sam, who is the only social support he has at hand. It turns out to be detrimental as Sam does carry the Ring for a time, saving the mission and comforting him when he is overwhelmed. Frodo eventually has no control over the Ring, knowing he is the only one who can complete the mission but in the end, he wasn't able to actually toss it into the fire.

The actual inability to rid himself of the Ring in the end was on Frodo, knowing he truly couldn't go through with it in the end. Of course, this is not Frodo's fault, the Ring was at its peak power and in Sauron's domain. So while Frodo may perceive it as a failure, I do not believe it was Tolkien's intention to think it so. As he says himself,

“Frodo indeed ‘failed’ as a hero, as conceived by simple minds: he did not endure to the end; he gave in, rattled. . . I do not think that Frodo's was a *moral* failure. At the last

moment the pressure of the Ring would reach its maximum — impossible, I should have said, for any one to resist, certainly after long possession, months of increasing torment, and when starved and exhausted. . . his exercise of patience and mercy towards Gollum gained him Mercy: his failure was redressed.” (Tolkien, 1973).

Regarding Frodo’s decision to sail West in the end, a particular notion that fits his arch is that “sometimes when a piece of reality is felt to be quite unmanageable, the defence is correspondingly extreme.” (Garland, 2013, p. 10). Now a stranger in his home, his only remaining family having left, and the physical toll of the wound plus the belief of his failure at the Crack of Doom, Frodo would never rest. Therefore, it does conclude that a someone with such kindness and humility as Tolkien describes him, who has been hunted to and looked directly into the evil of his world, would choose to find peace far away from it.

6.2. Rand al’Thor

Throughout the three book arc, Rand’s primary personal struggles are him being the Dragon Reborn and the realization of his parentage. The latter concerns itself with his view of himself and the shattering of his personal world.

Rand is predestined and has no choice in being the Dragon Reborn. In fact, the concept of *ta’veren* in the books robs those of any agency. Another uniqueness to Rand’s story is the permanent nature of his fate. There is a timeline for Rand, as the more he channels the more he exposes himself to the coming madness with it. He is not only at the center of his crisis event, it is an internal and external constant danger that directly involves the fates of those he cares about.

Frodo is eventually relieved of his duty as Ring bearer, Rand will always be the Chosen One until his death, leading to a lower locus of control.

Rand is supported by his father, Tam, who encourages him to start this journey to save their village. However, very early on in the story, Rand is confronted with the possibility, and later confirmation, that Tam is not his biological father. Throughout the three books, Rand projects his connection to his father through the heron-marked sword, which he gives him when he leaves. While he has support through Mat and Perrin, his primary familial tie is shaken and then severed, as represented by the destruction of the sword. Rand's view of himself as from the Two Rivers and Tam's son is challenged the farther he travels, making him increasingly vulnerable.

Regarding his travels, especially after he is separated from the main group and then when Tom is presumed dead, Mat and Rand are left to fend for themselves. Although they have the benefit of being taught gleeman's skills to win themselves a roof and a meal, it is far from a consistent method. Even more so the closer they get to Caemlyn. There are several instances where the boys sleep outside in the cold or go days without food. Another concern upon reaching Caemlyn is not only their dwindling money, but the increasing costs of similar commodities they've afforded previously.

Avoidance is Rand's primary choice of coping strategy throughout the first two books, not believing he is the one that Moiraine is looking for. In fact theorizing it is one of the other two boys. This changes by the third book, where the main plot is Rand rushing to fulfil another pivotal prophecy to confirm himself as the Dragon Reborn, understanding his fate. However, by this point one aspect that manifests here, beginning in the second book, is his anger. People like Moiraine but also some of his traveling companions, from his perspective, seem to be pushing

the mantle of 'lord' and 'Dragon onto him'. Rand's expectations of the journey don't match the perception until the third book. Especially once he flies the Dragon Banner over Falme, he begins to seclude himself as "it is not uncommon for people who have experienced a traumatic event to show intense anger about what has happened to them" (Garland, 2013, p. 97). This anger, particularly aimed toward Moiraine who he views as pushing responsibility onto him, eventually leads him to making the Dragon Reborn title his own. He does rebuke the temptations from Ba'alzamon to turn to the Shadow and not go mad from *saidin*, solidifying his fight for the Light, but he must then accept his eventual madness and isolation. His sense of coherence, although definitely meaningful and its parameters comprehensible, seems otherwise unmanageable.

One can view Rand's actions in the third book as a catalyst for some sort of reprieve. As he does believe that, although small, there is a chance that he will only go mad rather than have the fate of the world on his shoulders along with it. When he wields Callandor in the Stone of Tear, it is the first time he has full authority over himself. He could not be Tam's biological son, he had to be the Dragon Reborn, and he had to leave his home. But what he does going forward is up to him, and so temporarily as he actively engages with his crisis, he can mitigate some of the harm to come. But similarly to Frodo, Rand is also permanently wounded and so although making steps to fight off the madness, what he has already experienced will continue to linger.

7. Conclusion

One of the key steps in the Hero's Journey as laid out in Joseph Campbell's *A Hero with a Thousand Faces*, is the crossing of the threshold. The first crossing is the initial entry by the hero into the unknown world before encountering their trials and tests. "The adventurer still must return with his life-transmuting trophy" (Campbell, 2008, p. 167) and for both Frodo Baggins and Rand al'Thor that they indeed bring back a trophy for their respective societies; freedom from Sauron's tyranny and the prophesied savior for the end of the world. The second and final crossing marks the hero returning back to the known world, marked by either a literal or figurative 'resurrection'. "The first problem of the returning hero is to accept as real, after an experience of the soul-satisfying vision of fulfilment, the passing joys and sorrows, banalities and noisy obscenities of life." (p. 189). They always return changed, having gone through a metamorphosis due to the hardships endured to complete their quest.

The study shows the two protagonists, Frodo and Rand, share many similarities in the perils they may face. Both experience a permanent wound, being hunted by enemies, lack of sleep and food, slipping perception of control, and the separation from home, one never making it back, the other not recognizing it at all. With the supplied data identifying factors leading to culminating stress and trauma, we are able to see the change from the start and end of these two characters and they are exposed to countless unimaginable crises.

While their settings and trials are fantastical as is their genre, we can see the human cost and tragedy that befalls them as any reader can imagine the loss of home, comfort, and the ability to fail without the literal world failing with you. Rather than having to mirror what could be experienced, through the veil of fantasy we can enjoy the whimsy while acknowledging the most

human of tales. Tolkien said in 1947 that, “Fantasy (in this sense) is, I think, not a lower but a higher form of Art, indeed the most nearly pure form, and so (when achieved) the most potent.” (Tolkien, 1947, p. 23). Tolkien and Jordan were able to take the recognizable from the fair-story and the complexity of post-modern fantasy, and create an unimaginable world to articulate the most human and heartfelt of stories.

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9. Summary in Lithuanian

Analizėje daugiausia dėmesio skiriama streso ir traumų vaizdavimui, kurį patiria pagrindiniai J. R. R. Tolkienu „Žiedų valdovo“ trilogijos ir Roberto Jordano „Laiko rato“ veikėjai. Šie kūriniai buvo pasirinkti dėl jų reikšmės žanrui ir įtakos vėlesniems fantastikos žanro etapams. Tyrimas pirmiausia apibūdina žanro pradžią kaip „pasaką“, kuri galiausiai išsivystė į šiandien matomą postmodernistinę fantastiką. Nors išliko daug panašumų, pirmuoju asmeniu paremtas protagonisto žanras yra ta vieta, kur reikšmingiausias yra kūrėjo ir dabartinio žanro gylys. Po to nagrinėjami veiksniai, lemiantys individo streso ir traumos patyrimą, ir daugybė veiksmų, kurie gali juos paveikti.

„Žiedų valdovo“ analizės objektas yra pagrindinis veikėjas Frodas Baginsas, o „Laiko rato“ – Randas al'Thoras. Abu jie patiria klasikinius herojaus kelionės etapus, tuo pačiu nešdami savo pasaulio Išrinktųjų našta, nes jų nesėkmė reiškia tą patį ir kitiems. Kiekvienos trilogijos knygų pabaigoje abu negrįžtamai pasikeičia fiziškai ir protškai. Nustatomi ir ištiriami kintamieji, lėmę jų pokyčius. Galutinė išvada padeda nustatyti, ar duomenys paaiškina, kaip jų kelionės juos paveikė, ir ar tai padeda suprasti jų likimą istorijai pasibaigus.