

## **“But haud me fast...”: The Socialization, not Psychoanalysis, of the Heroic Couple within ‘Tam Lin’ and Its Contemporary Retellings**

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**Abstract:** *Though the majority of contemporary criticism has shifted focus from the hero to the heroine, their concerns remain on the ways in which the external world reflects on the individual character. However, within the genre of young adult, there has emerged a new heroic category: the couple. Rather than focusing on the obvious connector of romantic love or sexual desire, I will examine the external ways heroic couples are bound together, and how this affects the overall structure of the plot. It is my contention that these characters are connected by external social/cultural conventions necessitating both their individual and combined actions. Using the established story structure of the ballad of Tam Lin as a baseline, I will look at the ways story-telling, nature and social expectations define the heroic couple within not only the original ballad but also the contemporary retellings of *Perilous Gard* by Elizabeth Pope and *Fire and Hemlock* by Diana Wynne Jones. In this way, I will also be exploring the ways in which this common folk tale has changed through its various retellings and how these changes are accentuated through the external conventions surrounding the heroic couple.*

**Keywords** - heroic couple, culture, Tam Lin, story-telling, young adult literature

### **I. Introduction- The Heroic Couple**

Classically, a hero is a male individual progressing towards an ideal. With the popularity of Freud’s theories, scholarship has been primarily focused on the psycho-systematic development of the hero rather than the sociocentric influences on characterization. Though the discussion of heroes has begun to include many heroines, the psychoanalytical approach remains a favorite even today. Indeed, character relationships within this purview only serve as indicators of certain aspects of the heroic person’s personality or internal struggle. Working under this premise, critics, particularly of young adult literature, find the shift in the heroic gender of more cultural interest.

However, heroes are not solitary outsiders. If they lack support from the community of their birth, they cultivate their own. Superheroes gain ‘sidekicks’ and join justice leagues; Sherlock adopts Watson. Heroes must “... direct ‘the plot of [his own life]’ so that each moment strengthens one’s sense of belonging to a wider

*“But haud me fast...”: The Socialization, not Psychoanalysis, of the Heroic Couple within ‘Tam Lin’ and Its Contemporary Retellings*

community” (Moretti 19). This increasing level of socialization informs and defines a hero’s behavior. It is Watson who tells the stories and explains Sherlock’s actions; it is also Watson who influences and changes Sherlock’s perspective. The hero and the community have a symbiotic relationship without which they could never accomplish their idealized objectives. The ‘sidekicks’ are the characters that pave the way for the climatic last stand. Hermione and Ron, for example, complete the preliminary tasks so Harry can face Voldemort. Heroes cannot function without their communities.

The first gateway of socialization lies within the heroic couple dynamic. This term is defined as two characters whose relationship drives or defines the action within a story or novel. It is also an acknowledged staple of most young adult literature with a female protagonist. The scholar John Stephens in his essay entitled “Impartiality and Attachment: Ethics and Ecopoiesis in Children’s Narrative Texts” identifies heroic couples as “cathartic relationships” (207). He further defines these character connections as those “...grounded in the ideational and emotional investment one person has with another which range from pre-teen close friendships to young adult incipient romances” (207). The emotional connection between two characters is not limited to mainstream heterosexual norms of romance and friendship. Homosexual and bisexual relationships also fulfill an individual’s need to broaden their social sphere. However, I will be focusing my comments on heterosexual romantic couplings because of the added element of gender social roles. With this in mind, I will be focusing my attentions on the ‘Ballad of Tam Lin’ and two of its contemporary retellings: *The Perilous Gard* by Elizabeth Marie Pope and *Fire and Hemlock* by Diana Wynne Jones. There, I will be examining the external ways such heroic couples are bound together, and these factors (namely nature, social conventions and story-telling) necessitate both their individual and combined actions within the plot.

## **II. The Ballad of Tam Lin – A Retelling of Social Roles**

The story of Tam Lin is one of the most popular foundational components among the Fantasy or Supernatural/Paranormal genre. From Jane Yolan to Patricia Briggs, writers of this type of literature have either retold the tale or reused its shape-changing climax. Their interest lies in the unusual nature of the tale itself. It is one of the few folktales to feature a female hero, and is grouped with other such tales including “Beauty and the Beast”, “East of the Sun West of the Moon”, and “Cupid and Psyche.” In those tales, the protagonist, by enacting

*“But haud me fast...”: The Socialization, not Psychoanalysis, of the Heroic Couple within ‘Tam Lin’ and Its Contemporary Retellings*

her social role, finds and/or rescues her intended. In the case of Tam Lin, however, the protagonist-Janet- appears to not only reject the social norms of her society but to also gain her desires in the end. With the dearth of feminine role models in literature during the 70’s, a tale that had a young girl carry the day was too tempting to overlook, and its “didactic potential” helps readers become “aware of issues and possible [fresh] interpretations in the texts” (Joosen 130-1).

Indeed, Janet’s mannerisms, both before and after her pregnancy, carry a level of rebelliousness that would appeal to the modern aesthetic. First, she purposefully goes to a culturally forbidden place – Carterhaugh - because she believes she owns it and therefore, has a right to be there. “Carterhaugh it is mine ain; /My daddie gave it me; / I’ll come and gang to Carterhaugh,/ And ask nae leave o’ thee” (Child 33-6). Unlike Beauty or Psyche, who in their meekness and self-sacrificial tendencies exemplify pure clichés of women, Janet exhibits masculine traits. She states emphatically her right of property ownership (a generally masculine right) and asserts this right *against a man’s*. This defiance becomes her primary characteristic and continues after her pregnancy becomes general knowledge. Rather than accept the man her father chose to make her honest, she not only accepts the blame upon herself but more importantly, declares that her child will only bear the name of her true love. "If my love were an earthly knight, / As he's an elfin grey, /I wadna gie my ain true love/ For nae lord that ye hae" (Child 81-4). The implication here is clear: even if her true love were human and still unavailable, she would not trade him for another who was. This stubbornness and unwillingness to deviate from her chosen course (a masculine prerogative) is what allows her to rescue Tam.

Or so many critics postulate. For them, her pregnant state only serves to facilitate the practicality of her actions. She is going to have a baby and therefore, according to the edict of established social norms, must have a husband. Yes, she is choosing who her husband will be rather than accepting the substitute her father may have chosen for her. Indeed, there is a level of practicality to “hanging” onto Tam; as the true father of her child, he has a greater vested interest in her welfare. In her society, this would surely affect her final selection. However, the discussion of practicality takes away from the significance of her being pregnant at all, and her state of being muddles the question of whether Janet is, in fact, defying her social role.

The act of being pregnant is inarguably a decided feminine capability. It means, especially in regards to this ballad, that a piece of Tam resides within Janet, allowing him to remain tethered to the human world. Traditionally, women have served as the kite string within the relationship; and they are meant to keep their menfolk

*“But haud me fast...”: The Socialization, not Psychoanalysis, of the Heroic Couple within ‘Tam Lin’ and Its Contemporary Retellings*

tied to home (i.e. society). Like the Victorian “Angel of the House,” they represent home and family while the men symbolize the outside world. This juxtaposition becomes, even more, evident once children are conceived. Historically, women were mere vessels of masculine seed. They carried the child which they had no part in creating. However, looking at this from a purely modern perspective, the situation is much more balanced. Because they receive half of their genetics from their father and the other half from their mother, children are a permanent, irrefutable connection between two individuals. In the case of Tam Lin, it is the act of pregnancy which binds this couple together more assuredly than an act of marriage.

In a traditional Bildungsroman narrative, the story ends with either marriage or a social constrict of equal weight. “...For more than a century, European consciousness will perceive the crisis of marriage as a rupture that divides a couple but destroys the very roots ...of those sentiments that keep the individual ‘alive’” (Moretti 23). The act of marriage constitutes their acceptance of their position within society, and through this, the individual breaks down into a cog of the social machine. Instead of ‘me’ or ‘I,’ they become ‘we’ or ‘us.’ In the realm of the heroic couple, this means that, once the two people come to together, they become the extension of each other’s will; they represent one entity.

For a heroic couple of Janet and Tam, her pregnancy functions the same way and is reflected in the way that Janet and Tam behave around each other. As demonstrated above, Janet acts defiantly when she first meets Tam Lin, and she remains so to the rest of the world afterward. However, after she loses her virginity to Tam, her behavior towards him changes. In the scene following her rejection of suitors, Janet goes to find Tam. There, he tells her not only his history but also gives her a play-by-play of how to save him. Her following actions word for word abide by his instructions; indeed, from the moment that she accepted his authority, she became the instrument by which Tam saved himself.

He uses the connection through their child to grant her the authority to accomplish this. His subtle actions are made even more apparent through the Fairy Queen’s reaction. It is not Janet who the Queen reels against but Tam himself. She claims that had she known he intended to use his sexual conquests as a tether, she would have exchanged his eyes and heart for wood and stone (Child 225-35). Without his eyes, Tam would have been unable to acknowledge his attraction to Janet; without his heart, he could not have felt the prerequisite love. Thus, she would have effectively emasculated him, and he would have been incapable of developing the significant emotional connection that rescues him.

*“But haud me fast...”: The Socialization, not Psychoanalysis, of the Heroic Couple within ‘Tam Lin’ and Its Contemporary Retellings*

Most of the modern retelling have done away with the pregnancy subplot. However, they continue to utilize the ways in which external factors inform on the internal core relationship. The pregnancy in the original ballad both bound the couple and facilitates the resulting action. Without this aspect of the plot structure, authors have highlighted those other aspects of the plot that call for an external/internal social binary. Furthermore, to present a complete picture of the socialization of the heroic couple, I have included one retelling set in a historical setting (*The Perilous Gard*) and one contemporary (*Fire and Hemlock*). The aspects utilized within these retellings are reflective of their corresponding time periods. For *The Perilous Gard* by Elizabeth Marie Pope, the dynamic choice between one set of social expectations over another lies at the heart of its conflict. Both the Tam and Janet of this novel act as bridges between two states of being. For Kate, she moves between two society’s expectations: Elizabethan and Fairy. Not an official part of either society, Christopher suffers at the edge of the world and the realm of death, and for him, Fairy is a transitional stage between the two. It takes a physical act to defeat the Queen. In contrast, *Fire and Hemlock* by Diana Wynne Jones handle the connection between the couple very differently. Instead of a more physical representation like Pope’s retelling, this novel takes a more cerebral approach and focuses on the story-telling aspect of the ballad. For this variation, the connection between character and author is explored and becomes representative of the writer’s process.

### **III. The Perilous Gard- A Faerie Cultural Study**

As stated above, *The Perilous Gard* takes place in the historical era just before the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. The politics of the age are more of a fringe concern, and while it drives certain aspects of the plot, it becomes overshadowed by those of Fairy. In this novel, the Janet character is called Kate Sutton, and her Tam is known as Christopher Heron. Both are of them are of the nobility; Kate is an exiled lady-in-waiting to Princess Elizabeth and Christopher is the younger brother of an advisor to Queen Mary. However, Christopher, because he feels responsible for the disappearance of his niece, starts the novel rejecting the external world while Kate, due to the inference of a younger sister, is forced away. Since Queen Mary is dying, Kate knows that her exile is not permanent while Christopher intends for his to only end with his death. This slight variation in their circumstances allows Kate to function within their relationship as a link to Elizabethan society. However, without the addition of the nature-worshipping Fairy Folk civilization, the similarities between their situations would have kept them apart.

*“But haud me fast...”: The Socialization, not Psychoanalysis, of the Heroic Couple within ‘Tam Lin’ and Its Contemporary Retellings*

Indeed, unlike the Ballad itself, the Fairy Folk take a much more active role in the development of this novel’s plot. Thus, the description of the structure and norms of this social group are invaluable in a discussion of those relationships which develop within their confines. As John Stephens states, “A capacity to move attention from the local to the global requires not only an understanding of a particular ecosystem but a willingness to think beyond oneself and one’s own immediate environment and interests” (209). In other words, to understand the broader implications of a social condition, one must first describe how the primary community functions and then impartially discuss what the significance of this set-up is. In the case of the Fairies, this involves an in-depth look at the communal indicators of this fictional society.

With the original Tam and Janet, the Fairies are a fringe threat – something with limited contextual interaction with the characters, but who still poses a danger. The circumstances of both his position within the Fairy Court and how he must be rescued are told to Janet (and the audience) rather than being shown through words. This distances the reader from the action significantly and the very lack of interaction gives the Fairies the appropriate otherworldly aura. However, because of both the length of a novel and the contemporary looking-behind-curtain urge, the natural distance of the language does not function effectively away from the ballad structure. To compensate, Pope constructs an almost-possible Fairy society. Though their potions and herbal remedies are magical in their application, their nature-centered religious rituals, and underground civilization carry a level of historic realism. British holiday traditions have often displayed an element of the arcane. A man made of leaves (The Green Man) is pitched over a cliff into the sea, for example. Men made of straw are thrown into the bonfire on Bonfire Day. It is not much of a leap of logic to imagine a society dependent upon fiery human sacrifices like the teind-payer.

Furthermore, the nature aspect of the Fairy Folk becomes even more of a symbol as one examines the trappings of their social status. The expectations of their society are opposite of the Elizabethans. Their communal position is indicated by the naturalness of their possessions and not materialism. “Gold for the maids, and wood for the masters and one bronze bowl for the King of the land, at his death time” (Pope 164). Gold often correlates with affluence, and yet here, wood is the most precious element. Furthermore, the wood bowl lacks adornment while the golden bowls have handles “...shaped like animal heads: geese and asses and swine” (154). Taken with the first quotation, ‘the masters’ believe that civilization needs no ornate decoration; it simply exists within the natural order. The food that fills the bowl also highlights this point. The old adage that “you are what you eat” labels these

*“But haud me fast...”: The Socialization, not Psychoanalysis, of the Heroic Couple within ‘Tam Lin’ and Its Contemporary Retellings*

differences of culture as the binary of materialism and simplicity. While the Fairy Folk eat “... only a handful of boiled grain, like a fragmentary, sodden with milk and a little honey” (151), the maids are fed “[heaps of] some rich dark meat in a sauce that smelt delectable of wine and sweet herbs” (154). Like Daniel in the Biblical story of Daniel and the Princes of Babylon (Daniel 1), the Fairy Folk view the consumption of ‘unnaturally’ favored meat as sacrilegious because it denotes an animalistic behavior. This is verified in the maids’ actions. “They flung themselves on the bowls with little cries of delight, tossing away the spoons, snatching, gobbling, slavering as they tore at the meat with their fingers and stuffed great chunks of it into their mouths” (154). They do not act like civilized creatures but gluttonous beasts without thought or manners as evidenced by their ‘tossing away the spoons’ (a symbol of decorum) and adjectival words for eating. There remains no sense of society or community but what is overridden by selfishness. In this society, materialism correlates with an animalistic nature, and this kind of disposition lacks the capability to understand reality. Indeed, they are too weak mentally to handle life underground – the ultimate way to commune with nature. Thus, the maids are drugged into situation unawareness, clothed in the skins of animals and left grunting in the dark at the end of the day.

The undercurrent of this civilization is the weight. The Fairy Folk view their connection to nature is the most important aspect of their lives. They eat grains (a naturally occurring food), they use wooden utensils and wear greens and browns (what scholar Martha P. Hixon calls “the color of nature and new growth” (*Tam Lin* 73)). Nature is often associated with freedom or, at least, a lack of social restrictions. Conversely, this is not the case here. To join the society of the Fairy Folk even as a drugged maid is to simply exchange one set of norms for a more ritualistic set of rules. The dark edge of this existence is very readily apparent. Beyond the slave labor, this culture is dependent upon literal human sacrifice. Every seven years, they must have a young human throw themselves onto the fire. Most societies have their necessary black secrets, but they either remain unacknowledged or are rationalized away. The Fairy Folk are no exception. “All power comes from life, and when that life is low in the land and the people, they must take it from one who has it, adding his strength to their own, or perish. That is the law which the gods have laid on us, and they themselves cannot alter it” (208).

For them, a teind is an act of transference. During times of draft or famine, the life energy of the world – both natural and social – is lacking. To fill that emptiness, they believe that they can take the life of a person and distribute it to the world. They are aware of the cost and the blackness of the act, but it is “...the law [which] ...they themselves cannot alter.” This awareness presents itself as the constant weight of “...the tons and tons of actual

*“But haud me fast...”: The Socialization, not Psychoanalysis, of the Heroic Couple within ‘Tam Lin’ and Its Contemporary Retellings*

earth and stone lying above her, closing down on her, shutting her in. It was like some suffocating dream of being buried alive, or rather it was like the moment of awakening from that dream to find that it was true” (160). Though they are used to the pressure, the Fairy Folk have moments of weakness. They stumble or collapse under the weight; however, they view it as the personal price they pay for maintaining their way of life.

For Kate and Christopher, these idiosyncrasies – the weight, the drugging of the maids, the food bowl social markers - serve as physical reminders of their transitory states. Psychoanalysts would state that this is a natural element of story-telling; the external world acts as a magnifying glass, illuminating the characters’ personalities. However, these indicators are social constants for the Fairy Folk. All meals are conducted the same way. Every seven years, there will come a teind. Rather than viewing these aspects of the world-building as bringing forth hidden personal depths, it is signaling how well these characters are assimilating to their new social circumstances. Christopher and Kate are both outsiders to the Fairy culture; however, one has a greater chance of ‘fitting in’ than the other. This opportunity of integration works in direct contrast to what binds this couple together: rural ambitions.

Christopher is waffling between death and the manner but is not a recognized member of the community. Like the maids and the masters, his social position is indicated by his food and utensils. He is fed in a bronze bowl. As an unnatural metal, this clearly broadcasts to the Fairy Folk that he is not one of them. However, he is fed the same food as the masters: grain mixed with milk and honey. This places him in a position of greater public value than the maids because he was given the more socially acceptable victuals. This discrepancy between the bowl’s material and its fare represents his isolation. He is no longer considered a part of Elizabethan society in the eyes of the Fairy Folk, and yet he is also not part of their civilization. His lack of social interaction is to be expected because, by their social standards, he is already dead. For the nine weeks before Halloween, he is separated from everyone, and is prepared (or brainwashed) into throwing himself into the fire:

The ‘death service’ was what they called it long ago when the King of the land did it. To their way of thinking, he *was* dead from the moment he entered this place, or at least, couldn’t be treated as if he were even in the world any longer. Everyone was strictly forbidden to touch him, and nobody was allowed to speak to him except the Guardian of the Well (172).

The Guardian of the Well functions as the death figure of the novel and his strongest skill lies in his ethereal persuasion. Language plays a large part of the socialization process. Through it, the members of a

*“But haud me fast...”: The Socialization, not Psychoanalysis, of the Heroic Couple within ‘Tam Lin’ and Its Contemporary Retellings*

community not only recognize other members but also develop their own social identity. As Christopher’s only socially acceptable contact, the Guardian seeks to develop a strong enough bond that Christopher will identify with his position and enact his collectively assigned duty: to die. Unfortunately,(from the Fairy Folk’s perspective), the Guardian is not his only social contact.

After she is drafted into the Fairy Folk society as a maid, Kate makes a point of maintaining her upper-class Elizabethan dignity. First, she refused to be drugged, and defies the Lady (or Queen) by telling her “...why should your land be any more dreadful to me than it is too you?” (137) By laying down this gantlet, Kate is effectively declaring her sensibilities as equal to the greatest of the Fairy Folk. She will not be a wilting maiden, and though she feels the weight, she endures it on her own. Second, while the other maids ate like animals, she remembers her manners. “She picked up her silver spoon and began to eat: slowly and with the attention he her manners” (155). She is not only declaring to herself that she is different from the other maids, but also to her Fairy masters. It is these beginnings that convince them to begin teaching her their ways. Yet, though she is moving up in this new world, she still maintains a connection to her old life. Though she functions as Christopher’s tie to the upper world, she is also keeping her old way of life fresh in her mind through their strange conversations.

Rather than the romantic drivel that is often associated with the heroic couple, Christopher and Kate’s discussions are remarkably unsentimental. Indeed, the conversations between Kate and Christopher are characterized not by words of love but by practical statements about draining fields and “Manure, good plain dung. You take those water meadows at the manor ...” (185). Christopher even goes on to describe their relationship in similar terms. “You know how it is with me, Kate. I’ve been going to waste all my life, like the manor. It’s not bad land, but it’s too heavy and if the dead water backs up in it –“(279). The fact that this scene is enacted during a marriage proposal brings the lack of romanticism into sharper focus. Nonetheless, because the manor is the main focal point of most of their interactions, it represents their ambition to make a place for themselves in the upper ‘human’ world. Indeed, draining fields, the manor itself, and dunging are all indicators of a rural society. They require action and manpower; in short, they necessitate both life and social position. It is these concerns which hold Christopher within this world as Janet held Tam.

The tend scene functions as a more intense variation of these preliminary debates between farming techniques and Christopher’s death service. Even though Christopher clearly loves to talk about his dreams for the manor, it is a struggle to maintain his focus during his existential preparation for death. In essence, the Fairy Folk

*“But haud me fast...”: The Socialization, not Psychoanalysis, of the Heroic Couple within ‘Tam Lin’ and Its Contemporary Retellings*

do not simply want him to die, but to give up being himself. “Think. Will you keep the strength of your body, the force of your will, the power of your mind, the courage of your heart, or will you give them up to us, and be nothing?” (237) To truly become a sacrifice, there must be no part of Christopher left. Even what he wears during his final ritual becomes symbolic of what he must throw away in order to fulfill his role within this society. Christopher is decked out in gold and rubies to the point that he is even wearing a golden mask. As stated earlier, gold is not cherished by the culture of the Fairy Folk. Instead, it is symbolic of the materialism and lack of refinement of the Elizabethan society. During the final stage of the tend ritual, Christopher must throw away his clothes and jewelry and become “nothing.” This act is not only practical (fire + gold = a messy body) but also symbolic of throwing away his last connection to his former life. Without Kate’s constant reminder of his ambitions, Christopher might not have thought twice about tossing it all away. However, because they had, he is “...rigid as if [he] were locked in the grip of two equal and opposing forces, contending together, neither able to break free of the other” (243). These two opposing forces are conflicting social expectations. On the one hand are his social wants (i.e. his rural ambitions which includes marriage) and the other is his social duty (i.e. to sacrifice himself for the betterment of others). These are natural conflicts; what people want is not always what people should have. Still, in this case, it is a crippling struggle because one’s biological imperative includes a lack of enthusiasm for death. Ironically, it is another biological imperative that snaps him out of his internal stalemate: food.

Throughout Christopher and Kate’s conversations, food has been a re-occurring theme. This fits into the aesthetic symbol of the manor for what is a manor house but a gentry farm? And what is the point of a farm if not for sustenance? Yet, what is more, interesting about this final tempting of Christopher is that the Fairy Folk encourage appearances which defy their established social norms to win his cooperation. They suggest that he is dressed in “gold and precious things like one of the gods” (246). This encourages him to consider himself above present company when, in reality, gold has been an indicator of the lowest social caste. This slip of the tongue harkens back to the essentials of the original ballad. Tam is only free to leave after he turns into something culturally repugnant to the Fairies- a cold iron rod (Child 170). Here, they are simply stating something false – that gold indicates godliness to them. Like Janet, Kate is the one who dives into the truth of the matter by telling Christopher that he looks “... like a piece of gilded gingerbread, that’s what you look like, one of those cakes they

*“But haud me fast...”: The Socialization, not Psychoanalysis, of the Heroic Couple within ‘Tam Lin’ and Its Contemporary Retellings*

sell at the fair!” (246). This act of deception illustrates the final moral of the novel; whether for good or ill, defying social conventions (even unintentionally) causes them to dissolve.

#### **IV. Fire and Hemlock – The Author/Character Dynamic**

In Diana Wynne Jones’s *Fire and Hemlock*, the heroic couple Polly Whittaker and Thomas Lynn, unlike Christopher and Kate, is characterized by the cerebral rather than the physical. They met at a funeral when Polly is ten and Tom is a youngish man. There, they tell stories about themselves in which Tom is a hero called Tan Coul and Polly is his assistant called Hero. Though it can be argued that story-telling is an internal practice, it functions within society on an external level. Whether through writing or speech, telling is synonymous with sharing, and it is during this process that social groups are established. In the case of Polly and Tom, it is what forms their connection as a couple.

The writing process is unique to each writer, and can involve some very personal steps. However, there are certain aspects of the process that are foundational. First, they must brainstorm for ideas and story narratives. Second, they need to research similar stories and concepts. Next, they begin to tell the tale, which includes editing and critiques. Finally, they let go and work towards bringing it out into the world (i.e. publication). The relationship between Tom and Polly follows this basic pattern. At the funeral, they set out the parameters of their story. They choose names, decide on their general purpose (to become heroes), and establish their home life as Thomas Piper (ironmonger) and his assistant. Over the course of years, Tom sends Polly ‘necessary’ reading material (books like a collection of fairy tales and the *Three Musketeers*) and shares further ideas for stories and characters. As Polly becomes more and more involved with writing down her tales, Tom gives her feedback (sometimes harshly), but encourages her to dig deeper into her story’s possibilities like a professional editor. This progression of their relationship becomes more significant as they move towards the final, foundational stage: letting it go. Jones explores both the stagnation of the coveted work and the freedom of its release into the wider world. Unlike Pope’s novel, Jones is much subtle in her adaptation. Not only does this lead to a wildly different solution in the finale but also in her handling of the fantastic.

In Jones’s opinion, reality and the fantastic are not mutually exclusive; instead, the imagination augments the mundane and clarifies life situations. “Fantasy is very important part of how your mind works. People trot out

*“But haud me fast...”: The Socialization, not Psychoanalysis, of the Heroic Couple within ‘Tam Lin’ and Its Contemporary Retellings*

the truism that man is a tool-making animal, but nobody pauses to think that before a caveman could make a stone ax or obsidian arrowhead, he had to imagine it first” (*Answers* 131). She further elucidates that imagination and “matters that dealt with in fairy tales or myths (magic)” are “functions of the right lobe of the brain” (129). The significance of this lies in the problem-solving processes of the human mind. A human, most particularly an author, exists on multiple planes of awareness. On the standard level of ‘reality,’ people live their lives and deal with normal issues. The realm of the imagination happens nearly simultaneously with reality. It helps them calculate probabilities of success on mad ventures, and to think ahead in the middle of a conversation. For authors, this helps them live several lifetimes as their characters during their one. In actuality, it is the magic functions of the brain that keep society evolving.

In *Fire and Hemlock*, Jones gives these right and left operations new names: the Now Here of reality and the Nowhere of the imagination. They appear on the side of two spinning vases in front of Hunsdon House, or the home base of the fairies of this novel. In reality, each vase simply reads as “Nowhere,” but as they turn, their words shift around to read several different phrases: Nowhere, Now Here, and Here Now. In the time it takes them to spin, the planes of awareness have changed even in this small way. Martha P. Hixon established the purview of creative planes of existence in her essay entitled “The Importance of Being Nowhere: Narrative Dimensions and their Interplay in *Fire and Hemlock*” by stating emphatically that “[the] sphere of the creative imagination in the novel is “Nowhere,” the place where seemingly magical things can happen, whereas the ordinary and everyday is “Now Here”” (100). Like with her theory of problem-solving creativity and the real world, these two planes of existence happen so closely together at the same moment that they are almost indistinguishable. This theory is demonstrated early on in the novel as Tom and Polly gazed at a dry pool:

For just a flickering part of a second, some trick of the light filled the pool deep with transparent water. The sun made bright, curved wrinkles on the bottom, and the leaves, Polly could have sworn, instead of rolling on the bottom, were, just for an instant, floating, green and growing. Then the sunbeam traveled on, and there was just a dry oblong of concrete again (22).

The act of seeing beyond the standard expectations is a function of Nowhere, and yet in a blink, Now Here reasserts itself. In this way, Jones comments on authors (heroes) as people who flicker between these areas of perception. Polly even reaffirms this by saying directly after this incident, “Heroes do see things like that” (22). In this way, Jones suggests that this state of dual being is not just universal but natural.

*“But haud me fast...”: The Socialization, not Psychoanalysis, of the Heroic Couple within ‘Tam Lin’ and Its Contemporary Retellings*

Nowhere is where Tom and Polly meet, but it is Now Here where he prepares her for their meetings. He does this by sending her a great many books of fantasy and literature, and then commenting on her writing progress. The writing of fiction is naturally intertextual; no story grows up out of nothing. What constitutes texts is not simply literature, but also photographs, music, and other indicators of time and signification. Moreover, what constitutes intertextuality is that “the texts referring to each other illuminate each other” (Yamazaki 113). The significance of a single contributing text cannot overshadow the power/meaning of the itinerary texts as a whole. Thus, the work of balancing texts and creativity is the author’s main challenge; the act of taking too much from any one text or too little causes the whole novel to lose credibility. Some of Tom’s harshest criticism to Polly came after she read *Lord of the Rings*, and suddenly Tan and Hero were searching for an evil ring instead of questing for something more unique. “No, it is not a ring. You stole that from Tolkien. Use your own ideas” (192). *Use your own ideas* suggests that there is, in fact, an original idea. Still, it has to be said that it is only the configuration of old ideas that is new or fresh, and it is this intertextuality that represents the Social Conversation of fictional interpretation.

For Tom and Polly, this level of intertextuality is not simply to improve Polly’s skills as a writer but to also show her the reality of their own situation. Tom, like all the other variations of Tam Lin, is still intended to be a tithe to hell. His death will allow another fairy- The Queen’s consort - to renew his life. Unlike Tam, he cannot tell her directly about it. To make up for this lack, he sends her those novels and stories which can shed light on his situation. Unfortunately, stories are subject to interpretation and are therefore unreliable for conveying such specific information as Polly was sure to tell Tom once she found out. “Well, you should have told me! I can’t help if you don’t tell me anything, can I?” ‘I sent you enough books about it!’ ‘That’s not the sa-’ (368). The truth was that as long as she remembered him long as Polly remembers him and writes stories about him – holds onto to him mentally- he is safe. The trouble is that she cannot hoard him like a dragon over gold; he is not hers but is a part of Nowhere. Thus, he belongs to the world of readers. At the moment she tries to keep him to herself, Polly loses her ability to write about him at all. She forgets him, and the stories she already wrote about him were lost.

This is represented in the novel as the changed tales within the book *Tales of Nowhere*. Originally, this was a collection of tales told by her characters: Tan Coul, Tan Thare, Tan Hanivar, and Tan Audel. These characters have special abilities and have helped Polly as Hero with her hero business. Years later (and at the beginning of the novel proper), this same book’s tales are different than she remembered. This discrepancy reveals two things. One, those authors carry inside them two sets of memories: one of the real world and one figuring her imagined lives.

*“But haud me fast...”: The Socialization, not Psychoanalysis, of the Heroic Couple within ‘Tam Lin’ and Its Contemporary Retellings*

Two, that if she had forgotten any part of either lifetime, then “... it was because of something dreadful she had done herself” (5). Her act of possessive forgetting (which it takes nearly the entire book to remember) causes both a personal loss and a social one. Though she lost connection to her characters, it is her readers who suffer unknowingly because they will never meet them at all.

Indeed, if an author stops writing about a character without seeking publication for what they have completed, is it not like the story disappears into nothing – or hell? In the world of authors, there are boxes of unfinished stories. In all ways that matter, their characters are dead or lost. However, those who succeed in the writing game also lose control of their characters. They are now in the realm of the readers, who will have their own ideas of what things mean or what holds significance. This is the case of Polly and Tom. The harder they try to control the story or keep it for themselves, the faster they find it slipping from their fingers.

Unlike most Tam Lin variations, it is not the act of hanging on that rescues Tom. Instead, Polly must do the opposite. In the final scene, Tom and Mr. Leroy (the Queen’s consort) fight for the right to not be the tithe, and it is during this scene that Polly realizes that she has to let Tom go emotionally. “So the only way to win is to lose, I’ll have to lose” (413). The more Polly tries to hang onto Tom, the quicker she pulls him down into nothingness. He cannot grow with that weight. It is in the hands of readers that stories gain fresh, renewable life. It is through their interest and interpretation that academics, scholars and fans find the shifting significance of a layered text, and broaden the perspectives of later readers. However, this does not mean that Polly and Tom must part ways forever. She is still his author, and he her character. There is always Nowhere – the place of new stories. Polly summed it up perfectly when she said, “If two people can’t get together anywhere- “(420), then it must be Nowhere. Diana Wynne Jones confirms this in her essay entitled “The Heroic Ideal: A Personal Odyssey,” by saying that, “...though a relationship was possible between Polly and Tom, such a relationship is only likely to be maintained through continuing repeated small acts of heroism from both” (98). These acts of heroism can only amount to future situations of growth and stories freely shared with the community.

## **V. Conclusion – Summations and Implications**

Polly and Tom, Christopher and Kate, and Tam and Janet are all couples who are defined by the plot. For Tam and Janet, it is their status as an expecting couple that allows Tam to reconnect with the human world and defeat the

*“But haud me fast...”: The Socialization, not Psychoanalysis, of the Heroic Couple within ‘Tam Lin’ and Its Contemporary Retellings*

Fairy Queen. Kate tethers Christopher to Elizabethan society by reminding him of rural progression and social disorder. Polly and Tom explored the land of social imagination –Nowhere- and found that one can only hold onto stories that one let’s go. All of these heroic couples use their connection to each other to achieve those social expectations that would bring them the most happiness. However, do all heroic couples function this way or only those of the ‘fairy tale’ persuasion? Only the literature can tell. Still, are we not all products of external factors? It has been a proven fact that communal culture – families, regional backgrounds, social expectations – have a strong effect on the development of an individual, and this correlation can only be reinforced by those things that represent contemporary culture values: the stories themselves.

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*“But haurd me fast...”: The Socialization, not Psychoanalysis, of the Heroic Couple within ‘Tam Lin’ and Its Contemporary Retellings*

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