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REPRESENTATION OF MASCULINITY IN J.R.R.
TOLKIEN´S THE LORD OF THE RINGS

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I confirm that this thesis is my own work written using solely the sources and literature properly quoted and acknowledged as works cited.

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Anotace

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá rozličnými typy maskulinity zobrazenými v mužských postavách v díle Pán prstenů J.R.R. Tolkiena a jejich porovnáním se stereotypy genderových rolí a zobrazením mužských postav ve fantasy žánru. První část se soustředí na Tolkienův život, vlivy na jeho dílo a přehled kritiky Tolkienova díla. Také představuje debatu o sexismu spojeného se stereotypním zobrazením ženských postav a jejich nedostatek v příběhu. Druhá část obsahuje stručný úvod do genderových studií feminity a maskulinity a žánru fantasy. Ve třetí části je analýza hlavních ras Středozemě a vybraných postav – Aragorna, Samvěda Křepelky, Froda Pytlíka a bratrů Boromira a Faramira – v kontextu maskulinity.

Klíčová slova: J.R.R. Tolkien, The Lord of the Rings, Pán prstenů, maskulinita, feminita, fantasy žánr, fantasy postavy, stereotypy, reprezentace

Abstract

This bachelor thesis deals with various types of masculinity as represented by male characters in J.R.R. Tolkien's The *Lord of the Rings* and their comparison with stereotypical gender roles and the portrayal of male characters in the fantasy literature genre. The first part focuses on Tolkien's life and the influences on his writing and gives a review of the criticism of Tolkien's work. It also introduces the debate of sexism related to the stereotypical portrayal of female characters and their scarcity in the story. The second part is a brief introduction to the gender studies of femininity and masculinity, and the fantasy genre. The third part is the analysis of the main races of Middle-earth and selected characters – Aragorn, Samwise Gamgee, Frodo Baggins, and fraternal pair Boromir and Faramir - in the context of masculinity.

Key words: J.R.R.Tolkien, The Lord of the Rings, masculinity, femininity, fantasy genre, fantasy characters, stereotypes, representation

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1. Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to explore the patterns of different masculinity types represented by selected male characters from the high fantasy book *The Lord of the Rings* written by renowned English writer and scholar, professor J. R. R. Tolkien, and published as three separate volumes (*The Fellowship of the Ring, The Two Towers, The Return of the King*) between 1954 and 1955. Tolkien´s work was an immediate success after its publication, was adapted through various mediums over the years, and is enjoying a large and ever-growing fanbase. *The Lord of the Rings* and related works set in the same universe are regarded as a pivotal creation of the modern high fantasy literary genre, setting the standard for fantasy pieces that followed. Although Tolkien´s work is enjoyed across the world and by different groups of people, there always was a considerable critique addressing many issues found in *The Lord of the Rings,* such as the childish and naive nature of the work, lengthy descriptions and passages in invented languages, scarcity of women and misogyny, or the abundance of male characters. Every literary work bears the values and signs of the time in which it was written, and *The Lord of the Rings* is no different. Peter Jackson´s successful film adaptation from the years 2001-2003 brought the work back to the public attention and the new wave of criticism emerged.

The first part of the thesis focuses on the circumstances in which *The Lord of the Rings* was written, the summary of criticism surrounding the work with emphasis on the debate over sexism and Tolkien´s portrayal of women.

The second part explores masculinity and fantasy fiction in the context of masculinity studies, with an overview of fantasy fiction history, fantasy heroes, and archetypes.

The third part is the analysis of selected male characters – Boromir, Faramir, Aragorn, Frodo Baggins, Samwise Gamgee - in the context of gender studies and masculinity.

2. J.R.R. Tolkien´s background and the circumstances surrounding the creation of *The Lord of the Rings*

Tolkien began to write *The Lord of the Rings* in 1937, after the publication of *The Hobbit*, and it took him nearly 12 years to finish, and five more to publish. When *The Hobbit* was in printing, Tolkien wanted to return to his creation of languages and stories set in Arda, his fictional world, and its lands of Middle-earth (Hammond and Scull *LotR: A Reader´s Companion* xvii). If it were not for the immediate success of the children´s fantasy *The Hobbit* and the encouragement of Tolkien's publisher, Stanley Unwin, to work on something new to be published, Tolkien´s masterpiece would not exist (Hammond and Scull *LotR: A Reader´s Companion* xviii), as Tolkien wrote, "I cannot think of anything more to say about hobbits" (Tolkien *Letters* 23). In a letter from 19 October 1937, Unwin wrote "You are one of those rare people with genius" (Tolkien *Letters* 24) and Tolkien promised that he would start working on something soon (Hammond and Scull *LotR: A Reader´s Companion* xviii).

Tolkien was working on the first chapters and drafts of the story, and on 13 October 1938 wrote to Unwin that the work was "becoming more terrifying than *The Hobbit.* It may prove quite unsuitable. It is more ´adult´ […]. The darkness of the present days has had some effect on it. Though it is not an ´allegory´." (Tolkien *Letters* 41). The darkness and the reason why the work might prove unsuitable is the approaching war with Germany, as Hammond and Scull explain (*LotR: A Reader´s Companion* xxi). It may not be an allegory of World War II, but *The Lord of the Rings* clearly draws some inspiration from World War I, in which Tolkien served as battalion signalling officer in France and experienced the war first-hand (his experience with signalling could be the inspiration for the beacons being lit in *The Return of the King* 747) (Carpenter *A Biography* 85). Tolkien said, years after *The Lord of the Rings* came out, about one of the main characters, "My ´Samwise Gamgee´ is indeed a reflexion of the English soldier, of the privates and batmen I knew in the 1914 war, and recognised as so far superior to myself" (Carpenter *A Biography* 89). The most apparent inspiration by the World Wars is, of course, the battle between forces of good and evil, Mordor and the rest of the Middle-earth, itself.

Tolkien loved the inventing of languages, but he felt that for them to have some complexity, he needed to create an environment in which they could exist, and that is where the idea of creating his own mythology originated. Other impulses that led to the creation of the massive mythology were, that Tolkien wanted to express his feelings in poetry, and the longing for mythology of England, that he found was lacking compared to the Finnish *Kalevala* he was reading (Carpenter *A Biography* 97). Middle-earth in his mind is our world, but the events, that he said were not invented but arose in his mind as given things, are taken to the purely imaginary times of antiquity (Carpenter *A Biography* 98-100). The early writings of his mythology cycle were collected in *The Book of Lost Tales*, which eventually became the comprehensive and arduous *The Silmarillion* (Carpenter *A Biography* 98).

Tolkien felt that *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion* should be published together "to have its full impact" (Hammond and Scull *LotR: A Reader´s Companion* xxix). His publisher Unwin & Allen was reluctant to do so for a long time for various reasons. In the end, the books were published separately to Tolkien´s fury, *The Lord of the Rings* between 1954-1955 in three volumes because of the costs, and *The Silmarillion* in 1977 posthumously by Christopher Tolkien (Hammond and Scull *LotR: A Reader´s Companion* xxix). Even though *The Lord of the Rings* was published in three parts and because of that is often referred to as trilogy, it is one book "indivisible and unified" (Tolkien *Letters* 138).

2.1 Tolkien´s life and inspiration

A piece of literary work should probably speak for itself, and the reader should be able to enjoy it without the need to know the origins of the book and the life of the author. But having an insight into the author´s life and the circumstances the book was written in can be interesting and clarify the author's motifs, intentions, and opinions.

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien was born on 3 January 1892 in South African Bloemfontein to Mable (born Suffield) and Arthur Tolkien. After the death of Arthur in 1896, the family consisting of Mable, Ronald (as Tolkien was called by his family) and his younger brother Hilary moved back to England and shortly stayed with Mable´s parents in industrial Birmingham (Carpenter *A Biography*

20-25). His memories of Africa were scarce, but he vividly remembered a big hairy spider, which seeped into his writing (for example, the giant spider Shelob; *The Lord of the Rings 633*). After some time, Mabel found a cheap living in the rural area of Sarehole on the edge of Birmingham, originally belonging to Worcestershire. This place and its idyllic green environment left a big impression on J.R.R. Tolkien, and he once wrote "Any corner of that county (however fair or squalid) is in indefinable way ´home´ to me, as no other part of the world is" (Carpenter *A Biography* 27). The Sarehole countryside was also an inspiration for the Shire, home to the race of hobbits.

Tolkien was surrounded by all-male collectives throughout his life. In 1900, he entered King Edward´s School for boys (Carpenter *A Biography* 32) where he formed strong friendships and later was one of the founders of the T.C.B.S (Tea Club, Barrovian Society – named after the tea drinking and place where they gathered), a club of literary enthusiasts and friends (Carpenter *A Biography* 54). After one unsuccessful attempt and consecutive preparations for second attempt at Oxford scholarship, he was finally awarded an Open Classical Exhibition at Exeter College in December 1910 (Carpenter *A Biography* 56). Before Tolkien went to Oxford, aside of studying, he occupied himself with the Debating Society and rugby for example. In 1911 he enrolled in Oxford university. It was another male environment, not many women were studying there yet, and his Exeter College was for men only. Tolkien joined the Essay Club, the Dialectical Society, continued with debating, and quickly settled in. He founded his own club called the Apolausticks, which involved papers, discussions, and dinners (Carpenter *A Biography* 61). Of course, during the war, he again found himself surrounded by men. Between the 1930s and 1949, the literary discussion group called The Inklings became a great part of his life. It was an informal group of writers (and friends), that held their meetings in Oxford usually twice a week. The members, including C.S. Lewis – who became one of Tolkien´s best friends, were meeting for a conversation, drink and reading of their works – including giving and receiving objective critiques. Over time the meetings became less frequent, and the last one took place in 1949 (Carpenter *A Biography* 152-155). That is enough to illustrate that Tolkien enjoyed being part of clubs and "was at his happiest in groups of cronies where there was a good talk, plenty of tobacco […] and a male company" (Carpenter *A Biography 61*), which was to some extent inevitable, given his

occupation and circumstances. Craig remarks, that Tolkien´s interest in membership often resulted in difficulties with his wife (14).

The first person to introduce him to languages was Tolkien's mother, Mabel, who started to educate her sons as soon as possible. Tolkien could read at the age of four and was most excited about the lessons of languages, especially Latin and less French (Carpenter *A Biography* 29). At King Edward´s School he added Greek and started to learn the Gothic language on his own (Carpenter *A Biography* 35, 45). Throughout the years, he acquired many languages, for example, Finnish, Icelandic, or Old English, so he could read the literary works that interested him.

Since childhood, Tolkien has read many books that his mother gave him. He was amused by *Alice in Wonderland* but did not like *Treasure Island*, was satisfied with books of George Macdonald, that were set in remote kingdom and goblins were lurking under the mountains, and Arthurian legends, which lasted till his adulthood. *The Red Fairy Book* by Andrew Lang excited him the most, a story with dragons and knights (Carpenter *A Biography* 30). When Tolkien was about 16 years old, at school he was introduced to Anglo-Saxon (or Old English) and later Middle English. Through the languages, he found the works written in them, *Beowulf* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, that ignited his imagination (Carpenter *A Biography* 43). Very influential was also the Finnish Kalevala mentioned before, about which he appreciatively wrote "this strange people and these new gods, this race of unhypocritical low-brow scandalous heroes […] the more I read of it, the more I felt at home and enjoyed myself" (Carpenter *A Biography* 57). All these works influenced Tolkien and formed his own fantasy writing, which very much resembles the heroic romances.

Regarding Tolkien´s employment, after the war, he returned to Oxford and was employed with the *New English Dictionary*. In 1924, he was appointed as Professor of English Language at Leeds University and became Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford in 1925.

2.2. The Lord of the Rings – critics and advocates

There is no doubt that J.R.R. Tolkien was a traditionalist. His opinions and views were shaped by a strong Catholic faith, and he spent most of his time in a men-only company as discussed

previously. When he was surrounded by a male dominated environment, it is no wonder that the characters in Tolkien´s stories are also usually men dealing with manly business.

J. R. R. Tolkien was the target of considerable literary hostility between 1954 and the beginning of the twenty-first century, especially in relation to his best-selling book *The Lord of the Rings* which came out between 1945 and 1955. One of the first to reject *The Lord of the Rings* was the literary critic, Edmund Wilson. In his review *Oo, Those Awful Orcs,* Wilson states that Tolkien´s prose and verse in *The Lord of the Rings* show both the same level of "professorial amateurishness" and the trilogy is extremely unrewarding – there is no development in episodes, and protagonists have no character outside stereotypes (Frodo being the good Englishman and Samwise his loyal doglike servant, speaking in lower-class language) and it is simply "juvenile trash" that the British seem to have an appetite for (312-314). One interesting point that Wilson makes that might not usually be thought of is that in *The Lord of the Rings* we never quite meet the source of all the evil – Sauron – directly. He is present of course, through the One Ring, in the reflection of the prophetic fountain, as the eye at the top of the remote dark tower. Sauron spreads fear and destruction using, for example, the Black Riders (except they seem like ghosts), and Orcs (except they get rid of before committing overt acts). As Wilson says, "What one misses in all these terrors is any trace of concrete reality" (314). Throughout the trilogy, the tension to finally meet and face the foe builds up, but at the peak, everything evil is conveniently swallowed up by an earthquake when the Ring falls into the lava. But is not this threatening, shrouded proximity of the enemy also terrifying? The enemy is everywhere, elusive, but the heroes are equally uneasy and have to fight Sauron, embodied in his minions, nonetheless, and they prove challenging too. The real, ultimate battle is the one between the ring-bearer Frodo and the seductive voice of Sauron in his Ring – that is where the Good confronts the Evil directly. But according to Wilson "the climax […] proves extremely flat" (314).

One point the critics make quite often is that *The Lord of the Rings* and its heroes are somewhat childish, naive, mainly because of the seeming lack of expressed sexuality (Partridge 179). On 27 November 1955, Edwin Muir wrote a review for the *Observer* concerning *The Return of the King,* and the heroes there, stating that "All the characters are boys masquerading as adult

heroes….and will never come to puberty…. Hardly one of them knows anything about women."

(Tolkien *Letters* 229). Maurice Richardson is of the same mind, saying that *The Lord of the Rings* is

"an infantilist invasion" and that the book would "do quite nicely as an allegorical story for very

leisured boys, but as anything else … it has been widely overpraised." (835-836), and as cited before,

Wilson calls the trilogy "juvenile trash" (314). *The Lord of the* Rings was (and maybe still is)

perceived as a book for boys about men.

Another criticizing voice, speaking boldly about Tolkien and his work, was Catharine R.

Stimpson´s. In 1969, Stimpson described Tolkien as "an incorrigible nationalist" celebrating a

"bourgeois pastoral idyll' with one-dimensional characters who are 'irritatingly, blandly, traditionally

masculine" (30). Stimpson has a word of criticism for every aspect of Tolkien s writing and life, and

they may seem too harsh, even unfair when the reader is a fan, but upon further reading and thinking,

most of it makes sense, which is hard to admit. Catharine Stimpson conducted a thorough

investigation of Tolkien s life and work and contemporary documents concerning Tolkien s work. A

year later, Vera Chapman, founder of the Tolkien Society, (under the penname of Belladona Took)

published a review of Stimpson's survey in the first issue of *Mallorn*, *The Journal of the Tolkien*

Society. She criticizes the conscientiousness with which Stimpson searched for anything worth

criticising in Tolkien´s work and her obvious hostility towards Tolkien and wonders why the

Columbia University Press even chose Stimpson to write about Tolkien "seeing that she does not like

him at all" (10). If anything, Stimpson does not deny Tolkien's refined writing abilities and overall

verbal eloquence, but remarks, that Tolkien and the Inklings stammer emotionally (6). As John Wain

observes, the group thinks themselves noble knights, they were "Tories in politics, classicists in

education, and patronizing gentlemen in behaviour" (Stimpson 6). The whole atmosphere around the

literary group feels like a secluded group of boys, brilliant and educated, but smugly thinking they are

better than others with their qualities and inside jokes.

Another supporting voice was the one of W.H. Auden, a friend of Tolkien. In his book review

of *The Lord of the Rings* for *The New York Times* in 1956 called *At the End of Quest, Victory*, Auden

defends the book against the charges, that it is too heavy reading, with a great battle between Good

and Evil and exhausting descriptions, not abiding by the light and escapist nature of other heroic quest and imaginary world fiction works, implying that it no longer serves the purpose of escaping from reality. Auden believes that "Mr. Tolkien has succeeded more completely than any previous writer in this genre in using the traditional properties of the Quest, the heroic journey, the Numinous Object, the conflict between Good and Evil while at the same time satisfying our sense of historical and social reality…"(Auden *The New York Times*).

The most expressive defenders of Tolkien´s work were Patrick Curry and Tom Shippey. Curry summarised the attacks and found two significant characteristics: "a visceral hostility and emotional animus, and a plethora of errors showing that the books had not been read closely (or in a few cases, at all)" and refuted every negative critic by finding a positive example in favour of Tolkien (Curry 376). Shippey, regarded as one of the leading academic experts on the work of J. R. R. Tolkien, noted for example that Frodo, who is permanently wounded and can no longer enjoy life in the Shire, is the exception to Muir's claim that Tolkien's writing was non-adult because the protagonists end with no pain (*The Road to Middle-earth* 175).

The more recent critics from the beginning of the 21st century, like Judith Shulevitz, focus on aspects such as the pedantic style of writing, which is the death of literature itself (Shulevitz, *The New York Times*), or that features and themes are repeated multiple times and *The Lord of the Rings* provided "a closed space, finite and self-supporting, fixated on its own nostalgia, quietly running down" (Jenny Turner *London Review of Books*).

But where does the hostility of literary critics come from? How is it that, in the words of Jared Lobdell "no ´main-stream critic´ appreciated *The Lord of the Rings* or indeed was in a position to write criticism on it most being unsure what it was and why readers liked it" (110). According to some, it is the very classification of *The Lord of the Rings* as a "novel" and attempts to determine the genre. Tolkien himself tried to make the classification clear in a letter to P. S. Szentmihályi in 1971, saying that "My work is *not* a ´novel´, but a ´heroic romance´ a much older and quite different variety of literature" (Tolkien *Letters* 414). In response to the pending question 'What is it all about?' he replies, "It is to me, anyway, an essay in ´linguistic aesthetic´ […] It is not ´about´ anything but itself"

(Tolkien *Letters* 220). Also, the world in which *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Hobbit* and other Tolkien works take place was originally created as an environment in which Tolkien´s invented languages could work, as he wanted them to be alive and not remain only systems on paper, but it developed into something much bigger, the linguistic nature of his work being confirmed by Tolkien in his interview for the *New York Times Book Review* with Harvey Breit: "The so-called children's story *The Hobbit* was a fragment, torn out of an already existing mythology. In so far as it was dressed up as ´for children´, in style or manner, I regret it. So do the children. I am a philologist, and all my work is philological." (Tolkien *Letters* 218).

According to some, escapism can be the source of both adversity from critics and love of fans. To escape from reality is arguably one of the main benefits of reading, and according to Stimpson, it is no wonder that *The Lord of the Rings* was so popular in post-war England (42-43). But Wood remarks, that Tolkien´s books force us to confront the difficult reality, and rather than "grinding our faces in these horrors, however, it suggests a cure for the ills of our age" (1) and so it soothes the readers, and the great work enables us to escape *into* reality (ibid).

Patrick Curry pointed out, that the critics´ judgement can simply be based on this assumption – *The Lord of the Rings* is popular, so it must be trash (376). It is not hard to believe that a combination of this preconception, confusion around the genre, non-recognized escapist nature of Tolkien´s work and all the problematic features of *The Lord of the Rings* led to negative criticism. It usually is writers who grew up surrounded by works of modernist authors and sympathized with it, who wrote the early criticism, and even in this thesis are mostly mentioned their works. In Curry´s view, Tolkien threatened the "dominant ideology" of modernism, by not being ironic about his work, at least as educated as his critics, and a great storyteller. Tolkien is a modern writer, but as anti-modernist as possible (376-381).

But regardless of academics' criticism, *The Lord of the Rings* enjoyed huge success among readers from the beginning, with over 150 million copies sold worldwide (Collett-White Reuters.com), and the number of fans grew with each radio, movie, theatre, or game adaptation that was released. In 2003, the trilogy was named Britain´s best novel of all time in the BBC´s poll *The Big Read* (*BBC*). I

believe that it is not that fans do not notice issues in Tolkien's work and blindly love it, from my experience as a fan and part of the community, most fans are critical and often educated about Tolkien and the problems (and there are academics among fans too). They just appreciate the good things without allowing the unpleasant to cloud them and maybe the freedom of not being a literary critic but a mundane person allows them to evaluate the *The Lord of the Rings* and all kindred works CO . The descriptions might be too long and detailed, but they help thr imagination and immersion into the world. Tolkien may be too kind to his characters, but at least we do not suffer as while reading for example George R. R. Martin´s *A Song of Ice and Fire*. It is a specific piece of writing, and I would say that Rayner Unwin, son and partner of Tolkien´s publisher, summed it very well: "*The Lord of the Rings* is a very great book in its own curious way" (Carpenter *A Biography* 213).

2.3. Female characters of *The Lord of the Rings* and debates about sexism

One very important point of criticism that was not addressed properly yet is that of sexism in Tolkien's work and in general his problematic portrayal of women, which is a very interesting and ambiguous topic, as "Tolkien's heroines have been praised and severely criticized" (Łaszkiewicz 15).

Critics and readers have frequently pointed out and objected to the scarcity of women, their secondary role in the story, passivity, and their overall stereotypical portrayal in Tolkien´s work, especially in *The Lord of the Rings*, as femininity is such a minor issue in *The Hobbit* that it cannot even be meaningfully addressed. Tolkien wrote a letter to the Houghton Mifflin Company (his publisher in the U.S.A) in June 1955 to correct several mistakes that had been published in a *New York Times Book Review* piece. One of the two criticisms that annoyed him the most was that *The Lord of the Rings* contained no women (the second being it contained no religion, which is a topic worth whole other thesis). To that claim, he answered that "it does not matter, and is not true anyway" (Tolkien *Letters* 220). There certainly are some women, we briefly meet Rosie Cotton (later wife to Samwise Gamgee; *The Return of the King* 934)[1], Lobelia Sackville-Baggins (rather annoying Baggins relative; *The Fellowship of the Ring* 28), Arwen (*The Fellowship of the Ring* 227) and have some more

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[1] In brackets are the pages of first mentions of the selected female characters in *The Lord of the Rings.*

time with Éowyn (*The Two Towers* 521) and Galadriel (*The Lord of the Rings* 15). But, in addition to the latter two, they are of little significance for the story. There are no women in the Fellowship, only a few female representatives of some races are introduced, and, moreover, there are no dwarf women or female ents (called the Entwives; *The Two Towers* 472). There are also no orcish females or other female enemies, besides the giant spider Shelob (*The Lord of the Rings 633*), as if "Tolkien was not comfortable conjoining the concepts *female* and *enemy*, as if it was not chivalrous" (Frederick and McBride 109).

There is one argument, that seemingly plays in favour for Tolkien, and that is, the female characters that do appear in *The Lord of the Rings* are presented as powerful, even more than most of the male protagonists. But their physical, magical, or spiritual strength still does not compensate for their lack of numbers, since there are equally strong male heroes in generous numbers. The character of noble Galadriel is often elevated and praised. She is the ruler of the Elves of Lothlórien (together with her husband Celeborn), bearer of one of the three Elven rings of power and she surpasses almost all with her power, knowledge, and beauty. The moment when Frodo offered her the One Ring shows her great might, she passed the trial and did not allow herself to be seduced by the Ring´s promises of power and did not claim it, because she knew it would corrupt her (*The Fellowship of the Ring* 365-366). But her character is mainly present in the book as a supporting moral icon, "a symbolic Virgin Mary", and the invocation of her very name inspired and gave strength to struggling heroes. In addition to that, not much of her own power is actually shown in *The Lord of the Rings* (Craig 12).

Éowyn, a noblewoman and a shieldmaiden of Rohan, was originally to be the love of Aragorn, but Tolkien later decided that he "is too old and lordly and grim" and that he required someone more elevated (Craig 13). The first time we meet her, she is described through Aragorn´s eyes: "Thus Aragorn for the first time in the full light of day beheld Éowyn, Lady of Rohan, and thought her fair, fair and cold, like morning of pale spring that is not yet come to womanhood" (*The Two Towers* 515). That something is wrong with her, and she is not "fully woman" is mentioned many times in the book, for example, after hearing of slaughter at Helm´s Deep, her eyes shine, suggesting that "her natural womanly role has been disturbed" (Craig 14). This does not devalue that she is very brave, passionate,

and determined to fight for the good. She rides to the battle along with her people and kills the leader of the Nazgûl (*The Return of the King* 842). The idea of a female warrior may seem outstanding to modern readers, but Craig reminds us that readers are meant to feel pity for her and think that her desires for glory and fight must be caused by a troubled and unhappy mind, and the natural gender roles are overturned for her to achieve it, as she disguised herself as a man (14). After the Battle of Pelennor Fields, she is being healed in a hospital in Minas Tirith, where she meets Faramir (*The Return of the King* 959). They help each other by talking and sharing and they fall in love and later get married, thus Éowyn finally becomes a woman (in Tolkien´s conception) and she accepts the nurturing role.

Matrimony was very important to Tolkien personally, and the institution of marriage is reflected in his work. The characters of *The Lord of the Rings* - Sam, Aragorn, Peregrine - do marry at the end, but what is interesting, is that none of the characters expresses their longing for love, a relationship, or mentions having a love interest. Except on pitifully few occasions Aragorn or Sam talks about Arwen and Rosie. Only after their journeys and quests are done, do they settle down and marry, which marks a line between adventurous, bachelor life and new social roles. Throughout the book, there is no passion between the pairs, only the mentioned sacred devotion, and the relationships feel platonic and lukewarm and Weronika Łaszkiewicz remarks that „The positive male and female heroes generally seem prone to celibacy and become sexually active only within the bonds of matrimony. "(17). She also points out that the male-female relationships are substituted by warm male-male friendships.

The value of friendship and loyalty to one's companions is emphasized throughout the book, reflecting Tolkien's own appreciation for friends. Tolkien's friends among the Inklings were instrumental in shaping his views on women and life, which is only natural considering how much time he was surrounded by the male company, talking and exchanging ideas. C.S. Lewis, according to Brenda Partridge, was very strict about the issue of the rightful place of women: "It was an article of his faith that full intimacy with another man was impossible unless women were totally excluded. […] Believing women´s minds were not meant for logic or for great art it was his view that women had

little to say that was worth listening to" (180). It is presumable that the rest of the Inklings have been of similar mind, and Tolkien may have agreed with this notion of women's intellectual inferiority or at the very least their dependence on men, according to this quotation from a letter to his son Christopher from 1941: "How quickly an intelligent woman can be taught, grasp the teacher's ideas, see his points - and how (with some exceptions) they can go no further, when they leave his hand, or when they cease to take a personal interest in him. It is their gift to be receptive, stimulated, fertilized (in many other matters than the physical) by the male "(Tolkien *Letters* 49).

It can simply be said that the women are written very traditionally, stereotypically, in a medieval courtly-love way and respectful manner, that can feel dull - Kenneth McLeish likens them to cardboard figures (125). The women are either rustic, domestic figures, or, in cases of the elven women and Éowyn, noble women, ethereal and objects of devotion. In a letter from 1941, Tolkien told his son Christopher that there were three types of male-female relations: the first is purely sexual and a grave sin, second is pure friendship (which is unfortunately impossible in in this fallen world), and in the third, a man can be a lover "engaging and blending all his affections and powers of mind and body in a complex emotion powerfully coloured and energized by ´sex´" (Tolkien *Letters* 48). The third type of man-woman relations is religious in its supreme form. The woman a man loves with this romantic chivalric type of love is perceived as an object of noble conduct, a "guiding star or divinity" (Tolkien *Letters 49*). This sacred devotion and marriage make a man better, and for women, he believed that they are naturally made for a domestic life as "A young woman, even one 'economically independent´, as they say now (it usually really means economic subservience to male commercial employers instead of to a father or a family), begins to think of the 'bottom drawer' and dream of a home, almost at once." (Tolkien *Letters* 50). The traditional image of a woman as a caretaker and homemaker is presented by the hobbit Rosie, wife to Sam, and the elderly nurse Ioreth, the human woman, who is distinguished mostly by her talkativeness and her healing wisdom - two traits stereotypically associated with women (*The Return of the King* 860). There is also Goldberry, an ethereal, mysterious wife of Tom Bombadil, who is said to possess great power. But we never get to

see it, as she rather tends to her home duties and leaves Tom to deal with and advise the hobbits (*The Lord of the Rings* 123-125).

Naturally, Tolkien´s opinion about women was not shaped only by his friends. He had a few women in his life, that had greater or lesser impact on him. The first woman to have a great impact on Tolkien was his mother. She was a strong person, doing what she could to help her children after the death of her husband. Mabel Tolkien did not waste any time with the education of the boys. She taught the young boys at home, she was a great teacher and Tolkien a sharp student. He learned to write by the age of four and was good at drawing, but his favourite was languages (Carpenter *A Biography* 29). Mabel introduced him to Latin and later to French, but French did not charm him as much as English and Latin. A big part of his mother's life was the Christian faith, and Mabel and the boys were received into the Roman Catholic church in 1900, and such conversion brought the wrath of her Anglican family, which resulted in the loss of financial support.

In 1900, Tolkien entered King Edward´s School, but as it was too far to go there by foot and Mabel couldn´t afford the train fee, the three of them moved to King´s Health, another suburb of Birmingham, short of the countryside beauties. Four years later, Mabel was diagnosed with diabetes and died after a short hospitalization. Her untimely death had a deep influence on the formation of Tolkien´s personality and after she was gone, he filled the hollow in his heart with religion. It seemed like the loss of his mother made him into two people – Tolkien was naturally cheerful, humorous, and loved to talk, but now he had the other pessimistic half, dwelling in despair. Her departure also affirmed his studies and love for languages, as Mabel was his first teacher and had a great influence on him (Carpenter *A Biography* 39). Nine years after her death Tolkien wrote: "My own dear mother was a martyr indeed, and it is not to everybody that God grants easy a way to his great gifts as he did to Hilary and myself, giving us a mother who killed herself with labour and trouble to ensure us keeping the faith" (Carpenter *A Biography* 39). Tolkien and his brother became wards of Father Francis, a priest of Birmingham Oratory, and lived with him for one year, then moved in with their aunt Beatrice and in 1908, they moved again to Duchess Road to live with Mrs. Faulkner in her boarding house.

There Tolkien met the second great woman of his life, his future love, another lodger and an orphan, Edith Bratt (Carpenter *A Biography* 40, 46).

They were attracted to each other from the beginning, even though Edith was three years older. Shortly after Tolkien's moved in, Edith and Tolkien developed a friendship, being "allies against the ´Old Lady´" Mrs. Faulkner (Carpenter *A Biography* 47). They were frequent visitors to Birmingham teashops, talked to each other from windows during nights or early mornings, and went on cycle rides. As they shared a common family background, both being orphans in need of affection and with compatible personalities, it was inevitable that they would fall in love, which they declared in 1909. Father Francis and the Suffield family had objections to their relationship. He demanded that they break up and tried to separate them so that their love would die out. He found Edith inappropriate to Tolkien, whom he cared for dearly. Father Francis was not very perceptive man and did not realize, that by forcefully parting Edith and Tolkien, he only contributed to the transformation from juvenile love to serious romance. Tolkien wrote to himself: "Probably nothing else would have hardened the will enough to give such an affair (however genuine a case of true love) permanence" (Carpenter *A Biography* 52). Despite various obstacles they had to overcome, Tolkien and Edith got eventually married in 1916, as their love and patience were stronger than anyone thought. J.R.R. Tolkien and his wife Edith had 4 children and eventually settled down in Oxford. The youngest son, Christopher, is responsible for the publishing and editing of his father´s unpublished works, enriching the public with more Middle-earth content.

Tolkien's marriage to his wife demonstrates that he did not downplay the significance of romantic love and marriage. Edith and Tolkien endured long years of separation and attempts to smother their love, and despite their differences and Tolkien´s requiring academic career, lived a happy life. He deeply cared about her and understood that marital happiness is based on the mutual understanding and honesty of both partners (Hammond and Scull *The J.R.R.T. Companion* 1114). The fact that some of Tolkien's most famous fictional couples go through comparable tests of separation before they can fully realise their love is not surprising. The couple of Lúthien and Beren, Elven woman and mortal man, were inspired by Tolkien and Edith themselves. Lúthien was the first Elven

woman to fall in love with a human, they experienced big adventure and, in the end, Lúthien (similarly to Arwen) gave up her immortality so she could be with Beren. After Edith´s death, Tolkien wrote in a letter to his son Christopher: „she was (and knew she was) my Lúthien (…) I never called Edith *Lúthien* – but she was the source of the story that in time became the chief part of the *Silmarillion*." (Carpenter *Letter* 340).

Considering other female members of Tolkien´s family, Mabel had a younger sister, Jane, who earned a Bachelor of Science and became a school teacher. Tolkien wrote about her proudly in a letter to Joyce Reeves in 1961: "The professional aunt is a fairly recent development, perhaps; but I was fortunate in having an early example: one of the first women to take a science degree" (Tolkien *Letters* 308). Tolkien clearly had no issues with broadening rights of women and their education. Priscilla, Tolkien´s only daughter, said that her father always supported and encouraged her education (Scull and Hammond *The J.R.R.T. Companion* 1111). Scull and Hammond further state that "it is evident from his friendships and professional relationships, of which there were many, with female students and dons at Oxford, and from personal accounts by female friends, that Tolkien respected women no less than men for their talents, and that he welcomed their company." (*The J.R.R.T. Companion* 1112). But he had little opportunity to meet new female friends among the students and scholars. The rules of Oxford strictly separated men and women, they could not talk to each other or even greet their acquaintances (Scull and Hammond *The J.R.R.T. Companion* 1110). Vera Chapman, who was the founder of the Tolkien Society, commented on expected behaviour of female students and claimed that "no new friendships were to be formed – that was the very thing that was to be rigidly avoided" (Hammond and Scull *The J.R.R.T. Companion* 1110).

There is enough material and "evidence" to support either the claim that Tolkien was a sexist or that he was not. In real life, Tolkien was not particularly progressive and not a feminist. He has seen fit for a woman to fulfil the traditional stereotypical role of a caretaker, dependent on the lead of her male partner. But when a woman achieved something, he did not undermine her success and was supportive. The truth is that he was deeply respectful of women, treating them in a chivalrous manner, but to hold respect for other human beings is something inherent. Tolkien loved his wife, mother, and

children, but only his wife is immortalized in his literary work. His female characters are ambiguous, both passive and empowered, but the masculine power is seen as an unnatural flaw if expressed by woman. The true strength of Tolkien´s woman is to be a symbol of devotion that invokes courage in men and in the power of love and sacrifice. But as Łaszkiewicz points out, the societies are hardly strictly patriarchal - Éowyn is praised for her actions, not punished, which would be unthinkable if the society were so bigoted, and Galadriel is a leader of her people (18).

3. Masculinity and fantasy literature
3.1. Introduction to masculinity

Contemporary discourse is filled with debates about gender, gender roles, and stereotypes, and when defining masculine and feminine principles and patterns, we would instinctively say that they are assigned to men and women, respectively. But in the past few decades, the notion shifted. What we perceive as feminine and masculine, and to whom the patters "belong" is determined by the society we live in. The world and the people inhabiting it are diverse, and it is not possible to strictly assign either masculine or feminine features to one gender - yes, there are traits that are associated with men and other traits with women, but the resolution is not strict. These patterns might be perceived as irreconcilable opposites, but that is not true. As in yin and yang, there is always a bit of black in white, and together the principles create balance. Women can display some masculine patterns and still be women in traditional Western understanding, and men are not less "manly" if they have traits associated with women. Tolkien´s characters exhibit this mixed and ambiguous nature – Éowyn being an example of a woman with masculine patterns and the male characters that will be discussed later are examples of alternative masculinities - and it is the aim of the next chapters, and this whole thesis, to explore the claim.

Towards the late 1960s, a turbulent time of civil rights movements (especially in The United States) and the beginning of modern Women´s movement, brought a new approach to studying and identifying gender stereotypes, and especially feminist scholars challenged biases against women. As customary notions of gender and gender roles and societies were challenged, new views of masculinity (and femininity, of course) emerged. The old, accustomed approach was bipolar – viewing masculinity and femininity as opposites. A psychologist from Stanford, Sandra Bem, argued in the early 1970s, that these patterns were separate and independent dimensions and developed a new test to determine where on the feminine – masculine scales various traits are to be found – the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) (Lippa 56). It was built on the distinction of sets of personality traits, the *instrumental* and *expressive* traits, identified around 1950s. *Instrumental* traits set is associated more with men, focused on goals in the external world – examples being independence, assertiveness, dominance, and

leadership. Conversely, the *expressive* traits set is more associated with women, focused on people and private world – examples of such traits are warmth, sympathy, and compassion.

When taking the BSRI, participants are asked to rate how much various expressive and instrumental traits accurately describe them. Then, based on their mean self-ratings on sets of these traits, they are assigned separate M and F scores (masculinity and femininity). This measuring of F and M as separate dimensions allowed, according to Bem, for the reconceptualization of sex-roles and classifying of people. Her research proved that F and M are relatively independent and that the levels of F and M of an individual are not related. Bem applied a four-way classification scheme based on person´s F-M levels. High M – low F were considered stereotypically masculine, low M – high F stereotypically feminine, both M-F low classified as undifferentiated and both F-M high were labelled as androgynous – androgynous individual shares traits of stereotypically M and F (Lippa 57-59). It is this androgynous classification that could be assigned to the characters of Faramir and Aragorn, as I will show in the chapter dedicated to their analysis.

This redefinition of gender roles and social, economic and political changes brought a phenomenon called the "crisis of masculinity", a term first suggested in studies by George M. Frederickson or James McGovern in 1960s to name what was happening to men from the late 19th century (Winter 117). With the Women´s right movement and disillusionment after both World Wars, men felt that the traditional notions of masculinity were threatened, and they needed to define it anew. Many men then embraced the ideals of toughness and physical dominance in hope of counterweighing the perceived emasculation and to "restore a secure and uncontestable definition of masculinity" (Winter 177). This resulted in another phenomenon, cultural norms harming the society, women and men alike – the "toxic masculinity", or the "macho archetype" – where the masculine traits are taken to the extreme and become harmful.

Masculinity and femininity are fragile social constructs, that change together with society as it is natural for people to evolve and change. John McInnes believes that masculinity has been in crisis from the very beginning because "it can never be grasped or defined. If it comprises essentially social characteristics or capacities, we have to explain on what grounds women have been incapable of, or

prevented from, acquiring them. Masculinity is something for the girls as much as the boys, and over time, it must surely come to have no special connection to either biological sex." (45). Judith Butler also observed in the 1990s that gender is performative, and a social construct: "gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. As a result, it becomes impossible to separate out 'gender' from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained (6).

One of the most influential and cited sociologists in the field of gender studies is R. W. Connell, who proposed that it is more appropriate to discuss masculinities, in plural, because there are multiple patterns and masculinity varies depending on the time, place, and culture. Connell emphasizes the importance of relativity when talking about masculinity and femininity - the patterns are inherently relational concepts, having meaning in relation to each other in each society (*Masculinities* 43). Moreover, masculinities differ among men, classes, and races, and to recognize kinds of masculinity, it is essential to examine all the relations (76). Hearn and Collinson also outline the importance of awareness of relations when it comes to thinking about masculinities: "various men and masculinities may be defined in relation to other men, other masculinities, women, femininities, or some further difference(s). It is not possible to produce a complete taxonomy." (108-190).

Regarding the privileged position of masculinity in most societies connected with the oppression of women and minorities, the term "hegemonic masculinity" is often used. It was R. W. Connell who labelled the traditional male roles and privileges with this term. It derives from Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci´s analysis of class relations, where hegemony refers to the cultural dynamic by which a group asserts and maintains a dominant position in social life (Connell 77). And so, hegemonic masculinity is the configuration of gender practice that is the prevailing response to the question of the legitimacy of patriarchy and that ensures the dominance of men and the subordination of women (Connell 77), and alternative masculinities, or "subordinated". The most conspicuously oppressed masculinity is that of gay men, though it is not the only one rejected by the circle of legitimacy (Connell 79).

This insight into the history of gender studies provides an idea of what masculinity and femininity are and how the notion changed over time. This overview is necessary because *The Lord of the Rings* characters display various types of masculinity, hegemonic as well as nonhegemonic, based on their background.

3.2. Fantasy literature: masculinity, heroes, and archetypes
3.2.1. Fantasy genre

Over time, the fantasy genre has been diversifying, due to growing interest, fans, and commercialisation, developing many subgenres such as dark fantasy, science fantasy, or steampunk. *The Lord of the Rings* represents the subgenre of heroic fantasy, a term comprising the terms high fantasy, quest fantasy (quest is an objective the heroes must accomplish in order to save the world from evil, often requiring wandering and overcoming obstacles on the way, *Stableford* 337) and epic fantasy (Stableford 197), though *The Lord of the Rings* is still most spoken of as simply high fantasy. The high fantasy is set in an alternative and fictional "secondary" world to the "real, primary" world we live in (Stableford 198). This imaginary world is inhabited by various, often fictional races and other magical beings, usually comprises magic or other mystical forces, and works based on its own unique rules and/or physical laws, different from the real world. Our collective concept of fantasy races of elves, dwarves or orcs inhabiting these imaginary worlds comes most likely from Tolkien, who is often called the father of high fantasy. But Tolkien being the only "father" is a modern myth, as he was not the first or the only one who shaped the image of fantasy fiction with his writing. William Morris and his *The Well at the World´s End* are together with *The Lord of the Rings* regarded as archetypal works of the high fantasy (Dozois xvi-xvii).

Although it seems that fantasy literature is a relatively new phenomenon, it is not entirely true. Yes, the popular commercial genre of adult fiction received the label "fantasy" in the 1970s (Stableford xli), but the roots of fantasy run much further. Geoffrey Chaucer uses the word "fantasye" in reference to strange and bizarre notions, that have no basis in everyday real experience – which is the same sense in which the word "fantasy" is used in now. Except that in Chaucer´s usage, it had pejorative connotations similar to "foolish" (Stableford xxxvii). According to Stableford, this attitude

is peculiar and almost paradoxical, as there is no thinking without fantasy (xxxvii). The reason why "fantasy" in a modern notion is seen as new and was long regarded as unworthy is, that before 1969, "fantasy" described children´s fiction, and thus something adults should not indulge in. But many of these stories that were firstly heard in childhood – and then thought of as only children´s genre, were either based on, or were old legends and myths often predating the modern literary tradition (Stableford xxxviii-xxxix). Many of the features of these old stories are undergoing combination processes of recycling and transfiguration because they are time-proven, and despite the repetition, the modern fantasy stories feel deep-rooted rather than unoriginal and unrealistic (Stableford xxxix-xl). This mythical and legendary origin is why the majority of fantasy fiction is set in medieval-inspired worlds, though not usually from our timeline.

3.2.2. Fantasy heroes and archetypes

The characters of high fantasy fiction often show features similar to those found in heroes from classical and mainly medieval heroic romances, which is not surprising given their origin in mythical stories. Myths introduce archetypes, and the typical hero of the romance tradition is a chivalrous knight, model of a proper masculine behaviour based on Christian virtues. What is inextricably bound up with the romance structure and the archetype of knight is the motif of the quest (Fendler 103). R. W. Southern in his book *The Making of the Middle Ages* highlighted that the romance description of knightly life had three stages: the life of the court, the stage of lonely peril and grief, and the happy ending when the knight achieved his goal (245). It is the second stage that is connected to the theme of the quest. Joseph Campbell explored the archetype of the mythical hero and his quest in the book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. There he illustrates the nature of "hero´s quest", which is allegedly pervasive among all cultures (lix). The quest consists of three stages: Departure, Initiation, and Return and there are several tropes of the quest that the hero can follow and encounter. Call for adventure (45), supernatural aid (63), various trials (89), and realization about themselves (138) are some of the examples.

As Fendler describes, the ideals of knighthood shifted from the 12th century. The role of a knight was not just to be a soldier, the idea of courtly love – to a woman and people in general –

broadened the ideals. The most important was the protection of the weak – poor people, peasants, and especially women (Fendler 104). Whereas the classical hero was a "warrior who lives and dies in the pursuit of honour" (Schein 58), the post-classical hero, and so the hero of high fantasy fights from their inner belief for the general good. The conflict between good and evil is a common, even essential motif in high fantasy, which is true for *The Lord of the Rings* also (Shippey *Author of the Century* 120).

The archetypes of fantasy heroes are quite fluid, expanding and inventing more "sub-archetypes" whenever new piece of fantasy work is created, but the core archetypes are still the same. Campbell studied the hero myth patterns according to the analytical psychology of Carl Jung. It is the Jungian archetypes, that most characters of fantasy fiction can be classified as. The archetypal figures are: great mother, father, child, devil, god, wise old man, wise old woman, the trickster, the hero (Stevens 84). When applied to *The Lord of the Rings*, Gandalf would be identified as a wise old man, Peregrine as a child, and Aragorn as a typical hero. The archetypes differentiated as more fantasy stories were written, with new types of characters, for example the mentor, joker, bard, caregiver, outlaw, loyal beast, magician, or ruler.

The natural counterpart of a hero is the antihero, frequently defined as a refuser of heroic commitments. But this character is not as dangerous and often learns better, so the true villain is somewhere else (Clute and Grant 48). In fantasy and myths, the main antagonistic figure often appears as the archetypal "dark lord", who is the orchestrator of all evil and troubles, with the help of his minions (Clute and Grant 250). The evil villain in high fantasy is usually completely evil and unrelatable (McKillip 53).

Connell states "True masculinity is almost always thought to proceed from men´s bodies – to be inherent in a male body or to express something about a male body. Either the body drives and directs action […], or the body sets limits to action […]" (45). Similarly for a fantasy hero, his physical ability, the limits of his body (and further his mental strengths) and his journey to eventually gain the necessary strength to defy evil are an essential part of fantasy stories. Amy Lee summarizes this role of masculinity and the male body in fantastic travel fiction in her essay "Masculinity and

Fantasy (Travel) Literature. The fantasy genre has many features – travelling, overcoming of

obstacles, meeting of people, quest – that possess masculine qualities and the body is needed to be

able to perform these actions (Lee 23).

4. Representation of masculinity in *The Lord of the Rings*

Tolkien believes that gender and sex are not the same, and that masculine and feminine are conditions of his fictional universe, going farther than the concerns of mere humans (Rawls 5). According to him, feminine and masculine possess different characteristic that are meant to complement and augment one another, and the individuals, who possess both feminine and masculine qualities balanced within themselves or have access to the nature of the other gender through person close to them, are able to achieve good (Rawls 5). The attributes of femininity and masculinity are not bound to males or females, and Rawls points out Tolkien's critique of the extremes of both masculinity and femininity – the Macho Man (neglecting the understanding of feelings and though in favour of action) and the Total Woman (cunning and dependant on men) (5). *Understanding* is regarded in Tolkien's world as a prime feminine characteristic, and the prime masculine characteristic is *power* – power acts and understanding provides counsel. When unbalanced and without their counterpart, action without understanding results in rashness and understanding without action is impotence (Rawls 6). Rawls further provides a chart of positive and negative related traits that derive from the prime characteristics and associates them with forms of creativity. Positive masculine traits are law, reason, action and justice, and the creative actions born from masculinity are fine arts, crafts, technology. The negative branch of masculine traits consists of rashness, aggression and self-aggrandizing. Positive feminine traits are love, counsel, intuition, mercy and compassion and negative are impotence, passivity, demandingness. Feminine actions are song, dance, healing, weaving (Rawls 6). Rawls mentions Elrond as a male character, who possesses wide range of feminine attributes, that balances his masculinity (13). Such balanced character, embodying both feminine and masculine traits could be, in the language of Lippa, called androgynous.

4.1. Races of Middle-earth

The lands of Middle-earth are home to various forms of life, magical creatures and races. The humanoid races of Men, Elves, Dwarves, Hobbits and Ents, Orcs, Trolls, all inhabit different parts of the land, have their own origin and culture, speak diverse languages, all created by Tolkien. The

"Common Speech" is used when these various people interact with each other. The societies among the races have various types of government, different standards and values and consecutively different gender role tradition.

4.1.1. The Race of Elves

The Elves were the "First-born" children of Ilúvatar (the supreme deity of Arda), the fairest and wisest race, living in forest. Before Tolkien, Elves were a cunning fairy folk from fairy tales and legends, but now the typical image of an elf would be a tall, fair figure with long hair and pointy ears, with magical abilities and wisdom. Moseley sees their resemblance with medieval romance figures; they are noble, polished, courtly, musical and potentially dangerous (Moseley 31). The Elves are immortal and cannot easily die, only if injured beyond recovery or from extreme grievance, and even though immortality might be perceived as a positive attribute, Tolkien writes about the Elves in a letter to Milton Waldman: "The doom of the Elves is to be immortal, to love the beauty of the world, to bring it to full flower with their gifts of delicacy and perfection, to last while it lasts, never leaving it even when 'slain', but returning – and yet, when the Followers come, to teach them, and make way for them, to 'fade' as the Followers grow and absorb the life from which both proceed" (Tolkien *Letters* 147). As Coutras summarizes their customs, men and women had equal choices and opportunities regarding the activities of life, no one sex having privileges and benefit over the other- though families were patriarchal – the father named the child (206-207).

4.1.2. The Race of Men

Men, or the Followers, are the second race born after the Elves. In contrast to them, Men are doomed (or gifted) with mortality, "freedom from the circles of world" (Tolkien *Letters* 147). There are two main kingdoms of Men in Middle-earth – Gondor and Rohan.

The kingdom of Rohan is land of horses and great horsemen called Rohirrim, but their cultural and technological development level is a little lower than that of Gondor's (Honegger 119). Their land is mainly grassland (Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* 261-262). The society is inspired by the heroic Anglo-Saxon societies (Moseley 31) and serving as a counterpart to the "bucolic" hobbits (Honegger

116). Therefore, that society inherited the heroic code tying the warrior to their king, following him

into battle and to avenge his death - the Rohirrim were stirred when their king Théoden died in the

battle of Pelennor fields, and they thought Éowyn did too, and with new energy rode to avenge them

(Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* 843-844). By fearlessly riding to the battle and avenging their king,

they will earn glory. When we first meet the men of Rohan, riding their horses towards Aragorn,

Legolas and Gimli, they are described as tall and long-limbed, with fair braided hair and stern, keen

faces. They match their horses, that are well-build, strong, with long limbs and manes braided on their

necks (Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* 431). Such description leaves an impression of their warlike

spirit, the horses and the riders "radiate power, an aggressive energy, and a certain authentic

wildness." (Honegger 117). The ideal of masculinity in this society is characterised by forcefulness,

competence, competitiveness, vigour, and occasional violence (Heilburn xiv) and Éomer is the best

representative of Rohan's hypermasculinity. But also the last. Ruiz argues that the human kingdoms

faced the crisis of masculinity, or rather hypermasculinity, on the turn of the Third and Fourth age

(25). The Third age was coming to an end with the defeat of Sauron, and the ideals of hegemonic

masculinity did too. This phenomenon of declining hypermasculinity was happening in real world too

(Winter 117), and Tolkien most likely observed it and incorporated it into the book (Ruiz 25).

Gondor was once the greatest realm of Men, but in the time of the event of *The Lord of the

Rings*, its glory in decline. The king´s throne is empty and in his place is the line of Steward of

Gondor, defending the kingdom before the lost line of the kings of Númenor returns (Númenoreans

are ancient house of Men descended from Beren and Lúthien, Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* 193-194).

In Gondor too, the pattern of declining hypermasculinity can be found. Gondor is led by Denethor,

who is a rather authoritarian, dominant and imposing ruler. He is the representative of the oppressing

power, and even exerts it towards his sons (Ruiz 28). The two kingdoms emphasize male power, in

contrast to the Elves and Númenorean societies, that are based on gender equality and equality of

opportunity (Coutras 206). With Denethor's death and Aragorn's coronation as a king, who is a

descendant of people of Númenor, comes a new and gentler era.

4.1.3. The Race of Dwarves

Dwarves are a tough race, laborious, secretive and they are a bit taller than Hobbits. They are great craftsmen, skilled in metallurgy, blacksmithing, they love stone, and gems and are associated with mining – which is only understandable, given their original homes were in mountains. They have a great memory of injuries and wrongdoings but are not evil, though some old tales of Men suggest different, mostly caused by their envy for the wealth Dwarves possessed. After the destruction of their homes, the mansions within the mountains, they became wandering folk, travelling and labouring (Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* 1132)

Dwarves are distrustful towards other races, which was not always the case, and the relationship between Dwarves and Elves is the most complicated and bitter, wrongs being done on both sides. The two representatives of these races in the Fellowship accompanying Frodo on his quest, the Dwarf Gimli and Elf Legolas, were initially hostile towards each other, but eventually became great friends (relationship with Elves in Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* 255, 303). The race of Dwarves was inspired by old Germanic myths and Moseley points out that besides their names, their revenges and conflicts are of Old Norse origin (Moseley 32).

4.1.4. The Race of Hobbits

The Hobbits are a new fictional race of people, created completely new by Tolkien. He described the nature, history, and culture of Hobbits in detail in the prologue of *The Lord of the Rings* (1-16). Hobbits are little people whose height is around three feet (91.44 cm) for which the Men fittingly call them the Halflings, and they inhabit the land of the Shire, "where an ordered, civilised, if simple and rural life is maintained" (Tolkien *Letters* 158). They are unobtrusive people, having the ability disappear quickly and silently, if they want to. The Hobbizs are good-natured, like to laugh, drink, eat, and smoke pipes, and are hospitable and delighted in parties, giving and receiving presents eagerly (Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* 3). They care deeply about their relationships, and they live in holes and houses build in hills inhabited by large families. Hobbits like the land well-ordered and well-farmed, and do not like or understand complicated machines but are skilled with tools (Tolkien

The Lord of the Rings 1). This dismissive attitude comes directly from Tolkien's dislike for industrialization.

Hobbits like peace and quiet and were always shy of Men, "The Big Folk" as they called them. They are not warlike, never fought among themselves, but in the ancient time, they had to fight to survive in the hard world. But the times of *The Lord of the Rings* are peaceful and prosperous for Hobbits (Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* 1-7). The is no government in the Shire, nor was there a king for almost thousand years. Families are numerous, manage their own affairs and Hobbits follow set of laws called The Rules, and they do so of their own free will, because they are ancient and just (Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* 9).

Some critics observed that Hobbits are much like the Englishmen and Tolkien himself, and they were not far from truth. In a letter to Deborah Webster from 1958, Tolkien writes: "I am in fact a *Hobbit* (in all but size). I like gardens, trees and unmechanized farmlands; I smoke a pipe, and like good plain food (unrefrigerated), but detest French cooking; I like, and even dare to wear in these dull days, ornamental waistcoats. I am fond of mushrooms (out of a field); have a very simple sense of humour (which even my appreciative critics find tiresome); I go to bed late and get up late (when possible). I do not travel much." (Tolkien *Letters* 288-289).

4.2. Analysis of selected characters

The characters selected for analysis are three men and two hobbits, showing different types of masculinity. Apart from Faramir, all the characters are members of the Fellowship of the Ring. The group of nine members with task to accompany Frodo on his quest to destroy the Ring shows the unity of Good against the Evil, and all the representatives of the races are of nobility. Gandalf is the powerful Istari, Boromir is the heir of the Steward of Gondor (and his brother Faramir is next in the line), Aragorn is the heir of Elendil and becomes the king of Gondor, Legolas is the prince of Mirkwood Elves, Gimli is from the royal line of Dwarves, though not close to succession, Merry is the son of the Master of Buckland, Pippin the heir of Thain in Tookland and Frodo is Bilbo's heir. The

only exception is Sam, but he will also gain higher status, and after the events concerning the Ring, he becomes the Mayor of the Shire (Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* 1097).

4.2.1. Boromir and Faramir

Boromir and Faramir represent the people of hegemonic Gondor and two different masculinities. They are the sons of Denethor, the Steward of Gondor. The House of Steward is in charge in the absence of the king and each new Steward takes an office with the oath "to rod and rule in the name of the king, until he shall return" (Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* 1052). But these words became only ritual and Stewards rule over the kingdom with all the power of the king. Boromir and Faramir are therefore the closest to Gondor royalty.

Denethor was tall and proud man, more kingly that any man before him. He was wise ruler, far-sighted, listened to counsel but doing what he wanted. He was married, and loved his wife deeply in his own fashion, but after she passed away, he became grimmer and more silent than he was before (Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* 1055-1056). He spent many hours in his tower invested in thoughts, and after he dared to look into the p*alantir*, he shut himself there even more often, gaining knowledge the stone offered him. *Palantir* is a magical stone that had the ability to reveal and show things distant in time and space, and to communicate with other such stones (Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* 597). His obsession with palantir and excessive pride made him a depressed man (Ruiz 28).

Boromir, five years older than Faramir, was beloved by his father and similar to Denethor in appearance and pride, but nothing else. He was the captain of Gondor, fearless and strong warrior but cared little for lore (Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* 1056). However the excess of pride and little knowledge of lore and humility lead to catastrophe, and Jane Chance saw Boromir's character arc as a moral deterioration (58). Tolkien saw the theme of Fall as essential in his story (Moseley 60), and Boromir falls when he tries to take the Ring from Frodo (Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* 399). His intentions were good, he wants to use its power to help his people, but he fell into the frenzy of the Ring and scared Frodo, threating him. He quickly came back to his senses, weeping after realizing what had happened, as he was very sorry. Hammond and Scull describe him as a "tragic figure with

many good qualities but with weaknesses that lay him open to temptation....." (349). In the end, Boromir managed to redeem himself through courage, when he fought to save Merry and Pippin from the Orcs (to whom he was like duplicitous uncle, Craig 16) and after being suspicious and distant towards Aragorn for a long time (Tolkien *the Lord of the Rings* 247-248), he finally acknowledges him as the king of Gondor, though in time of his death (Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* 414).

Faramir also resembles his father in looks but was of different nature. He shared with Denethor the love for lore and books, but he also liked music, which was one of many things Denethor was displeased with (Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* 1056). Faramir was gentle, reading the hearts of people and welcoming Gandalf. It was the wizard from whom Faramir learned much and had closer relationship with than his father. Despite Denethor's favouritism and unequal affection for his sons, Faramir did not turn resentful or vengeful (Ruiz 31), though he was "daunted" by his father (Tolkien *Letters* 323) and the brothers loved one another. Boromir supported and protected Faramir, and there was no rivalry or jealousy between the brothers.

Faramir lead a group of scouts, and he was very respected, partly due to his rank, but his men loved him. Carter sees the resemblance between him and modern soldiers from World War I - he earned the respect of his subordinates not by force or exploitation of his birth rank, but by being kind a breaking the class differences by wearing the same clothes as his men. He also used modern military strategies (Carter 95-96). Faramir did not seek glory in danger without purpose, contrary to the impulsive Boromir and the hegemonic masculinity he represents (Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* 1056).

Faramir embodies the alternative masculinity, exhibiting qualities that would traditionally be assigned to women. Faramir rejects militarism and treasures life like his mentor Gandalf, resembling Tolkien, who wrote: "As far as any character is 'like me' it is Faramir"(Carpenter *Letters* 232).

4.2.2. Aragorn

Aragorn is one of the main protagonists of the book. He is first introduced to the reader in the chapter "At the Sign of the Prancing Pony" (Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* 149-162). Frodo and the

other Hobbits rest in the inn while on their way to Rivendell, the settlement of the Elves, where they seek protection and counsel on the One Ring. Despite the circumstances, the Hobbits enjoy themselves and the guests of the inn, when Frodo noticed that "a strange-looking weather-beaten man, sitting in the shadows near the wall" (Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* 156) was listening to their conversation. His appearance gives away that he travels a lot, the colour of his clothes faded, and shoes covered in mud. The innkeeper tells Frodo that he is one of the "wandering folk" (ibid.), the Rangers. His appearance is further described as having "shaggy head of dark hair flecked with grey, and in a pale stern face a pair of keen green eyes" (Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* 156). The man introduces himself as Strider. Hobbits are scared and suspicious of him, but later they find out he was sent by Gandalf to help them reach Rivendell. His true name, Aragorn, is revealed shortly after, but he continues to use the name Strider, as Tolkien also refers to him. The figure of Strider remains mysterious until his origin and great legacy is revealed in "The Council of Elrond" (Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* 247-248). Aragorn is the heir of Isildur, and heir of the Lands of Gondor.

A poem, composed by Bilbo, summarizes Aragorn's destiny and character well:

All that is gold does not glitter,

Not all those who wander are lost;

The old that is strong does not wither,

Deep roots are not reached by the frost.

From the ashes a fire shall be woken,

A light from the shadows shall spring;

Renewed shall be blade that was broken,

The crownless again shall be king. (Tolkien 247)

Aragorn's life is entwined with evil Sauron more than it seems, and they can be thought of as real opponents. As Isildur´s heir, bears the shards of Narsil, ("blade that was broken" in quoted poem, Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* 170), the sword which caused the fall of Sauron. Heirloom of not only

the right to the Gondor throne but also of great burden. As his descendant, Aragorn feels responsible for Isildur´s inability to destroy the Ring and the fall of Gondor´s greatness and glory. The poem foretells, that when one Ring is found and destined to be destroyed, the broken sword should be reforged, and the bearer shall be king. Aragorn is the embodiment of Arthur Redivius, The King-Who-Returns archetype (Lakowski 28). Aragorn has doubts about himself and does not desire to be a leader or a ruler, but as the story proceeds, he eventually grows in to the role and desires to rule, not for power, but for love of his land and people, and because he humbly knows he would do it best. Aragorn's identity depends on the circumstances and places, and his character is written in layers, that Tolkien gradually removes as the time for his coronation approaches (Ruiz 30).

Aragorn had some moments, where he doubted himself and his decisions, and according to Crocker, the death of Boromir, escaping of Frodo and Sam, kidnapping of Merry and Pippin and the disbandment of the Fellowship is partly Aragorn's failure, caused by his momentary indecision what to do (119). Aragorn thinks everything through, and the indecision is the opposite of impulsiveness, a trait traditionally associated with men. His character is far from the hypermasculine type. He never uses his authority or superiority over others and does not allow his own goals to intervene with his task to protect the Hobbits, to whom he is kind and fatherly, a guiding figure (Craig 16). On the first meeting with Frodo, he proves his loyalty and dedication to the right thing: "I am Aragorn, son of Arathorn; and if by life or death I can save you, I will." (Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* 171).

Aragorn's love interest and later wife is the Elf Arwen, daughter of Elrond. Their love story is a replay of that of Beren and Lúthien - they are separated for a long time, and in the end, Arwen has to sacrifice her immortal life to be with her loved one. But Arwen is different from Lúthien. She is rather passive, her character lacks depth she and plays no part in Aragorn's quest, and when that is done, Aragorn can be with her. There are not many moments of them together and Aragorn does not mention her often, and it is not apparent that they are betrothed, which is because Arwen did not exist for the majority of the writing of *The Lord of the Rings* (Craig 13). Tolkien intended Aragorn to be with Éowyn, but later decided they do not fit each other and invented Arwen, just to fulfil the logic of the narrative (Craig 13). Tolkien admitted that this change proved confusing and there are faults in the

work he regrets: "I do not feel much can be done to heal the faults of this large and much-embracing tale" (Tolkien *Letters* 161).

Gandalf, Aragorn's upbringing with the Elves, and his Númenorean blood contribute to the gentle, more feminine character of Aragorn. Elven and Númenorean societies are not hegemonic, they provide both sexes with the same opportunities and feminine and masculine is balanced, allowing for alternative masculinities to exist (Coutras 206). Gandalf, the wizard and Jungian archetype of the wise old man (Ruiz 32), is a mentor and friend to Aragorn. Gandalf and Aragorn share the desire to protect life, contrary to the Evil, and have traits that would be traditionally labelled as feminine – they are compassionate, honourable, dutiful, wise, merciful, just and humble (Ruiz 33). Some of these traits belong to the category of positive masculine displays of power according to Rawls (6). Aragorn likes to compose poems and is skillfull at healing, activities that would be classified as feminine (Rawls 6) and is not afraid to show affection. For example, when Boromir dies, he kisses his brow, holds his hand and weeps (Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* 414).

Aragorn is inherently heteronormative at the core, but he does not exhibit any of the negative traits typically associated with a dominant hegemonic masculinity. He does not assert authority and dominance trough violence, does not try to oppress the weaker members of the Fellowship of the Ring, and he does not view them as subordinates. But he is able to fight and act, when the situation demands.

4.2.3. Samwise Gamgee and Frodo Baggins

Frodo and Sam are the smallest people that saved the world, with help the of others of course. Sam and Frodo travel the world and are together the whole time. According to Craig, their relationship is the central emotion of the book, because their love is spiritual (16). Their relationship is very expressive and can be read in more ways.

Frodo and Sam care for each other very deeply, but they do not seem to be on the same level. Tolkien presents their relationship to be that of master and his servant, but that does not capture its depth (Craig 16). Sam really is a loyal servant, always selfless and accommodating, resembling the

soldiers taking care of higher-ranked officers, quoting once again: "My ´Samwise Gamgee´ is indeed a reflexion of the English soldier, of the privates and batmen I knew in the 1914 war, and recognised as so far superior to myself" (Carpenter *A Biography* 89). Sam's character was also likened to a dog a few times, by critics and Tolkien himself. In "Shadow of the Past", where Frodo and Gandalf discuss the Ring and his departure from the Hobbiton (Hobbit settlement), Sam is sad to hear that Frodo should leave, but when Gandalf said that Sam shall go with Frodo, Sam was "springing like a dog invited for a walk" (Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* 64). Wilson wrote that Frodo is the good little Englishman and Sam "his dog-like servant, who talks lower-class and respectful, and never deserts his master." (313). Sam refused to ever leave Frodo, and even slept "curled up at Frodo's feet" (Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* 82).

Craig states two reasons why Sam desires to follow Frodo so eagerly. The one being Frodo himself, Sam loves his master. The second is that Sam longs to see and experience something nobler, expressed by his desire to see Elves (Craig 16). When he finally meets them, he is changed, especially after meeting Galadriel. This interest in Elves was sparked by Bilbo, who was telling Sam and other young Hobbits the stories of his adventures. Bilbo and Frodo are perceived by Hobbits as "queer" (Craig16), suspicious, odd. They wander and are friends with Dwarves and wizards. Tolkien uses "queer" in the original meaning as strange/peculiar, not implying that the Hobbits are homosexuals, though the word already had this meaning in his time. Sam and Frodo might not be written by Tolkien as queer in the modern meaning, but there definitely is something queer about them. Their relationship was very affectionate. At least with the world changing to be more accepting, many people wondered if they are homosexuals, seeing more behind the strong male-male friendships.

With Frodo, the key motif of Fall returns in "Mount Doom" (Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* 933-947). As Sam and Frodo were approaching the volcano where the evil and powerful Ring of Sauron was forged, Frodo could not walk anymore, and Sam decided to carry him, with the famous words "I can't carry it for you, but I can carry you and it as well."(Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings*). Inside Mount Doom, so close to the end of the Evil, Frodo's powers are finally drained by the Ring and Frodo cannot resist anymore. His mind is taken over by the Ring and he refuses to cast it into the

flames and destroy it (Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* 945). Some fans saw this as Frodo´s failure, and Tolkien addressed such claims in a letter from 1963. Frodo indeed "failed" as a hero, he did not endure till the end. But it was not a moral failure. Frodo was under great pressure for a long time, he bore the Ring, was starved and mainly mentally exhausted, and did what he could. "His humility (with which he began) and his sufferings were justly rewarded by the highest honour; and his exercise of patience and mercy towards Gollum gained him Mercy: his failure was redressed." (Tolkien *Letters* 326). Frodo endured such burden for a long time, while others, more powerful (Gandalf, Galadriel) did not even dared to touch it.

Pity and Mercy is also important for Frodo´s character. Frodo regrets that Bilbo did not kill Gollum when he had the chance. Gandalf explains that Gollum is alive for the same reason, Bilbo felt pity for Gollum and out of mercy did not kill him (Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* 59). Frodo had no pity for Gollum in the beginning, but later, when Gollum joined Sam and Frodo on their journey, Frodo learned more about him and felt those two emotions – pity and mercy, and it proved beneficial that Gollum was not killed by Bilbo, for without Gollum's help, the Hobbits would probably not reach Mordor on their own. And the chain continues with Sam, who loves Frodo for his charity, humanity, and pity, but does not understand why he treats Gollum as he does (Craig 17) and sometimes becomes jealous of him. Frodo´s attitudes and qualities are of more feminine nature, and he is viewed as the feminine hero (Craig 16).

When the four Hobbits return to the Shire, they found it to be overrun by ruffians and Orcs, the war did reach there too. In an encounter with the ruffians, they are threatened and all draw swords in case of need, except for Frodo. Frodo also later demanded that there will be no killing, no matter what (Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* 1005-1006). Frodo is a pacifist after Tolkien, and Gandalf, his friend and mentor, shared the desire to preserve life (Ruiz 32).

Tolkien called Sam the chief hero and wrote "I think the simple "rustic" love of Sam and his Rosie (nowhere elaborated) is *absolutely essential* to the study of his (the chief hero´s) character, and to the theme of the relation of ordinary life (breathing, eating, working, begetting) and quests, sacrifices, causes, and the 'longing for Elves', and sheer beauty." (Tolkien *Letters* 160). Sam is meant

to be lovable and laughable, but he is sometimes irritating, and he never thought of himself to be admirable in any way – except in his loyalty to Frodo (Tolkien *Letters* 329). Without Sam, Frodo would not succeed and Horstmann says, that when a characters saves the world, he becomes hero and the ideal of masculinity, and that applies for Sam ("'Boy!' – Male Adolescence in Contemporary Fantasy Novels" 81).

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to explore the patterns of different masculinity types represented by five selected male characters from the high fantasy book *The Lord of the Rings* written by J. R. R. Tolkien. The book was an immediate success, but also target of major criticism. The first part focused on the author and circumstances outside of the book. It had three objectives: 1. investigation of Tolkien's life, its influence on his writing and circumstances of the creation of *The Lord of the Rings*. 2. Review of the criticism of Tolkien. 3. Review of female characters and problematics sexism. The second part was a general introduction to gender studies, fantasy fiction and archetypes, to provide some background for the analysis of the male characters. The focus of the third part was the analysis of Faramir, Boromir, Aragorn, Samwise Gamgee and Frodo Baggins and the races of Middle-earth in the context of masculinity.

Many aspects of Tolkien's life seeped into his writing, as it is natural for the work to have something of its creator. The biggest influences on Tolkien's life had his mother, wife, friends and the wars. Marriage and friendship were for him sacred institutions, and he did demonstrate them his work.

There were two waves of criticism – the first came right after the publication of *The Lord of the Rings* until the 1960s, the second around 2000s, after the films of Peter Jackson were released. Both waves made similar arguments. *The Lord of the Rings* is confusing, naïve, its characters are childish, bland and stereotypical. Each of the negative waves was answered by equally passionate supporters, that praised Tolkien's eloquent language, expansive and intricate mythology and art of narration.

The most heated is the debate if Tolkien was sexist or not and how he portrayed women. Tolkien' intentions were good, he wrote them as he liked them the most. His female characters are both passive and powerful, but their power does not equalize their numbers. An exception that is the independent, strong, and androgynous Galadriel, does not make up for the few stereotypically depicted women. In real life, Tolkien had no problem with women, he deeply respected them and was even glad

that women could access more education. He was just passive, not actively supporting them or trying to meet them. Tolkien was a man of men, among whom he spent time and enjoyed their company his whole life.

Tolkien's heroes express various types of masculinity. Boromir is the representative of the hypermasculine type. He is brave, great warrior and passionate, but too proud and reckless, without an interest in lore, that leads to bad results for him. But he is not mean. He loves his brother and befriends the members of the Fellowship. Faramir and Aragorn represent the alternative masculinities, or the androgynous individuals. They have balanced masculine and feminine traits. They are gentle, contained, interested in arts and are not afraid to show affection. Their feminine qualities do not depreciate their manhood, and when needed, they exhibit more stereotypically male features of action and power. Sam and Frodo are the most feminine of the selected men, the gentlest. Sam's greatest virtue is his loyalty to Frodo, and Frodo's is mercy. Frodo, Faramir and Aragorn are the most determined protectors of life, reflecting Tolkien's own pacifism.

In conclusion, Tolkien perfectly represents the mentality of Oxford dons from the early twentieth century. He was a traditionalist in every aspect of his life, yet he managed to create characters representing various types of masculinities, heteronormative, and alternative alike. The masculinity of Boromir is the ideal of a stereotypical patriarchal society, Aragorn and Faramir have many feminine traits, but those are balanced with the masculine enough to exist safely and prosperously within such society. Sam and Frodo are the most feminine of all of them, and that could lead to ostracization from the patriarchal society. Such a variety of masculine representation in his fictional world suggests, that Tolkien was able to identify the harmful patterns of a patriarchal society, showing unintentionally a bit of a modernity.

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