

**Flight Over Telethar**

**An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)**

**by**

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Scott', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

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Abstract

*Flight Over Telethar* is a steampunk fantasy novel for young adults. In the land of Telethar, the many races of the Fae are persecuted and hunted down by human mages that call themselves the Mageri. Sherieth is a Fae girl who grew up hiding her true identity in a human city, apart from her own kind. When her best friend is captured by the Mageri, she is willing to do whatever it takes to find him – even if it means working with Alerid, a cold and dangerous young Mageri officer who she knows she cannot fully trust. *Telethar* is a coming-of-age tale and a story of redemption, drawing influences from mythology, steampunk subculture, and a variety of fantasy works including the novels of Diana Wynne Jones. This excerpt consists of the prologue and the first three chapters, covering what could be considered the first act of the novel's plot.

## Acknowledgements

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I would like to thank my parents for all of their support over the past four years.

### Author's Statement

Deciding to write *Flight Over Telethar* was not a decision I made this year, or even last year; this novel had its beginnings when I was still in high school and still more or less ignorant about the process of writing something on such a large scale. By the time I graduated, I had produced a complete draft of the novel, but it didn't stop there. Over the next four years, I continued to write and rewrite, editing some things and scrapping others. While other projects came and went, some better than others, there was something about *Telethar* that stuck with me even long after I had abandoned most, if not all, of the other novels and stories I'd tried starting in my teenage years. Most of them I grew out of as I became a better writer, but for whatever reason, I wanted to see this through.

Because of its longevity, *Telethar* occupies a unique position in my academic and writing portfolio. When I decided to completely overhaul and rewrite *Telethar* as my senior honors thesis, it was in some ways an experiment. Since my first attempt at writing the novel, I had learned a great deal and completed the coursework for a creative writing minor. In my opinion, nothing could better encapsulate what I'd learned as a writer over the past four years than starting over on a project which had been with me from the beginning. Even though I changed my major to psychology halfway through college, creative writing still felt like the most fitting capstone for my undergraduate years.

Though many of the details have changed, the basic concept of the novel has stayed the same. *Flight Over Telethar* is a fantasy novel aimed at young adults, which draws influences from mythology and a lifetime of fantasy reading, as well as the subgenre or subculture known as "steampunk," which portrays a fantastical version of Victorian technology and culture. It's an adventure story, in some ways a coming-of-age tale, in which the heroine Sherieth must embark on a dangerous journey in order to save her closest friend. It's also a story of redemption; as

Sherieth discovers herself on her quest, her adversary and reluctant travelling partner Alerid finds the strength to break away from an evil order that has had him trapped since childhood.

I find that the thematic strengths of the novel are what have changed the most since the first time I attempted to write it. It isn't that the novel's main themes are different, exactly, but they are more intentionally woven into the narrative. The ideas of redemption, maturation, and heroism arose quite naturally in the original story, and it may have been this experience which led me to initially reject some of the ideas I discovered in my college-level creative writing classes. The idea of writing to convey a theme felt stilted and forced. Literary fiction was something that my previous creative writing classes had not really covered, and I was surprised by the emphasis that this genre placed on metaphors, signs, and symbols. It felt, at first, like something that did not really apply to me. I preferred to write genre fiction, and having been fortunate enough to wind up in a creative writing program that allowed this, continued to do so where possible.

What I learned over subsequent years was that these two types of fiction, the all-encompassing categories that must never be crossed, were not actually as mutually exclusive as I had come to believe. One of the earliest clues was the novel *Fire and Hemlock* by the British fantasy writer Diana Wynne Jones. *Fire and Hemlock* was – and remains – one of the most complex, layered novels I have ever read. Explaining her process in her essay “The Heroic Ideal: A Personal Odyssey,” Jones revealed that everything about the novel, every thematic detail and literary allusion no matter how subtle, was completely intentional. It was precisely the sort of thematic, “literary” writing I'd assumed was so forced, and yet I hadn't even noticed as I read the novel, because Jones was a masterful spinner of tales. This opened my eyes to an entirely new

way of looking at “theme” in writing, and I began to gain a new appreciation for what I had previously dismissed.

Part of the shift was that Jones rebelled against the idea that moral relativism and strict realism were the only way to write literary fiction. As she explained in the essay, “No respectable writer dared for centuries to write a straightforward heroic narrative. If you wanted to, you had to show that your narrative had a purpose that was not heroic; either to strip the illusions from a naïve hero ... or to make a moral and social point aside from the story” (Jones 85). In another essay, Jones discussed genre boundaries and how arbitrary they truly are: “Each has hunkered down inside what it believes to be its own boundaries, and inside those boundaries the Rules for Being Of That Genre have proliferated and hardened until almost no one can write anything original at all. But the Rules say that if you write the same book all the time, that’s okay. That’s fine. That’s Genre” (Jones 110-1).

The secret was that the boundaries as I understood them did not really exist. Though it is incredibly unlikely that anything I write will ever be sold as literary fiction, it turns out that it is possible to take lessons from one genre, bring them to another, and create something that is stronger from the fusion. *Teletar*, though it exemplifies the change in my writing process, is far from the end product. As I continue to write in the future, I will be writing with intent.

All I have ever wanted is to tell the stories I most need to tell. Now, I find myself at last beginning to understand the tools I need to do that.

## Works Cited

Jones, Diana Wynne. *Reflections on the Magic of Writing*. New York, NY: Greenwillow Books, 2012. Print.