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# Madam Pele: Novel and essay

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# MADAM PELE

NOVEL

&

ESSAY

By

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Master of Arts (Writing)

Faculty of

Education and Arts

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## **Abstract.**

### Novel

My novel deals with the themes of obsession, jealousy, volatility, and revenge, while simultaneously dealing with the more benign theme of love within relationships, and holiday-mode pleasures. Divided into different narrative voices, it traces the interweaving stories of Madam Pele, Goddess of volcanoes and lava, a small lava rock, and Di and Paul, both during their past holiday in Hawaii, and in the present in Perth. Inadvertantly transporting Pele within the rock on their return from Hawaii, they unwittingly release her rage upon their city.

### Essay

In this essay I cover contemporary theoretical considerations, such as Modernism, Postmodernism and Fantasy, and an analysis of various influential authors' writing techniques, descriptive language and narrative-plot genres, that led me to want to write my novel *Madam Pele* as a contemporary mythical fantasy. I then detail the devices, (such as voices, patterns, free verse, active verbs and so on) that I used to achieve this result - the implausible becoming reality with the Pele myth incorporated into the contemporary world.

## **Declaration**

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- (i) incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- (ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or
- (iii) contain any defamatory material.

.....

Jud L House

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## **MADAM PELE: A Contemporary Fantasy Novel**

**What led me to write my novel ‘*Madam Pele*’, as a contemporary Mythical Fantasy novel – including discussions of both literary theory and influential authors of several genres.**

## **Introduction.**

In this essay I cover contemporary theoretical considerations - such as Modernism, Postmodernism and Fantasy - that led me to want to write my novel *Madam Pele* as a contemporary mythical fantasy. The influences, of various authors' writing techniques, descriptive language and narrative-plot genre, ranged from fleeting to extensive. Authors, such as J R R Tolkien (who triggered my delving into Medieval authors), C S Lewis, Ursula Le Guin, Julian May, Douglas Adams, Daphne Du Maurier, Susan Cooper, and currently J K Rowling, awakened then fed my ever-increasing interest in the mythic and Sci-Fi Fantasy genre. Along with Dylan Thomas, P G Wodehouse, J B Priestley, Somerset Maugham, William Golding, Peter Carey, Dorothy Porter, and Tim Winton, their poetic and prose styles engendered an appreciation of not only their content but also their techniques, showing me narratorial alternatives.

Naturally, my personal experiences form the foundation of the novel, especially those in Hawaii which contribute to its scope, but writing style is of equal importance. In order to demonstrate what has led me to this stage of style development and position of perceptions, my early reading history and an analysis of the above influential authors are a necessity. It is important to understand that *my* understanding of literary terminology through this pre-university period was general - I knew why I liked certain novelists and poets, though lacked the literary-theory-specific language to express my reasons.

### *'Travelogue' novels.*

My definition of a 'travelogue' novel is one that describes the details of a journey to another country or location, as the vehicle for the story which is often secondary to those details.

As a child in Primary School I read an abridged School Edition of a 'travelogue' novel called *A Pattern of Islands* by Arthur Grimble, about the Gilbert and Ellice Islands. From this small novel, set from 1914 to 1920, with its descriptions of a young Cadet District Officer's encounters with island administration, villagers, and various marine creatures, I discovered a fascination for exotic islands which endures to this day. After describing their landing upon Ocean Island, "a tiny hump of land ... so forlornly

crouched between the vastitudes of sky and sea” (Grimble, 1961, p. 8), and the “grim civilization of Home Bay” (ibid, p. 12) with its “flagrant quarter-mile of factory buildings and workshops [where] hardly a green thing was to be seen” (ibid, p. 11), he and his young wife were transported via railway flat-cars to the Government siding. During their journey, he tells how

[s]uddenly, too, we were out of the torrid glare and running in the latticed shade of palms. The din of machinery was magically snuffed out as we rounded a bend; the dwellings of a Baanaban village over-arched by palms came in sight on the seaward slopes below us. We caught glimpses, through twined shadow and sunlight, of crimson and cream hibiscus, of thatches raised on corner-posts, of neatly matted floors beneath them, of bronze bodies in brightly coloured loin-cloths. We heard the chatter of laughing women and the shouts of children across a murmur of surf that rose muted from the trees. Scents of gardenia and frangipani floated up to us mixed with savours of cooking. .... The village was gone again in half a minute, but its spell stayed with us. We felt we had passed, in that flash of time, through a miraculous gateway opened for us into the real, the homely heart of the Pacific. (ibid, p. 12)

With his use of all the senses for this description, Grimble ensured that the spell also stayed with me, the reader.

I have read a variety of these ‘travelogue’ novels both during my formative and adult years, and they always have the same affect on me – that of making me desire to travel to the places described. J B Priestley wrote a long ‘travelogue’ novel *Faraway*, about a journey made by four strangers brought together into partnership to locate and claim an uncharted island they called Faraway that had tons of pitchblende “sticking out all over the place” (Priestley, n. d., p. 45). The main protagonist, William Dursley, with a lump of pitchblende and the details of its provenance, sought out the other two beneficiaries of his Uncle’s will, Commander Ivybridge and P T Riley who respectively had the Longitude and Latitude coordinates for Faraway. With the deceased Riley’s daughter, Terry, taking his place, and with the Commander’s financial partner, Ramsbottom, as their fourth member, they made Tahiti their base, from which they chartered schooners to search for the island. Once again sensual and metaphoric language was used to describe Tahiti – some of it far from flattering, but much of it extremely evocative.

William, in love with Terry, walked back to their hotel on the night before they set sail for Faraway the first time:

It was a lovely night, a night of the legendary South Seas, when the worst copra dump or most monotonous stretch of palm and coral suddenly becomes part of the Garden of Hesperides; it had a silken and fragrant beauty in it; there was half a white moon and just a glimmer of stars; there was a soft little wind among the palms; and through this nocturne in purple and silver, this island symphony of distant booming surf, sighing wind, and cicadas, they walked slowly, arm-in-arm, close together. Now and then a car would pass them, sometimes carrying a load of beanfeasting, singing Tahitians, and offering a quick glimpse of flower-crowned dark faces. William was drunk, not with wine ... but with love and romantic wonder. .... They picked their way through the stream-haunted garden, where daturas were giving out a very strong sweet smell. .... Between the black silhouetted palms, the lagoon was a bright silver. The moonlight mistily filled the great lily cups in the pond. (ibid, pp. 292 & 293)

A little later, upon their return after initial failure to reach Faraway, and rejected by Terry, the same scene is described in similar terms. “Yet now it was all different. It was rapidly shrinking into a mere huddle of canvas scenery” (ibid, p. 367). The reality of island life, and the struggle to achieve one’s goals continued despite the superficial beauty of the place. Having failed in their endeavour due to their Faraway Island having been claimed by Chile and a rival ‘treasure hunter’, William mused while waiting for a schooner to rescue them after the Commander’s death on Easter Island:

“There seems to be an awful mirage element about life now. Every place is wonderful when you’re not there, and the minute you are there it dwindles into something rather ordinary and some other place begins to look wonderful. It’s a trick of the imagination, of course, but I don’t see why one should go on being humbugged by it.” (ibid, p. 540)

While I have found this sentiment to contain some truth during my subsequent travels overseas, I have always experienced the wonder and delight in the novelty of a new location. Of course the longer I have stayed, the more aware I have become of the mundane, but this has not detracted from the journey itself or the subsequent memories of it. Priestley’s novel includes the mundane, plus the failure of the quest, but he ended it with William at home again in England where he “found himself overwhelmed by a great tide of longing for the Pacific and the islands, the distant blue magic of the South

Seas” (ibid, p. 567). So did I - his story contributing to a wanderlust that I have never satisfied.

Recently, I discovered Joseph Conrad’s stories, *Typhoon*, *The Shadow Line*, and *The Nigger of the ‘Narcissus’*, entailing a ship captain’s journeys, that reminded me somewhat of the original story, *A Pattern of Islands*. I read these from a different perspective – that of someone who has been and seen, and can now discern the difference between the romantic notion and the reality of travel. An additional difference is that I am now aware of the imperialism behind the protagonists’ situations within their respective narratives, a theory I had no knowledge of when I first encountered both Grimble’s and Priestley’s novels.

Following the viewing of the Elvis Presley movies of *Blue Hawaii* and *Paradise, Hawaiian Style*, my island lust was cemented. Consequently, one of my goals in life was to visit Hawaii, the ultimate in exotic island paradises. And, because I went with an appetite whetted by a *Sesame Street* program that had shown the landscape and native people of Hawaii rather than the commercial aspect of the islands, I was not disappointed. While there, my discovery of the legends of Madam Pele and her role, past and present, in Hawaiian society, sowed the seed that slowly germinated in my mind until it developed into an organised plotline.

Combining my love of Hawaii with my increasing interest and knowledge of the Fantasy genre and of Mythology, the subject chosen for my novel is consequently understandable.

### *Crime novel plotting.*

Over the last thirty-seven years I have accumulated an extensive library in Crime/Mystery fiction, that includes the renowned authors Agatha Christie, Ruth Rendell, P D James, Ngaio Marsh, and Dorothy L Sayers; plus more recent authors such as Elizabeth George, Kathy Reichs, Sue Grafton, Minette Walters and Perri O’Shaughnessy. If asked I would say that I liked the plots, the logic, the application of the mind to unravel the clues to reveal the perpetrator before the author does. I have become very skilled at this – I have an analytical mind that breezes through jigsaws, mazes, codes, and problems, linked, I believe, to observation of minutiae. From these

novels I learned to apply my mind, and gained a firm grounding in plot construction. This I have carried forward throughout my writing, and have completed an unpublished mystery novel, *Crimmons*, which I have also converted into a television script, with outlines of sixteen accompanying episodes.

### **Analysis of influential authors.**

As I moved through the works of various authors I rejected many and was drawn closely to others. I found that the novels that remained embedded in my mind contained these elements of satisfying plots, and mystery that was not always criminal. I was drawn towards fantasy fiction (which I deal with in more detail later in this essay) along a path of established authors – such as Wilkie Collins: *The Moonstone*, Daphne Du Maurier: *The House on the Strand*, J B Priestley: *Benighted*, W. Somerset Maugham: *The Magician*, William Golding: *The Inheritors*, and of course J R R Tolkien: *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* – while *Adam in Moonshine* by Priestley and *Pincher Martin* by Golding exposed me to the convolutions of a ‘Stream of Consciousness’ form, and the “narrative boundary-breaking or slippage, excess, and indeterminacy” (Lewis, 1990, p. 133) of Postmodernism. At University I was further exposed to novels that fell into this category, such as *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys, in which the first person protagonist changed from the male character presenting his point of view, to that of the female from her subjugated position, and *The Riders* by Tim Winton with its unanswered questions and open-ended text.

### *Modern and Postmodern characteristics.*

Postmodernism was a term coined by the Modernists to describe the late 50’s and early 60’s during which enormous change took place throughout all art forms - art, architecture, fashions, dance, music, and literature. Modernism itself represented experimentation, innovation, and a bundle of shared characteristics from vastly diverse writers. There was a great interest in form, free verse, and voices, the utilisation of myth and quotations from past literature in an attempt to bring structure, shape and order to the futility and chaos of modern life. I have made use of these things for *Madam Pele*.



While studying literary theory for my degree, I wrote that Postmodern characteristics that apply to texts could read as follows: multiple narratives, different points-of-view, plurality of meaning, reader participation, dark themes, fractured world, open-ended texts, a wide variety of and mixed genres, boundary breaking, gaps, metafiction, and the replacement of marginalised groups in texts. [Of course there was a continuation of social criticism, either subtle or blatant and regardless of the genre.] I noted that D Lewis, in *The Constructedness of Texts*, after describing how “[m]etafiction ... refus[ed] to take for granted how stories should be told and thus implicitly comment[ed] upon the nature of fiction itself” (Lewis, 1990, p. 132), continued to state that there were three main features of postmodernism - “narrative *boundary-breaking* or ‘slippage’, *excess*, and *indeterminacy*” (ibid, p. 133). I also quoted Geoff Moss, who in *Metafiction, Illustration, and the Poetics* propounded that:

postmodernism pictures a subjective, relativistic world [and] is .... a process, perpetually in construction, perpetually contradictory, perpetually open to change, ...where the self is decentred ... [and there is] a plurality of discourses. (Moss, 1992, pp. 54-55)

### *Descriptive Language.*

The thing that attracted me to all these authors, apart from their narratives, plots, settings and characters, was their clever, unusual and sometimes startling ‘way with words’. Trite, one might say – in order to use words, the units of language, all authors have a ‘way with words, and that ‘way’ is called their style. Yet these authors who influenced me had a particular knack with words – an ability to create and manipulate descriptive language: utilising the economy of metaphors linking two meanings, two unconnected things, to create a new way of seeing; together with simile comparisons; the more logical connected associative metonymy turning the real into an abstraction; and synecdoche with its parts signifying the whole. With specified or unspecified tenor carried by the vehicle of the word, these language tropes were often twisted for figurative use. They could all evoke an image that was instantly recognized, including the connotations of the chosen likenesses, and the baggage of intertextuality the resultant image suggested. These images contributed to the clarity of the wit, humour and

landscape of their texts. I will illustrate this by a brief discussion of several of these authors.

*A particular knack with words.*

*Dylan Thomas:*

The thing that appeals to me about Dylan Thomas is his use of evocative language in his prose. I love his prose. It is easy, enjoyable, and engaging to read, written to be read aloud so that the music of the language can be heard. Unfortunately, I find much of his verse too obscure, incomprehensible, as if I were missing ‘the key’ to unlock the esoteric meaning of its words/images. When read aloud it creates a kind of understanding, a ‘sense’ of the verse, but the economy of the verse robs it of readily accessible meaning to the reader – even at times to the poet himself. In a letter he wrote:

I am getting more obscure day by day. .... I shall never be understood. ... All day yesterday I was working, as hard as a navvy, on six lines of a poem. I finished them, but had, in the labour of them, picked and cleaned them so much that nothing but their barbaric sounds remained. .... They are not the words that express what I want to express; they are the only words I can find that come near to expressing a half. (Ferris, 1999, pp. 106-7)

Thomas himself was enthralled with words for their own sake, a fact well documented in his many letters. He was fond of quoting the Biblical ‘In the beginning was the word’, then, depending on his mood, launching into a stream of explanatory and often agonised words about his own poetry:

I’m a freak user of words, not a poet .... I write in the only way I can write, & my warped, crabbed and cabined stuff is not the result of theorising but of pure incapability to express my needless tortuities in any other way. (ibid, p 107)

In a letter to Pamela Hansford Johnson in 1934 he came closest to explaining his obsession with the disturbing nature of words – words (rather than ideas) with which Thomas believed his poetry began:

There is torture in words, torture in their linking & spelling, in the snail of their course ... In the beginning was a word I can’t spell, not a reversed Dog, or a physical light, but a word as long as Glastonbury and as short as pith. Nor does it lisp like the last word, break wind like

Balzac through a calligraphied window, but speaks out sharp & everlastingly with the intonations of death and doom on the magnificent syllables. I wonder whether I love your word, the word of your hair ... the word of your voice. The word of your flesh, & the word of your presence. (ibid, p. 108)

Even in his correspondence his clever use of metaphorical language, with its intertextual reference to a quotation from Shakespeare's 'cabin'd, cribbed, confined', evokes imagery that extends meaning for the reader – 'warped, crabbed and cabinned stuff' immediately presents the notion that he believes his writing is confined and constrained, while 'in the snail of their course' presents it as a trail of words left behind the crawling pen on its journey across the page.

When in America, he later told Alastair Reid that "when I experience anything I experience it as a thing and a word at the same time, both equally amazing" (ibid, p. 109). According to Paul Ferris this:

[f]ailure to see that an image is only an image, not the reality, may have been, for Thomas, not a failure at all, but a positive capacity that was at the root of his perception. ... [H]e wrote in a state of mind where words and objects became ... essentially the same. (ibid, p. 109)

I also perceive and experience in this way, having been aware from childhood of the shape of words, the picture they make on the page, their sounds, their rhymes, their rhythms, their syllables, and the magic of their often inbuilt alliteration. I have my own notions of which words are visually beautiful, those that are satisfying and those that are irritating and downright ugly. I believed that this was a personal peculiarity, so was delighted when I discovered that both Tolkien and Thomas shared this characteristic. Although it took them in different directions, they also shared a fascination for the sounds of the Welsh language. This linguistic penchant underlies my affinity with, and explains my attraction to, the writings of most of the listed authors in this essay.

Thomas's prose, while filled with Welsh or British places, experiences, and occasions, is easily understood. In his prose I can hear him talking; I can see the people preparing for their Bank holiday picnic, for example, because I have experienced similar events, and because his language is so descriptive. With his use of rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, and heteroglossic sense of voices, age, gender, and differing social groups,

his prose evokes the sights, sounds, smells, clutter, activities, turmoil, all with instant clarity and yet still an economy of words.

In his volume *Quite Early One Morning - Poems, Stories, Essays*, there are two versions of the short story *Reminiscences of Childhood* - I prefer some of the first version to the tidied up second version, although some of that is also better. I would like to see a combination of both versions – and no doubt if he had lived longer he well may have written a third version. The first seems more naive and fresh, with less of an eye to the ‘political correctness’ of the latter, though I realise that term had not been coined in his time. It is also interesting to see that the changes to the *Hunchback in the Park* poem in the second version comprised mainly of punctuation removal, plus the removal of the first version references to his two childhood ‘swan’ verses.

The opening paragraph of *Holiday Memory* is scintillating, with not a sentence in sight – phrases and clauses as sensual fragments:

August Bank Holiday. A tune on an ice-cream cornet. A slap of sea and a tickle of sand. A fanfare of sunshades opening. A wince and whinny of bathers dancing into deceptive water. A tuck of dresses. A rolling of trousers. A compromise of paddlers. A sunburn of girls and a lark of boys. A silent hullabaloo of balloons. (Thomas, 1983, p. 29)

And so it goes on - a litany of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and textural sensations. Seaside and fairground are crammed into the limited space along with the people and their preparations and experiences. Textually, if re-shaped physically on the page, it could succeed equally as a poem – just the thought of that evokes a yearning in me for it to be so. Being written for radio broadcasts, the short stories within this volume were restricted in length by a time limit. Thus they have a page-number uniformity which seems artificial, and occasionally a feel of there being more to come that is left unsaid. There is a sense that the author has just begun to settle into his illustration of his point of view – especially with the essays – when the text is abruptly terminated. Unintentionally or fortuitously, these pieces have the “narrative boundary-breaking or slippage, excess, and indeterminacy” (Lewis, 1990, p. 133) characteristics of Postmodernism.

A number of these radio scripts/short stories in this volume deal with memory - *Reminiscences of Childhood* versions one and two, *Memories of Christmas*, *Holiday Memory* and *The Crumbs of One Man’s Year* - while memory assists the other pieces as

one would expect. *Return Journey* is a short radio play; and *Quite Early One Morning* is a precursor of *Under Milk Wood*, his most successful play.

With an emphasis on Spring, *Under Milk Wood* demonstrates a day in the life of a seaside Welsh town, as seen through the viewpoints of various of its inhabitants. Thomas's use of these voices/viewpoints makes the play a working example of heteroglossia – all social voices having their say in a kaleidoscope of social values and ideologies. Once again the language is startling – text, lacking grammatic continuity, strewn with onomatopoeia, a deliberate euphony and cacophony of sounds as the words roll and trip from the mouth; adjectives and nouns turned into mixed tense verbs including participles sprinkled intermittently amongst the phrase fragments; images instantly leaping off the page, juxtaposed and unrelated/individual:

*There's the clip clop of horses on the sunhoneyed cobbles of the humming streets, hammering of horseshoes, gobble quack and cackle, tomtit twitter from the bird-ounced boughs, braying on Donkey Down. Bread is baking, pigs are grunting, chop goes the butcher, milk churns bell, tills ring, sheep cough, dogs shout, saws sing. Oh, the Spring whinny and morning moo from the clog dancing farms, the gulls' gab and rabble on the boat bobbing river and sea and the cockles bubbling in the sand, scamper of sanderlings, curlew cry, crow caw, pigeon coo, clock strike, bull bellow, and the ragged gabble of the beargarden school as the women scratch and babble in Mrs Organ Morgan's general shop where everything is sold: custard, buckets, henna, rat-traps, shrimp nets, sugar, stamps, confetti, paraffin, hatchets, whistles. (Thomas, 2000, p. 358)*

In his essay, 'Wilfred Owen', Thomas wrote:

You cannot generalize about age and poetry. A Man's poems, if they are good poems, are always older than himself; and sometimes they are ageless. We know that the shape and the texture of his poems would always be restlessly changing, though the purpose behind them would surely remain unalterable; he would always be experimenting technically, deeper and deeper driving towards the final intensity of language: the words behind words. Poetry is, of its nature, an experiment. All poetical impulses are towards the creation of adventure. And adventure is movement. And the end of each adventure is a new impulse to move again towards creation. (Thomas, 1983, pp. 98-99)

This not only shows Dylan Thomas's attitude towards poetry, but describes his method, his approach, as he tackled his own creations. As a game-plan or manifesto for his own works, it provides us with an insight into Dylan Thomas the craftsman.

In Brinnin's book, *Dylan Thomas in America*, the author gave a detailed account of Thomas's studio, including the fact that:

on many of his manuscripts Dylan would add a single word or a phrase, or a new punctuation, then recopy the whole poem in longhand. When another addition or revision was made, no matter how minor or major, he would then copy the whole poem again. [There were, for example,] more than two hundred separate and distinct versions of the poem [*Fern Hill*]. It was, he explained, his way of 'keeping the poem together,' so that its process of growth was like that of an organism. (Brinnin, 1971, pp. 103-4)

In this book, from pages 96 to 105, Brinnin details a BBC lecture that he was to give on Dylan Thomas's time in America, and how he was perceived and received by Americans; followed by a discussion between himself and Dylan, in the latter's studio, on poetry generally, his method of writing and what motivated him to begin a work. It was fascinating to see that such an apparently disorganised person - his studio was a cluttered shambles, as his crumpled scruffy physical appearance would lead one to expect - worked in such a methodical manner when constructing his craft, either poetry or prose.

In Dylan Thomas's essay, 'A Dearth of Comic Writers', he comments, when asked by Calder Marshall whether P G Wodehouse fits his definition of a comic world perfectly, that:

[t]hose chinless, dim eyeglassed, asinine, bespatted drones were borrowed, lock, stock, and title, from memories of the Pink 'Un period and the Smart Set, from the ghostly, hansom past of the moneyed masher and the stage-door johnny. Some people like Jeeves, but include me out: I, for one, do not appreciate gentleman's gentleman's relish.

A truly comic, invented world must live *at the same time* as the world *we* live in. (Thomas, 1983, pp. 123-4)

*P G Wodehouse:*

Although I understand Dylan Thomas's point of view, I am inclined to disagree about the comic nature of P G Wodehouse's works. Rather than his plots or characters providing the comic element in his stories, I believe it is his use of language - his

surprising descriptive imagery, his metaphors and similes - that does so. These linguistic elements engender chuckles that swell to gales of laughter.

For example, in *Galahad at Blandings*, when discussing how Lord Clarence Emsworth had been avoiding women since his wife had died twenty-five years earlier, Wodehouse wrote that “women have a nasty way of popping up at unexpected moments, but [Emsworth] was quick on his feet and his policy of suddenly disappearing like a diving duck had had excellent results” (Wodehouse, 1979 p. 42). Just two words, ‘diving duck’, and the image evoked releases a chuckle. Having set the scene of Emsworth being glad to be free of women at his castle, Blandings, for a while, and discussing this with his younger brother Galahad over sole mornay, Wodehouse drops the next well-crafted twist. Gally informs Clarence that one of their domineering sisters, “Hermione has moved in [to Blandings] and is firmly wedged into the woodwork. Egbert’s there, too, of course. And Wilfred Allsop” (ibid, p. 42). It is his choice of words that not only creates the humour but evokes the notion that Hermione is now unmovable from the castle. There were many ways he could have said this, some requiring considerable length, but by using the metaphor ‘wedged into the woodwork’ all that is necessary is revealed. I could continue in this vein page by page throughout this book, not to mention every one of his books, but I believe my point is made.

Of course the characters, their settings and predicaments are silly; the plots are clever though often predictable - after reading your first P G Wodehouse, the twists and turns of future books’ narratives are expected, and usually awaited with anticipation. As for the “chinless, dim eyeglassed, asinine, bespatted drones ... of the Pink ‘Un period and the Smart Set, from the ghostly, hansom past of the moneyed masher and the stage-door johnny” (Thomas, 1983, pp. 123-4), they *were* of the author’s era. They were his contemporaries, their apparently frivolous lifestyles, occupations, and pastimes being fictionalised, melodramatised to create escapism during more serious times.

Wodehouse himself was unperturbed by criticism such as that of Dylan Thomas. He said:

I believe there are two ways of writing novels. One is mine, making a sort of musical comedy without music and ignoring real life altogether; the other is going right deep down into life and not caring a damn ... (Wodehouse, 1977, frontispiece)

As a part author and lyricist for eighteen musical comedies, he understood the genre well, and his over-ninety books were translated into many languages, and won world-wide acclaim as “a comic genius recognized in his lifetime as a classic and an old master of farce.” (*The Times*) According to Evelyn Waugh, whose comments from a BBC broadcast were quoted on the rear cover blurb of several Wodehouse volumes:

Mr Wodehouse’s idyllic world can never stale. He will continue to release future generations from captivity that may be more irksome than our own. He has made a world for us to live in and delight in”. (Waugh, on Wodehouse, 1977, rear cover)

While his content was farcical, his context was quite serious. Wodehouse was renowned to have meticulously plied his craft, paying attention to every word he wrote, although there is a generally held opinion that his latter works lacked the freshness and spontaneity of the earlier works. With this I am inclined to agree. Despite his language craft being highly skilled and honed in these latter works, his storylines were not accorded the same development - they did not move and grow with his times.

His character descriptions were immensely individual and refreshing. He described Lord Emsworth as “looking like an absentminded member of the Jukes family, for he ha[d] always been a careless dresser and when in front of a camera [wa]s inclined to let his mouth hang open in rather a noticeable way” (Wodehouse, 1979, p. 17), and, when upset by Gally’s news, that:

his eyes, like stars, start[ed] from their spheres and also [the news] cause[d] his knotted and combined locks, if you could call them that, to part and each particular hair – there were about twenty of them – to stand on end like quills upon the fretful porcupine.” (ibid, p. 44)

Thus we learned a lot more about Emsworth’s appearance than a mere list of physical characteristics would have revealed. And his discourse varied according to the viewpoint from which he wrote. The Galahad novels were written in third person, allowing a multiple of viewpoints and narratives within each novel. The Jeeves stories were written as if by Bertie Wooster, in the first person, using idiomatic simplistic language, except in direct dialogue from other characters, especially the more pedantic Jeeves. We see most things from Bertie’s position, and in his terms are acquainted with descriptions of those around him:



Aunt Dahlia blew in on the morrow, and I rang the bell for Jeeves. He appeared looking brainier than one could have believed possible – sheer intellect shining from every feature – and I could see at once that the engine had been turning over. (Wodehouse, 1977, p. 80)

Wodehouse, like Dylan Thomas, spent hours carefully manipulating his language to create the humour and plot twists his particular novels required. Thomas may not have respected the content of Wodehouse's works, but he should have respected the context that reflects the craft of the author.

*Tim Winton:*

Like P G Wodehouse, Tim Winton has a gift of creating evocative imagery. I first encountered Tim Winton via his novel *Lockie Leonard, Human Torpedo*, in which he narrated the story of an Australian teen who moved to a small country town, fell in love, and lived for surfing. The language used is Australian in all its nuances, but it's not the idiom so much as the descriptions that so fill the senses with Aussie flavour. And it was written with his juvenile audience in mind, yet, like J K Rowling's novels, is also viable for adult readers.

He writes about:

[t]he old family Falcon [being] loaded down like a refugee boat as they rolled into this [country] place fresh from the city. The whole family tried to be cheerful about it, but the place looked awful. The town was small and crummy-looking and when they saw the house the police force had organized for them, everyone in the car went quiet. . . . It was a big old fibro joint with a rusty tin roof, and it went all higgledy-piggledy inside, like whoever built it kept having more kids and just bunged on a room every Christmas. (Winton, 1993, p. 5)

The tone is colloquial Australian, as is the setting, and the language – for example 'looked awful', 'crummy-looking', 'big old fibro joint' and 'bunged on'. As with Wodehouse's works, I could give examples, page after page, book after book, of his imagery.

I studied Tim Winton's novel, *The Riders*, while completing my Bachelor of Arts degree, and wrote an essay: '*The Riders* as an example of a Postmodern text' (House, 1997, see Appendix – A for original), which, because it was an important influence on my own work, I have here compressed and paraphrased for clarity, modifying it to

include additional and relevant comments. [I have indicated the re-worked text by using inverted commas from the beginning of each paragraph until the end.] Winton's language involved not only the use of particularly Australian metaphorically descriptive language, but also of the Postmodern characteristics mentioned earlier. I was drawn to the metafictional way he "refused to take for granted how stories should be told" (Lewis, 1990, p. 132). 'He turned the ordinary into the extraordinary, moving away from initial realism to a post-modern text, multi-layered like an onion which he slowly peeled back until the bitter centre, the tale's inconclusive conclusion, was reached.

'He introduced into the realist narrative a fantasy genre and dark themes with his descriptions of the riders at the castle keep. Despite giving the novel its title, signifying their importance, the role of these riders in the narrative is never revealed to the reader causing a sense of *indeterminacy* and the notion that they have *plurality of meanings* – a psychological journey, the psychical phenomena of Celtic myth, symbolic of the tenacious wait for enlightenment, and/or as structural narrative brackets.

'Throughout *The Riders* there is a *mixing of genre* – fantasy, mystery, and 'travelogue'. Writing in the third person, as an omniscient narrator, he moved from one character's position to another, giving the impression of multiple narrators, while in actuality there are many voices, viewpoints, but only one narrator. The uncertainty this creates, the layering of the narratorial voices, is postmodern, as is the unreliability of the dominating narratorial voice, Scully's, and the changing of tenses from past to present, usually to change narratorial voice position, at intervals throughout the text.

'There are a few metafictional moments, narratorial boundary-breaking, that cause reader confusion, destabilising the suspension of disbelief that accompanies the reading of fiction. One of these involved the change of person from third to second - "[Scully] let her stay till she'd had enough. He said nothing. What could you say?" (Winton, 1994, p.144). To remain conventional it should have read: 'What could he say?' This second person device not only asks the reader to agree with Scully, but also draws their attention to the fact that it is a work of fiction, a book, that they are reading.

'The questioning of which is plot and which is subplot is also postmodern. Realist novels have a plot, with subplots intertwined, comprising a beginning, a middle, and an end which is conclusive, providing answers to most if not all questions raised in

the text - providing a sense of closure. *The Riders* does not do this. It is clearly an open-ended text, showing a fractured world, evoking reader response and participation. Preferring not to divulge the answers, not to tie up the loose threads, Tim Winton leaves active readers to make up their own minds, reach their own conclusions, find closure where they can. This lack of authorial closure is postmodern.

‘The gap in the narrative, *indeterminacy*, is rarely temporal or spatial. Predominantly, it is textual - the reader, given snippets of information about the characters, must again actively participate with the text to decide who they are, where they fit in the story, and their psychological, psychical, or practical effect on the protagonist and his quests for his wife, for an answer, and for himself - a *plurality of meaning*.

‘Winton intermingled past and present tenses in verb and participle form, during the revelation of Billie’s worries:

Billie [tried] to think of something good, something she could remember that wouldn’t make her afraid to remember. Past the cloud. The white neck she saw....Beautiful skin. The veins as she sits down. Skin blue with veins. Like marble. And talking now, mouth moving tightly. Cheeks stretched. Hair perfect. But the words lost in the roar, the huge stadium sound in Billie’s ears as the cloud comes down, like smoke down the aisle, rolling across them, blotting the war memorial look of her mother in blinding quiet. (ibid, p. 234)(My underlining)

This long quotation shows not only Winton’s unorthodox, post-modern verb usage to create an atmosphere of uncertainty and insecurity, but also his evocative metaphorical language, ‘war memorial look’ and ‘blinding quiet’.

‘Relying on reader’s foreknowledge of the ‘other’ text referred to, intertextuality occurs in this novel between the hunchback, Quasimodo, from *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and Scully - both deformed physically, misunderstood because of it, yet kind with good hearts - marginalised figures brought to the centre of the narrative. Billie, the medium for this link, recognized it herself as they travelled by boat from Greece to Italy: “He was like the hunchback, Scully. Not very pretty. Sometimes he wasn’t very smart. But his heart was good” (ibid, p. 210); and again in Amsterdam: “Billie saw him come out handcuffed and bellowing like the Hunchback on the Feast of Fools” (ibid, p. 344).

The cathedral of Notre Dame also features continually throughout the novel, another means of reaffirming the character linkage as more than just coincidence.

‘The language of Winton is evocative, with descriptions both metaphorical: “Night warped by.” (ibid, p. 235) and onomatopoeic: “The sea sucked and grabbed and hissed and snatched” (ibid, p.188). The use here of active verbs usually associated with animate beings rather than the sea (which although full of animate lifeforms is of itself inanimate), makes the description dynamic and powerful. On the other hand, the actions of his characters are excessive, surreal, a little incredible. There is a ‘soapie’ quality surrounding *The Riders* - the squeezing in of *all* possibilities into the one narrative which appears to be “perpetually in construction, perpetually contradictory, perpetually open to change” (Moss, 1992, p. 55) - unsettling to the reader as surreal art is to the viewer. In other words, postmodern.’

I have focussed on this novel by Winton in order to illustrate how easily the postmodern elements can be used to weave a narrative, albeit incomplete in places and with its threads clearly visible in others. I elaborate on this in the ‘Madam Pele’ section of this essay.

#### *William Golding:*

In his novel, *Pincher Martin*, Golding depicts the plight of a man lost at sea during the war, struggling to survive the elements while stranded on an isolated rock. As his health fails due to injuries and malnutrition, and his mind struggles with hallucinations and slippage of memory, the protagonist, Martin, sees his world through the ‘windows’ of his eyes – a thing we all do though some are more aware of the act of doing so than are others.

Constantly talking out loud as a reassurance that he is still alive, he struggles to maintain his identity. Unable to see himself reflected in a pool of water except as a dark shape against the sky, he states:

“How can I have a complete identity without a mirror? That is what has changed me. Once I was a man with twenty photographs of myself . . . . Even when I was in the Navy there was that photograph in my identity card so that every now and then I could look and see who I was. . . . There were mirrors too, triple mirrors. . . I could arrange the side ones . .

. and spy myself from the side or back . . . and assess the impact of Christopher Hadley Martin on the world.” (Golding, n.d., p132)

Continuing his monologue, he then discloses his view of himself as seen by others - reflecting Bakhtin’s ideas of ‘the self’ as a composite. Bakhtin focussed on the way the individual perceived him/herself - from within and not from outside. He proposed that every individual is incomplete from within but sees every other individual as complete, because they can be observed from outside. In order to see oneself as ‘I for myself’ it is necessary to see oneself as ‘I as seen by others’ - in other words, one needs to know others’ perspectives of oneself in order to see oneself as complete. Although they may show similar characteristics, each individual is non-identical, different, unique - thus there are a multiplicity of individuals.

Martin states that though his eyes are now no longer sufficient to identify him by, as they were in his pre-rock world:

“. . . there were other people to describe me to myself – they fell in love with me, they applauded me, they caressed this body they defined it for me. There were the people I got the better of, people who disliked me, people who quarrelled with me. Here I have nothing to quarrel with. I am in danger of losing definiton. (ibid, p. 132)

Golding’s use of this Bakhtinian notion of ‘self’ as a composite, in particular of other people’s views of us, is illustrated clearly in this novel. Not only in Pincher’s discourse above but throughout the entire text Golding offers via the memory flashes and hallucinations snippets of Pincher’s past that has led him to this dire point. We the readers are given the opportunity to build up our own image of his character, physical and personal, as he loses his. His ‘self’ is de-centred, paradoxically, as our understanding of his ‘self’ centres via his disclosures.

Although it is written in third person, there is no sense of the author behind the story. We are placed outside the story watching the protagonist’s plight, observing his attempts to feed himself, provide a water supply, and create signals for rescue. We watch his deterioration – aware of it by the fragmentation of the text as much as by the nature of his ramblings. While these fragmentations, these sudden forays into memories, flashbacks, and hallucinations are indications of the author’s presence behind the text, it is only by these devices, his techniques, that this authorial visibility occurs.

With an uncanny twist at the end of the novel, creating uncertainty in the reader of the narrative's validity, the work steps over the line from reality to fantasy.

## **Fantasy.**

### **Definition.**

Fantasy is the implausible becoming reality – the engaging of the imagination to go beyond fancy into a secondary or parallel world/universe.

J R R Tolkien defines fantasy as that

which combines with its ... use as an equivalent of Imagination the derived notions of 'unreality'..., [combines] freedom from the domination of observed 'fact' ... with ... things that are not only 'not actually present', but which are indeed not to be found in our primary world at all, or are generally believed not to be found there. (Tolkien, 1990, p. 156)

According to the critic, Tzvetan Todorov, in his *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (cited in Abrams, 1993, pp. 168-9), "fantastic literature ... [is] deliberately designed by the author to leave the reader in a state of uncertainty whether the events are to be explained by reference to natural or to supernatural causes". To succeed in persuading readers that fantasy is a very real dimension of our actual world, authors must convince them to a "willing suspension of [their] disbelief" (Coleridge, 1949, p. 147) in the narrative as a contrived text, and to become involved with it as true. The fantasy dimension can encompass the supernatural, the surreal, the occult, the extra-terrestrial, in fact anything that is incredible, unexplainable, or that defies accepted scientific or commonsense explanations. As the reality of the inner self, fantasy, via the imagination, can also be a great instrument of moral good.

In accord with Coleridge in *Biographia Literaria* (1949, Chaps. 13 & 14), I believe that fantasy is driven by the imagination rather than by fancy. Fancy can be defined as a lesser ability to combine memorised images via the law of association, and is distinguished by its simplicity. To Coleridge, fancy, relying on memory, was mere technique, for example metaphor and simile, creating links between disparate objects or ideas. Imagination is different, going beyond the surface of time and space, and operating like a collage, like the cutting and pasting of images. For Coleridge, a self-

proclaimed writer of fantasy – “my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural ...” (Coleridge, 1949, p. 147 ) - imagination was so much more than technique - it was the seamless incorporation of these disparate objects and ideas, their blending to form a new complete subject.

Imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception .... Coexisting with the conscious will .... It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create.... It is essentially vital.... Fancy, on contrary, has no other counters to play with but fixities and definites. The fancy is indeed no other than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space; ....[b]ut equally with the ordinary memory the Fancy must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association. (ibid, pp. 145 &146)

While fancy reorders images, reassembles fixities, imagination creates by unification of the fixities.

The faculty of imagination ... assimilates and synthesizes the most disparate elements into an organic whole - that is, a newly generated unity, constituted by a living interdependence of parts whose identity cannot survive their removal from the whole. (Abrams, 1993, p. 64)

Thus, if fantasy is the expression of the super-real, of dream-vision material, of the uncanny and spiritual, where it is necessary for the reader to suspend their disbelief in order to immerse themselves in the narrative, these works are governed by the imagination.

M. Saxby, in his article *Fantasy: Beyond the Rim of Reality*, states that

[f]antasy ... reflects reality through unreality, life through illusion .... makes visible the invisible and illuminates the darkness. It brings the wished for and the imagined into the rational world .... [and] arises from the human desire to penetrate the unknown and to venture beyond the here and now. (Saxby, 1997, pp. 231-2)

According to Freud (1918) the product of the imagination is always fantasy, but it helps us live our lives because our world is not always stable. For Coleridge, fantasy/ imagination is the power that helps us find the truth. He claimed it could see into the life of things, it could see the real construct of the world. His poems, ‘Xanadu’ and ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’, are examples of this. But he believed that it could also fail in this task.

Yoked together as the device of poetry, fancy and imagination makes the mundane fresh beyond simple images or associations of like qualities. Imagination requires more complex thought than fancy, and the ability to use thought, metre, and rhythm as tools to provide unity and imagery.

According to Abrams

“Imagery” ... signif[ies] all the objects and qualities of sense perception referred to in a poem [or work of prose] ... whether by literal description, by allusion, or in the *vehicles* ... of its similes and metaphors. (Abrams, 1993, p. 86)

The use of imagery collectively can include more than the five senses - sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell. It can also include the perception of movement and the notion of temperature. Imagery can also focus narrowly on “visible objects and scenes” (ibid, p. 87) or figuratively which incorporates the use of symbols, themes, and motifs as well as similes and metaphors.

Ursula Le Guin describes imagery and imagination in this way:

Imagery takes place in “the imagination”, which I take to be the meeting place of the thinking mind with the sensing body. What is imagined isn’t physically real, but it *feels as if it were*: the reader sees or hears or feels what goes on in the story, is drawn into it, exists in it, among its images, in the imagination (the reader’s? the writer’s?) while reading.” (Le Guin, 1992, p. 196)

Narrative ‘fantasy’ has various forms: High Fantasy – myth-based, or created-myth-based like J R R Tolkien’s completely self-contained secondary world, Middle-earth, and its resident creatures; Science Fiction Fantasy - set on alien planets in space, such as Ursula Le Guin’s *The Dispossessed*; set on Earth with alien invasions like Julian May’s *Intervention*; and set on both like Douglas Adams’ humorous ‘five part trilogy’ *The Hitch Hiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*; and Realistic Fantasy - using temporal and spatial alterations in the same ‘real’ location, usually on Earth, incorporating ghosts, dreams, psychic phenomena, magic and witchcraft such as the *Harry Potter* series by J K Rowling, and mythic characters accessed by a vehicle such as a potion as in Daphne du Maurier’s *The House on the Strand*, or magic symbols as in *The Dark is Rising* series by Susan Cooper. My novel, *Madam Pele*, falls between High Fantasy and Realistic



Fantasy, containing as it does authentic mythology presented within a real setting accessed via a small lava rock.

## **Analysis of influential authors.**

### *High Fantasy.*

#### *J R R Tolkien:*

As groundwork for my Honours thesis: ‘The hybrid world of J R R Tolkien’s fiction: a study of *The Lord of the Rings* and other texts in the light of Mikhail Bakhtin’s essay ‘Epic and Novel’, I studied Medieval works, such as *Piers Plowman*, *Beowulf*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and the legendary cycle of ‘King Arthur and the Round Table’. While dealing with the fantasy elements of my thesis, I referred to the opinions of the above-mentioned and noted Fantasists - Tolkien, Coleridge, Le Guin, and Lewis. Their considerable works, and those of several other fantasy authors, have had a definitive affect upon my own writing, both technically and narratively - the compulsion for mythic authenticity within my novel has become paramount.

‘A great deal has been written about J R R Tolkien. There have been biographies, essays and articles both positive and negative about his works individually and collectively, psychologically and theologically, mythically and morally, philologically and narratively. These works discuss the influences on him, that led him to develop a ‘secondary’ world with languages, and mythical history, and discuss his borrowing from mythic, linguistic and Biblical sources of the ‘primary’ world that he used to achieve his “really long story” (LOR, p. 10) and give his ‘secondary’ world credibility. While the opinions are as diverse as they are similar, the fact of Tolkien’s influence on ‘story’ and on language is certain.

‘His lecture/essay ‘Beowulf: the Monsters and the Critics’, is recognised as the definitive text on the *Beowulf* tale. His lecture/essay ‘On Fairy Stories’ is an established respected text for those studying fantasy, or narrative. His coining of the word *eucatastrophe* to mean the burst of joy experienced by a reader confronting a happy ending, “the sudden happy turn in a story which pierces you with a joy that brings tears (which [he] argued it is the highest function of fairy-stories to produce)” (Tolkien, 1995, p. 100) can apply to the same experience felt by movie audiences, or even sporting

achievements of personal bests. While Samuel Taylor Coleridge gave the working definition of *imagination*, Tolkien expanded on it to incorporate the creation of a 'secondary world' containing the realities of the 'primary world' enhanced by the supernatural - where 'super' is used as an intensifier, and the 'primary world' is, of course, our own world in our own time. It was important to Tolkien that while his 'secondary world' was set in Epic times his readers could still relate to his characters, and to the events and problems assailing them. Their belief in what they read was paramount if the mythology was to be understood and hopefully absorbed.' (modified and paraphrased text - see Appendix – B: the introduction and conclusion)

His has been the major influence upon me, and pervades my discourse on all other fantasy authors. My work, set in our fast-pace time, is not an emulation of his work - that would be ludicrous. But the scope of his fantasy, set in the mythical past, demonstrates how vast a single story can become. "His mythology was a living thing, always changing and growing. But some ideas came to him early and changed little over the years." (Hammond & Scull, 1995, p. 61) His attention to detail, which saw him rewriting whole sections of his mythology in order to ensure its authenticity and to iron out any wrinkle of inconsistency, was similar to that of Dylan Thomas but on a far grander scale.

His use of a Ring, its Master and its current owner as both antagonists and protagonist opened the way for me to similarly use the lava rock. His imagery is evocative, and his characters believable. From its Prologue beginning, he allowed his mythology to unfold via the development and interaction of his huge cast of characters, and via the twists and turns of the world-saving quest which encompassed most regions on his map, building up the narrative till it reached its several conclusions. Accused of not knowing when to 'end' the novel, he made sure that not only was his King, Aragorn, crowned, but that the original members of the Fellowship returned home to undertake restoration of their war-affected lands, before the primary characters, Frodo, Gandalf and Bilbo, embarked to sail to the undying lands, never to return to Middle-earth. Even then he was unsatisfied with leaving the future of his characters unknown to his readers. As a consequence he wrote a number of Appendices dealing with the Fourth Age of Middle-earth, and the fate of the main characters and their offspring.

Who wouldn't want to write like that? There is an ever-increasing list of authors who have tried to emulate his works, with varying degrees of success. Ursula Le Guin, Susan Cooper, Julian May, and more recently J K Rowling are among the more successful at creating secondary worlds on a grand scale. My work of course is on a minor scale.

### *Science Fiction Fantasy.*

#### *Julian May:*

In *The Saga of the Exiles*, encompassing four novels, Julian May created a well laid out fantasy using time travel as a vehicle, back then forward; ESP as a means of communication, a skill to be treasured; alien life-forms as the threat to our World from its own past; and relationships sexual and platonic to carry allies and adversaries onward. *Intervention* set in the New England area of USA with great effect, bridges between these previous four novels and the three that form the following set of *The Galactic Milieu Trilogy*. The plotting is complex yet builds up in layers so that the reader retains their grip on it, and doesn't become lost despite the ever-increasing number of characters and settings. Because of her imagery, *the reader sees or hears or feels what goes on in the story, is drawn into it, exists in it, among its images, in the imagination*; suspending disbelief for the duration of all eight novels.

Her *Trillium* series creates a more primitive world akin to Tolkien's yet alien - with created life-forms in place of Elves and Dwarves. Handled with delicacy the imagery is clear and the sense of place immediate. Completely different from the prior series, her *Rampart Worlds* series used brawn and brain, sex and humour, in modern language, in futuristic sci-fi settings.

As a writer I find her range of writing intriguing, a meld of fantasy and sci-fi, heteroglossically diverse, written to be read, easily, fluently, yet still providing the complexity that keeps the interest engaged till the last page. This is what I hope that I have achieved with my novel.

#### *Douglas Adams:*

Unlike May, Douglas Adams, the author of five books comprising "the increasingly inaccurately named *Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* trilogy", is

inspirational in his use of humour. An example of this, is his creation of Marvin, the paranoid android, a hyperchondriac manic-depressive robot with a Genuine People Personality (GPP) who wavers between asking “ I’m not getting you down at all am I? .... I wouldn’t like to think I was getting you down.” (Adams, 1982, p.73); and grumbling resentfully “I’ve been ordered to take you down to the bridge. Here I am, brain the size of a planet and they ask me to take you down to the bridge. Call that *job satisfaction* ? ‘Cos I don’t.” (ibid, p. 75) Upon arrival at the bridge he then asks “Do you want me to sit in a corner and rust, or just fall apart where I’m standing?” (ibid, p. 82) The writing is witty, the language straightforward, the characters well-named and neatly stereotypical, the plot containing an abundance of twists and turns, while the setting is obviously out of this world. Evoking continual laughter, his writing is reminiscent of that of Wodehouse, who used language with amazing clarity, creating powerful descriptions of landscape and character.

These are only a couple of examples of the many novels available that I have read in this genre, but my main focus is upon High Fantasy and Realistic Fantasy.

### *Realistic Fantasy.*

*Fantasy is the implausible becoming reality – the engaging of the imagination to go beyond fancy into a secondary or parallel world/universe.*

*William Golding:*

An example of Realistic Fantasy is Golding’s novel *The Inheritors*, in which he gave a voice – albeit with simple language based on pictorial thoughts, feelings, and basic social skills - to Orang-utan beings, pitted against more advanced primitive man in a fight for their survival. One step outside reality as we know it, yet with an authentic tropical setting and acceptable Orang-utan behaviours, the narrative engages and involves the reader’s credibility. It is only one step outside of reality to have Orang-utans actually conversing – we already accept that they are intelligent social creatures like ourselves, and that it is only an accident of vocal cord development that inhibits them from speaking. So by defying accepted scientific explanations, Golding’s compelling tale barely stretches our disbelief. It is as though he has one foot in the realm of fantasy while the rest of him remains in our own world.

*Patricia Wrightson:*

A little further into the fantasy realm, Patricia Wrightson, in her novel *The Nargun and the stars*, used the Australian rural setting “to evoke [and reveal ] the mythic past not of the European Settler people but of the indigenous Aboriginal people” (Stephens, 1992, p. 126) in the form of carefully researched non-sacred earth spirits. She wanted to show the Australian reader, who have only had access to European mythical creatures, such as dragons, elves, etc, “that indigenous magic did indeed have powers of conviction and interpretation unmatched by the imported kind.” (Wrightson, 1980, p. 615). As her spirits are of the trees, the swamps, the mountain, of stone, of nature, it was necessary that Wrightson used their landscape to bring *the imagined into the rational world*. They “were part of the earth and this mountain. People might come and go ... but those others ...had belonged here always.” (Wrightson, 1975, pp 61-2) She wanted us to believe that they really exist in our world, as they do for the Aboriginal Australian. But today’s world of the white Australian is one of mechanical and social progress which leaves little room for fantasy.

It was in this article by her that I first came across the idea that Australia has only ghosts from the last 200 years and Aboriginal Dreamtime legends for its mythology. As a non-Aboriginal I feel that Aboriginal legends are outside my purview - Patricia Wrightson has their express permission for the ones that she uses. She pointed out that myth could be imported into Australia, and that many had tried this, usually importing Wizards and Dragons and so on from Europe, especially the Celtic United Kingdom, via an artifact. This reinforced my idea of importing myth from Hawaii via the lava rock to Perth, an unlikely location for a fantasy to occur.

I was disconcerted to find that Wrightson had used a rock, the Nargun, which moved on stumpy legs, settled, killed, and threatened. But my little lava rock - while described as being animate - was the vehicle for Madam Pele’s spirit, and it is she who manifests to threaten and cajole.

*Daphne Du Maurier:*

Another Realistic Fantasy, Du Maurier’s *The House on the Strand*, takes the reader into the surreality of a parallel world, crossing the time barrier, witnessing the duality of past and present running simultaneously as the protagonist, Dick, moves in the

present but participates in the past, often traversing terrain that is no longer accessible. His altered sense of perception is caused by the imbibing of a potion which had “to do with D.N.A., enzyme catalysts, molecular equilibria and the like” (Du Maurier, 1969, p. 16), concocted by his scientist friend, Magnus, who wants his own experiences validated by his friend. Highlighting the danger involved in moving around while experiencing this dual reality, Magnus is eventually killed by walking in front of a train while in his trance state of altered perception. In the past in which he moved there were no trains. Dick, however, despite this real and dangerous outcome, cannot resist making the final journey with the remainder of the potion and loses his wife, family, and sanity.

Du Maurier set the novel in Cornwall, in the Middle Ages and in her present. Her attention to detail in both time zones, making them authentic and thus believable, facilitated the heteroglossia of both, physically at first and later socially.

The village of Tywardreath, as I had seen it a few ours earlier, had utterly changed. The cottages and house that had formed a jigsaw pattern, spreading north and west from the church, had vanished: there was a hamlet there now .... Small dwellings, thatch-roofed, squat, clustered round a sprawling green on which were pigs, geese, chickens, two or three hobbled ponies, and the inevitable prowling dogs. Smoke rose from these humble dwellings, but not from any chimneys, from some hole in the thatch. (ibid, p. 5)

The temporal slippage is readily accepted, a collage made upon the surface of time and space, the novel opening on the point of transition from present to past for Dick: “The first thing I noticed was the clarity of the air, and then the sharp green colour of the land. There was no softness anywhere.” (ibid, p. 1) Only after the first experience comes to an unexpected end - he inadvertently makes physical contact with a man he has been following, throwing him back into his own time vertiginous, and retching – do we learn the back-story of the potion.

How damnably typical of Magnus. He had not even told me if I must expect some side-effect from his hell-brew of synthetic fungus and monkeys’ brain-cells, or whatever the solution was that he had extracted from his loathsome bottles. The vertigo might seize me again, and the nausea too. I might suddenly go blind, or mad, or both. To hell with Magnus and his freak experiment. . . . (ibid, p. 17)

The foundation in Medieval history or mythology, or a creative alternative, gives an authenticity to the ‘secondary worlds’ in most fantasy novels.

*Susan Cooper:*

As a Cambridge university student of Tolkien and C S Lewis, Susan Cooper’s work demonstrates the use of myth, in this case Celtic, brought forward in time into existing locations, but also involving the passing of the protagonists into secondary created worlds. Based upon the Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Old English, pre Christian poems and legends of *Beowulf*, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, and the persona of King Alfred, and the medieval Middle English tales of *King Arthur*, *Merlin* and *Herne the Hunter* - and symbols and artifacts such as The Celtic cross, the circle of continuity quartered by the pathways or elements of life - Cooper authenticated the magic and fantasy of her parallel worlds of her hero quest narrative. Rather than instructing the reader she textually interwove the mythology in Celtic pattern, allowing them to be absorbed through the narrative, as Tolkien did with his created myths of his High Fantasy. By the end of the five books of the *Dark is Rising* series there is a sense of the breadth of the myths covered. Underlying all five novels they carry the stories forward unobtrusively. This is how I wish to use the Hawaiian myth.

Cooper is here ... weaving a tapestry of Anglo-Saxon history and culture around historical or literary individuals who, like Alfred and Arthur, are described as “Lords of the Light”. These individuals are connected to each other through genealogy and culture. .... Alfred ... is parallel to ... Arthur.... [Both] held off violent invaders as cycles of invasions, defense, conquest, and assimilation [we]re repeated.” (Drout, 1997, pp. 242 & 234-5)

Because the mythic and legendary incorporates the historical, both Christian and pagan, Cooper was able to utilise, within her *Dark is Rising* narrative, historical factors, such as the ring-giving by kings, and the Anglo-Saxon burial ship at Sutton Hoo, and historical pagan beliefs, such as the possession of magical (as well as healing) properties/powers by magicians, trees and plants, birds, animals, bells, colours, gems, stone and pathways. Her novel is sign-posted throughout with medieval minor details that validate the major characters and events, like the presence of Merlin in the form of Merriman, Herne the Hunter who chases the Dark away, the Rider and the Walker, and many symbolic elements. On the tapestries in the Hall of Time, her protagonist, Will,

saw “a silver unicorn, a field of red roses, a glowing golden sun” (Cooper, 1976, p. 43), symbols of magic/peace, blood/royalty, and Light/God. Later he saw “the brightest image of all: a masked man with a human face, the head of a stag [magic], the eyes of an owl [wisdom], the ears of a wolf [intuition] and the body of a horse [strength].” (ibid, pp 55) By her use of ‘co-existing’ time, Cooper had Will move back into the Middle Ages, with all its trappings - tapestries on the walls, huge carved wooden doors, forests that “swallow up whole villages and hamlets”. (Cooper, 1976, p. 65)

When Cooper’s ship, providing substantiating detail and a location for the acquisition of a sign, is carried off by the flood waters of the swollen Thames, it equates with the usual fate of a dead king being cast adrift in his ship, sometimes aflame as a pyre. Her mentor, Tolkien also used this motif in his *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, when after death, Boromir, son of the Steward of Gondor, was set adrift with his sword and cloven horn of Gondor over the massive Rauros Falls. Both were aligned intertextually with the Sutton Hoo find of a

ship-burial of a king of East Anglia late in the seventh century on the Suffolk coast .... with cultural monuments .... ceremonial and symbolic treasures .... nearly a century before the composition of *Beowulf* .... [in which] the first Danish king Scyld Scefing ... [of] the fifth century (Wrenn, 1970, pp. 4 & 3)

was borne on a funeral-ship out to sea.

With both Sutton Hoo, and *Beowulf* there is “a blending of pagan and Christian ceremony and sacrament ... [a] Christian use of essentially pagan material; ... conserving pagan tradition with progressive Christian adaptation ... an essential and most characteristic feature of Anglo-Saxon culture” (ibid, p. 4) and of both Cooper’s and Tolkien’s narratives as well. An example of this integration between the cultures occurs with Merriman’s warning to Will.

Through all this midwinter season [the Dark’s] power will be waxing very strong, with the Old Magic [pagan] able to keep it at a distance only on Christmas Eve [Christian]. And even past Christmas it will grow, not losing its high force until the Twelfth Day, the Twelfth Night - which once was Christmas Day [medieval Christian], and once before that, long ago, was the high winter festival of our old year [pagan]. (ibid, p. 57)



As a result of the mythic and legendary material used, *The Dark is Rising* series, the *Narnia* series, and Tolkien's *Middle-earth* collection all carry the notions of heroic quest adventure, which includes fierce battles against and final success over evil often symbolised by darkness. Both contain a degree of medieval chivalry, elements of wizardry and magic, and the unreality of fantasy. In the Lewis *Narnia* series, there is a distinction between the fantasy land, Narnia, and the real world, with a specific point of entry between them. But in Cooper's series, fantasy occurs as an extra dimension intermingling with the real world, enhancing and challenging the reader's perception of reality. "Cooper allows the intrusion of myth and magic into the fictionalised mundane world, and like Lewis, resurrects Logres, the spiritual Britain of the legendary King Arthur, to influence matters in the present day. (Filmer, 1990, p. 120) In Tolkien's fantasy works, the fabricated Middle-Earth *is* the real world in mythic time – an apparent contradiction accepted readily by readers as they 'willingly suspend their disbelief'.

Ideologically, these novels champion the fight for what is right and good, and the suppression or defeat of evil in all its forms - including personal behaviour. They use religion, Christian and pagan, as vehicles for their message of heroic endeavour in the face of one's fears. As backdrop for her tale, a part of the accepted reality of life, Cooper "is sceptical of traditional religion, but articulates hope in and through the caring and commitment of human beings .... emphasising [that] the power of love [is] greater even than the "High Magic"".(ibid, p. 120) Lewis allows religion to intrude into his narrative in allegorical form - Aslan as Christ figure - to carry notions of Christian redemption and salvation. As storyteller/poet, Tolkien set his own 'epic' in the *heroic pagan past*, pagan meaning not Christian rather than godless, with its own form of 'doom' overshadowing it. Yet he never allows his tale to portray *hopelessness*. "Hope without guarantees" (Tolkien, 1995, p. 237) is held out before his characters in order that they continue with their quests - both in *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

*J K Rowling:*

I include the *Harry Potter* books by J K Rowling, as they are the latest fantasy novels that have woven their 'magic' upon me, due to the great plotting and language skill of the author as she dovetails and compounds the narrative complexities moving inexorably towards the concluding Book Seven. Initially, as with Tolkien's *The Hobbit*,

the language used is simple yet descriptive and evocative. But, also like Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, with each succeeding novel the language level increases in complexity, as the age of both Harry and the readers increases. Book One opens with the lines: "Mr and Mrs Dursley, of number four, Privet Drive, were proud to say that they were perfectly normal, thank you very much." (Rowling, 1997, p.7) Book Six ends with:

His hand closed automatically around the fake Horcrux, but in spite of everything, in spite of the dark and twisting path he saw stretching ahead for himself, in spite of the final meeting with Voldemort he knew must come, whether in a month, in a year, or in ten, he felt his heart lift at the thought that there was still one last golden day of peace left to enjoy with Ron and Hermione. (Rowling, 2005, p. 607)

The plotline and narrative of Book One is detailed but straightforward, the characters diverse but manageable. The plotline and narrative of Book Two not only contains the details of the new tale, but also includes those of the preceding story. And so on throughout the series, each novel becoming more profound as each compounds upon the last, and the overall tale broadens, the character number and variety increases, the sentence structure becomes more complex, and the physical size of the volumes trebles – 216 pages in Book One and 600 pages in Book Six.. And this all done to a preconceived plan – the entire series was plotted out before Rowling began to write the first volume.

Her fantasy deals with ancient witchcraft set in our time in Britain, in a hidden wizardry world rarely interconnecting and then only by accident. The narrative follows the adventures of an eleven year old Harry as he begins his schooling at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry as a first year, then on through each succeeding year to the seventh and final year – this last book is not yet available to the public.

As well as wizards and witches, the books are peopled with giants, merfolk, house-elves, Cornish pixies, ghosts, dwarfs, leprechauns, and centaurs, plus both invented and mythical creatures such as giant spiders and snakes, dementors, werewolves, dragons, basilisks and hyppogryphs. Then there is the ever-increasing phenomena such as animated painting characters, enchanted cars and statues, Animagi (wizards who can transform themselves into animals and back again), Boggart shape-shifters, and so on, some of which are actively good, some of which are neutral, and some of which are

aligned with the dark side. Her use of imagery is sharp and imaginative, drawing the reader in to the secondary world with total belief in its validity.

Ideologically, this series of novels also deals with the fight for what is right and good, and the suppression or defeat of evil in all its forms. The evil surrounding her antagonist, Lord Voldemort, is palpable, and all seven narratives deal with Harry's quest to rid the world of him forever – a thing that he initially, naively, thinks he has accomplished. But with each re-appearance of Voldemort, each one stronger than the last, he realises that it will take a monumental and probably self-fatal struggle to eliminate him. The reader's knowledge and acceptance of this fact speaks volumes for the power of Rowling's narratives. Knowing that Harry will most likely die in the final book, has not deterred the readers from awaiting its publication avidly.

Many wizards have died at Voldemort's hands and those of his followers, the Death Eaters, leaving Harry as the only person to have ever survived an *Avada Kedavra* death curse cast by Voldemort. Her clever use names for characters, spells and Hogwarts' Houses, and herbal potions has made the book easily accessible to the wide demographic of her readers. The heteroglossia of the characters is detailed and specie-specific – an example is the 'normality' of the Dursley family, displayed as Mr Dursley prepared to leave for work:

At half-past eight, Mr Dursley picked up his briefcase, pecked Mrs Dursley on the cheek and tried to kiss Dudley goodbye but missed, because Dudley was now having a tantrum and throwing his cereal at the walls. 'Little tyke,' chortled Mr Dursley as he left the house. (Rowling, 1997, p. 8)

The discourse places the Dursleys into a specific stereo-type, with the language aimed squarely at the eleven year old reader. The humour of both situations and characters allows respite from the serious underlying quest. An example of this use of humour is the way the groundwork for the giant spider scenes in Book Two are set up with constant humorous references to Harry's friend, Ron's great aversion to spiders. Upon entering the Forbidden Forest to search for Aragog, Hagrid's pet spider, Ron's fear escalates, intentionally humourously broken momentarily for the reader by the appearance of his dad's enchanted car "standing, empty, in the middle of a circle of thick trees .... [which

then] moved slowly towards him, exactly like a large, turquoise dog greeting its owner.”  
(Rowling, 1998, p. 230) When they finally find Aragog, Ron’s fears are justified.

Spiders. Not tiny spiders like those surging over the leaves below. Spiders the size of carthorses, eight-eyed, eight-legged, black, hairy, gigantic. .... And from the middle of the misty domed web, a spider the size of an small elephant emerged, very slowly. There was grey in the black of his body and legs, and each of the eyes on his ugly, pincerred head was milky white. He was blind. (ibid, pp. 204 & 205)

Even this description of terrifying spiders is undermined by Rowling’s use of humour- it is difficult to fear something that is likened to a carthorse or an elephant.

Like Tolkien, Rowling leaves the reader with some hope at the end of each novel, and even though the protagonist’s death seems inevitable, there is still a chance that he and his friends, Hermione and Ron, will survive, with the prospect of future endeavours as yet untackled to finish the series.

### *Postmodern Fantasy.*

There are a number of other children’s writers whose works have opened doors to future writing possibilities for me. They showed me that fantasy can be written in a postmodern format - with tenses mixed up, opposing protagonists presented from the first-person perspective within the same work, fonts and layouts manipulated to create whatever visual ‘picture’ the author wants, and poetry used in place of prose if it suits the content better. These authors, and their respective novels, are: Robert Westall - *The Devil on the Road*, and *The Scarecrows*; Caroline Macdonald - *The Lake at the End of the World*; Margaret Mahy - *Dangerous Spaces*; Ruth Park - *Playing Beattie Bow*; and Aidan Chambers – *Breaktime*.

I am indebted to all the authors discussed for their textual discipline and freedom, their linguistic brilliance and simplicity, and their imaginative narrative scope.

## ***Madam Pele : the novel.***

Dylan Thomas's opening sentence in '*How to begin a Story*' makes an excellent point about story itself.

The way to begin a story depends not so much on what you mean by a story as upon the story itself and the public for which it is intended.  
(Thomas, 1983, p. 38)

While my novel is primarily concerned with its content, it is also about its context, about the fact that it *is* a story/narrative. The fact that it seems to be two separate stories, the one told by the other, informing the background of one and the future of the other, running concurrently and interwoven, clearly telegraphs this. My intention was not to submerge and disguise the mechanics of the writing, but to leave them visible and available to the discerning and observant reader – while asking them to 'willingly suspend their disbelief' in the mythical content. I have drawn on a range of 'devices' or characteristics that the Modernists and Postmodernists formalised in the middle of the twentieth century.

Patrick Curry touched on this idea when, in his book *Defending Middle-earth - Tolkien: Myth & Modernity*, he pointed out:

Tolkien realized ... that ... [an] authentic myth ... has to be *re-created*, in the form of a contemporary literary myth or mythopoeic fiction. While the result still partakes of myth - how could it not, when it was in his metaphysical bones? - it also includes sufficient elements of the realistic and secular novel to provide access to modern readers, and thus to enable 'these old things' to survive in a hostile literary milieu. (Curry, 1997, p. 126)

This in effect is what I have attempted to do – *recreate an authentic myth into a contemporary literary myth including sufficient elements of the realistic novel to provide access to modern readers.*

## ***Madam Pele - Outline.***

Madam Pele, the Goddess of the volcano and its lava, is embodied in every piece and form the lava takes. She is in the huge lava flows, the small pumice stones and the black sand of the beaches. They cannot be removed from her Hawaiian islands without incurring her wrath - resulting in bad luck for those who remove the lava.

Diane and Paul on a visit to Hawaii take home a small lava rock as one of their mementos. As a result, Madam Pele's spirit is transported to Australia where it gradually manifests itself. Initially felt only as an uneasiness, it grows until the goddess herself takes form - embodied both as an ugly malevolent old hag to those who fear the lava rock, and as a beautiful young Hawaiian girl to Diane who loves her rock and the Hawaii it evokes for her.

Diane finds herself loving Madam Pele with a passion that brooks no intrusion from others. Meanwhile Diane and Paul's relationship begins to disintegrate. Initially undermined by the power of the rock's influence, this rapidly collapses with the manifestations in physical forms of Madam Pele. Madam Pele is to lava what Sauron was to the Ring. And that is how she manifests - a temptress to Diane and an evil monster to others. She arouses ill-feeling, engenders passion and jealousy, causes extreme fear. Her manifestation will be ethereal rather than solid, yet create a lust in Diane. Initially she will appear to Paul as the beautiful maiden in an attempt to seduce him and create jealousy in Diane, but he will see through this form to the hag beneath. She affects Diane's behaviour, influences her thoughts and actions, alienating her from all those around her, including Paul who is afraid and repulsed not only by the old hag he sees, but also by Diane's apparent infatuation and desire for her.

As the animosity of the rock intrudes, people at work become upset and alienated, so that while Diane still performs her job efficiently the rest of the company experiences bad luck. Dissension amongst Diane's fellow-employees increases as Madam Pele's malevolence permeates the workplace, intensifying the usual office gossip into vindictive back-stabbing. As Madam Pele's frustration turns to rage and vengeance, she taps subterranean magma in King's Park, causing an eruption and lava flow to cascade down to the Swan River destroying much of the park and the city below. It becomes apparent that for the safety of all inhabitants of Perth and the outlying areas, Diane must return the rock to Hawaii. She refuses to mail it, and will only return it if able to do so in person. Finally she, Madam Pele and a reluctant Paul fly back to Hawaii to return the rock to the lava fields. As suddenly as it appeared, the lava subsides, returning to its subterranean caverns, leaving a scarred city with an apparently extinct crater in King's Park. Or is it only dormant?

Interspersed with this story, of accelerating tension and disintegration of relationships and work, is the travelogue story of Diane and Paul's first holiday visit to Hawaii. This comprises four sections - one for each island they visit - Oahu, Hawai'i, Kauai, and Maui. They embark on Circle Island Tours, travelling in small buses with tourists from around the world (though predominantly American) to see and learn as much as possible about the respective islands. From their drivers/tour guides they learn of the history, both social and geographical, of Hawaii, including land rights, homelessness, Pearl Harbour bombing, and what constitutes a (Polynesian) Hawai'ian. Tourists' behaviour which signals their attitudes, sensitivity and lack thereof, toward Hawaii and Hawaiians is also exposed during these tours. This is seen strongly during the Luau segment.

The travelogue gradually builds up a background to Diane and Paul's relationship, to the obtaining of the rock, and to her obsession with Hawaii. As the beauty of the island is exposed, the mythology infused, and the atmosphere both climatic and emotional is explored, her reasons for loving Hawaii become apparent. These are disturbed only by unnerving flashes of 'disastrous events' and her unsettling meetings with Madam Pele, while on The Big Island.

Paul settles into 'holiday mode' and enjoys Hawaii as a tourist, retaining his grasp of the reality that awaits him when he flies back to Perth. But Diane feels as if she has 'come home', that she always belonged to Hawaii, and detests the thought of the approaching return. Hawaii is her reality. Through her thoughts can be seen the magical influence of the islands, gradually consuming her, becoming obsession. This is offset by Paul's negative 'realist' attitude which is not enough to penetrate the romantic scenario she attaches to their relationship.

Through Diane's responses to the sensual influences of Hawaii - its landscape, its colour, its fragrance, its smiling people, its music, its pervasive mythology and, underlying all these, the volcanic threat bubbling and simmering below the thin crust - will develop a reader-knowledge of what comprises the island chain, and its attractions. Thus the travelogue works on three levels - as superficial background to the present Perth story, as an exposition of the complexities of Hawaiian life past and present, and as a window to the legends of Madam Pele.

### *The importance of Madam Pele.*

I intended Madam Pele to be a major character within this tale, with her legends - concerning her flight from and conflict with her sister, Na Maka o Kaha'i, Goddess of the sea, her love for a mortal prince, and her sled race with another prince - being exposed intermittently in the 'travelogue'; while her presence in the 'present' shows her as a main player in the overall story. Thus she is seen from within her own story via the legends, and outside it via her intrusion into Di and Paul's world, and also via the beliefs of the Hawai'ian people, such as the tour drivers and the rangers from the Volcanoes National Park to whom she is a 'real' entity.

### *Postmodern characteristics.*

I covered as many of these characteristics as possible within my novel, without the work appearing to be a mere exercise in devices. While the reader will be aware of the movement from second to third person for the same character, and of course first person for dialogue, they will, I hope, understand that it signposts a different point in time and place and will quickly find it natural. Thus, by moving beyond Modernism and Postmodernism, I challenged the straightforward method of narration without detracting from the narrative itself. Being presumptuous, I threw away the literary rule book (*narrative boundary-breaking*), used tenses and perspectives of my own choosing, and used poetic introductions to sections within the 'travelogue', and free verse for the sexual scenes – as a vehicle for passion, I find the economy of verse intensifies the context by focussing the content. I treated the text as my playground and I controlled the games I played.

I have retreated, a device at a time, until I reached the point where the narrative was comfortable with those used.

### *Geometric plotline.*

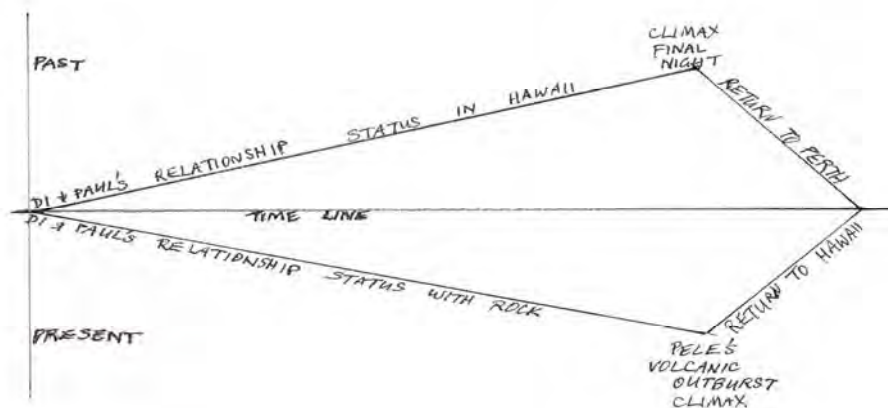
From the outset I had a structural image in my mind regarding the plotting of *Madam Pele*. I decided to quarter the 'Travelogue' text into the four islands, as on a



pie chart. I then inserted slices of present into the pie between the quarters, with a prologue and epilogue forming the slice between the first and last quarter. This took care of the difficult undertaking of splitting the two narratives into interweaving portions.

This planned juxtaposition of the two sections – the past and the present - of the novel, had an additional function that could be visualised geometrically. The emotional movements of the plotlines mirrored each other within the text, so that simultaneously they built without intersecting to their separate climaxes, but at opposite ends of the emotional scale. After this culmination they finally reconnected at normality for the conclusion.

This process (see diagram below) could be visualised as two lopsided triangles, representing the Past and the Present, stacked with their longest sides, representing their individual time lines, together. The longer of the two remaining sides of the top triangle represented the blossoming relationship between the two protagonists, Diane and Paul, during their holiday in Hawaii in the past, peaking just prior to their departure from the islands. The bottom triangle, with its longer remaining side pointing down, represented the deterioration of their relationship in the present caused by the presence of the lava rock and ultimately of Madam Pele, reaching its lowest point as she wreaks her vengeance on Perth. The very short sides of the triangles plunge back to intersect at the conclusion.



### *Devices.*

According to the Oxford Dictionary, the word ‘device’ means “1. a thing that is made or used for a particular purpose; 2. a plan or scheme for achieving something; and [that the expression] ‘leave a person to his own devices’ means to leave him to do as he wishes without help or advice.” (Hawkins, 1979, p. 169) As mentioned, in my novel I have made use of writing devices to facilitate the readability of the text. By using this term ‘devices’ I am indicating my authorial intention behind the often visible techniques used to achieve unification of content and context.

### *Dialogue.*

A penchant of mine, I have kept the work ‘dialogue driven’, especially in the present sections. This allows the reader to slowly build up their own image of the various characters from what they say and how they react to what is said to them – a characteristic of script-writing. I have used a certain amount of interior monologue in both the present and the past to facilitate this character construction further, by exposing the main character’s ‘inner dialogue’. A twist to this is that as the reader is constructing his/her understanding of Diane, she (Diane) is in fact doing likewise - constructing her own character from other people’s views of her. This incorporates Bakhtin’s ideas of ‘the self’ as being a composite of other’s views.

The using of dialogue to tell the story is characteristic of many of the authors, Tim Winton, P G Wodehouse, and Dylan Thomas in particular, who I have chosen as influential to my style of writing. A strong example of this style development’s origin, can be found in such works as *Under Milkwood* and *Holiday Memories* by Dylan Thomas where the dialogue tells so much.

And if you could have listened at some of the open doors of some of the houses in the street you might have heard:

‘Uncle Owen says he can’t find the bottle-opener . . .’

‘Has he looked under the hallstand?’

‘Willy’s cut his finger . . .’

‘Got your spade?’

‘If somebody doesn’t kill that dog . . .’

‘Uncle Owen says why should the bottle-opener be under the hallstand?’

‘Never again, never again . . .’

‘I know I put the pepper somewhere . . .’

‘Willy’s bleeding . . .’

'Look, there's a bootlace in my bucket . . .'  
'Oh, come *on*, come on . . .'  
'Let's have a look at the bootlace in your bucket . . .'  
'If I lay my hands on that dog . . .'  
'Uncle Owen's found the bottle-opener . . .'  
'Willy's bleeding over the cheese . . .'  
And the trams that hissed like ganders took us all to the beautiful beach.  
(Thomas, 1983, p. 31)

This use of evocative yet economical dialogue/oral language within prose, makes for a fast moving piece that can be read quickly, delivering myriad snippets of information, as essential parts of the plot, to the reader. He/she does not get bogged down in lengthy passages of background descriptions and data.

*Non-essential descriptions.*

Unless absolutely essential to the reader perception and understanding, lengthy passages of descriptions and miscellaneous details were in fact not supplied by me either. I had no wish to bog my narrative down with unnecessary complexities. For example, I did not and still don't consider it at all important where Diane and Paul worked - what the company did, and what they do personally within it, except for the fact that it involved paper work of some sort and that it was done in a large office complex. It could have been any office complex anywhere in Perth (well in any city actually, but I designated Perth as the location). It was a generic office, containing offices, lunchrooms, toilets, photocopying rooms, computer terminals, and staff both male and female, doing both white and blue collar tasks.

This non-disclosure of unessentials applied to all surnames, and to landscape and character descriptions that had no bearing on the movement or development of the plot. For example, a description of the tour guide, Garth, as a huge Hawaiian man, or of the American tourists who were dripping with jewellery and so big that they were unable to sit on the bus seat together, had a direct bearing on the plot. But other character physical descriptions were kept to a minimum.

Although I could have expanded upon these personal details, back stories, and experiences of the various characters, both major and minor, I found that the narrative flowed naturally when I exercised restraint, and concentrated on the economy of dialogue and action to create the necessary impetus. My narrative is simple, and my style my own

– although greatly influenced by the previously mentioned authors, I was in no way writing another *Lord of the Rings*.

#### *Patterns.*

By extracting a sentence from the first chapter, to use, often with a different meaning, to commence the following chapter, and so on chapter by chapter; I set up two sets of linking patterns for the two distinct parts of the narrative - the Hawaiian chapters and the Present chapters each had their own ‘chain of starters’. These pattern chains contributed to the sense of continuity and familiarity, while physically linking the chapters together.

#### *Voices.*

While initially disconcerting, the use of second person for Diane, and second person plural for her and Paul, in the ‘travelogue’ section of the novel, becomes easier and more familiar as the reader progresses and gradually engages with the characters and their journey. The reader finds him/herself placed in a unique position, partly watching and partly involved as the protagonist. Intentionally written to highlight this ambiguity within an omniscient narration, I wanted the possibility that the narrator could be Diane, or the reader, or both, or even Madam Pele to signpost this narrative as ‘story’. Confronted with its narrative nature, and in order to discover the details, the reader must accept his/her own role in its telling.

The ‘travelogue’ reads as an account of the Hawaiian holiday, as if told by an outsider watching Diane and Paul as they progress from island to island, yet seeming to participate in all that they do from within. The ‘inner monologues’ contribute to this impression of being a part of Diane and her journey. If I had used first person, the ‘travelogue’ would have been a diary, written by Diane, noting locations visited, tours they took, items bought, restaurants eaten in, pamphlets collected, revealing feelings and thoughts she had about Hawaii, and about Paul and their relationship. But a diary is the expected format, and I wanted to do the unexpected. I like the way the second person places the narrative, and the way it places it firmly *as* a narrative told to the reader, while drawing the him/her into an almost voyeuristic position.

By creating the narrative as a musing, a reminiscence of her Hawaiian holiday as told by Diane to herself while looking at the photographs in her album, I further

developed this second person perspective. These chapters acted as the textual segue from present to past on each occasion, as do the accompanying photographs, taking with them Diane's thoughts using second person.

*Active Verbs.*

I have used active verbs when referring to the inanimate lava rock in order to create a sense of unease and uncertainty, to give it animation. For example, the first time we see the rock I describe it thus: 'Humped on her desk the little black lava rock menaced the office.' I go on to talk about it as 'hover[ing] anxiously on the brink {of the mantle}, peering over at the tiled hearth below' and later still as 'squatt[ing] grumpily in the In-tray' and 'burrowing into the potting mix' of the pot plant. Thus, when this is followed by the mention of a 'feeling of presence', then a 'glimpse of something out of the corner of [the] eye', and finally by Madam Pele manifesting from the rock, there is no jarring of the plot or unexpected shock for the reader. It helps to create a natural flow-on throughout the storyline of escalating fantasy.

*Free verse.*

Within the 'Travelogue' narrative, I led the reader into the holiday, via the poem, *Arrival*, and withdrew them at the end via the poem, *Departure*, in matching formats. The visual layout of the free verse is a vital part of its overall message, and played a role in the poetic snippets heading most chapters - information specific for each island visited. Because I like the way that free verse pinpoints the passions while allowing freedom of expression and format, I also used it for all sex scenes that took place during their holiday - and for the sex scene that failed to take place, as the antagonism developed between them in the 'Present' narrative.

*Inserts.*

To add to the postmodernism of the work, I have inserted email and chat-room formats to provide snippets of plot information, and a volcano flyer from the Hawaiian National Park Bureau giving details of Madam Pele and Kilauea volcano. I have included maps of the Hawaiian islands - four individual maps at the start of each island's section showing the places visited, and an overall map of the islands as a frontispiece - to assist with the setting locations. I intend to use actual photos with accompanying poem snippets beside or below them as headings for the 'Travelogue' section. This will allow

the reader to see exactly what Diane is looking at as she browses through her photograph album, taking the reader with her into her journey. I feel that these devices will enhance the sense of the 'Travelogue'.

*'Travelogue' nature.*

I believe it is important to show the islands as seen by Diane, a tourist smitten by their beauty, using each as a vehicle for the other. In other words, while describing the landscape, the physical reality of the islands, thus presenting them to the reader as if the latter were travelling through them, by using Diane as the vehicle for these descriptions, her personal story is revealed. So in that sense, the 'travelogue' nature of the narrative is also a device.

## **Conclusion.**

I hope I have demonstrated convincingly my reasons for writing my novel, *Madam Pele*, as a contemporary mythical fantasy novel – contemporary because I love the freedom of having no rules, allowing me to mix tenses, points of view (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person), verse with prose, photographs and pamphlets, emails and online chat texts, and chapter patterning to form an individual novel layout; mythical because for years I have been drawn to the development of such works, especially the way they allow both reader and writer to immerse themselves in the world of imagination while still benefiting from the euphoria that the triumph of good over evil provides; and fantasy because that allows the inclusion of a tremendous variety of settings, experiences, and narrative topics for the reader and writer now living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

While not of an epic nature, my novel stands up as a fantasy – the implausible becoming reality with the Pele myth incorporated into the contemporary world.

## Appendix – A.

Topic: **Discuss *The Riders* as an example of a postmodern text.**

If listed, postmodern characteristics that apply to texts would read as follows: multiple narratives, different points-of-view, plurality of meaning, reader response, reader participation, dark themes, fractured world, open-ended texts, wide variety of and mixed genre, boundary breaking, gaps, metafiction, social criticism, and the replacement of marginalised groups into texts.

D Lewis, in 'The Constructedness of Texts', after describing how "[m]etafiction ... refus[es] to take for granted how stories should be told and thus implicitly comment[s] upon the nature of fiction itself" (Lewis, 1990, p.132), continues to state that there are three main features of postmodernism - "narrative *boundary-breaking* or 'slippage', *excess*, and *indeterminacy*." (ibid, p. 133). Geoff Moss, in 'Metafiction, Illustration, and the Poetics' propounds that:

postmodernism pictures a subjective, relativistic world  
[and] is .... a process, perpetually in construction, per-  
petually contradictory, perpetually open to change, ...  
where the self is decentred ...[and there is] a plurality  
of discourses. (Moss, 1992, pp. 54-55)

I believe that a great number of these attributes can be found in Tim Winton's novel, *The Riders*. With an antihero, Scully, who behaves melodramatically, and moves from controlled happiness to extreme depression, from respectability to degradation, at its centre, *The Riders* inexorably evolves from realist to postmodern fiction.

Refusing to take for granted how stories should be told, with chapter eleven Winton turned the ordinary into the extraordinary, moving away from the realism that the first ten chapters promise, into a post-modern text - multi-layered like an onion, to be peeled back until the bitter bit in the middle, the end of Scully's quest, was reached.

He introduced a fantasy genre, dark themes, into the realist narrative with his descriptions of the riders at the castle keep. Their role in the narrative is debatable, being a form of *indeterminacy* and having plurality of meanings - psychological, psychical, symbolic, or structural. Do they represent Scully's internal psychological journey towards wholeness? Are they psychic phenomena derived from the antiquity of the Celtic myth? Do they symbolize his unyielding wait for Jennifer and for an answer to her disappearance? Are they narrative devices, bracketing the search for his wife from the rest of the text?

Although realist texts, of singular genre, often contain dream sequences, the surreal nature of those frequently scattered throughout *The Riders* adds another fantasy element to the mixing of genre. The disappearance of Jennifer, the nature of Scully's search, and Alex's death add the mystery genre to the mix. There is also an implied travel diary as Scully's physical journey is documented across the continent, showing the reality of the street life of the various countries visited, rather than the tourist spots

Winton wrote the entire text in the third person, as an omni-scient narrator who relates the action from various character's viewpoints, opening their feelings and thoughts to the scrutiny of the reader. He moves from one character's position to another, giving the impression that there are many narrators, while in actuality there are many voices, viewpoints, but only one narrator. The uncertainty this creates, the layering of the narratorial voices, is postmodern.

There are a few metafictional moments, narratorial boundary-breaking, that cause reader confusion, destabilising the suspension of disbelief that accompanies the reading of fiction. One occurred on the Greek island, while Scully and Billie, *en route* to visit Alex, trekked through villages. As they passed through one, Billie stopped to listen to classroom chanting. "[Scully] let her stay till she'd had enough. He said nothing. What could you say?" (Winton, 1994, p.144) To remain conventional it should have read: 'What could he say?' The omniscient narrator was describing actions and musings by Scully, and actions by Billie in third person particular. Directed at the reader, this second person device not only asks them to agree with Scully, but also draws their attention to the fact that it is a work of fiction, a book, that they are reading.

The unreliability of the dominating narratorial voice, Scully's, is another postmodern device. An optimist, his naive views of people were shattered all through the book - he seemed to know less and less about his own past as the quest for his wife progressed.

So many characters in the novel seemed to know more about her disappearance than Scully, but unlike in a realist novel where eventually he would be permitted to know, these answers were withheld from him. As he pursued those with knowledge of Jennifer, he allowed himself to be fobbed off with words, foiled by spite, turned aside by disdain, rather than give in to aggression to gain the required information. Until Amsterdam. There his explosion into drunken violence causes the reader to question the reliability of his calm quiet kind character traits, and wonder if Marianne was right to ask him:

‘Did you beat her much, Scully? Were you rough in bed, were you ‘ard on her, Scully?’ .... ‘You are a basher, aren’t you, Scully?’ (ibid, p. 281)

The questioning of which is plot and which is subplot is also postmodern. The discovery that the actual primary plot is Scully’s self-examination to ‘find himself’, his internal journey, rather than the apparent primary plot of the frustrating search for his wife, creates confusion as the narrative unfolds. Realist novels have a plot, with subplots intertwined, comprising a beginning, a middle, and an end which is conclusive, providing answers to most if not all questions raised in the text - providing a sense of closure. *The Riders* does not do this.

Scully’s frustrations are shared by the reader, who is constantly asking “Why doesn’t he go to the police? Why won’t he ask the right questions? Why? Why? Why?” throughout the narrative. It is clearly an open-ended text, showing a fractured world, evoking reader response and participation. Scully’s internal journey, at the end of which his search was over - what he sought was unequivocally dead, as dead as the riders at the castle keep - is secondary in the eyes of the reader, who like Scully, just wants to *know*. It seems Tim Winton prefers not to divulge the answers, not to tie up the loose threads. Active readers must make up their own minds, reach their own conclusions, find closure where they can. This lack of authorial closure is postmodern.

The changing of tenses from past to present, usually to change narratorial voice position, at intervals throughout the text, is another postmodern device used in *The Riders*. While the bulk of the narrative is written in past tense, the present tense chapters seem to serve the following function: 5 offers Jimmy Brereton’s views of the newcomers to the Bothy; 12 shows Billie in the plane; 15 introduces Arthur Lipp and his views of the Australians; 19 Alex Moore’s views; 35 Peter Kenneally’s concerns for Scully; 38 Jennifer (?); and 47 Irma’s reaction to being deserted by Scully with her cash. Seven different character’s viewpoints are foregrounded in present tense, providing corroborative and additional information to the narrative.

There are two odd chapters in present tense describing landscapes - 32 Australia (?); and 53 the Bothy and castle in Ireland. The question whether it *is* Australia engages the reader in active participation with the text, and their placement, their recognition of the vivid descriptions could depend upon their nationality.

In chapter 31, another oddity occurs - Winton intermingles past and present tenses in verb and participle form, during the revelation of Billie’s worries:

Billie [tried] to think of something good, something she could remember that wouldn’t make her afraid to remember. Past the cloud. The white neck she saw....Beautiful skin. The veins as she sits down. Skin blue with veins. Like marble. And talking now, mouth moving tightly. Cheeks stretched. Hair perfect. But the words lost in the roar, the huge stadium sound in Billie’s ears as the cloud comes down, like smoke down the aisle, rolling across them, blotting the war memorial look of her mother in blinding quiet. (ibid, p. 234)(My underlining)

This long quotation shows not only Winton’s clever, unorthodox, post-modern verb usage to create an atmosphere of uncertainty and insecurity, but also his wonderful imaginative descriptive language.

The gap in the narrative, *indeterminacy*, is rarely temporal or spatial. Predominantly, it is textual - the reader, given snippets of information about the characters, must again actively participate with the text to decide who they are, where they fit in the story, and their psychological, psychical, or practical effect on Scully and his quests for Jennifer, an answer, and himself - a plurality of meanings. An example of this gap, in the paragraphic chapter 38, describes a woman watching others in the Rue de Rivoli - presumably Jennifer watching Scully and Billie; or is it Irma, or Marianne, or Dominique?

She slips back into the bleak doorway to let them pass



blindly by without feeling the heat of her love. She knows where they are going. She knows everything there is to know about them .... she watches her life limp by ... while she decides how far to follow, wondering when enough is enough, asking herself why it hurts to need so badly. (ibid, p. 271)

The reader is required to decide whether to believe that Jennifer, torn between being free to pursue her ambitions and her love for Billie and Scully, regretted her actions. At this stage in the narrative, reader response to Jennifer, based on individual experience and personal bias, influences hopes and desires for a successful ending to the quest.

Relying on reader's foreknowledge of the 'other' text referred to, intertextuality occurs in this novel between the hunchback, Quasimodo, in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and Scully - both deformed physically, misunderstood because of it, yet kind with good hearts - marginalised figures brought to the centre of the narrative. Billie, the medium for this link, recognized it herself as they travelled by boat from Greece to Italy: "He was like the hunchback, Scully. Not very pretty. Sometimes he wasn't very smart. But his heart was good (ibid, p. 210); and again in Amsterdam: "Billie saw him come out handcuffed and bellowing like the Hunchback on the Feast of Fools". (ibid, p. 344) Constant references are made throughout the text about Notre Dame, initially as a wonderful place from which you could see for miles, and where birds dwelt. Gradually the references change. As Billie left Paris her romantic notions of Notre Dame disintegrated as she reflected on the city's reality:

Paris was pretty on top and hollow underneath. Underground everyone was dirty and tired and lost. They weren't going anywhere. They were just waiting for the Eiffel Tower and Notre Dame, the whole town, to fall in on them. (ibid, p. 322)

While the language of Winton is evocative, with descriptions that stun, both metaphorically: "Night warped by." (ibid, p. 235) and as truisms: "The sea sucked and grabbed and hissed and snatched" (ibid, p.188), the actions of his characters are excessive, surreal, a little incredible. There is a 'soapie' quality surrounding *The Riders* - the squeezing in of *all* possibilities into the one narrative which appears to be "perpetually in construction, perpetually contradictory, perpetually open to change" (Moss, 1992, p. 55) - unsettling to the reader as surreal art is to the viewer. In other words, postmodern.

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## Appendix – B.

BACHELOR OF ARTS HONOURS THESIS

**Topic: The hybrid world of J R R Tolkien's fiction: a study of The Lord of the Rings and other texts in the light of Mikhail Bakhtin's essay 'Epic and Novel'.**

J R R Tolkien was a renowned medievalist, linguist, and professor at both Leeds and Oxford universities during his lifetime. His knowledge of ancient languages, myths and legends is legendary itself. The fact that he managed to write and compile such an enormous quantity of creative works while still attending to the requirements of the universities is remarkable. As Tolkien said in a letter to Hugh Brogan, 31 October 1948, in reference to his difficulty in getting on with his 'Hobbit sequel': "This university business of earning one's living by teaching, delivering philological lectures, and daily attendance at 'boards' and other talk-meetings, interferes sadly with serious work." (Tolkien, 1995, p. 131)

Throughout his prolific letters, always long and detailed, runs the theme of the constant demands - including dreaded weeks of examination setting and marking, his poor health, his wife's poor health, his money worries, and the continual domestic tasks (like regularly digging the fowl house out of the snow) - on his precious time. "Yesterday 2 lectures, re-drafting findings of Committee on Emergency Exams . . . and then a great event: an evening Inklings .... a most amusing and highly contentious evening". (ibid, p. 103) The Inklings was a literary circle of like-minded male authors which met regularly in a local bar to read their works-in-progress to each other for critical input. It was one of Tolkien's few pleasures in which he indulged when duty allowed - one vital to the ultimate completion of The Hobbit, and The Lord of the Rings. As I said, remarkable to have written as much as he did - considering that only now, via the auspices of his son Christopher and friend Humphrey Carpenter, has the quantity of material written been made public.

A great deal has been written about J R R Tolkien. There have been biographies, essays and articles both positive and negative about his works individually and collectively, psychologically and theologically, mythically and morally, philologically and narratively. These works discuss the influences on him, that led him to develop a 'secondary' world with languages, and mythical history, and discuss his borrowing from other myths and languages of the 'primary' world that he used to give his 'secondary' world credibility. From time to time I may allude to this borrowing from mythic, linguistic and Biblical sources that he used to achieve his "really long story" (LOR, p. 10) - but I believe it is hardly necessary to cover them in this work. While the opinions are as diverse as they are similar, the fact of Tolkien's influence on 'story' and on language is certain.

His lecture/essay Beowulf: the Monsters and the Critics, is recognised as the definitive text on the Beowulf tale. His lecture/essay 'On Fairy Stories' is an established respected text for those studying fantasy, or narrative. His coining of the word *eucatastrophe* to mean the burst of joy experienced by a reader confronting a happy ending, "the sudden happy turn in a story which pierces you with a joy that brings tears (which [he] argued it is the highest function of fairy-stories to produce)" (Tolkien, 1995, p. 100) can apply to the same experience felt by movie-watchers, or even sporting achievements of personal bests. While Samuel Taylor Coleridge gave the working definition of *imagination*, Tolkien expanded on it to incorporate the creation of a 'secondary world' containing the realities of the 'primary world' enhanced by the supernatural - where 'super' is used as an intensifier, and the 'primary world' is, of course, our own world in our own time.

Ursula Le Guin describes *imagination* in this way:

Imagery takes place in "the imagination", which I take to be the meeting place of the thinking mind with the sensing body. What is imagined isn't physically real, but it *feels as if it were*: the reader sees or hears or feels what goes on in the story, is drawn into it, exists in it, among its images, in the imagination (the reader's? the writer's?) while reading." (Le Guin, 1992, p. 196)

This aligns with Tolkien's approach to his 'secondary world' creation - it was important to him that while the world portrayed was set in Epic times his readers could still relate to his characters, and to the events and problems assailing them. Their belief in what they read was paramount if the mythology was to be understood and hopefully absorbed.

**Epic and Novel**

The Russian critic, Mikhail Bakhtin, a contemporary of Tolkien, but to my knowledge unknown each to the other, wrote an essay '*Epic and Novel*' in which he discussed the evolution of the novel, and his detailed views on the difference between and total incompatibility of the Epic genre and the Novel genre. While reading this essay, I found myself murmuring throughout the Epic section: "Tolkien does this." Yet, when I read the Novel section, I found that I continued to murmur: "Tolkien does this too." This then made a nonsense of the idea that the Epic and Novel were incompatible as Bakhtin proposed.

According to him the Epic genre is completed, impersonal, inaccessible:

We speak of the epic as a genre that has come down to us already well defined and real. ... it is already completely finished, a congealed and half-moribund genre. Its completedness, its consistency and its absolute lack of artistic naivete bespeak its old age as a genre and its lengthy past. (Bakhtin, p. 14)

whereas, within the Novel genre, he believed that:

novels become more free and flexible, their language renews itself by incorporating extraliterary heteroglossia and the "novelistic" layers of literary language, they become dialogized, permeated with laughter, irony, humor, elements of self-parody and finally - this is the most important thing - the novel inserts into these other genres an indeterminacy, a certain semantic openedness, a living contact with unfinished, still-evolving contemporary reality (the opened present). (ibid, pp. 6-7)

I wish to establish how Tolkien, to relate the action taking place, not only used this rigid format of the Epic, but also used the flexible format of the Novel - with its shift in the temporal centre, where the past is the past as seen by those in the present, and characters are built up from other character's views of them. Tolkien applied these features to his Epic novels, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, but not to *The Silmarillion*. The former novels let the reader in to experience the ordeals and joys of the characters as they do; the latter Epic tells the tale, unfolds the events as *fait accompli* to the reader - the interaction is minimal.

According to Bakhtin:

In an era when the novel reigns supreme, almost all the remaining genres [including Epic] are to a greater or lesser extent "novelized" .... Those genres that stubbornly preserve their old canonic nature begin to appear stylized .... a stylization taken to the point of parody. (ibid, pp. 5-6)

In other words he believed that an Epic work was inflexible and stylized - with stereotypical heroic characters set in a fixed time slot - and thus no longer pertinent to the world of the Novel. It can be deduced therefore that he believed that any attempt to utilise the Epic genre within the Novel genre would result only in parody, an Epic mockery. But with no evidence of satire, Tolkien used these Epic genre characteristics to advantage, not only juxtaposing them beside the Novel genre devices within his work, but having them actively collaborate to create a **hybrid** genre of *mythical fantasy* in which both blended within the genre of Novel to tell the tale.

Patrick Curry touched on this idea when, in his book *Defending Middle-earth - Tolkien: Myth & Modernity*, he pointed out:

Tolkien realized ... that ... [an] authentic myth .... has to be *re-created*, in the form of a contemporary literary myth or mythopoeic fiction. While the result still partakes of myth - how could it not, when it was in his metaphysical bones? - it also includes sufficient elements of the realistic and secular novel to provide access to modern readers, and thus to enable 'these old things' to survive in a hostile literary milieu. (Curry, 1997, p. 126)

But he passed over this statement on to discussion of the notion of 'Faerie', Loss, and Consolation. However, I believe that it indicates that I am not alone in my perception of this **hybridity** between Epic and Novel.

Tolkien incorporated these (Bakhtin's) ideas of Epic and Novel genres to his advantage. Instead of seeing them in opposition, Tolkien used the Novel format to expand the traditional, static Epic into something personal, flexible, and dependent upon the individual choice of his characters. While being drawn into a familiar relationship with its characters, the reader is made aware of the epic nature of the tale - its absolute distance, and subsequently its overall unchangeable quality. In order to make his Epic become personal, he utilised devices of the Novel genre within its creation. By his use of humour, and of flawed heroic characters - those exhibiting ignoble 'human' traits such as ambition, greed, and failure as well as the usual 'heroic' traits of bravery, stoicism, and persistence in the face of adversity - Tolkien placed his tale on familiar ground, enabling the reader to draw close to his Epic. It is an Epic Novel. Contrary to Bakhtin's notions of the incompatibility of the novel with its predecessors, I believe that this is

not necessarily a contradiction of terms - rather a progression into a new category, a new genre: Fantasy. Tolkien created his secondary **hybrid** world in which both genres, Epic and Novel, coexist.

### **Authenticating Epic Devices**

#### **Epic within an Epic**

Tolkien used the Epic genre as a base for his work.

The epic as a genre ... may be characterized by three constitutive features: (1) a national epic past - ... the “absolute past” - serves as the subject for the epic; (2) national tradition (not personal experience and the free thought that grows out of it) serves as the source for the epic; (3) and absolute epic distance separates the epic world from contemporary reality, that is, from the time in which the singer (the author and his audience) lives. (Bakhtin, p. 13) (my underlining)

Tolkien used an Epic within his Epic - *Silmarillion* tales and poems within his *Lord of the Rings* - allowing the narrative verse of the heroes of the earlier Ages to provide an epic past to authenticate his epic present; to help create the notion of it “already [being] well defined and real .... completely finished, a congealed and half-moribund genre [with i]ts completedness, its consistency and ... its lengthy past.” (ibid, p. 14) Tolkien placed his Epic ‘secondary’ world into a position as something complete, “impossible to change, to re-think, to re-evaluate. It is completed, conclusive, and immutable, as a fact, an idea and a value.” (ibid, p. 17) At the end of the Second Age the physical world did change, with the flooding and sinking of the island, Numenor, and the removal of the Forbidden Lands of Valinor and Erreseas to beyond the realm of Middle-earth, which became a sphere. But the history of the era was set, unchangeable - as if its inhabitants trod preordained paths.

According to Bakhtin

The epic is indifferent to formal beginnings and can remain incomplete (that is, where it concludes is almost arbitrary). The absolute past is closed and completed in the whole as well as in any of its parts. It is, therefore, possible to take any part and offer it as the whole. One cannot embrace, in a single epic, the entire world of the absolute past ... - to do so would mean a retelling of the whole of national tradition, and it is sufficiently difficult to embrace even a significant portion of it. ... [T]he structure of the whole is repeated in each part, and each part is complete and circular like the whole. One may begin the story at almost any moment, and finish at almost any moment. (ibid, p. 31)

In light of his total mythical output on Middle-earth, Tolkien told the Ring tale lifted from the cycle of the epic past. He could have told any other tale from this past in detail if he chose - in fact of course, he did tell the Tale of Beren and Luthien in verse form, plus others before and after the Ring tale superficially (some in *The Silmarillion* and some in the Appendices in the one volume paperback edition of *The Lord of the Rings*) - and given a longer life perhaps he may have. His major objective after the publication of *The Lord of the Rings* was to collate *The Silmarillion* into a publishable form - a task that proved too difficult for Tolkien. “His mythology was a living thing, always changing and growing. But some ideas came to him early and changed little over the years.” (Hammond & Scull, 1995, p. 61) Only his presentation of them changed as he wrote and re-wrote the same tales, striving for perfection.

In his work, *The Silmarillion*, Tolkien laid out in Epic form the events of the creation of Middle-earth, its subsequent population, and its wars featuring its heroes and villains - always clearly cut, good versus evil. This work conforms to the more superficial Epic structure, where the hero and his fate are pre-ordained - he cannot escape his fate. According to Bakhtin:

In the epic, characters are bounded, pre-formed, individualized by their various situations and destinies, but not by varying “truths”. Not even the gods are separated from men by a special truth: they have the same language, they all share the same world view, the same fate, the same extravagant externalization. (Bakhtin, p. 35)

This is particularly true of *The Silmarillion* where all characters regardless of race, morals, skills, or hierarchical position in the reality of Middle-earth, share these attributes.

Compiled for publication from Tolkien’s copious manuscripts by his son Christopher, *The Silmarillion* reads in the main as a mythical history text. This established the mythology of Middle-earth - “a ‘monotheistic but “sub-creational” mythology”” (Tolkien, 1995, p. 235) - as seen in the tales of a later Age, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, told in narrative verse form as entertainment, or as points of clarification, for example, by differing protagonists at the Council of Elrond held in Rivendell between the

Elves, Dunedain, Men, Dwarves and Hobbits. In this chapter, *'The Council of Elrond'*, Tolkien laid out the history of each race and of their involvement in the history of the One Ring that Bilbo found in *The Hobbit*, and that Frodo carried. With it lay the doom of Middle-earth and all races therein; inscribed by Sauron on the inside of the ring and only visible when the Ring was heated by flame:

*One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them,*

*One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them* (LOR, p. 63)

#### Language, Calligraphy and Illustration

In addition to his use of existing mythological names, places, and words from various sources (Nordic, Icelandic, Celtic, Germanic etc) to establish an authenticity for his Middle-earth myth, Tolkien used formal 'archaic' language to describe the actions of the epic heroes, and used 'Middle Ages' rituals before departure to and after the victory of war. Thus, he placed them firmly into a distant epic past somewhere in England; an imaginary "absolute past".

Another characteristic of the Epic genre language is to use capital letters for important words throughout the text. Tolkien used this prolifically, for titles of participants (Gollum), weapons (the Sword of Elendil, the Sword that was Broken, Narsil), geographical (the Black Gate of Mordor) and temporal (the Black Years) locations, objects (the One Ring, Isildur's Bane), and abstractions (Doom, Hope). This gives the physical texts of his works an Epic appearance, which subliminally reinforces its authenticity for the reader.

He used calligraphy to advantage in all his works - his *Father Christmas Letters* with their characters' individual handwriting is renowned - but for his mythology invented several scripts. "For Tolkien an interest in calligraphy naturally paralleled his interest in language ... not content to invent languages ... without also inventing alphabets in which they could be written." (Hammond & Scull, 1995, p. 201) Aware that various mythologies reputed that Man was given writing by the Gods, Tolkien devised that "Aule, the Vala who is master of crafts, aided by Gnomes [Noldorin Elves] contrived alphabets and scripts" (ibid, p. 201) when the world was new. These, along with their accompanying languages, spread temporally and geographically through the various races (Elves, Dwarves, Men, Hobbits, Orcs), evolving to suit each kind. We see these invented languages in the forms written and spoken at the time of *The Lord of the Rings* but are aware subconsciously and through textual hints of their antiquity and authenticity. Tolkien stated

that 'legends' depend on the language to which they belong; but a living language depends equally on the 'legends' which it conveys by tradition. .... [Though] I began with language, I found myself involved in inventing 'legends' of the same 'taste'. (Tolkien, 1995, p.231)

To consolidate the genuine status of his myth, Tolkien not only used his art as illustration, but also as authentication - he produced three 'facsimiles' of the 'Book of Mazarbul' found in Moria in *The Lord of the Rings* - "to support ... the pretence he set up in his foreword ... that he had derived his text from ancient records." (Hammond & Scull, 1995, p. 163) According to Christopher Tolkien "[t]hey are masterpieces of fabrication: their tears, losses, and burn marks are genuine, and 'binding holes' through which the leaves of the 'real' book had once been sewn together, are stabbed along the side." (ibid, p. 163) Tolkien planned that they would be reproduced and placed within the Moria episode at the beginning of *The Bridge of Khazad-dum* but unfortunately they proved "too expensive to print as colour halftones, and Tolkien was unwilling to convert them into plain line as his publisher suggested." (ibid, p. 163)

#### Religious Undertones

Because of his profound belief in the Catholic religion, Tolkien wanted his myth to have religious undertones without allusions to Christianity which would drag it into the contemporary (Christian) past, that is a past contiguous with our own period. He admitted that his mythology is

a fundamentally religious and Catholic work; unconsciously so at first, but consciously in the revision. That is why I have not put in, or have cut out, practically all references to anything 'like religion', to cults or practices, in the imaginary world. For the religious element is absorbed into the story and the symbolism. .... It is a monotheistic world of 'natural theology'. The odd fact that there are no churches, temples, or religious rites and ceremonies, is simply part of the historical climate depicted. .... [It is] not a Christian world. (Tolkien, 1995, pp. 172 & 220)

This need to separate, yet paradoxically align, his myth from and with Christianity led him to write in *The Silmarillion*, a 'creation' story *'Ainulindale'* (parallel to Genesis in the Bible) for his 'secondary' world of Middle-earth. This story flows from the beginnings of the Universe through the

creation of Eru, the One; his spirits, Ainur and Valar (archangels and angels); the creation of Middle-earth itself woven from the voices of the Ainur in a Great Music; to the awakening of the Children of the Earth: Dwarves; the Firstborn Elves, and Men. Tolkien admitted that

[t]here is no embodiment of the One, of God, who indeed remains remote, outside the World, and only directly accessible to the Valar or Rulers. These take the place of the 'gods', but are created spirits, or those of the primary creation who by their own will have entered into the world. (ibid, p. 235)

Tolkien's history, *The Silmarillion*, then relates the First Age with the creation of the Silmarils by the Valar, Feanor, and their subsequent theft by the evil fallen spirit Melkor - who (like Satan) was cast out when as a result of his pride he tried to outdo Eru, The One, within the creation process. Melkor, renamed Morgoth, aided by the giant spider Ungoliant, destroyed the trees of light that lit Valinor and Middle-earth, plunging the latter into darkness, set the Silmarils into his crown, and fought countless battles with the avenging Elves, in particular Feanor's sons, and the Men and Dwarves who inhabited Middle-earth. With *The Silmarillion* stories Tolkien "set in order the mythology and legends of the Elder Days, ... [which] was primarily linguistic in inspiration and was begun in order to provide the necessary background of 'history' for Elvish tongues." (LOR, p.9)

The Second Age, told in the '*Akallabeth -The Downfall of Numenor*', told of the sinking of the island of Numenor (like Atlantis) because its people broke a prohibition not to sail west to Valinor (heaven) laid on them by the Valar (spirits). With Valinor removed from it within space, Middle-earth was recreated as its present day sphere, its continents rearranged parallel to the continental drift notion and linked to the Biblical Flood stories. The Third Age encompassed the subject of the novel, *The Lord of the Rings*, which became "a history of the Great War of the Ring and included many glimpses of the yet more ancient history that preceded it. "(LOR, p. 9)

### Storytelling

In his foreword to *The Lord of the Rings* Tolkien stated:

The prime motive was the desire of a tale-teller to try his hand at a really long story that would hold the attention of readers, amuse them, delight them, and at times maybe excite them or deeply move them. .... As for any inner meaning or 'message', it has in the intention of the author none. It is neither allegorical nor topical. As the story grew it put down roots (into the past) and threw out unexpected branches; but its main theme was settled from the outset by the inevitable choice of the Ring as the link between it and *The Hobbit*. (LOR, p. 10)

Using his 'storyteller's voice' as the device with which he related the tale to the reader - his audience - Tolkien established from the outset that this was to be an Epic tale. Epic narratives were sung or recited to an audience who were aware at all times of the presence and influence of the storyteller. In his lecture/essay *Beowulf: the Monsters and the Critics*, Tolkien discussed the importance of the poet at work, of the monsters' position at the centre of the poem, of the historical material as 'trimming', and of the content as 'truth' rather than 'facts'.

By means of the monsters, and merely supported by the history, the poet makes the poem what he wants it to be: a picture of man on earth .... [who] is doomed in time. To show this at its clearest, the Christian poet has set his poem in his people's heroic pagan past: days he realizes were "heathen, noble and hopeless." Heroism is remembered and sung, but can gain the hero and his people at most a respite before the next attack, never salvation. (Rogers, 1980, p. 45)

It is hardly surprising that in light of this Tolkien, as storyteller/poet, set his own 'epic' in the *heroic pagan past*, pagan meaning not Christian rather than godless, with its own form of 'doom' overshadowing it. Yet he never allows his tale to portray *hopelessness*. "Hope without guarantees" (Tolkien, 1995, p. 237) is held out before his characters in order that they continue with their quests - both in *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

At the outset Tolkien positioned himself as storyteller, using italics to stress and parentheses to enclose humorous, interesting, or miscellaneous asides to the reader. Here, from *The Lord of the Rings*, is an example from the opening page of Chapter one: '*A Long-Expected Party*':

At ninety-nine they began to call him *well-preserved*; but *unchanged* would have been nearer the mark. There were some that shook their heads and thought this was too much

of a good thing; it seemed so unfair that anyone should possess (apparently) perpetual youth as well as (reputedly) inexhaustible wealth. (LOR, p. 33)

However, I believe that as the tale unfolds his authorial presence becomes less noticeable, as he allowed his characters, Elrond, Aragorn, and, in particular, Gandalf to supply the historical background where needed. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that readers worldwide equate Gandalf with Tolkien himself. In answer to this Tolkien stated:

“I am *not* Gandalf, being a transcendent Sub-creator in this little world. As far as any character is ‘like me’ it is Faramir .... [f]or when Faramir speaks of his private vision of the Great Wave, he speaks for me. That vision and dream has been ever with me .... - except that I lack what all my characters possess (let the psychoanalysts note!) *Courage*.” (Tolkien, 1995, p. 232)

After the fall of Gandalf in Moria - as, grieving and apparently unsure of their way, the companions continued their journey, led by Aragorn along the path to Lothlorien - there is still a sense of Gandalf’s guiding hand, of his omniscience. This, of course, was the guiding hand of Tolkien. When Gandalf later rejoined several of the scattered companions after the breaking of the Fellowship, Tolkien’s ‘presence’ is spread between the three groups - Aragorn leading his followers through the Paths of the Dead; Gandalf setting Theoden’s riders on the road to defend Gondor; and Frodo and Sam struggling together to reach Mount Doom.

Tolkien even had his characters, Frodo and Sam, discuss their relative positions within the story of their adventurous quest, in order to consolidate the fact that this is indeed a tale. Sitting on a ledge outside Shelob’s lair, Sam pointed out to Frodo that if they had known what lay ahead of them they would never have started their adventure.

‘But I suppose it’s often that way. The brave things in the old tales and songs, Mr Frodo: adventures, as I used to call them. I used to think that they were things the wonderful folk of the stories went out and looked for, [for excitement, or sport]. ... But that’s not the way of it with the tales that really mattered, or the ones that stay in the mind. Folk seem to have been just landed in them, usually - their paths were laid that way. ... But I expect they had lots of chances, like us, of turning back, only they didn’t.’ (LOR, p. 739)

After debating about the good and bad endings of such tales, Sam concluded:

‘I wonder what sort of a tale we’ve fallen into? ... I wonder if we shall ever be put into songs or tales. We’re in one, of course; but I mean: put into words, you know, told by the fireside, or read out of a great big book with red and black letters, years and years afterwards.’ (ibid, p. 739)

This is a device used by Tolkien to reinforce the Epic nature of his tale, aligning it with the Epic quest tales of the Middle Ages by having his characters acknowledge its similarity to them. At the end, as Sam and Frodo stood below Mount Doom as Mordor destructed before them, Sam once more reinforced this aspect, especially by his comparison to an ancient tale told to him and Frodo.

‘What a tale we have been in, Mr Frodo, haven’t we?’ he said. ‘I wish I could hear it told! Do you think they’ll say: *Now comes the story of Nine-fingered Frodo and the Ring of Doom?* And then everyone will hush, like we did, when in Rivendell they told us the tale of Breren One-hand and the Great Jewel. I wish I could hear it! And I wonder how it will go on after our part.’ (ibid, pp. 986-7)

These discussions also carry with them small textual examples of pointing ahead to a possible outcome of the Ring quest, or at least the part in it played by Frodo and Sam.

#### Prophetic Pointing Ahead

Tolkien used the epic characteristic of prophetic pointing ahead to coming events throughout the text, to indicate the enclosed, finished time-frame of the tale. These are often more readily detected with the aid of hindsight upon subsequent readings.

Prophecy is characteristic for the epic, prediction for the novel. Epic prophecy is realized wholly within the limits of the absolute past; ...it does not touch the reader and his real time. The novel might wish to prophesize facts, to predict and influence the real future, the future of the author and his readers. But the novel has a new and quite specific problematcalness: characteristic for it is an eternal re-thinking and re-evaluating. (Bakhtin, p. 31)

Tolkien used both forms; yet the flexibility of the re-evaluation and choice-making by characters such as Aragorn, and Frodo and Sam, was done within their set paths already pre-ordained within earlier chapters. And although Tolkien had no wish to *predict* the future in the ‘primary’ world, he certainly *influenced* the future of his readers, the recipients of the many messages of the tale.

Examples of Epic prophetic pointing ahead are the dreams of and divination by Tolkien’s characters that are sprinkled throughout the text. Various characters experienced prophetic dreams - none more so than Frodo - that the reader recognises as the story unfolds, but which the characters may not understand. Both Faramir and his brother Boromir experienced a dream of a shadow engulfing their land of Gondor while

in the West a pale light lingered, ... [out of which they heard] a voice, remote but clear, crying:

*Seek for the sword that was broken:  
In Imladris it dwells;  
There shall be counsels taken  
Stronger than Morgul-spells.  
There shall be shown a token  
That Doom is near at hand,  
For Isildur’s Bane shall waken,  
And the Halfling forth shall stand.*

(LOR, p. 263)

In order to discover the meaning of this enigmatic dream, Boromir left Gondor in search of Imladris (Rivendell) home of Elrond Halfelven, whose “might ... is in wisdom not in weapons.” (ibid, p. 263) There Boromir was shown the sword that was broken newly reforged and in the hands of Aragorn; the One Ring was revealed to him (which he immediately coveted); he met the Halflings (Hobbits), Bilbo and Frodo Baggins; and the fellowship was formed to return the One Ring to the fire of Mount Doom in which it was forged and which was the only means of its destruction.

Later, after the fall of Gandalf in Moria and before the breaking of the Fellowship, Galadriel took Frodo and Sam to the Mirror of Galadriel to show them what they desired to see, but warned that the mirror might reveal things which they might not wish to see. Sam wished to see what was happening at home in the Shire, but first saw a vision of

Frodo with a pale face lying fast asleep under a great dark cliff. Then he seemed to see himself going along a dim passage, and climbing an endless winding stair. It came to him suddenly that he was looking urgently for something, but what it was he did not know. Like a dream the vision shifted and went back, and he saw the trees again. But this time they were not so close, and he could see what was going on: they were not waving in the wind, they were falling, crashing to the ground. .... Sam noticed that the Old Mill had vanished, and a large red-brick building was being put up where it had stood. Lots of folk were busily at work. There was a tall red chimney nearby. Black smoke seemed to cloud the surface of the Mirror. (ibid, pp. 381-2)

Sam immediately wanted to return home to stop the devastation of his beloved Shire, but Galadriel informed him that what he saw might not yet have happened, and that “the Mirror is dangerous as a guide of deeds”. (ibid, p. 382) What Sam saw happening in the Mirror was the future; and the reader sees the actual events later in the story; of Frodo, supposedly dead from the spider Shelob’s bite, lying on the path of Cirith Ungol; then of Sam urgently searching for Frodo to rescue him from the Orcs.

When it was Frodo’s turn to use the Mirror’s divination, he saw the future in the form of the re-born Gandalf as ‘Gandalf the White’, but thought that it was Saruman; he saw the present in the form of Bilbo pacing and worrying amongst his papers at Rivendell; and he saw the epic past in the form of the sinking of Numenor. This vision merged with one of ships with black sails coming to battle flying “a banner bearing the emblem of a white tree [that] shone in the sun” (ibid, p. 383) - revealed to readers and characters alike as the future, when Aragorn came from “the Paths of the Dead, borne upon a wind from the Sea” (ibid, p. 881) to turn the tide of the battle at Pelennor Fields at Gondor. As this vision faded into a grey mist Frodo saw a small ship, twinkling with lights, vanishing. This we later discover is the ship that bears Frodo and Bilbo away to Valinor at the end of the story. His visions were not yet complete; he saw the Eye

rimmed with fire, ... glazed, yellow as a cat’s, watchful and intent, and the black slit of its pupil opened on a pit, a window into nothing.



Then the Eye began to rove, searching this way and that; and Frodo knew with certainty and horror that among the many things that it sought he himself was one. (ibid, p. 383)

The Eye was Sauron, the Dark Lord of Morgoth, the Lord of the Rings, and Frodo was to see the Eye again and be ever aware of its searching presence for the rest of his journey. Paul Kocher points out that

No one else in the whole epic dreams so constantly and so diversely [as Frodo]. ... Frodo's visions in sleep set him apart as unusual even before he leaves the Shire, and begin to affect his conduct and personality. ... For better or worse Frodo seems gifted with a power possessed only by the greatest among other races. (Kocher, 1975, p. 107)

Kocher continues, listing several of Frodo's dreams, including the dream he had at Tom Bombadil's house in which he saw Gandalf's rescue from Orthanc by the eagle, Gwaihir; and the dream "in the inn at Bree which shows him the Black Riders attacking his house at Crickhollow in a vain attempt to seize him." (ibid, p. 107)

The episode of divination at the Mirror of Galadriel is the most blatant of the prophetic pointing ahead that Tolkien used. Frodo's dreams are more insidious, accumulating in our conscience as we read, accepted by us as a part of his character, vital for his survival. There are various moments of reflection by characters, odd pieces of dialogue that occur, that point ahead - sometimes in reassurance for the reader by the storyteller, sometimes to prepare the way for future events. They are all tools of the Epic genre, used by Tolkien to prepare the reader for what is ahead, and to assist in placing the events taking place into a definite Epic past.

#### Epic Mythical Characters

Finally, and most obviously, Tolkien used mythical characters and creatures to people his tales, in order to authenticate them as belonging to the Epic genre. Nowhere else were Dragons found - or Wizards, Knights in shining armour, Elves, Dwarves, Shape-changers (Beorn the Bear-man), Goblins, Magical Horses (Shadowfax), Giant Spiders and Tentacled Monsters for that matter. And of course then there were Tolkien's own imagined creatures - Valar and Ainur, Hobbits (including Gollum), Ents, Witch-Kings, Waugs, Orcs, Nazgul, Balrog, and Oliphaunts. His character, Tom Bombadil, was unique, an Earth-Spirit, not aligning with any of the above categories. The fact that there were levels of power for good and evil that ranged from the ethereal to the base, added to this roll call creating sub-divisions within the various groups.

There were High Elves, and Half-Elven (including Dunedain and Numenoreans) whose powers of healing, wisdom, insight and longevity of life were renowned. There were Dwarves who had almost magical power over metal, delving vast and beautiful cavern-chambers as they mined for precious metals which they wrought into marvellous armour. There were Dragons that flew, breathing fire and scourging the earth, hoarding gold and jewels in mounds upon which they lay. There were trees that came alive, and were shepherded by Ents, entities that were physically like tall trees, some old gnarled and moss-bearing while others were like saplings. There were the Little People - Hobbits created by Tolkien to carry the onerous burden too great for more powerful folk to bear. I could categorise in this fashion for some time, but the point I believe is made. Tolkien's mythology is placed geographically and temporally in the Epic genre, blatantly peopled with recognisably Epic mythical characters and creatures. That these same creatures are now found in the Fantasy genre - the Epic Novel - is a tribute to Tolkien's incredible skill, example, and influence.

.... Mid-section omitted due to irrelevance to this *Madam Pele* essay ....

## CONCLUSION

### Temporal Games

Tolkien's **hybridisation** of Epic and Novel genres results in a novel that teases the reader with depths of time which go beyond history - rather than destroying the sense of Epic past, Tolkien incorporated it into the continuum present, the novel's present which is Epic past for the reader, and yet into the reader's present too. A good example of this is the episode of the Pukel-men at Firienfeld, "great standing stones that had been carved in the likeness of men, huge and clumsy-limbed, squatting cross-legged with their stumpy arms folded on fat bellies." (LOR, p. 825) which led to the forbidden door.

Such was the dark Dunharrow, the work of long-forgotten men. Their name was lost and no song or legend remembered it. For what purpose they had made this place, as a town or secret temple or a tomb of Kings, none could say. Here they laboured in the

Dark Years, before ever a ship came to the western shores, or Gondor of the Dunedain was built; and now they had vanished, and only the Pukel-men were left, still sitting at the turnings of the road. (ibid, p. 826)

Thus Tolkien added a layer of story beyond history, a mystery of standing stones like Stonehenge with speculation as to their origin but no myths or legends remaining to provide necessary clues. A story lost in time somewhere in the First Age, one presumes.

During the Ride of the Rohirrim to the aid of Gondor, Merry (through whose eyes the reader sees the Pukel-men), on hearing drums, was told of the Woses, the Wild Men of the Woods, rumoured to haunt Druadan Forest. "Remnants of an older time they be, living few and secretly, wild and wary as beasts ... us[ing] poisoned arrows, it is said, and they are woodcrafty beyond compare." (ibid, p. 863) Merry saw the headman, "a strange squat shape of a man, gnarled as an old stone, .... short-legged and fat-armed, thick and stumpy," sitting with Theoden and Eomer and he remembered "the Pukel-men of Dunharrow. Here was one of those old images brought to life, or maybe a creature descended in true line through endless years from the models used by the forgotten craftsmen long ago." (ibid, p. 864) Suddenly the Pukel-men from beyond history are present in the current story. There is a blurring of Epic past and present, deliberately perpetrated by Tolkien, blending the times together, merging the Epic and Novel, creating the **hybrid**.

#### Tolkien's Influence

Certain characteristics of Tolkien's work, in particular his **hybridisation** of the Epic and novel genres, has been a profound influence on the world of writers.

[The novel is] a genre-in-the-making .... the basic structural characteristics of this most fluid of genres, [are] characteristics that might determine the direction of its peculiar capacity for change and of its influence and effect on the rest of literature. (Bakhtin, p. 11)

Many have followed his lead in the creation of secondary worlds in which to set their novels; have used three dimensional yet epic figures as heroes and heroines. I am particularly interested in Tolkien's influence on ensuing writers of Fantasy. Although he was one of a group of writers who were tackling 'faery' in writing - his friend C S Lewis was particularly known and successful - there is no doubt that Tolkien, with his publication of *The Hobbit*, triggered a plethora of fantasy works. Students of Tolkien at Oxford University were of course especially affected, not to mention lucky. Susan Cooper was one who went on to write a famous series of books of which *The Dark is Rising* is the most famous. She too borrowed from British history and Celtic mythology to achieve credibility, authenticity.

#### Standards

According to Bakhtin

The process of the novel's development has not yet come to an end. It is currently entering a new phase. For our era is characterized by an extraordinary complexity and a deepening in our perception of the world; there is an unusual growth in demands on human discernment, on mature objectivity and the critical faculty. These are features that will shape the further development of the novel as well. (ibid, p. 40)

For Tolkien this development included a backward look into the Epic past, real and imagined, as a source for story content and context. He created a tale of *extraordinary complexity*, that gave the reader *a deepening of their perception of the world*, and made *demands on their human discernment*, their *mature objectivity* and their *critical faculty*. There is no doubt in my mind that both *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion* are books that require many adult readings to absorb and understand the complexities of the mythology that Tolkien created - to take in the myriad nuances of character and racial differences, of ecological messages, of ethical and moral concerns (particularly the nature of death).

Early in his essay, Bakhtin wrote:

The novel parodies other genres (precisely in their role as genres); it exposes the conventionality of their forms and their language; it squeezes out some genres and incorporates others into its own peculiar structure, re-formulating and re-accentuating them. (Bakhtin, p. 5)

Although not parodying the genres of Epic or Serio-comical, Tolkien made the *conventionality of their forms and their language* work for him. He *squeezes out some genres* (that of satire and farce) and *incorporates others* such as Epic verse into his Novel's *own peculiar structure, re-formulating and re-accentuating them*, merging them into his creation of his **hybrid** genre of Mythical Fantasy.

Tolkien thus set the standard against which all *Fantasy Novels* are measured. To succeed, it is necessary that the blend is, as Tolkien's was, subtle, invisible except to the researching eye, so that the reader is unaware of the two genres as they intertwine, weaving a (Celtic interlace) pattern through the text. The end result should be a rich, deep, believable tale no matter the setting, for the reader should be able to suspend disbelief and enter the 'secondary' world with ease, unaware of doing so.

I will leave the last word on Fantasy to Tolkien - taken from his famous lecture/essay '*On Fairy-Stories*'.

To the elvish craft, Enchantment, Fantasy aspires, and when it is successful of all forms of human art most nearly approaches. At the heart of many man-made stories of the elves lies, open or concealed, pure or alloyed, the desire for a living, realised sub-creative art, which ... is inwardly wholly different from the greed for self-centred power which is the mark of the mere Magician. ....

To many, Fantasy, this sub-creative art which plays strange tricks with the world and all that is in it, combining nouns and re-distributing adjectives, [is not] a thing only for peoples or for persons in their youth. ....

Fantasy is a natural human activity. (Tolkien, 1992, pp. 161 & 162)

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