



The Monastic Life and the Warrior's Quest: The Middle Ages from the Viewpoint of Animals in Brian Jacques's *Redwall* Novels

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For all of its technological sophistication, contemporary popular culture seems to find the medieval era greatly appealing. Current films and audio recordings, home decorating accessories, restaurants offering mock jousting events as entertainment, and fantasy literature both for adults and children variously depict the Middle Ages. For children particularly, toys, costumes and all sorts of games both ordinary and electronic rely heavily on popular medieval icons such as warriors, maidens, castles, dungeons, dragons, monks, monasteries, sorcerers, quests and, of course, battles. Perhaps most appealingly, the medieval context as it is popularly understood provides the possibility for vicarious engagement in powerful struggles between the forces of Good and the forces of Evil. This allows for a rough and ready kind of familiarity with the Middle Ages, one that makes for a popular awareness, even if the accuracy of information which most people associate with the era leaves much to be desired—a problem with much of contemporary medievalism.

A recent series of novels for children by the British author Brian Jacques relies on some of the medieval icons I have just mentioned. His use of warrior figures, quests as a path to growth, and the role of the monastic life all appear regularly. He is, however, more sophisticated in his depiction of the Middle Ages than many of his peers. My aim in this essay will be to examine some of the distinctive strengths of this series of novels, and consider some of the anomalous aspects of these works as well in terms of their expression of a medieval authenticity in essence as well as in their particulars.

Brian Jacques writes in the tradition of medieval animal tales such as *Aesop's Fables*, *Reynard the Fox* stories or the story of Chanticleer from

The Canterbury Tales in the sense that he treats the animal characters in his stories anthropomorphically. These animals speak, solve problems, construct buildings, weapons, art and other items, cook, brew beer, and establish communities that are diverse in their animal species membership. In short, his animal characters function just as human beings function in the world. His cast of characters consists of animals to be found in an English forest, marshland, or seacoast. Unlike the animal characters in the medieval stories, however, there is at most only indirect and rare reference to humans and the artifacts, foods or other phenomena of human lives in his writings, and only one description of a domesticated animal, all in the very first book of the series.

The first novel, *Redwall*, contains some indirect references to humans at the outset. The evil Cluny the Scourge, a monstrosly large sea rat, is described as being probably a "Portuguese rat," a suggestion that the country of Portugal and what the existence of a country entails is meaningful to the characters in the novel. The rat Cluny is described as entering the woods with a horde of 500 vermin followers by riding on a human-sized cart pulled by a horse. The horse is caused to gallop into the forest because he is provoked by fear of the rats (there is neither a rat nor a human driver), but the horse and hay cart are stolen by Cluny and his horde from someone with the ability to bridle and blinker the horse and attach him to the wagon.

Also in the first book, a farm is mentioned in passing, and the animals speak of dairy products and eggs as a part of their diet; any references to cheeses or cream in later books is to a product made from the sap of plants. Nor are eggs consumed in later books, since to do so would be cannibalistic from the point of view of the anthropomorphized birds and animals. Jacques seems to accept the consumption of fish, however, since references to catching or eating them occur in several of the novels. Since the anthropomorphized creatures cannot communicate with fish, this seems to suggest that fish are not of the same sentient class as other creatures and thus may be consumed for food. Reptiles and amphibians are regarded as able to be communicated with, but are not highly regarded by the animals. There is a certain class hierarchy of creatures suggested in the novels.

This exclusion of humankind creates a literary universe distinct from any in medieval lore. In works such as the tales of Reynard the Fox, the animals interact against the backdrop of the farmer's yard, or cart, or stores of food: that is, they interact with the unstated presumption of humans. Likewise Chaucer's animal tale and the fables of Aesop generally presume the existence of humans: dogs and other animals

make reference to their masters, and there is mention of household utensils in some of the fables; thus the various sorts of tales presume humans who made such objects. This is noteworthy because Jacques's animals are not influenced or affected by humans in any manner. After the first novel, they exist in a context devoid of any suggestion of humankind or human influence: hence their choices and decisions are to be understood as in every way without human influence or context, and so are themselves more humanlike. They have all the artifacts and skills of medieval humans, and they are fully responsible for what they make and do. This strong anthropomorphism makes for some interesting issues of morally significant decisionmaking throughout the novels.

Jacques's novels are influenced by many medieval literary staples. Episodes from *Beowulf*, the *Cid*, Arthurian lore, lives of the saints, and traits of creatures from bestiaries turn up in the novels in slightly altered form. The examples are numerous and creative. In *Beowulf*, Beowulf's sword of the giants borrowed from Grendel's lair loses its blade by melting caused by exposure to Grendel's blood, and only the finely crafted hilt remains. So, too, in the early novel *Mossflower*, the sword blade of the famed warrior Martin the mouse is initially destroyed by the wicked tyrant Tsarmina, a cat,¹ leaving only the hilt. But unlike in the Grendel episode, the sword is destroyed by Tsarmina herself, not by having brought about her demise. Another episode of similarity to a famous medieval work occurs in a later novel, *Salamandastron*. Just as the *Cid* wins an important battle by being propped upon his horse and going forth even though he is dead, so also does the legendary badger warrior Urthstripe win a battle by similar means, although he, too, is dead. In the novel Jacques brings about the creation of a new and spectacular sword for his hero Martin, from its remaining hilt, by extraordinary means. The continual reliance on the sword, or upon creatures' memory of it, through many of the novels recalls the symbolic role of other legendary swords, such as Excalibur of King Arthur.

Heroes and villains in Jacques's novels may be either male or female, just as in some Germanic, Celtic and Slavic sources, as well as at least one female figure in Arthurian lore, Morgan le Fay. Interestingly, there are even some allusions to stories of the lives of the saints. The life of the warrior mouse Martin is in some ways similar to the life of St. Martin of Tours, a saint whose burial place became the locus of medieval pilgrimage, who was first a warrior and later entered a monastery. These details are similar to the life of Martin the mouse as he has been described by Jacques.

Finally, some of Jacques's animal types are consistent with their medieval characterizations and conventions in bestiaries. Foxes are

always cast as wily, devious, untrustworthy, and harmful to others, and crows who are soothsayers, are some examples.

Jacques is also quite consistent with medieval practices and customs. On several occasions significant information is passed on to benevolent animals by means of visions or dreams. These may be prophetic, mysteriously informative (for example, a riddle which, when solved, provides direction or a solution to a problem), or merely supportive (for instance, visions of a long-dead, noble animal warrior who encourages the living in their time of difficulty). These dream types are consistent with the classifications formulated by Macrobius² and added to by St. Augustine of Hippo,³ and relied upon throughout the Middle Ages. The three dream types identified above are named *oraculum*, *somnium* and *phantasma*, respectively, by the classical sources.

Also, some characterizations of monastic life among animals are consistent with the descriptions given of monastic hospitality and monastic charity. For example, at Redwall Abbey,⁴ the monastery around which all of Jacques's novels revolve, travelers are welcomed and fed, clothed if need be, attended to in the infirmary if they are injured or ill, and permitted to stay as long as they wish. The poor, orphans, and the elderly often live permanently at the Abbey, even though they are not under vows. The young are educated, and the Abbey produces all of its own food and drink.

Most noteworthy, however, are Jacques's descriptions of feasts. He describes numerous feasts in ample detail⁵ throughout the series, reflecting appropriate attitudes of medieval courtesy to one's guests. For instance, Jacques has the hosts of his feasts continue to dine so long as the perceived desire of the guests to do so continues. He has the hosts provide their best fare, without stint, but also with humility.⁶

Lastly, the tradition of the quest is significant, for beasts undertake it in many of the same ways and for many of the same reasons it is significant in medieval literature. Creatures leave their homes or ordinary lives, going into a liminal state in which they are removed from their friends and family and must accomplish some difficult task with little or no help. They undergo transformation because of their quest, and transform others by means of what they do. Most of Jacques's books are developed around a quest that must be accomplished by some character.

Jacques's books are particularly intriguing not only because of what they incorporate of medieval history and lore, but most especially because of what they *exclude*. Examples of these exclusions can be revelatory in a variety of ways. Jacques has his beasts occupy the same categories of medieval life as humans would, and as indicated earlier,

some animal species act in ways consistent with their characterizations in bestiary accounts of their animal natures. This is consistent with the beasts replacing the role of humans on earth since the medievals themselves saw the relationship of beastly characters to human characters—beasts were understood to represent human character traits which were either to be cultivated or avoided. More often in Jacques's novels, however, animals are consistent with a species characterization stipulatively determined by Jacques. There are no members of the category of those who rule. The leaders in the novels arise naturally and are recognized readily by those with whom they live. There is no monarchy in the *Redwall* novels.

In the category of those who fight, however, mice are perhaps the most notable since they are never timid or "mousy." As a species in Jacques's accounts, mice are capable, generally intelligent, good-natured, and occasionally superbly courageous.⁷ The greatest warrior heroes of the series are mice, with badgers a close second. Badgers are always stalwart, brave, and great warriors, or leaders in other ways. They tend to have the fearlessness of the medieval French hero of the *Song of Roland*, and occasionally also his pride and foolhardiness. Badgers are most likely to fight to the death with their vassals, the hares. In certain circumstances badgers attain a greater level of wisdom, and conclude their lives as sages. Hares are also courageous warriors, but with the behavioral quirks and peculiarities of dialect belonging to what is very like a contemporary English upperclass background. They also occasionally exhibit annoying traits (some are braggarts), and all hares display an almost limitless capacity to ingest food.

In the category of those who work, otters, moles, squirrels and hedgehogs are always goodnatured, although the rare squirrel or hedgehog may be somewhat close-minded or vain. Weasels, stoats, ferrets and rats are always villainous and dangerous, as are foxes, but the former group may also be occasionally dimwitted. The only species in the series that can be either good or evil, depending upon the individual beasts, are the shrew and the cat.⁸ Regarding the cat, this may be because cats do not appear beyond the very few earliest books, and it is apparent that Jacques was still developing the rules of his cosmos at that time. Regarding the shrews, while shrews are understood to be mercenaries, they rarely fail to support the Redwall creatures in their time of need. In many cases, species are further identified by consistent use of a particular dialect.⁹ Stoats, weasels, ferrets and sea rats—generally all pirates—have been identified as using a London Cockney or an Irish dialect. Moles use a rustic dialect from Cornwall, and hedgehogs speak as if from Yorkshire

or Lancastershire. Otters, always near water, use speech reminiscent of workers from Liverpool. Only mice and badgers speak consistently without dialect. As for the birds, the falcons speak as Scots, rooks (usually malevolent) and owls (usually benevolent) speak with no dialect, and other birds use a sort of pidgin English; no doubt the pun was intended.¹⁰ It is unclear what Jacques intends by ascribing particular dialects to specific groups of creatures, since humans of the same cultural background are not identical in their life paths, and thus, not identical in their patterns of speech. The consistency regarding dialect in Jacques's writing suggests that there is a certain innuendo of stereotyping in the development of the characters of certain animal species due to their consistency of dialect.

Piracy, kidnapping and enslavement of docile, benevolent beasts by antagonistic beasts are frequent themes in Jacques's novels. Although slavery existed in Europe before and during the Middle Ages (and after), when it did occur, often it was enslavement of persons from distant places.¹¹ The same would be true of piracy. In fact, as Jacques characterizes them, his pirates are much more creatures of the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries than they are of, say, the tenth or twelfth. This liberty is a useful device for Jacques, since most of his novels after the second have essentially the same plot, namely the struggle of a youthful character to defeat a daunting foe and in so doing find his or her own inner strength. Pirates are usually that foe, and so they are imported back in time to serve the purposes of plot.¹² It will become clear shortly why, for Jacques, this is preferable to the use of any medieval collection of foes.

The creatures that make Redwall Abbey their home include another group in addition to those already mentioned. Nuclear and extended families of animals live within the Abbey. Some live in private dwellings within the Abbey walls, yet all are part of the Abbey. They may or may not take communal meals; some of them dress in habits; but they all live under the guidance of the abbot or abbess of Redwall. They participate in the communal life, rather like more involved members of a Third Order¹³ or a commune, or perhaps like very early Christians are believed to have lived. The communal component is strongly emphasized and makes the lifestyle of the Abbey beasts quite anomalous as examples of monasticism (clerics and laity both under Abbey rule), animal life as we know it (various animal species do not live communally), or as life in a medieval village (the residents of a village did not live in a communal arrangement).

The most striking departure from all things medieval by Jacques, however, is his omission of any reference to a Judeo-Christian God or

religion in any form. Needless to say, the presence of an Abbey, creatures referred to as “Abbot,” “Abbess,” “Friar,” “Sister,” “Brother,” and “Father,” the attire of habits, and even prayers would seem to indicate that somehow religion played a role in the life and society of the beasts. But the closest Jacques comes to a religious symbol in any regard is a sword placed at the top of a tower that resembles a cross, even though it is not so described.¹⁴ Prayers are uttered to thank “the seasons,” and the importance of the hero’s quest is always some good work with no further significance than the positive outcomes of its accomplishment. The struggle to overcome evil has no salvific significance beyond the mundane and the practical. It is as if the animals of the *Redwall* novels have no awareness of the God their activities were formulated to venerate, at least as formulated among humans.

This leaves the reader questioning why these beasts engage in the activities they do. One obvious answer is that, setting religion and religious rituals and traditions aside for the moment, they all have some sense of morality in its most basic formulation. I am suggesting a version of morality that presumes the similarities of sentient beings with regard to needs and wants, and the ways in which those similarities lead to a recognition of shared values and ends. The best-known moral theory of this sort from the Middle Ages is the Thomistic version of virtue theory and Natural Law. By means of it Thomas Aquinas articulates the aims for character development and the basic Goods: those traits and conditions of sentient beings that are recognized as good, positive or beneficial to them and by them unvaryingly, no matter what the time, location, etc.¹⁵ According to Aquinas the basic Goods are the following: to seek the good and avoid evil, to pursue knowledge and an orderly social life, to engage in sexual love and create a family, and to pursue productive work and enjoy the fruits of such labor. These Goods, along with the cultivation of traits of character that exemplify the cardinal virtues, describe the basic guidelines for individual development and action in society.¹⁶

It seems apparent that the animals described in the *Redwall* books know the basic Goods that constitute Natural Law, but they do not know that they know them, or they do not recognize Natural Law for what it is defined as in medieval philosophy, that is, a human understanding of divine law. This is not so different from the condition of simple human societies that have never encountered Christianity, or that of young children, according to Aquinas. They, too, are aware of Natural Law without recognizing their awareness of it or the purported source of the law. The very reasonableness of it is seen as the justification of the

appellation “natural,” that is, not arbitrary. One may know Natural Law without ever recognizing or forming an awareness of the Judeo-Christian God. Thus, the choice in the world of humans for Natural Law as the basis for international law, particularly in relation to “crimes against humanity” in the recent past.

It is possible for Jacques to develop reasonable presumptions about the values to which his anthropomorphized animals might subscribe by working from the Natural Law model: and, of course, the cultivation of a virtuous character makes sense outside the framework of religious belief, since the original ancient cardinal virtues which dominate his books themselves rely only on the kind of society preferred by a community, and no divine commandment. But this leaves the matter of an animal model of medieval society developed with no reference to Christianity.

What is the significance of the absence of any reference to God in the medieval world of the *Redwall* novels? I have two sorts of answers I would like to offer, each quite different from the other. Perhaps the greatest significance is that it is an easy matter not to notice the absence at all. Everything about these works is internally consistent, and certainly is intended to be positive and uplifting to the youthful reader. He or she comes away from the works with a sense of the importance of striving for good and working to defeat evil. But how does he or she know why this is so? The omission of the role of religion obscures the motivation for seeking the good and avoiding evil as it would have been understood in the actual medieval context.¹⁷ The omission also undermines the possibility of an accurate sense of the historic Middle Ages for young readers. Without a discussion of the role of religion, eventual exposure to authentic historical accounts may be confusing to a child. Obviously, however, to omit any mention of religion is quite consistent with a contemporary worldview. When asked about the omission, my 10-year-old son, Edward Leinwand, who had read the series and knew something about the Middle Ages, as well as the contemporary context, responded: “I think Mr. Jacques thinks he will sell more books this way, because many people don’t like to think about religion, or else they disagree about what they think about it.” Not addressing a controversial area of the study of the Middle Ages is the safe approach—indeed, a preferred approach when public responses to any aspect of children’s literature that might be controversial can cause a book to be banished from a library. However, what are the ramifications of making such choices based on a preference for safety?

It is clear that right action in the *Redwall* books is founded on a kind of moral absolutism. Ethical theories based on religious principles are

often of this sort, as are deontological¹⁸ ethical theories generally. By “moral absolutism” I mean the view that there is an absolute moral principle or set of principles that can be known and in terms of which right action can be determined. To act from these principles is to act rightly. But there is no explanation in the *Redwall* books of what the justification for the absolutist views might be. While seeking the good is consistently important in the writings, there is no explanation as to why the beasts do so, or of what the good consists. One might expect some philosophical motive to be articulated, such as a deontological, Kantian-type emphasis on duty as the motive for action, or perhaps a Buddhist view, with compassion as the preferred motive.

In a deontological ethical account, an action is right so long as one acts from the proper motive, and the means for determining the proper motive is an absolutist rule or principle that is not outcome-directed. The significance of this from an ethical point of view is the fact that the outcome of one’s actions is not relevant in the evaluation of the action. This means that doing something for the sake of the outcome is not regarded as a right action since focussing on an outcome would not be consistent with rules for actions that are supposed to be good in themselves, or good because they are rightly motivated. Ethical theories that determine right action on the basis of outcomes may be of several sorts, but those most popularly recognized are utilitarian ethical theories that maintain that an action is right only if it maximizes benefits over burdens most effectively for society. There is surely not merely a reliance on some sort of utilitarian interest in good results in the *Redwall* books, since the right-acting animal characters in the books do not usually decide what to do on the basis of the likely outcome. For example, a warrior hare or badger may stand and fight in a situation in which he is outnumbered because it is the right thing to do, even though he has every reason to believe when he does so that all hope is already lost. Fighting on principle is highly regarded in the world of *Redwall*.

So why is an absence of ethical theory problematic? Because a child may surmise a misguided justification for the actions taken. For example, one sort of misunderstanding might be that a child presumes an action is right because lots of people/beasts say it is. In the case of the beasts of *Redwall*, they are so appealing that what they advocate must be right. But they may not be right. One character in the series,¹⁹ a squirrel called Felldoh who is a former slave held in captivity since his early youth, is willing to destroy himself to take revenge upon his former captors. The story comes to a point at which there are no longer any slaves held by the captors, and Felldoh and the other former slaves are well away from the

slave camp. Felldoh cannot return to normality, however, because he remains enraged by his former captivity and will go to any length to have his revenge. In taking his revenge, he does not kill his former captor, a stoat named Badrang, although he injures him. Badrang then unleashes his horde upon Felldoh, who dies from multiple wounds. Felldoh is strong and determined—and foolhardy and vengeful. The solution Felldoh seeks is much like the solution a contemporary gang member might seek against another rival gang. In the story, the violence escalates, just as it does in contemporary life. Although the evil horde is eventually defeated by the forces of good beasts, the solution to the problem of the malicious gang is death to Badrang and all of his horde. Hence, the messages that “right action is identical with the position held by myself and my friends,” or worse, that “right action is the slaughter of one’s enemies,” are terribly misguided, although these are likely messages for the reader to take away from this book.

Another reason moral absolutism without reasonable justification is a problem is that the message to a child may be that “a person may be right for no reason.” That is, one may hold a view uncritically and allow it to guide one’s actions and choices even though, if it were to be reflectively considered, it would be recognized as very problematic. An example of this can be found in Jacques’s stereotyping of the various animal species, and the pirates. Creating virtually all foxes, rats, weasels, stoats and ferrets as evil or all pirates as using an Irish dialect might be perceived as a kind of prejudice against certain animal species, with components of negative stereotyping. If this is true of animals, a child might reason, then perhaps it is true of humans as well. Obviously this would be an extremely regrettable message to convey.

The *Redwall* novels of Brian Jacques, like many other contemporary instances of medievalism, emphasize certain immediately appealing aspects of the Middle Ages: beauty and adventure; the appeal of what is thought to have been a simpler time; the glories of nature; strong and enduring friendships; and a kind of naive spirituality without any particular source, grounding, or the complications of religion, or even a well-developed ethical theory. Utilizing these attractions can be beneficial to enlivening an interest in the Middle Ages. But Jacques’s books are internally troubling; they entangle the medieval past with some confusing and critically untreated aspects of the present and our contemporary selves. These entanglements create an appealing yet disturbing entry into the Middle Ages for children.

The second approach to looking at the *Redwall* books is somewhat different. One may interpret the fictional world of *Redwall* as a kind of

alternative to the actual world, one in which God remains, but humans never came into being, and thus, one in which intuition and instinct rule, not intellect and reason. Animals can only move toward that to which their appetites direct them. A hare follows his sensitive appetite for food, according to Thomas Aquinas, because it is natural for him to do so.²⁰ He naturally tends toward the “objective good” of the thing that possesses it—in this case, the hare wants food because of the goodness of food. Unlike humans, who also have a rational or intellectual appetite, animals do not have that which makes them able to apprehend a good consciously by use of reason: that is, animals cannot reason to will the good. In such a Thomistic world, whatever the animals do is never motivated by reason; they can only act from instinct, and move toward whatever their senses draw them to. The beasts, thus, would never have religion, nor understand what it is, even though they may be drawn to a communal life. They would never have an understanding of the Good beyond that which is sensorily or instinctively appealing. Animals could never know the Good even though they could appreciate good things; they could never comprehend ethics. Thus, under my alternative interpretation, all actions of creatures in the Jacques books are ethically unmotivated, even though they might seem to be so to humans, who can and do think and reason in terms of theories of value whatever the bases, religious or ethical, for those value systems.

What might this mean from a child’s perspective of Jacques’s novels? Perhaps it might mean that clear instances of what is good will attract children, even if they cannot yet know all that is entailed in pursuit of the Good. Or perhaps that a child will attempt to figure out what motivates the beasts’ choices, even though the beasts themselves could never know this in any real sense of knowledge. The child’s capacity to reason can lead him or her into another level of consideration of what transpires, as is consistent with the capacities of the mind of a human being. While Jacques might not always provide clear instances of what is good, a child may well be able to recognize or at least reflect upon those that are, and puzzle over those that are not. That, too, is a part of reason.

Whatever the interpretation, the *Redwall* books offer only a partial understanding of the medieval era at best, even though their potential at the outset for the cultivation of historical insight and an awareness of the development of an ethical point of view might seem strong. From the perspective of medievalism, the accomplishments of the *Redwall* novels lack the understanding of the Middle Ages that motivates the earlier works of Lewis or Tolkien. In those cases, it is a comprehension of the essence of medieval culture that was revealed in detail by means of the

stories. Jacques's works make use of the particulars of medieval society to create novels that are appealing and familiar—and formulaic and conceptually confusing. In a popular series such as *Redwall*, especially one that has incorporated many of the trappings of the Middle Ages so effectively into the stories, it is disappointing to recognize the possibilities left undeveloped. The inadequacies of these novels contribute to the perpetration of a superficial medievalism. In the end, they offer less than they might have promised at the outset.

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Notes

¹ It is debatable whether Tsarina is a domestic animal or not. She is certainly wild in her behavior, and so at least in that sense she is unequivocally not a domesticated beast: that is, she cannot function in a domestic context.

² In his work, the *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, Macrobius identifies three classifications of dreams. They are: (1) *oraculum*, in which a portent, respectable person, priest or god announces what shall or shall not come to pass, or what one should or should not do; (2) *visio*, a prophetic dream, which actually comes true; and (3) *somnium*, a dream composed of images that require interpretation because they are enigmatic or concealed in meaning.

³ St. Augustine, in his work *Liber de Spiritu et Anima*, quoted in Russell, identifies two more dream types: (4) *insomnium*, a state in which that which oppressed a person while awake returns to afflict him in sleep; and (5) *phantasma*, a state in which one is barely asleep but thinks oneself awake, and seems to see fleeting images or various flitting shapes, sometimes joyful, sometimes troubled.

⁴ One may note the similarity in the name of the Abbey to that of the early king of the East Angles, Raedwald, mentioned by The Venerable Bede in his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. I have not been able to discern any other connection between the king and characteristics of the Abbey, however.

⁵ The foods described are usually not medieval fare, however; for example, I believe that trifle had not yet been invented in the Middle Ages.

⁶ According to Heinrich Fichtenau, caring for one's guests was significant, and particularly understood in the Middle Ages.

⁷ There are other examples of courageous mice in English children's literature, most notably Reepicheep in the work of C. S. Lewis, which may have been a significant influence on Jacques.

⁸ There is a sea rat called Blaggut in the novel *The Bellmaker* who is goodhearted, and saves other creatures from another treacherous animal, his sea rat captain Slipp, but his role is minor in the novel, and such a character has not been re-introduced. In fact, this novel has several creatures who are counter to type, including a scholarly mole, Egbert, who does not speak in dialect. The examples of counter-to-type animals are few, and usually not significant to the development of the novels.

⁹ Writing in dialect is a skill Jacques has developed masterfully. It is clearly irrelevant to the medieval context of the novels, but significant to the class consciousness of the characters.

¹⁰ Jacques incorporates other details of this sort throughout the novels. Another example is a former petty thief gone straight called Ganff, from the Yiddish word *ganif*, meaning "thief."

¹¹ Fichtenau describes the Moorish slave or servant as already by the tenth century becoming "fashionable" and sought after because of his or her distinctive appearance. Hence, more often slaves would be taken from the Middle East or Africa rather than Europe.

¹² There are, however, earlier literary instances of pirates making problems. Late ancient/early medieval romances may include abduction by pirates as one of many ways of adding episodes of excitement and adventure to a tale. The romance *Daphnis and Chloe* is an example, and one might readily note a certain similarity to this genre of literature in some of Jacques's works.

¹³ A secular religious order whose participants take some vows, engage regularly in certain religious practices, but remain part of lay society.

¹⁴ An unused human church is an important site in the first novel, *Redwall*, and the ruins of the same church are mentioned in passing in later books, but again, this sort of image has not re-occurred in later books. Even the term "churchmouse" vanishes from use in later books.

¹⁵ While there is much philosophical commentary about the basic Goods, I will formulate a summary of some of their most fundamental components as understood and elaborated by Thomas Aquinas.

¹⁶ Although the medieval cardinal virtues are justice, prudence, fortitude and temperance (enhanced with the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity), one more often sees the traits exemplified in the *Redwall* novels to be more in keeping with the ancient excellences of character such as courage and wisdom replacing fortitude and prudence. This is not so surprising, since at least within the warrior class the virtue of courage remains pivotal, and among many of all classes, wisdom (especially as the basis for leadership of a group) is highly valued.

¹⁷ It is appropriate to note that in the C. S. Lewis *Narnia* series, a Judeo-Christian God and Christianity are also not mentioned or described until the last novel of the series, and then only obliquely. The significant difference between the Lewis works and Jacques's works regarding references to a Western tradition of God and religion, however, is that Jacques includes the cultural components of religion as an integral part of his writing throughout, while Lewis does not. Lewis is concerned with the expression of the message of Christianity in his novels; Jacques is interested in the trappings of Christianity, but without any religious message.

¹⁸ A deontological ethical theory is one in which an action is defined as right only if it is based upon motives that function in a law-like way, such as the motive of duty in a Kantian ethical account.

¹⁹ See *Martin the Warrior*, the sixth book of the series.

²⁰ See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1a, 81, 1.

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