

# Bards and Gleemen: from the Middle Ages to Robert Jordan's *The Wheel of Time*

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### 1. The World of *The Wheel of Time*

Before discussing the types of poet that existed throughout the ages, it seems important to give a general idea of how the world of Robert Jordan works. The world of *The Wheel of Time* is a fantasy world where a primeval battle between the Creator and his antithesis, the Dark One, resulted in the latter's defeat and entrapment in a prison outside of time. The Creator, victorious, made the Wheel of Time and used the True Source, the driving force of the universe, to turn the Wheel. The Wheel weaves the Pattern, like a great tapestry that intertwines the lives of people, each thread representing a human life. The True Source can also affect human lives and grant them access to the One Power, which is the ability to channel the five flows of the Power: Air, Earth, Fire, Spirit and Water.

True Source was of restricted use; women could only draw the One Power from *saidar* and men from *saidin*, the female and male halves of the True Source, respectively. Both halves worked together as much as they did against each other. These restrictions led to the search for a new source of power. The True Power, as the newly-found was called, required the drilling of a hole in the ground so that it could be tapped into. The drilling of this hole caused a tear in the Pattern and the Dark One, trapped outside of time, could now influence the lives of people. The True Power was the Dark One's own essence and it was addictive and dangerous to those who had permission to use it. With the Bore<sup>1</sup> open evil came to the world, bringing wars and long years of strife. However, a group of men were able

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<sup>1</sup> Another name for the Dark One's prison.

to seal the prison, but not permanently, and to a great cost; the Dark One was able to taint *saidin* and drive all men who could wield it mad. And so, since the world of *The Wheel of Time* is one where events repeat themselves, the Dark One is destined to break free again. When he does, the Pattern will weave the hero who will face the Dark One. This man, the Dragon Reborn, will be the reincarnation of the leader of the men who had imprisoned the Creator's antagonist before. Because of these events, the use of prophecy is recurrent in the series, and prophecy is part of the repertoire of songs sung by poets throughout the land, but these songs will be explained as we proceed.

## 2. The Poet: Origin and Types

The first part of this essay aims at dating the origin of the poet, as well as trying to find the different types of composers through medieval Europe. The earliest accounts of the poet can be traced back to Ancient Greece, according to Wallace E. McLeod, who points that the bard has its origin in Delphi, in Apollo's temple. However, the bard's function was slightly different; he worked as a composer of the messages given by the oracle; therefore, the bard is a "versifier", as McLeod calls him, a composer of verse.

It is possible to date some bardic compositions back to the eighth century BC when the influence of the oracles was still strong in Greece. Throughout the centuries, especially in the sixth century BC, the bards, who were "custodians of the oral art", were associated with the *aoidi* (McLeod 323). The *aoidi* were composers of verse and were stationed in court, where they always performed. Homer and Hesiod, composers of epic verse, like the *Illiad*, the *Odyssey*, and the *Theogony*, were *aoidi*. The *rhapsode*, or rhapsodist, was an itinerant poet, going from city to city singing poems, but not composing. Actually, the Homeric poems were already well known by the time they appeared in writing. Crosby states that "the Homeric poems themselves, it is believed, were chanted at the courts of kings and chieftains long before they were written down" (Crosby 88).

This is similar to what we will find later: the bard and the gleeman. The bard was employed by a person of rank, a monarch or lord, to compose and sing in court or palace, and, like the *aoidi*, bards were composers.

These poets had different names according to their places of origin. In Iceland and Scandinavia, we would find the *skald*, and its Anglo-Saxon version was the *scop*. The *fili* was from pre-Christian Ireland, and could still be found just before the Renaissance. The minstrel, also known as gleeman, came from Medieval Europe and replaced the English *scop* after the Norman Conquest.

The word “bard” can be found in the Gaelic branch of the Celtic tongue. According to Herbert Hope, the term was used to classify “a person who composes and sings inspiring poems” (Hope 93). In pre-Christian Ireland, the bards were a very important part of the court and being one was a profession of great renown. It was their job to educate the Irish people concerning their leaders; the bards taught the people to think the leaders “great and powerful” (Hope 110).

However, the bards were the lowest class among the seven groups of the *filid* in Ireland. It is possible that the *filid* belonged, along with the druids, to the same class of Irish society, one that dealt with knowledge. For instance, in war, “the *philosophoi*<sup>2</sup> are readily obeyed, they and the singing bards, and this by enemies as well as their own people” (qtd. in Gantz 10), making it seem that the importance of the arts outranks that of the war. The importance of the *fili* can be seen by the number of stories he could recite: “early Irish professional poets (*fili*) or storytellers were ranked partly by the extent of their repertory of tales, the highest class being able to recite no less than 350 separate stories” (Holman 236). This repertory does not mean the memorization of stories in detail. In fact, the *fili* would memorize only the main aspects of a tale and add details of his imagination (Gantz 19). Nonetheless, this position would require long years of training and, of the seven classes among the *filid*, the *ollmah*, the highest, would take up to twelve years in training (*Encyclopedia Britannica* “Fili”).

There is an association of the *fili* with the druid, whose training was also long. In addition, they were dedicated to the collection of knowledge. Their relation can be perceived from the fact that the *filid* “assumed the poetic function of the outlawed Druids” following the Christianization of Ireland (*Encyclopedia Britannica* “Fili”). The distinction between bard and

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<sup>2</sup> These would be the druids.

*fili* eventually became less clear, with the bard assuming a more important role after the thirteenth century (*Encyclopedia Britannica* “Fili”).

Still, the bard was not exclusive of Celtic Ireland. When Welsh literature experienced a renaissance around the eleventh century, court poetry thrived (Hollman 465). Various orders of court poets existed. The highest-ranking was the *pencerdd*, which means “chief of song or craft”, but there were also the *gogynfeirdd* or the *bardd teulu* (Thomson and Jones, *Encyclopedia Britannica* “Scottish Gaelic”). The bards, ranked according to their ability, were present until the seventeenth century, which validates their importance as preservers of the Welsh poetry (Hollman 465).

The word bard may have been in use among the Germanic peoples, namely the Teutons. In Tacitus’s *Germania*, the following is said about their composer: “possuem ainda uns carmes com cuja declamação, a que chamam barito, inflamam os ânimos e com a própria sorte auguram a sorte do futuro combate” (Tácio 19). This type of bard bore some resemblance to the Celtic one. The Germanic was closely linked to war, and while the Celtic dealt mostly with poems concerning the deeds of great heroes, the Irish *fili*, as seers, could partake in battle by deciphering its outcome. They could also use poetry to curse people (*Encyclopedia Britannica* “Fili”). Therefore, we find a resemblance between the Celtic bard and the Greek *aoidi*, whose recitation and chanting consisted, in part, of praising heroes, most of them war heroes. The *aoidi* sang of love as well, like the tale of Ares and Aphrodite sung in the *Odyssey*.

As to the *scop*, his job was much steadier than the bards’. The *scop* seemed to have a much more secure position, for he was permanently stationed at court, traveling only occasionally, and was part of the king’s retinue. French writes that one of the *scop*’s goals was to compose and recite his poems to please a patron who could and would support him (623), much like the court bard we find in *The Wheel of Time*. They differed from the Scandinavian *skald* in terms of their poems’ content. While the *scop* sang of noble deeds performed by heroes, kings, or lords, the *skald*’s poems had a strong mythological edge to them. After some time, the *scop*’s compositions included biblical themes and he was tasked with compositions about the family he served.

On the other hand, the *scop* may have another function, as the meaning of the word suggests, alongside poet or minstrel, mockery and

jest, among others. The same reference can be made to the *skald*, from which derives the word “scold”. This may mean that both types of poet had some control over society, praising some and satirizing others, and adding or destroying reputations. They shared this trait with the *fili*. However, some definitions of *scop*, namely the one provided by Holman, place him among the wandering poets, though not so much as the Welsh bard. Holman states that “he [the *scop*] occupied a position of importance and permanence in the king’s retinue” (Holman 405). In addition, he calls him a court poet and an ancestor of the Poet Laureate. The gleeman held a rather different position from that of the *scop*, although at times it could show some similarities. The gleeman was not a composer, but a reciter of poetry composed by other people. They were wanderers, not staying in a place for too long. They could be temporarily employed by a king or lord, but their position was not as honorable as the *scop*’s. The term may be wrongly used to apply both to composers and reciters. The gleeman was also a professional storyteller and he coexisted with the *scop* during the Anglo-Saxon period.

After the Norman Conquest, Europe witnessed the arrival of the minstrel. This professional character consisted of a mixture of the *scop* and gleeman, although he was more closely linked to the latter. Jay Ruud says that minstrels were “most typically (...) itinerant musicians, singers, storytellers, magicians, or jugglers who wandered from court to court and from town to town” (Ruud 448). They were active from the late thirteenth century until the end of the fifteenth century, when the printing press was invented and minstrelsy waned. The minstrel and the gleeman were on par with the *jongleur*, the French term for a professional poet who “sometimes composed and sometimes supplied nonmusical forms of entertainment, such as juggling and tumbling” (Holman 239). The *jongleur* could also be an assistant to the troubadour, who was an aristocratic poet from France, namely from the region of Provence. However, the gleeman had a less dignified position in court and it is possible that the *jongleur* and troubadour were held in more esteem.

It was in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that the troubadours proliferated, and they sang mostly of love. In the same period in the north of France, groups of poets influenced by the troubadours appeared. They were called *trouvères* and sang, among others, songs of love (Holman 453).

Ruud even mentions the existence of a guild for minstrels and they experienced a change in their characteristics that operated as time went on, such as the fact that minstrels turned their focus toward music, instead of poetry. These guilds also ensured that there was little competition from other groups of wandering musicians. So, what we witness is the existence of many poets from very early ages, even before the appearance of the Homeric poems, and in a wide variety. As to the work of these poets, it varied in two ways, as we have seen: either they were employed by a patron and created their own verse, or they were itinerant poets and told or sang, and sometimes embellished, the stories they knew.

Throughout *The Wheel of Time* series, we are not faced with such a wide variety of poets, but they are nonetheless worthy of mention. The most common deliverers of the oral tradition in the Westlands<sup>3</sup> are the gleeman and the court bard. The word bard is almost never used, unless it is referring to one stationed at court. The difference that we find among these is that the gleeman's displays are more varied. They eat fire, tell stories, juggle, play instruments, throw knives, or perform acrobatic moves. The gleeman does this as a wandering man. The court bard is hired by a patron as an entertainer. We do not know the full extent of his job, but it may not entirely differ from that of the gleeman. It is safe to assume that his displays are in accordance to the proper decorum of court life. The court bard in *The Wheel of Time* could be ranked alongside that of the Welsh bard in the eleventh century, after the renaissance, and sharing some traits with the *scop* and *skald*, for he was a composer, was stationed at court and was not a wanderer.

There is still another type of deliverer: the singers in inns and taverns. These are exclusively employed by the owners of these establishments to entertain and attract customers. There is reason to believe this job was somewhat permanent, although the professionals might change from time to time. Not all inns could afford this kind of entertainment; however, gleemen sometimes performed in exchange for a room and meals.

Some inns located in the rougher parts of the cities could hire singers, normally female, who would attract not only with her voice, but

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<sup>3</sup> The main continent in the series.



with not so modest displays of body parts.<sup>4</sup> In *The Fires of Heaven*, one of the characters, Sivan Sanche, asks for a job as a singer at an inn and she is told to show her legs, proving that singing was not at all the primary requisite. Since Sivan was only seeking information, she confesses that she couldn't really sing, to which the innkeeper replies: "as if it mattered to that lot out there" (Jordan 241). Therefore, this job does not resemble a gleeman or a bard's job, although they may sing the same songs sometimes. There were poets and musicians already since before the drilling of the Bore,<sup>5</sup> which took place more than three thousand years before the events in the series. The means of composition and travelling were probably much better then than in the Third Age.<sup>6</sup>

Now that we have managed to properly define the types of poet that existed throughout the times, it is important to see how these bards and wandering poets worked, what they used to aid them in their performance, and what kind of life they led.

### **3. The Mechanics of the Poet: the Middle Ages and Thom Merrilin**

We have already seen that poets could be stationed at court or wander the lands to entertain people. The form of entertainment could be delivered in two ways: either by recitation and chanting or by reading the stories (Crosby 91). These methods were the most frequent in the Middle Ages, but the form of reading aloud will not be of interest in this work. Recitation and chanting were often accompanied by a musical instrument, usually

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<sup>4</sup> Travelling circuses can also be found throughout the Westlands. These assemble a variety of exhibitions that range from acrobatics to displays with animals. However, it is unknown whether they employ any sort of poets or singers.

<sup>5</sup> The official name of the Dark One's prison.

<sup>6</sup> Many stories in *The Wheel of Time* come from the First Age, which possibly corresponds to the twentieth century of our world. The Second Age, the Age of Legends, refers to an epoch where technology was greatly developed, even better than in our twenty-first century. The Third Age, when the events in the main series occur, corresponds to our medieval times.

the harp, which allowed the poet to play while talking or singing. If the poet had an assistant, stories could be told accompanied by the flute, for example. This kind of entertainment was very prominent during some periods of the Middle Ages where access to books was very difficult, especially among the lower classes. Even though this art was long-lasting, it could be argued that the appearance of the printing press had some impact in the art of oral delivery. Chanting and recitation usually took place during feasts and celebrations. According to Crosby, “it was necessary for the story-teller to ask that all noise come to an end and that attention be given to him” (Crosby 102). That way, the story-teller knew the crowd would surely pay him attention.

Since these stories were not written and could not be universally read, the use of repetition would be strongly recurrent. Words or phrases, or even entire situations, would be repeated, so that the listeners would not easily forget. One of the songs in *The Eye of the World* uses repetition,<sup>7</sup> so we can see that the main purpose is to tell the story and memorize the important parts. There are more strategies the story-teller uses that describe the type of songs we could listen to during the Middle Ages. A song or story would normally start with the phrase “on a day” or “on the morrow when it was day”, among others (Crosby 103). The use of adjectives was also common as well as the use of alliteration, to grant some musicality.

In *The Wheel of Time*, gleemen were recognized at first sight. The description given to us of Thom Merrilin could suit any other gleeman: “his cloak seemed a mass of patches, in odd shapes and sizes, fluttering with every breath of air, patches in a hundred colors” (Jordan 46). The cloak is a distinguishing symbol of gleemen.

Even though the gleeman's is not as notable a position as the court bard's, they are very well respected and welcome. The presence of a gleeman is always enticing, and innkeepers are often glad to have a gleeman perform at an inn, as is the case of Thom's reception in Baerlon, in Tanchico, or in Tar Valon. However, a gleeman's life is hard. As Thom puts it: “that's how gleemen travel, like dust on the wind” (Jordan 309). It indicates that it is a very unsteady life. Later, Thom dwells on the subject again: “wandering

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<sup>7</sup> See Appendix A.

from town to town, village to village, wondering how they'll try to cheat you this time, half the time wondering where your next meal is coming from" (Jordan 383). In a place like Cairhien, where "musicians were hired and forgotten", this is certainly the case (Jordan 390).

E. K. Chambers defines this kind of life in a similar way:

To tramp long miles in wind and rain, to stand wet to the skin and hungry and footsore, making the slow bourgeois laugh while the heart was bitter within; such must have been the daily fate of many amongst the humbler minstrels at least. And at the end to die like a fog in a ditch, under the ban of the Church and with the prospect of eternal damnation before the soul. (Chambers 48)

Thom was a house bard to House Trakand, in Andor, and became the court bard when Morgase Trakand won the throne. It is even stated that he tried teaching the queen to throw knives (Jordan 572). Being a court bard meant being constantly in contact with court life, and it is possible that during the Middle Ages bards knew well enough what happened in a palace or court.

Thom also advised Morgase and helped her maintain the Andoran throne.<sup>8</sup> Actually, the character is possibly inspired by King Arthur's advisor, Merlin, given the resemblance of the name, the Andoran capital city is called Caemlyn, a clear reference to Camelot, and Morgase to Morgause. Furthermore, the name derives from Myrddin, a legendary Welsh figure who was also a bard and prophet.<sup>9</sup> Thom is very skilled in politics, and is regarded as one of the best players of *Daes Dae'mar*, also known as the Game of Houses.<sup>10</sup> Thom's skills in storytelling are remarkable, for he is able to recite with the same efficacy in the three existing forms: Common, Plain Chant and High Chant. Common is very

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<sup>8</sup> Thom was involved in the murder of Taringail Damodred, Morgase's husband, when he discovered that he planned to murder his wife and take the throne for himself.

<sup>9</sup> Myrddin was "the original form of Merlin" (Ellis 165).

<sup>10</sup> The Game of Houses consists of actions done in a specific way as to misguide others in order to attain power and influence among the powerful.

simple, as it consists of telling a story in a conversational tone. Plain Chant implied reciting in a poetic form. High Chant was sung and it meant to convey the more emotional aspects of the song. This form was very difficult for people who didn't understand High Chant. Usually, it was only used in court.

Some stories are meant to be told in one of these three forms; however, all of them can be used to tell the same, although not with the same results. Thom complains over the fact that people prefer to hear something in Common, rather than Plain or High Chant: "the tale<sup>11</sup> is a hundred times better in Plain Chant, and a thousand in High, but they want Common.' Without another word, he buried his face in his wine" (Jordan 383). Thom's displeasure might indicate that he is too skilled in both Plain Chant and High Chant.

Women as gleemen were unheard of during the Middle Ages, yet it is possible that some who accompanied minstrels also performed. In *The Wheel of Time*, female gleemen were never found. There is one case in which a woman, Dena, was apprenticed to Thom and claimed she would become the first gleeman (Jordan 382), though Thom expected her to become a court bard, since, in his opinion, a gleeman's is no life for a woman. Dena's untimely death could indicate that women would never vindicate in this kind of profession, and no others were seen in the rest of the series.

We have seen that geography plays an important role concerning the itinerant poets. They have different names in different places, even though they have the same characteristics. The same happens in the Westlands, but with the songs themselves; a song that is known in a city or village may be known with a different name in another town. That is remarked a few times in *The Eye of the World* and the *Great Hunt*: "it was not the first time that Rand had discovered a tune had different words and different names in different lands, sometimes even in villages in the same land" (Jordan 312). For instance, a song that was known as "The Marriage of Cinny Wade" in Caemlyn, was known as "Always Choose the Right Horse" in a different place.

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<sup>11</sup> Thom is referring to a song called "Mara and the Three Foolish Kings."

Two of the most important epics in the series are *The Great Hunt of the Horn* and the *Karaethon Cycle*. They are sung by gleemen and bards throughout the Westlands. *The Great Hunt of the Horn* is a long poem that praises the men and women who went in search of this almost mythical object that would summon the heroes of old from their graves to fight alongside the one who blew the horn. The Horn of Valere, as it is called, would be found just in time to fight the Last Battle when the Dark One breaks free, so, this epic has a prophetic meaning. The same holds for the *Karaethon Cycle*,<sup>12</sup> which is but a mere part of the *Prophecies of the Dragon*. These verses result from Foretellings<sup>13</sup> that refer to the rebirth of the Dragon, the Last Battle, and the coming of the Dark One.

Songs and poetry were such an important part of life in the Westlands that when the Great Hunt for the Horn was proclaimed in the city of Illian, a contest took place to determine who would best recite *The Great Hunt of the Horn*. Great glory would await the winner of the contest. In addition, it would be an opportunity to sing of the new proclamation.

At the time of the Last Battle, Thom is sitting in a vantage point from where he can see the battle raging in one of the main fronts. The reader witnesses the moment in which the gleeman is composing what would be the epic of that age. He fumbles trying to find the appropriate words:

*Perilous*”? he thought. No, that wasn’t the right word. He’d make a ballad of this for certain. Rand deserved it. Moiraine, too. This would be her victory as much as it was his. He needed words. The right words. (...) “*Exquisite*,” Thom thought. *That is the word. Unexpected, but true. Majestically exquisite. No. Not “majestically.” Let the word stand on its own. If it is the right word, it will work without help. If it’s the wrong word, adding other words to it will just make it seem desperate.* This was what the end should be like. (Jordan 1086-87)

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<sup>12</sup> See Appendix B.

<sup>13</sup> A talent some people have that is related to the One Power. People with the Foretelling unknowingly speak words in riddles that are difficult to understand.

All this information on Thom tells us how versatile a character he is and how he manages to comprise the characteristics of many performers from the Middle Ages.

As a matter of curiosity, a number of stories in *The Wheel of Time* that come from the First Age are actually based on historical people. For example, Elsbet, the Queen of All, is inspired by Elizabeth I; Lenn, who is said to have been to the moon, is a possible reference to John Glenn; Materese the Healer, also known as Mother of the Wondrous Ind, may refer to Mother Theresa. Stories of Artur Paendrag were also very common. Artur, the High King who united all the Westlands, building a huge empire, was inspired by King Arthur.

Since the first known appearance of the bards and gleemen, represented by the Greek *aoidos* and *rhapsode*, until the end of the Middle Ages, we can establish a common ground between them and *The Wheel of Time*. Thom Merrill fits quite well into the paradigm of the bard and gleeman that we know, proving the preservation of this character in contemporary literature.

*The Wheel of Time* shows us a rich culture and easy access to it through the itinerant poets. The great variety of poets through Europe, though, is much wider than the variety we find in Jordan's work. We can conclude that Thom is a crucial character because he gives the readers the opportunity to know of the world, the culture, the mythology. The gleemen and bards had the same function. Since in both places there was no printing press, this was the best way of transmission. Even though this kind of life was hard, we can determine how important it must have been, since it was an occupation that held for so long, and it would probably have gone on much longer, had it not been for the invention of the press.

A very interesting aspect in Robert Jordan's *The Wheel of Time* is how he managed to connect his own story to world culture. Profoundly based on Arthurian legend and historical people, he fit these characters in the tales of an ancient world, thus placing the Third Age of *The Wheel of Time* in a very far future. Although it is difficult to cross some of the information, we can see the similarities between bards and gleemen from our world and the bards and gleemen in *The Wheel of Time*. One of these similarities consists on the use of instruments. For Thom, the harp was his most prized object.

Finally, we can determine that the similarity between the Middle Ages and *The Wheel of Time* regarding the poets is easier to see among the bard than the gleeman, for whom there is little information available. In addition, this parallel between Jordan's work and the itinerant poets of the Middle Ages constitutes a characteristic that is very common in the fantasy genre, which is that of using medieval settings and many of its aspects in order to create secondary worlds, those that are imagined by the authors.

By bringing into his world the aspects of the poet of the Middle Ages Robert Jordan is using a segment of the primary world (our world) to deliver a more realistic story, one in which the reader can identify traces of history, in this case the history of the itinerant poets, so that he feels closer to the story itself. Moreover, the use of the gleeman in *The Wheel of Time* serves the purpose of telling stories by means of the club narrative. This form of storytelling is a way of conveying to an audience some form of unquestionable tale and "[i]n the club narrative, the ability to convince and to hold the floor is the sign of success" (Mendlesohn 7). This is a narrative technique often employed by fantasy writers. Therefore, Robert Jordan's fantasy has a very medievalist way of narrating the past, by making use of the gleeman to help create the roots of his fantasy story. The delineation of the itinerant poets helped demonstrate how Robert Jordan appropriated some of the methods of storytelling recurrent in the Middle Ages.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

“The Wind That Shakes the Willow”

My love is gone, carried away  
by the wind that shakes the willow,  
and all the land is beaten hard  
by the wind that shakes the willow.  
But I will hold her close to me  
in heart and dearest memory,  
and with her strength to steel my soul,  
her love to warm my heart-strings,  
I will stand when we once sang,  
though cold wind shakes the willow. (Jordan 243)

### Appendix B

*The Karaethon Cycle*

“Twice and twice shall he be marked,  
twice to live, and twice to die.  
Once the heron, to set his path.  
Twice the heron, to name him true.  
Once the Dragon, for remembrance lost.  
Twice the Dragon, for the price he must pay.  
Twice dawns the day when his blood is shed.  
Once for mourning, once for birth.  
Red on black, the Dragon’s blood stains the rock of Shayol Ghul.  
In the Pit of Doom shall his blood free men from the Shadow.”  
(Jordan 387)

#### ABSTRACT

In Robert Jordan's work, *The Wheel of Time* (1990-2013), particularly in the character of Thom Merrilin, we can see a reflection of the paradigm of the itinerant poet from medieval times. From the classical period until the appearance of the printing press, Europe witnessed the existence of multiple types of poet. What this article aims at is to understand how Jordan's Thom Merrilin corresponds to the figure of the gleeman and bard known during the Middle Ages. However, it is essential to determine the different types of poet so we can narrow them to those that best resemble Thom and his condition as a gleeman and former court bard. After identifying the multiple composers and poets, it is important to know how they work; whether they are employed by a patron or wander the lands as storytellers; what materials they use, and what stories they tell. *The Wheel of Time* also presents some examples of the various types of entertainers, which will be used in this article in order to differentiate the most renowned types, the ones employed by nobles, and the simplest ones, usually employed in inns and taverns.

#### KEYWORDS

Robert Jordan; *Wheel of Time*; gleemen; itinerant poets; Thom Merrilin.

#### RESUMO

Na obra de Robert Jordan, *The Wheel of Time* (1990-2013), principalmente na personagem Thom Merrilin, podemos ver reflectido o paradigma do poeta itinerante da época medieval. Desde o período clássico até ao aparecimento da imprensa, a Europa assistiu à existência de múltiplos tipos de poeta. O que este artigo pretende é perceber como o Thom Merrilin de Robert Jordan corresponde à figura do jogral e do bardo encontrados durante a Idade Média. Contudo, é importante identificar os diferentes tipos de poetas de forma a limitar as hipóteses àquelas que mais se assemelham a Thom e à sua condição de jogral e antigo bardo de corte. Depois de identificar os vários poetas e compositores, é importante perceber como trabalham; se são empregados por um patrono ou vagueiam pela

terra como contadores de histórias; que materiais utilizam na sua profissão e que histórias contam. *The Wheel of Time* ainda nos apresenta outros exemplos de artistas que serão úteis neste artigo para diferenciar os tipos mais afamados, aqueles que são contratados pelos nobres, dos tipos mais simples, normalmente empregados em estalagens e tabernas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Robert Jordan; *Wheel of Time*; jograis; poetas itinerantes; Thom Merrilin.

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