



## POSUDEK OPONENTA BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

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Studijní obor: **Anglický jazyk a literatura (dvouoborové studium)**

Název práce: **Representation of Masculinity in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings***

Autorka práce: **Václava Bláhovcová**

Vedoucí bakalářské práce: **Einat Adar, M.A., Ph.D.**

Oponent bakalářské práce: **doc. PhDr. Ladislav Nagy, Ph.D.**

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### Short characteristics of the thesis

The thesis studies gender roles, particularly models of masculinity, in J.R.R. Tolkien's novel *The Lord of the Rings*. It combines a review of criticism with analysis of particular characters to formulate an original thesis about the desired model of masculinity in the novel. The first part is concerned with the writing of the novel and the author's life, including early responses and criticism of the novel. The second part considers the issue of masculinity in fantasy literature more generally, and the third part analyses specific masculine representations in the novel: the various races of this world, Boromir, Faramir, Aragorn, Sam Gamgee and Frodo Baggins.

The study of representations of masculinity in the trilogy found that characters which are considered close to ideal in the novel, such as Faramir and Aragorn, possess a mixture of characteristics which are partly masculine and partly feminine. This is contrasted with more exclusively masculine types, such as Boromir, whose exaggerated aggression lead to failure and death.

### Overall assessment

First, it needs to be said that this is an excellently researched thesis. The requirements for a BA thesis are that students research critical material on the topic and present a summary of it. These requirements were clearly met and even exceeded by Ms Bláhovcová. Moreover, her thesis is well written in decent English (despite some minor glitches) and, consequently, reads well.

As the opponent, I should perhaps voice some reservations. Well, first and foremost, I think that the actual topic „Representation of masculinity” should deserve more space in the structure of the text. I do understand that it is difficult to cover forty pages with an argument on a single topic but, still, I do not think it fortunate to mix literary analysis with biographical analysis and to mix issues of literary representation with the question of whether the writer was a sexist or not. “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.” — I find this statement banal, anachronistic and, what is particularly disturbing, unsourced. What is also quite disconcerting is that when it comes to literary criticism of Tolkien's oeuvre, Ms Bláhovcová quotes exclusively criticism of the 1950s and early 1960s, while exclusively recent criticism is quoted when dealing with gender issues.

For the defence, I have two questions. On page 31 the author of the thesis states: “Tolkien believes that gender and sex are not the same, and that masculine and feminine are conditions of this fictional universe, going farther than the concerns of mere humans” with a reference to an article by Melanie Rawls. Could Ms Bláhovcová elaborate on this, including a reference to the long and distinguished tradition of female movement from the late 18th century to Tolkien's



time (Mary Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill etc.)? Also, could she provide examples from Tolkien's work that prove these beliefs of Tolkien's?

The second question concerns a statement on page 16: "The descriptions might be too long and detailed, but they help the 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*." To be honest, I don't quite understand this statement. Would it be possible to explain it? How exactly do we suffer while reading Martin and what is the role of descriptions in alleviating/avoiding this suffering?

Práci doporučuji k obhajobě.

Navrhovaná klasifikace: **výborně**

15. 8. 2022

Datum

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Podpis