ALDUR'S WAY

A NOVEL

A Thesis Submitted to the
College of Graduate Studies and Research
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Fine Arts in Writing
In the Department of English
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon

By

Amanda Dawson

© Copyright Amanda Dawson, September 2021. All rights reserved.

Unless otherwise noted, copyright of the material in this thesis belongs to the author.

PERMISSION TO USE

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for an MFA in Writing degree from the University of Saskatchewan, I agree that the Libraries of this University may make its Preliminary Pages freely available for inspection as outlined in the MFA in Writing Thesis License/Access Agreement accepted by the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies in June 2013.

Requests for permission to make use of material beyond the Preliminary Pages of this thesis should be addressed to the author of the thesis, or:

Coordinator
MFA in Writing
Department of English
University of Saskatchewan
518 Arts Building, 9 Campus Drive
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 5A5 Canada

OR

Dean
College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
University of Saskatchewan
116 Thorvaldson Building, 110 Science Place
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 5C9 Canada

ABSTRACT

Aldur's Way is a quest fantasy novel written for adult readers. The novel's protagonist, Ril, lives a quiet life in her remote mountain village until her mother dies under mysterious and suspicious circumstances. After discovering a secret journal in her mother's room that suggests her mother was murdered for her dangerous past, Ril sets out on a journey to investigate her mother's death in the far-off city of Tanalin. There, at the College library nestled within the city, she hopes to uncover clues to who might have killed her mother. In order to access the library, though, Ril must first be accepted to the College. Once she arrives, she is thrown into a complex academic environment, dangerous secrets of her mother's past, and magic. Ril must prove herself in a heavily male-dominated academic culture and unravel the mystery of her mother's death in secret. The novel's key themes include female agency, mentorship, and magic.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my MFA in Writing mentor, Nicholas Eames, for his support and encouragement while I attempted to make a novel out of a vague idea and several character sketches. If not for his reassurance that my story was, indeed, making progress, this novel might never have come to fruition.

Thank you to Jeanette Lynes, Sheri Benning, and my MFA in Writing cohort for helping me further develop and hone my writing skills. I came to the program with little knowledge of the craft and can say for certain that I have grown significantly as a writer during my time in the program.

Finally, thank you to my partner Steve, for providing support and understanding at home while I embarked upon this chapter of my life. Your help has not gone unnoticed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PERMISSION TO USE i
ABSTRACT ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS iv
ARTIST STATEMENT vi
WORKS CITED xx
CREATIVE MANUSCRIPT 1
ALDUR'S WAY 1
PROLOGUE: Moon and Shadow 2
CHAPTER ONE: Ril 4
CHAPTER TWO: Canthas 17
CHAPTER THREE: Secrets 33
CHAPTER FOUR: Leave-taking 47
CHAPTER FIVE: Kingsroad 65
CHAPTER SIX: Light Fingers 86
CHAPTER SEVEN: Marund 97
CHAPTER EIGHT: A Parting of Ways 120
CHAPTER NINE: Tanalin 137
CHAPTER TEN: The College 149
CHAPTER ELEVEN: Entrances 170
CHAPTER TWELVE: Beginnings 190
CHAPTER THRITEEN: Summer Term 208
CHAPTER FOURTEEN: Crossroads 219
CHAPTER FIFTEEN: The Hall of Justices 232
CHAPTER SIXTEEN: Rivale 249
CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: Training 260
CHAPTER EIGHTEEN: Threads 278
CHAPTER NINETEEN: Shadows of the Past 299
CHAPTER TWENTY: Translation 310

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE: Ruins 320
EPILOGUE.. 329

Artist Statement

Aldur's Way is a quest fantasy novel written for an adult audience. It takes place in the continent of Nurafel and follows the protagonist, Ril, as she travels to the far-off city of Tanalin in search of her mother's killer. The novel's key themes include female agency, mentorship, and magic. In quest fantasy, the reader most often learns about the world with the protagonist as they embark on their journey. Quest fantasy is one of the oldest subgenres of fantasy. Farah Mendlesohn defines the quest fantasy as follows:

> characteristically the quest fantasy protagonist goes from a mundane life, in which the fantastic, if she is aware of it, is very distant and unknown (or at least unavailable to the protagonist) to direct contact with the fantastic through which she transitions, exploring the world until she or those around her are knowledgeable enough to negotiate with the world via the personal manipulation of the fantastic realm. (2)

Aldur's Way follows this structure very closely. It begins with Ril in her remote mountain village of Aldur's Way. Ril, though well-versed in the history of Nurafel, has little practical experience with the world beyond her village. She lives a simple life and shares a small cottage with her mother. With the event of her mother's death, Ril must leave her village and travel to Tanalin, a city three countries away from Aldur's Way. She begins in a safe and 'known' environment and transitions to one that is both unsafe and unknown. As Ril progresses on her journey, she learns about the wider world and later, Tanalin, through her interactions with others, and especially through her mentors.

World building in fantasy involves an interactive dynamic between the story's characters and, in turn, between the characters and the reader. In J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo and the other hobbits from the Shire learn about the wider world from their interactions with the rest of the fellowship and the other groups of beings they meet. Mendlesohn describes

the role of the reader in quest fantasies as “companion-audience, tied to the protagonist, and dependent upon the protagonist for explanation and decoding” (1). It was important for me that the reader experience this relationship to my protagonist in *Aldur’s Way*, because I want them to be active participants in the work as Ril navigates the world she finds herself in. This presented certain craft challenges that shall be discussed in what follows.

Nurafel, the continent in which *Aldur’s Way* takes place, is what is referred to in fantasy as a ‘secondary world’, a world that exists entirely independent of our own. As Edward James states, the fantasy author we have to thank for “normalizing the idea of a secondary world” (65), is J.R.R. Tolkien. Following Tolkien’s publication of *The Lord of the Rings*, “fantasy writers no longer had to explain away their worlds by framing them as dreams, or travellers’ tales, or by providing them with any fictional link to our own world at all” (James 65). The secondary world has become a standard in modern fantasy stories, especially in epic and quest fantasy works like Brandon Sanderson’s *Way of Kings*, Nicholas Eames’s *Kings of the Wyld*, and Terry Pratchett’s *Colour of Magic* to name just a few. Like these books, the world in my novel has minimal links to our reality. It is its own closed system, independent of our familiar earth.

Orson Scott Card has written that “science fiction and fantasy stories are those that take place in worlds that have never existed or are yet not known” (18). That said, Nurafel draws much from a general medieval European backdrop. Like J.R.R. Tolkien and many of the fantasy writers who have followed, my novel takes place in a rustic, pseudo-medieval world. This enchanted setting is one of my favourite elements of fantasy fiction and has been since I began reading works in the genre as a young child. The wild, unmapped mountains and forests and the charming, pastoral villages in fantasy always seemed mystical and awe-inspiring, and early on in the development of *Aldur’s Way* I knew that I wanted a similar setting. The setting for *Aldur’s*

Way, therefore, was inspired by medieval European technology, culture, and politics. Writing this novel has illuminated the craft choices that must be made with world building in fantasy fiction for this particular setting. My novel is primarily a work of fantasy. For some things, I wanted to maintain accurate descriptions of certain technological advancements of the period, and for others, I was willing to break from historical accuracy. These breaks from accuracy would necessarily be rooted in the fact that Nurafel, as a secondary world, would have its own cultural and technological advancements independent of what would have been realistic in, for example, fourteenth-century Europe. Some breaks are due to the presence of other types of technology, such as alchemy. Others I included because, as Ann Swinfen notes, "all fantasy…requires a firm basis in primary world reality" (76). Medieval Europe is not a familiar setting to most readers today. Including some technologies that people today would be comfortable with would create a stronger link of shared reality between my world and the reader. Deciding where to break from accuracy was a challenge. If I altered too much, the world would seem off for the reader. The technologies that I chose to alter therefore were, overall, small items that readers in modern society would be more familiar with. Pens, paper, ink, matches, and glass windows were not commonly available in medieval Europe. I included them in *Aldur's Way* to help provide a sense of the familiar in a setting that, though frequently employed in fantasy, is far removed from modern reality. The food, clothing, houses, and weapons in *Aldur's Way* are all based on medieval European examples, but they are not entirely historically accurate. By changing these elements slightly, I hoped to instill a sense of familiarity in the setting, something modern readers could relate to and feel more connected with, even though Nurafel is very different from what we experience in our lives today.

My decision to make *Aldur's Way* a quest fantasy story and not an immersive or intrusive fantasy is rooted in my own personal history and experiences, and the desire to write a character who would undergo a similar evolution of character that I did as a young adult. Ril must leave the village she grew up in and travel to the large city of Tanalin to solve the mystery of her mother's death. Like Ril, I grew up in a small, rural farming community and had very little experience outside of that environment. When I graduated from high school, many of my classmates went to a nearby small city college for their post-secondary degrees. I chose to attend classes at the University of Alberta in Edmonton instead. The transition from my hometown to my new residence at the U of A was a life-changing one. I was fully on my own and constantly learning about the wider world I inhabited. The four years of my undergraduate degree were a period of intense personal growth and maturation into independent adulthood. I wanted this kind of coming of age to be reflected in my protagonist. Because quest fantasy often begins with the hero on a farm or village (such as Ursula K. Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea* or Robert Jordan's *The Eye of the World,* to name only two), I saw the ideal opportunity to reflect on my own experiences of becoming an adult woman in the context of exposure to a completely new and unfamiliar world.

Throughout my life, I have had the good fortune of knowing several mentor figures who have helped guide me on my own personal journey in my goal to become a writer. If not for them, I would not know the things I do today, or have the drive to tackle my aspirations. This is another place where my personal experiences and the characteristics of the quest fantasy genre intersect. It was important for Ril to have a mentor figure, both to transmit information and make sense of the world Ril is unfamiliar with, and also to provide her with someone who would foster her growth as a character. As Mendlesohn writes, "to some extent, all portal and quest fantasies

use the figure of a guide to download information into the text" (13). The mentor characters in *Aldur's Way* would function as a source of information for Ril and the reader, just as mentors in reality do for their pupils. Ril has three mentor characters—Keigan, Pia, and Chancellor Rojin. Keigan is Ril's mentor for most of her time on the Kingsroad, guiding her in the practical art of stealing and burglary. Pia is Ril's mentor who helps her navigate the academic and social circles of Tanalin and the College. And finally, Chancellor Rojin operates as Ril's mentor in casting her magic. Each of these women fulfills a narrative role of providing information—often in the form of dialogue—to Ril and the audience.

It was also important to me that Ril's mentor figures be women. The majority of fantasy stories feature male heroes and mentors, and though they were interesting to read, I never fully connected to them. Female characters in traditional fantasy have often been relegated to lesser roles compared to their male counterparts—for example, Eowyn in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*—and I found the lack of women heroes irritating. Holly Hassel has commented on the dearth of female heroes, writing that "typically, [fantasy] protagonists have been male, and the stories have involved the rescuing of a princess or love interest as the end goal. This plot is especially prominent in sword-and sorcery and high fantasy genres" (106). Women did not typically get to be the heroes in quest fantasy (and the other genre siblings, high fantasy and sword-and-sorcery), and that was something I set out to change with Ril. I aspired for Ril to be the female hero I'd wanted to see in fantasy as a young reader. Because Ril's gender was an important element in *Aldur's Way*, I also decided that her mentor figures would need to be female as well. Female mentor figures are perhaps even less common than women protagonists in fantasy, and I wanted Keigan, Pia, and Chancellor Rojin to comport themselves as competent, knowledgeable mentor figures.

Finally, the quest fantasy genre is preceded by a long history of quests in historical literature that predate the fantasy genre as we know it today. The quest is usually a journey that the story's hero takes to achieve a certain goal, whether that is to destroy a corrupting ring of power in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of The Rings*, or to reach and defeat the monster Grendel in the Old English epic *Beowulf*. As Mendlesohn states, "the origins of quest fantasy…lie in epic, in the Bible, in the Arthurian romances, and in fairy tales" (3). Often, the process of the journey is more important to the story than reaching the goal. In C.S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, the journey the Pevensie children undertake to reach the citadel of Cair Paravel is more significant to their character development than the actual arrival at the castle itself. Quests are a "process, in which the object sought may or may not be a mere token of reward. The real reward is moral growth and/or admission into the kingdom, or redemption" (Mendlesohn 4). Ril's quest is to find her mother's killer, but the process of the journey, her time exploring the world and meeting new people, is where the bulk of her growth as a character occurs. Charlotte Spivak suggests that "the quest in the fantasy novel is symbolic…a metaphor of the search for meaning, for identity" (4). We all must undergo our own quest story of our lives, a leaving of the nest and a journey to grow as a person and discover the wider world outside of the comfort of our childhood homes. Ril's journey is as much about her quest to find her mother's murderer as it is about her becoming a woman and discovering what she is capable of.

The advent of Ril's quest to Tanalin begins with the murder of her mother, which brought me to the subject of parents—and more specifically, mothers—in fantasy. The protagonists in many modern fantasy stories are often orphans. Some examples of orphaned protagonists include Patrick Rothfuss's Kvothe in *The Name of the Wind*, Tamsyn Muir's Gideon and Harrow in *Gideon the Ninth*, and S.A. Chakraborty's Nahri in *The City of Brass*. Whether the protagonists

have no memory of their parents at all, or the parents meet tragic fates early on, it is common for the fantasy hero to lack parents and, especially, mothers.

While orphanhood is common, protagonists who are partially orphaned—those who have only one living parent—are also very typical. Nearly always in this case the living parent is the father, and the mother is rarely, if ever, mentioned. Gabriela Houston, in her post "Where Are All of the Mothers in Fantasy Fiction," states that "since mainstream fantasy as a genre was Eurocentric, [the lack of mothers] is a trend that is very much connected to the patriarchal structures persisting throughout Europe for most of recorded history" (Houston). There are examples throughout fantasy fiction in which the protagonist's father is their sole living parent, and the mother plays practically no role in the story. In Robert Jordan's *Eye of the World*, the protagonist Rand al'Thor's father is alive, and his mother is only mentioned briefly to have been a foreigner to their village. Robin Hobb's protagonist in *Assassin's Apprentice,* Fitz, is the bastard child of King-in-Waiting Chivalry and an unknown woman. It is the protagonist's father who takes on the more important role in their life. This erasure of mothers is reminiscent of Shakespeare's infamous lack of mothers, in which the fathers are present but the mothers in the story are nonexistent, such as in *The Taming of the Shrew, King Lear,* and *The Tempest*. Aliette de Bodard, in speaking about the removal of mothers in mainstream media, writes that the protagonist's mother's death "can be at birth, can be off-stage, can be in the story, but it's always either a minor inconvenience, something so far ago that it's never even mentioned, or mined for a main character's pain" (Bodard). Though I was engaging with this trope of dead mothers in *Aldur's Way*, I did not want Ril's mother to disappear completely from the narrative following her death, or else only appear occasionally as a source of emotional pain for Ril. I wanted Ril's mother to remain a source of inspiration and comfort for Ril, a foundation of strength she could

draw on in times of need. Because of this, Ril's mother's presence is felt throughout the novel, in the form of her journal, her reputation at the College, and in Ril's own memory. Ril's mother, though dead in most of *Aldur's Way*, is not absent. She is the reason Ril embarks upon her quest to Tanalin, and her presence in Ril's life is held close throughout the novel. Rather than being erased in her death, she remains an active presence, an affirmation that mothers can have a significant, positive impact on the stories of the fantasy protagonist.

In addition to the craft challenge discussed earlier of selecting real historical elements and blending them with invented elements, another hurdle I faced was the development of the novel's magic. As mentioned, Ril must make her way in a world of class hierarchy and male dominance. Central to this story is Ril's discovery of her own magical agency. A small portion of Nurafel's population is able to cast magic. While the murder of Ril's mother was the advent of Ril's quest, it was the magic—and all the social ramifications associated with it—that would initiate the quest. Since magic is essential to the plot of the story, I needed to decide what kind of magic system I wanted. For this, I turned to Brandon Sanderson and his Laws of Magic. Sanderson, one of the most prolific contemporary fantasy writers today, is well known for his articulate breakdown of magic systems in fantasy. I chose to use Sanderson's Laws of Magic as guidelines for my own magic system because they apply to virtually all kinds of magic in fantasy, and they are a good distillation of what makes magic so compelling in the fantasy genre. Magic systems, as categorized by Sanderson, can be either 'soft' or 'hard'. Soft magic systems are defined as:

> where the magic is included in order to establish a sense of wonder and give the setting a fantastical feel. Books that focus on this use of magic tend to want to indicate that men are a small, small part of the eternal and mystical workings of the universe. This gives the reader a sense of tension as they're never certain what dangers—or wonders—the characters will encounter. Indeed, the characters themselves never truly know what can happen and what can't. (Sanderson)

I chose not to make my magic system a soft magic system. Though I do appreciate experiencing a sense of awe or wonder when reading magic in fantasy, I did not want to give the characters or readers the sense that they did not or could not understand the magic they wield. In order for magic to operate in a such a way that my characters could use it as a tool to manipulate their environments, I needed to sacrifice the emotional response of marvelling at the magic and establish rules. I wanted Ril, from the beginning of the book, to be a character who would use her wit or resourcefulness to get herself in and out of troubling situations, and I could not do this with a soft magic system. I chose instead to create a hard magic system. Hard magic, as Sanderson explains, operates in a very different way from soft magic:

> This is the side where the authors explicitly describe the rules of magic. This is done so that the reader can have the fun of feeling like they themselves are part of the magic, and so that the author can show clever twists and turns in the way the magic works… If the reader understands how the magic works, then you can use the magic (or, rather, the characters using the magic) to solve problems. In this case, it's not the magic mystically making everything better. Instead, it's the characters' wit and experience that solves the problems. Magic becomes another tool—and, like any other tool, its careful application can enhance the character and the plot. (Sanderson)

Ril, unequipped to solve problems or defend herself in a physical manner, needs a magic system that she can understand and (semi) reliably use as a tool to help her in troubling situations. I also wanted the reader to become involved in the problem-solving possibilities the magic could have. For magic to act as a tool like this, I needed my magic system to be a hard magic system. After deciding on a hard magic system for *Aldur's Way*, I knew that I needed to follow Sanderson's four laws of magic in order for it to work. Sanderson's four laws are as follows:

0. Always err on the side of what is awesome.
1. An author's ability to solve conflict with magic is directly proportional to how well the reader understands said magic.
2. Weaknesses, limits and costs are more interesting than powers.

3. The author should expand on what is already a part of the magic system before something entirely new is added, as this may otherwise entirely change how the magic system fits into the fictional world. (Sanderson)

In order to conform to Sanderson's first law, I had to make the rules of the magic system very clear. I wanted to allow my readers to become active participants in situations where magic was going to be used. Since Ril is, like the reader, ignorant of how her magic operates, I had Chancellor Rojin explain the rules of the magic system to her. She does this while also demonstrating the effects of the magic she has, so the reader and Ril herself get a good idea of how the magic works.

Following Sanderson's second law of introducing weaknesses, costs, and limitations to a magic system, I knew that the magic in my book had the potential to be so powerful it would become problematic by offering an easy solution to many problems my protagonist might encounter. I solved this by looking to the second law, and incorporating weaknesses, limitations, and costs into my magic system. As Sanderson says, "it isn't what the heroes can do that is most important to who they are, but what they have trouble doing." The magic in *Aldur's Way* has one very distinct weakness: if the magic user cannot concentrate properly—because they are hungry, injured, or otherwise in distress—the magic does not always do what it should. It requires a calm state of mind to focus enough to cast, and if the practitioner cannot manage to do this, they will not get the desired effect of their magic. Ril, having just lost her mother and moved to a new and intimidating environment, is fraught with emotional turmoil. This makes casting her magic properly difficult, as she is frequently too frustrated or emotionally overwhelmed to cast her magic.

Hard magic also needs a limitation and a cost. I linked the two of these with the nature of the magic itself. In *Aldur's Way*, practitioners of magic are all descendants of the alien race that

had inhabited Nurafel in the past—the Ithanil—and the humans they procreated with. On their home world, the Ithanil had a symbiotic relationship with a large species of native fungus. Once they had ingested the fungus's spores, they would be able to use magic. Then, when they died, enough of the spores would remain present in their bodies to give rise to the fungus's fruiting body. When the Ithanil fled their world, they brought the fungus—and its magic—with them to Nurafel. For the limitation of my magic system, I made the magic resource-based. Meaning, if Ril wanted to cast magic, she had to have a certain amount of the resource (the fungus spores) to do so. This limitation has been used quite often in Brandon Sanderson's books, including the *Mistborn* and the *Way of Kings*. If the protagonist does not have enough of the magical resource in their possession, they cannot cast magic. Ril starts out inhaling the spores from the Aendrias trees without being aware that she's done so, and later consumes a tincture made of the spores to fuel her magic.

The final subsection of Sanderson's second law that I wanted to address is the cost of casting the magic. I rationalized that, because magic practitioners in Nurafel are all mostly human descendants of the Ithanil, it would be likely that their bodies would not be able to handle the strain of doing magic as much as their ancestors. Therefore, I added a physical reaction, a casting sickness, as a cost to my magic system. Just as the human body can be severely damaged by too much physical exertion (rhabdomyolysis was an inspirational example of this), the bodies of practitioners can become damaged by casting too much magic. If a magic user cast too much, they would become seriously ill, and in extreme cases, die. I made the threshold for this physical reaction variable, as everyone's ancestry and physical bodies would be different. There was also a scale to how severe the illness could be. If a practitioner cast just a little too much, they would

suffer influenza-like symptoms. If they cast more, the severity of symptoms would increase. All magic users, including Ril, would have to be aware of this danger while casting magic.

Sanderson's third law was less influential for the development of my magic system, but it was still a good rule to keep in mind. The law sounds complex, but in Sanderson's words, all it means is that "in epic fantasy books, it's not the number of powers that creates immersive and memorable worldbuilding—it's not even the powers themselves. It's how well they are ingrained into the society, culture, ecology, economics, and everyday lives of the people in the stories" (Sanderson). As mentioned above, I tied my magic system to the alien race of the Ithanil, a fungus common throughout the continent, and the Ithanil's mixed human descendants. Magic practitioners in the past were enslaved and used to fuel the military conquests of the Orathian Empire, thus creating a deep-rooted cultural animosity toward magic users across much of the continent. The magic in *Aldur's Way* is connected to the worldbuilding on a physical, cultural, and psychological level, and this connection makes the magic feel natural to the world.

Finally, Sanderson also has a zeroth law. This lower-numbered law actually supersedes the higher-numbered laws and is based on Isaac Asimov's zeroth law of robotics. This law I kept in the back of my mind while developing my magic system. Although I have always loved the versatility of magic, I admit a preference toward the type of dynamic, explosive, physical magic seen in Fonda Lee's *Jade City*, Patrick Rothfuss's *Name of the Wind*, and Nickelodeon's *Avatar: The Last Airbender*. This type of magic has always been incredibly satisfying for me to read, and so this was the type of magic I gave my protagonist. As Sanderson has stated in one of his lectures at Brigham Young University, "there should be stuff about [the magic system] that is just awesome" (Sanderson), and I agree. While having a strong magic system in *Aldur's Way* was imperative, I always erred on the side of what I thought would be amazing to behold when it

came to the kind of magic I included in my novel. For example, Ril is a Shifter, a practitioner that can exert a push or pull energetic force using her magic. Her uses of magic are dramatic and violent, manifesting most often in small explosions that wreak havoc on the surrounding area. Like the magic in the aforementioned fantasy works, the magic in *Aldur's Way* is flashy, intense, and awesome.

Traditional fantasy draws more than its setting from Medieval Europe. It also tends to borrow some cultural ideas as well, including the trope of the evil sorceress. Michael D Bailey situates the origin of the witch stereotype in Medieval Europe:

> The figure of the witch first appeared in Europe toward the end of the Middle Ages… also in the fifteenth century an aspect of witchcraft emerged that, to many modern minds at least, is perhaps the most striking and compelling element of the stereotype—the pronounced association of witchcraft with women rather than with men. (120)

In the traditional fantasy genre, both women and men can be magical practitioners, but often the kind of magic they can wield and for what purpose they wield it differs immensely. Male practitioners are often wizards that use their magic for good, like Gandalf in J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. Female practitioners tend to be cast as evil witches, who use their magic to further their own goals, often to the detriment of others. C.S. Lewis's white witch Jadis is an example of the more typical evil sorceress. Men who use magic are frequently more powerful than their women counterparts as well. In Ursula K. Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea*, men are the primary wielders of magic, as sorcerers. Women can be witches, but their magic is on the lowest rung of the magical ladder. Women practitioners are so scorned that a quote from the book makes the relationship between male and female magical abilities very clear: "there is a saying on Gont, *Weak as women's magic*, and there is another saying, *Wicked as women's magic*." (5) Female magical practitioners in the fantasy genre are frequently less powerful than

male practitioners, and they also often use their magic for evil. Bailey writes that the notion of women as evil witches was

> developed most completely and ruthlessly in what is now by far the most famous late-medieval text dealing with witchcraft, the witch-hunting manual *Malleus maleficarum*, written by the Dominican inquisitor Heinrich Kramer in 1486. In this profoundly misogynist work, Kramer linked witchcraft entirely to what he regarded as women's spiritual weakness and their natural proclivity for evil. (120)

This reflection of the stereotyped wicked witch in the fantasy genre has, in recent years, begun to wane. In many contemporary fantasy works such as Tamsyn Muir's *Gideon the Ninth*, Fonda Lee's *Jade City*, and N.K. Jemisin's *Stone Sky*, there is no difference between male and female magic, nor is there a presence of the stereotyped evil sorceress. Some practitioners may be stronger or weaker than others, but this is not based on gender. This type of egalitarian magic is the kind that I chose for *Aldur's Way*. Because the society in *Aldur's Way* is patriarchal, I wanted there to be a field in which women could be equal to, or even more powerful than, men.

Aldur's Way grew out of a deep love for the fantasy genre and a desire to write about a young woman's journey into womanhood as she leaves behind her childhood home and discovers who she is and what she can do on her own. Overcoming barriers related to class and gender, Ril grows into her powers and becomes her own person. Fantasy as a genre has always been a reflection of real life and its problems. Ril is thrust into her own uncertain future following an emotional and geographical upheaval, into a place where she is looked down upon and feared because of who she is, all while attempting to discover and bring her mother's killer to justice.

Works Cited

Bailey, Michael David. “The Feminization of Magic and the Emerging Idea of the Female Witch in the Late Middle Ages.” *Essays in Medieval Studies*, vol. 19, 2002, pp. 120–134.

Card, Orson Scott. *How to Write Science Fiction and Fantasy.* Writer’s Digest Books, 1990.

Chakraborty, S.A. *The City of Brass*. HarperCollins, 2018.

Lewis, C.S. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardobe.* Geoffrey Bles, 1950.

de Bodard, Aliette. “On Motherhood and Erasure: People-Shaped Holes, Hollow Characters and the Illusion of Impossible Adventures.” *Intellectus Speculativus*, intellectusspeculativus.wordpress.com/2018/12/03/aliette-de-bodard-on-motherhood-and-erasure. Accessed April 20, 2021.

DiMartino, Michael Dante and Brian Konietzko, creators. *Avatar: The Last Airbender.* Nickelodeon Animation Studio, 2005.

Eames, Nicholas. *Kings of the Wyld.* Orbit, 2017.

Hassel, Holly. “Fantasy Film: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries.” *Women in Science Fiction and Fantasy*, edited by Robin Anne Reid, Greenwood Press, 2009, 101-111.

Heaney, Seamus. *Beowulf: A New Verse Translation*. Translated by Seamus Heaney. Norton, 2000.

Hobb, Robin. *Assassin’s Apprentice*. Del Rey, 1995.

Houston, Gabriela. “Where Are All of the Mothers in Fantasy Fiction?” *Den of Geek,* www.denofgeek.com/books/where-are-all-of-the-mothers-in-our-fantasy-fiction. Accessed April 20, 2021.

James, Edward, and Mendlesohn, Farah. *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*. Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Jordan, Robert. *The Eye of the World*. Tor, 1990.

Lee, Fonda. *Jade City*. Orbit, 2018.

Mendlesohn, Farah. *Rhetorics of Fantasy*. Wesleyan University Press, 2008.

Muir, Tamsyn. *Gideon the Ninth*. Tor, 2019.

Pratchett, Terry. *The Colour of Magic*. Corgi, 1985.

Rothfuss, Patrick. *The Name of the Wind*. DAW, 2007.

Sanderson, Brandon. “Sanderson’s First Law of Magic.” *brandonsanderson.com,* brandonsanderson.com/sandersons-first-law. Accessed April 20, 2021.

---. “Sanderson’s Second Law of Magic.” *brandonsanderson.com,* brandonsanderson.com/sandersons-second-law. Accessed April 20, 2021.

---. “Sanderson’s Third Law of Magic.” *brandonsanderson.com,* brandonsanderson.com/sandersons-third-law-of-magic. Accessed April 20, 2021.

---. "Brandon Sanderson-318r- #8 (Magic Systems)." *YouTube,* uploaded by Camera Panda, 10 August 2016, www.youtube.com/watch?v=jXAcA_y3l6M&t=3322s&ab_channel=CameraPanda

---. *The Way of Kings*. Tor, 2010.

---. *Mistborn*. Tor, 2006.

Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest*. Project Gutenberg, 2008.

---. *King Lear*. Third ed., 2015.

---. *The Taming of the Shrew*. Arden Shakespeare, 2010.

Spivack, Charlotte. *Merlin's Daughters: Contemporary Women Writers of Fantasy*. Greenwood Press, 1987.

Swinfen, Ann. *In Defense of Fantasy: A Study of the Genre in English and American Literature since 1945*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984.

Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Fellowship of the Ring*. HarperCollins, 1999.

---. *The Two Towers*. HarperCollins, 1999.

---. *The Return of the King*. HarperCollins, 1999.