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The Fantasy Worlds in J. R. R. Tolkien's The Lord of
the Rings and George R. R. Martin's A Song of Ice
and Fire
(Bachelor's thesis)

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I confirm that I wrote this thesis myself and integrated corrections and suggestions of improvement of my supervisor. I also confirm that the thesis includes complete list of sources and literature cited.

In Olomouc

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1 Introduction

The father of modern fantasy and the American Tolkien - those are the names they were called. Professor J.R.R. Tolkien and George R.R. Martin share many characteristics, despite being as different from each other as possible. They both come from a poor family, but they managed to graduate from the Universities with Honors. They both started to write stories when they were just small children and they both were teachers of literature (at least for some time). But most importantly they both created famous epic fantasy worlds with extraordinary sense of detail and dedication to their work. By following the principles of the World Building theory I will focus on the most important aspects of creating the secondary worlds and I will try to describe the worlds of Tolkien and Martin with respect to them.

The aim of this theses is to draw attention to the similarities in the works of both authors and decide, whether the success of Martin's fantasy series *A Song of Ice and Fire* could be, at least partially, caused by the fact, that after more than thirty years of more or less successful attempts of aspiring fantasy authors to imitate Tolkien and his work, there finally is someone, who can be rightfully called "the American Tolkien".

2 Tolkien and Martin

In this chapter I would like to introduce both authors through their lives, show their backgrounds and provide some information about how their most significant works were created. While they both come from a poor family, it is interesting to see how differently their lives were going, mostly because one of them lived in England and the second one is an American, but also with respect to the eras they were living in. The factual information in this chapter was taken from H. Carpenter's *Tolkien, A Biography* for the subchapter 2.1 and from George R.R. Martin's official webpage *georgerrmartin.com* for the subchapter 2.2, if not stated otherwise.

2.1 John Ronald Reuel Tolkien

2.1.1 Childhood

J. R. R. Tolkien was born on the 3rd of January 1892, surprisingly not in England but in Bloemfontein, in the Orange Free State (South Africa). His father Arthur Reuel Tolkien left England because of better job and career opportunities and his mother Mabel followed him there a few years after that. She did not like Africa's hot climate but it was the only way how to be with her beloved husband. The couple got married soon after her arrival and at the beginning of the next year she gave birth to their first son, John Ronald Reuel. The child was named John after his grandfather and Reuel after his father, but Ronald was the name he was called by his family and his future wife. Two years later Ronald's brother was born, he was named Hilary Arthur Reuel. One year later, in 1895, Mabel and her sons had to leave for England because of Ronald's health condition. Arthur could not leave his job to go with them at that moment, however he planned to visit them later. Unfortunately, they never saw him again – he died of rheumatic fever before he could leave Africa. Ronald was only three years old when he last saw his father and according to Carpenter, his only clear memory of him was an image of Arthur painting his suitcase, preparing himself for future journey.¹

¹ Humphrey Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien: A Biography* (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1978), 22.

For some time Mabel and her boys lived in a small family house in Birmingham, together with her parents and siblings. Little Ronald soon almost forgot about Africa and started to make bonds with the Suffield family. His grandfather John Tolkien was much older and died shortly after Arthur and the only other member of Tolkien family was Ronald's aunt Grace, who used to tell him stories about Tolkiens history and origins. Ronald however, felt more connected with the Suffields. As he once wrote: "Though a Tolkien by name, I am a Suffield by tastes, talents and upbringing".²

In the summer of 1896, they moved into a small village called Sarehole, a mile away from Birmingham. Ronald and Hilary enjoyed discovering all the places around the village, Sarehole Mill, forests or the nearby sand quarry. Soon they found friends from the nearby village of Hall Green, even though they were so different at the beginning, especially in their language and manners. This place, being a perfect example of English countryside at that time, later became an inspiration for Tolkien when creating The Shire for *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* stories.

The Tolkien boys were taught at home by their mother. Ronald's favorite lessons were languages, he was able to read at the age of four and soon after that he could write. Mabel taught him some Latin and he loved it, not only learning the meaning of words, but also their sounds and forms. She soon realized he had a special gift for languages. Ronald also excelled in drawing, especially drawing trees and plants. He knew a little bit of botany as well, but he cared about the way the trees looked more than about their botanical characteristics. Thanks to his mother he could read many books as a child, but he definitely did not like all of them. He disliked *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Treasure Island*, but he liked stories about Indians, some books from George Macdonald (which took place in a kingdom surrounded by mountains hiding orcs) or *The Red Fairy Book* by Andrew Lang, which he learned about dragons from. He even started to write his own dragon story at the age of seven.

In 1900, Mabel decided to join the Roman Catholic Church together with her sons and her sister May Incedon. This was significant for Mabel as she faced ostracism by much of the Suffield and Tolkien families. May's husband Walter

² Carpenter, *A Biography*, 27.

Inclendon used to help Mabel financially, but he stopped his support the moment he learnt this news. He even forbade his wife May from stepping in a Catholic church ever again. Even though Mabel's decision brought many complications to the life of her family, Christianity later influenced Ronald in his work when creating the world Arda – place for his *The Lord of the Rings* stories.

2.1.2 School Years

In the same year, Ronald was old enough to start school. He was sent to the King Edward's School in the center of Birmingham, four miles away from Sarehole and at first Ronald had to walk most of the way every day. Of course Mabel saw this was not the best solution and sadly realized they will have to move again. This meant the end of their peaceful life in the countryside, of what Tolkien himself later described as “four years, but the longest-seeming and most formative part of my life”.³ The small family moved into Moseley, bustling noisy town which was closer to Ronald's school, but they did not really felt it as home. And soon after that they had to move again – this time to a house on a street close to King's Heath's railway station, to place in which “young Ronald's developing linguistic imagination was engaged by the sight of coal trucks going to and from South Wales bearing destinations like “Nantyglo”, “Penrhiwceiber” and “Senghenydd”.”⁴

Mabel was not satisfied neither by their new home nor the local Catholic church and continued with her effort to find a better place for her and her sons. This eventually led her to the finding of the Birmingham Oratory – a big church in the suburb of Edgbaston with its own school – St. Philip's Grammar School – a Catholic school run by local priests, where tuition was cheaper and most importantly, there was a house for rent nearby. And so in 1902 the Tolkiens moved again. They found a dear friend in one of the priests, Father Francis Xavier Morgan. According to Michael Coren, Father Francis became a “father figure” to the Tolkien boys, told them stories, took them for trips and helped Mabel psychically.⁵ Soon it came to light that young Ronald was too talented for St. Philip's School's standards

³ Carpenter, *A Biography*, 32.

⁴ “Biography – Who was Tolkien?,” The Tolkien Society, accessed August 15, 2016, <http://www.tolkiensociety.org/author/biography/>.

⁵ Michael Coren, *J.R.R. Tolkien The Man Who Created The Lord of the Rings* (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing Co. Limited, 2001), 27.

so Mabel decided to teach him herself again and in the fall of 1903 Ronald received scholarship for talented students from King Edward's School which suited his needs better.

Ronald was placed into the sixth grade and he was enjoying the study of languages again. He started to learn Greek but his teacher George Brewerton introduced him to Middle Ages, medieval English and literature. He despised Shakespeare for his lack of imagination, but he was amazed by Geoffrey Chaucer and his *Canterbury Tales* and decided to study the history of English more.

Year 1904 was a tough one for the Tolkien family – the boys got sick and Mabel was diagnosed with diabetes. After she was released from the hospital the Tolkiens spent the summer in the countryside again, in a small house in Rednal. For the boys it was like if they were back in Sarehole again and it was the best holiday in their lives. But the fall came, they had to go back to school and did not realize their mother's health was getting worse. She died in November the same year, at the age of thirty four, leaving her two sons orphaned. Father Francis became their guardian, took care of the boys and found them a new place to live in – in Birmingham with their childless widowed aunt Beatrice Suffield. She made sure the boys were clothed, fed and visiting school, but that was all. The boys dearly missed their mother and the happy moments they spent in the countryside together. Because they lost all of this at once Ronald later always connected his memories of countryside with memories of his lost mother.

After his mother's death, Ronald devoted his life mainly to his studies and school life as a whole. Ronald already excelled in Greek, Latin, French and German, but he felt he should not only learn the languages but also learn something about them - why are they what they are, what they come from – philology. He also started actively studying Anglo-Saxon, soon he was able to read *Beowulf* in original form and felt like it was the most remarkable poem of all times, a legend about a warrior who died fighting a dragon. He came back to medieval English again and read *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* – a poem about a knight looking for a giant. He even started to learn old Norwegian so he could read the story about Sigurd and the dragon Fafnir from *The Red Fairy Book* he loved as a child.

His love for languages, not surprisingly, lead him to creating his own languages, purely for fun. He took Spanish (even though he did not speak it) as a model and started creating "Naffarin". And he would probably perfect it if a book

named *Primer of the Gothic Language* did not cross his way. He opened it and immediately fell in love with it. He learnt all that was left from the language and soon started to invent new “missing” words from the vocabulary and even a presumed etymology. Later, he even did this with his own languages.

Father Francis still oversaw the boys’ lives and successes and realized they were not happy living with their aunt, so in 1908, he found them a better accommodation – in Mrs. Faulkner’s boarding house near Oratory. This place was about to change Ronald’s life greatly – he met the love of his life – Edith Bratt – here. He was sixteen years old and she was three years older but they had a lot of in common, they were both orphans, they shared the same sense of humor and they both needed to love someone and to be loved by someone. Father Francis however did not approve their relationship and after Ronald failed his first attempt at getting a scholarship to Oxford he forbade him to see or even write to her again until he is twenty-one and not under his guidance anymore. They both moved away from Mrs. Faulkner’s house and lived separately for some time.

Ronald put all his effort into his studies again. He was a captain of a rugby team and found three very close friends – Geoffrey Smith, Robert Gilson and Christopher Wiseman - they even established a discussion club together, known as the “T. C. B. S.” (Tea Club, Barrovian Society, named after their meeting place at the Barrow Stores). They met regularly after school and discussed everyone’s (quite different) interests. In the end of 1910 Ronald came back to Oxford for his second attempt to get the scholarship – and he succeeded.

2.1.3 University Studies

In October 1911, he left Birmingham for the Exeter College at Oxford, a place he felt he would be able to love and consider a home – the first place after his mother’s death. He went there to study Classical languages – Greek and Latin but during his first two semesters he got bored with them and was more fascinated by Germanic languages. He also met a very inspiring person – his teacher Joseph Wright who learnt to read and write on his own and later even became an expert in comparative philology at Oxford. They shared similar interests and because of him Tolkien decided he would like to become an Oxford teacher as well.

During the first year of his Oxford studies Tolkien realized he was not really working hard at all and decided to learn Finnish - at least a little bit. In the end he never really learnt much of it but it strongly influenced his approach to creating his own languages. He started creating a new language again – a language which later became known as “Quenya”, the language spoken by elves in the Middle Earth.

In January 1913 he was finally twenty-one years old, immediately after his birthday he wrote a letter to Edith only to be rejected by her answer – she was already engaged to George Field, the brother of her friend. This broke Ronald’s heart and he decided he will convince her personally. He went to her current place and they had a long talk. In the end she promised him she would marry him.

Absolutely delighted he went back to Oxford to take an important exam, but he was not quite ready for it and “obtained a disappointing second class degree in Honour Moderations, the “midway” stage of a 4-year Oxford “Greats” (i.e. Classics) course, although with an “alpha plus” in philology“.⁶ After this he was advised by his professors to change the subject of his studies to English Philology and he agreed.

Studying English at Oxford was however harder than he thought and he came across some texts he had never seen before. One of them was a poem *Crist* by Cynewulf, particularly these two verses amazed him: “Eala Earendel engla beorhtast / ofer middangeard monnum sended” which translates as “Hail Earendel brightest of angels / over Middle Earth sent to man”.⁷ As he later wrote he was strongly moved by its beauty, something distant and strange.

In the meantime he and Edith discussed her religion – she was member of the Church of England which meant they could not marry in a Catholic church, she had to convert. And she did even though this angered the people she lived with, the ones she considered her family and she had to move out soon. For her new home she chose Warwick, a beautiful place known for its amazing medieval castle. Tolkien liked Warwick as well, mainly for its intact nature. While Edith was trying to establish her new home Roland enjoyed his “manly” university life. He also started to create his first works, during his stay in Nottinghamshire in 1914 he wrote a poem named *The Voyage of Earendel the Evening Star* inspired by *Crist*. This poem marked the beginning of his own mythology.

⁶ “Biography – Who was Tolkien?.”

⁷ “Biography – Who was Tolkien?.”

2.1.4 The War

During Tolkien's first attempts of poetry in 1914 and the first half of 1915 the Great War fully occupied many European states. A lot of his contemporaries joined the army but he really wanted to finish his university studies first, he was so close. He joined the Oxford army program which allowed him to train without interrupting his studies and in June 1915 he achieved a first-class degree. Confident he will get a job at a university after the war he enlisted as a lieutenant in the Lancashire Fusiliers. While preparing to sail to France in 1916 he kept working on his ideas of Earendel, the Mariner who became a star, and also his invented languages.

With this prospect he and Edith decided to get married before he left, they could not be sure he will ever come back. They did so on the 22th of March 1916 in a Catholic church in Warwick and in June he left for France. He actively fought on the Western Front, but got sick with "trench fever" in October and was sent back to England. He recovered sufficiently to stay with Edith for Christmas. By this time he knew two of his T. C. B. S. friends – Rob Gilson and Geoffrey Smith – had died in the war. The last letter he received from G. Smith encouraged him to start with his dream – creating a whole mythology.

During his recovery in the beginning of 1917 he wrote a story "The Fall of Gondolin", part of *The Book of Lost Tales* as he originally named what was later to become *The Silmarillion*. It was quite peaceful time for Ronald and Edith and she became pregnant with their first child. Tolkien was expected to come back to France once he is healthy, but he fell ill again and this did not change for most of the year. He even missed the birth of his first son – John Francis Reuel, because he could not leave the hospital on time. He came back to the army, but it was almost clear he would not be sent to France ever again. Edith with little John moved close to his camp and they tried to spend as much time together as they could. They used to go for walks into the nearby forest, Edith danced and sang for him and he was happy. This later inspired another story from *Silmarillion* – the story about a mortal man Beren who falls in love with a beautiful elvish girl Lúthien Tinúviel, when he sees her dancing in the forest. This story always remained Tolkien's favorite one, for it mirrors his passionate love for his wife. Many years later after her death when writing a letter to his son Christopher he wrote: "... she was (and knew she was)

my Lúthien. (...) Her hair was raven, her skin clear, her eyes brighter than you have seen them, and she could sing – and dance.“⁸

2.1.5 After the War

When the war ended in November 1918 Tolkien and his family moved to Oxford. There he participated in creating the Oxford English Dictionary for two years and in his spare time he continued working on his *Lost Tales*. He also publicly read “The Fall of Gondolin” for the first time, it was for the members of Exeter College Essay Club. The audience received it well, among them Neville Coghill and Hugo Dyson, two future “Inklings”. In the summer of 1920 he applied for a teaching job at the University of Leeds and to his surprise he succeeded.

Tolkien had spent five years teaching in Leeds and during this period of his life his two younger sons – Michael Hillary Reuel and Christopher Reuel – were born. He almost finished his *Book of Lost Tales* but he continued to rewrite it over and over again, never fully satisfied with it. He also cooperated with his colleague Eric V. Gordon on the new edition of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* – one suitable for university students. Then at the beginning of 1925 he successfully applied for a professorship of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford.

2.1.6 Oxford

His growing family moved to Oxford and they had stayed there for twenty one years. Those were good years. The Tolkiens were finally enjoying calm family life, living in the same house for more than a few years, going for family vacations, being “normal”. The youngest member of the family came to this world in 1929, a daughter named Priscilla Mary Reuel. Tolkien loved telling stories to his children, relaxing in their garden and he was also drawing and painting. His professional life was similarly satisfying, he “fitted extremely well into the largely male world of teaching, research, the comradely exchange of ideas and occasional publication“.⁹ In 1926 he established a grouping named “The Inklings” meant for the Oxford

⁸ John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, edit. Humphrey Carpenter and Christopher Tolkien (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1995), No. 340, 463.

⁹ “Biography – Who was Tolkien?.”

professors mainly, to discuss their common interests and their works. As well as the aforementioned Coghill and Dyson, Owen Barfield and Charles Williams also belonged to the group and above all C. S. Lewis, who later became one of Tolkien's closest friends.

These tranquil times however saw the creation of Tolkien's masterpieces – *The Hobbit* and its sequel *The Lord of the Rings*. According to Tolkien himself this all started on one standard day while he was marking some papers – he took one of them and wrote “In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit”. He did not know what a hobbit was and why it lived in a hole, but he was determined to find out. And he did and created an adventurous story about Bilbo Baggins. He used to read parts of it to his children and they loved it. Interestingly at first he did not mention it to be a story happening in his mythological universe full of elves which he was writing about in *The Silmarillion*. But some parts of this universe began to appear here and there and he realized Bilbo's adventures were happening in the Middle Earth as well. In 1936 an unfinished typescript came into the hands of an employee of The Allen & Unwin publishing firm and they wanted it. Tolkien completed the book in 1936 and it came out in September 1937. The first edition was sold out before Christmas and its great success lead Stanley Unwin – the chairman of the firm – to ask Tolkien for more “Middle Earth material”.

This encouraged Tolkien to make some of his *Silmarillion* stories into a more presentable state and he sent them to Unwin together with some of his older children stories. His reader however thought this had almost no commercial potential and that some new “hobbit story” would be a much better choice. Tolkien was frustrated by their reaction to his beloved mythological world, but in his letter to the publisher he agreed that “it is plain that quite apart from [*Silmarillion*], a sequel or successor to *The Hobbit* is called for”.¹⁰

Three days later he started his work on another story about hobbits, but was not really sure about what he wanted to write about. During his writing process he changed almost everything - from the main protagonist to the names, to the overall atmosphere of the book. He went from writing the “hobbit sequel” to something more similar to *Silmarillion*, but that was not what bothered his publishers, it was his slow working pace. They wanted to publish “the new hobbit” a few years after

¹⁰ John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *The Letters*, No. 19, 32.

The Hobbit, but Tolkien was still postponing the writing. World War II had come and gone, this time without such a significant impact on his family and friends and surprisingly it was not the main reason the writing took him so much time. It was his perfectionism. He reworked, rewrote and revised the book over and over again and even when he finally finished it in 1949 he was not fully satisfied with it. It took him twelve years to do it.

The first part of the book came out in 1954 mostly because Tolkien thought it would be better to cooperate with another publishing firm – Collins. The main reason for this was Tolkien's desire to publish the (still unfinished) *Silmarillion* and Allen & Unwin already refused. This seemed like the perfect moment to do this, to present *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings* as two parts of a one story. After three years of complicated negotiating with Collins Tolkien realized something is better than nothing and came back to Allen & Unwin – to publish at least *The Lord of the Rings*. It took Tolkien another two years to collect all his notes and (with the help of his son Christopher) remake the needed maps of Middle Earth.

It was selling well, much better than the author or the publishers expected. But it was nothing too extraordinary until the pirated paperback version came out in the USA in 1965 and started a cult. American university students loved many aspects of Tolkien's story and even established the "American Tolkien Society" club. On one hand there were academic works concerning the story – on the other hand so called "hobbit picnics" in costumes. Americans were flying over the ocean to see their favorite professor and ask for a signature. The popularity of Tolkien's books increased in the UK as well thanks to this. Tolkien was getting so many presents he had no place to put them anymore and so many letters he was no longer able to answer them all.

Speaking of his professional life, he retired in 1959 after almost forty years of teaching. He was sixty seven years old and he felt he had the right to rest. He needed more time to spend with his wife and to finish his beloved *Silmarillion*. In 1968 they moved from Oxford to Bournemouth to enjoy the rest of their lives near the sea. Three years later Edith died – Beren lost his Lúthien. After this he could not imagine staying in Bournemouth and went back to Oxford, where he lived in rooms provided by Merton College. He died on the 2nd of September 1973. He never finished *The Silmarillion*, but his son Christopher managed to edit it himself and it

was published in 1977, followed by *Unfinished Tales of Númenor and Middle-earth* in 1980 – a selection of incomplete writings. He was “the father of modern fantasy”.

2.2 George Raymond Richard Martin

2.2.1 Childhood

George R. R. Martin was born on the 20th of September 1948 in Bayonne in New Jersey to a longshoreman Raymond Collins Martin and his wife Margaret Brady Martin. As he himself said he “arrived short one “R” but fixed that at [his] confirmation thirteen years later”¹¹ when he adopted the confirmation name Richard. He was the oldest of their three children, a brother to his two younger sisters – Darleen Martin Lapinski and Janet Martin Patten.

Until 1953 the Martins lived in an old house on Broadway and 31st street in a house that belonged to George’s great grandmother. There were a lot of adults in that house but no kids to play with, which according to Martin woke up his imagination and he started making up characters and stories. During his Torcon 3 speech he said:

“It was in the backyard that I created my first character. I suppose I was about three. Most cowboys had one six-shooter, but some had two, and that was cooler. Somehow I figured out that three would be even better than two, four would be better than three, and so on. (...) I told my mother that I was that famous desperado, Lotsa Guns, who had guns in his boots and his cowboy hat and shoved through his belt and *everywhere*. Admittedly, most of my armaments looked suspiciously like sticks . . . but hey, I wouldn’t be standing here today without a vivid imagination.”¹²

When he was four years old they have moved into an apartment of their own in a housing project on First Street. The place was called “LaTourette Gardens” and it was near the Bayonne Docks. From the windows of their apartment he could see the Kill van Kull Channel full of ships and the lights of Staten Island beyond it. The ships usually had flags on them and young George learnt all of them and was trying to imagine those places the flags belonged to, he dreamt of travelling.¹³

¹¹ “Bayonne,” George Raymond Richard Martin, accessed August 15, 2016, <http://georgerrmartin.com/life/bayonne.html>.

¹² “The Heart of a Small Boy,” George Raymond Richard Martin, accessed August 15, 2016, https://web.archive.org/web/20110728084547/http://www.asimovs.com/_issue_0410/theheartofasmall.shtml.

¹³ “Interview with George R.R. Martin,” Joanna Buffum, accessed August 15, 2016, <https://seaofshelves.wordpress.com/2013/02/24/interview-george-r-r-martin/>.

By this time he began to write his own stories – monster stories – and he was selling them to neighborhood children for pennies. One year he got a medieval playset with a castle and lots of knights and he used it as a house for his pet turtles. “Those were the only pets we could have. (...) I had five or six turtles who lived in the castle, I decided they were knights, lords and kings, so I started writing this whole fantasy series about the turtle kingdom and the king of the turtles.”¹⁴ They were dying a lot for unknown reasons which caused young George to think they were killing each other in sinister plots. The story he wrote about his turtles killing each other eventually became a base for his fantasy series *A Song of Ice and Fire*.

2.2.2 School Years and University

Martin attended Mary Jane Donohoe School, a grade school four blocks away from his home. He graduated in 1962 and he was the class valedictorian. He continued his studies in a Catholic prep school – Marist High, a boy’s school. According to Martin these four years were not the happiest years in his life, because there were other things besides his studies he loved more. On his official website we says: “Aside from discovering that I had absolutely no gift for foreign languages (I struggled mightily in both Latin and French), I did well enough with the academics, but my real passion were for chess, comic books, and writing.”¹⁵ For two years he had been writing and editing for the school paper, until a censorship dispute in his senior year. During his high school years he got involved in the comic fandom and began publishing amateur superhero stories in fanzines. He graduated from Marist High School in 1966.

For the college he chose Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois despite the fact he had been accepted at several local schools. But this was the first opportunity for young George to fulfil his traveling dreams, to see some other part of the world, and he took it. He received a Bachelor of Science degree in Journalism in 1970, graduating “summa cum laude” (with highest honor). He completed his studies a year later when he received a Master of Science degree, also from the Northwestern University. During his last year of studies he began selling his short

¹⁴ “Lunch with the FT: George RR Martin,” Financial Times, accessed August 15, 2016, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/2/bd1e2638-a8b7-11e1-a747-00144feabdc0.html#axzz1wYzURCl0>.

¹⁵ “Bayonne.”

stories professionally – his first sale was a story named “The Hero” which he sold to Galaxy magazine.

2.2.3 Chicago and Dubuque

After his graduation Martin moved to Chicago where he lived from 1971 to 1975 in a three-bedroom apartment with an “ever-changing cast of roomies”.¹⁶ He did two years of alternative service, working as a volunteer assigned to the Cook County Legal Assistance Foundation, which provided aid to the poor. Since his degrees were in journalism his job was to edit their newsletter and write their press release. During this time he met his first love Lisa Tuttle, a college student from University in Syracuse, New York. They fell in love at the 1973 Worldcon in Toronto, but since Lisa lived in Los Angeles they were only corresponding and visiting each other from time to time. They became collaborators and lovers, until Lisa fell in love with someone else in 1974 and ended their short romance. However, they did not stop writing to each other and remain friends to this day.

In the same year he met his future wife Gale Burnick, it was a Worldcon meeting again, this time in Washington, D.C. She moved from Philadelphia to Martin’s shared apartment, but she did not like living with all the roommates so they soon moved to their own flat. Martin was happy he was finally having his own office, it was a place where he wrote his first novel *Dying of the Light*. He and Gale married in November 1975 after a little more than a year of living together. Martin was trying to make money for living out of selling his stories, but those were only short stories and the income was not enough. Also his wife wanted to go back to college and finish her degree, so for the first time in his life he had to take a day job. He was hired as a journalism teacher by Clarke College, a small Catholic women’s college in Dubuque, Iowa. The department consisted of him and his friend Charlie Ellis only, his job was to teach the print journalism courses and he was also the faculty advisor to the student newspaper *The Courier*.

In 1976 George and Gale moved into the first house he had ever owned, in an old house in Dubuque, Iowa. They had to fix some parts of the house, but in the end they were happy with the results. While teaching the journalism courses George

¹⁶ “Chicago,” George Raymond Richard Martin, accessed August 15, 2016, <http://georgerrmartin.com/life/chicago.html>.

had to teach some for the English department as well, because the journalism department was not large enough to have two full-time faculty members. He taught the “Freshman Composition” and the “Science Fiction Literature” courses – he hated the first one but loved the second one, because it gave him “a great excuse for rereading a dozen or so of [his] favorite novels, and also allowed [him] to bring some actual science-fiction writers to campus to talk to [his] class”.¹⁷

His wife Gale graduated from Clarke College in 1979, in a time George was ready to become a full-time writer. He came to love Dubuque with its hills and old Victorian houses, but Gale hated the weather conditions, so they decided to move to New Mexico. They chose Santa Fe, because they fell in love with it a year ago while driving to the Worldcon in Phoenix. But while she moved there sooner, George had to stay to finish the semester and their separation and the stress of moving eventually caused them to be divorced soon after, with no children. After that George moved into a house he had never seen before and Gale moved out to Minneapolis.

2.2.4 Santa Fe and Hollywood

After the divorce he eventually became a full-time writer, he had time for writing novels as well. In 1982 Martin wrote a novel named *Fevre Dream* about vampires followed by another horror novel *The Armageddon Rag* in 1983. He expected it to be a hit, but the opposite happened, it was not selling. As he remembers “it was the worst-selling of all [his] novels and essentially destroyed [his] career as a novelist at the time”.¹⁸ This eventually caused him to search for a career in a movie industry in Hollywood. He started his television career as a story editor for *Twilight Zone* in 1986 and in 1987 he became an Executive Story Consultant for *Beauty and the Beast*. Later he worked as a Producer and a Co-Supervising Producer for the same series and he also wrote a pilot for *Doorways*, which was filmed but never aired. During this era he kept writing, but mostly short stories. He also started dating his current wife and the biggest love of his life, Parris

¹⁷ “Dubuque,” George Raymond Richard Martin, accessed August 15, 2016, <http://georgerrmartin.com/life/dubuque.html>.

¹⁸ “Lunch with the FT: George RR Martin.”

McBride. She was living in Portland, Oregon at that time but soon moved to George's house in Santa Fe. Interestingly they did not married until February 2011.

At the beginning of the 1990's he started to get frustrated with his job in television, mostly because the majority of his work was never brought to people. In an interview for the *January Magazine* he recalls: "I was creating my own pilots for new shows. I was doing some film scripts for features, some of them adapting my own work, some originals and some adapting other people's work. Nothing ever got made though. It was one of the things that ultimately frustrated me and drove me back to books."¹⁹ He says books were his first real love and no amount of money he was getting for his job in Hollywood can really counterbalance the feeling when you know your books are read by people. So in 1991 he began to work on *A Song of Ice and Fire*, which was supposed to be a trilogy.

2.2.5 Game of Thrones

He was still working for the studio at that time, but he knew he will have some spare time for writing in the summer to come and he began to work on a science-fiction novel called *Avalon*. He was working on it when a sudden glimpse of a young boy witnessing a beheading came through his mind and he wrote it down immediately. It later became the first non-prolog chapter in the series. "It's from Bran's viewpoint; they see a man beheaded and they find some direwolf pups in the snow. It just came to me so strongly and vividly that I knew I had to write it. I sat down to write, and in, like, three days [the chapter] just came right out of me, almost in the form you've read,"²⁰ Martin has said for the *Rolling Stone*. He submitted the first hundred pages to his agent together with a summarized plan for the whole trilogy and he succeeded so he fully immersed himself into the writing process, with the book titled *A Game of Thrones* eventually being published in 1996. But as he kept writing he realized his story was becoming too complex to be presented in

¹⁹ "Interview – George R.R. Martin," *January Magazine*, accessed August 15, 2016, <http://januarymagazine.com/profiles/grmartin.html>.

²⁰ "George R.R. Martin: The Rolling Stone Interview," *Rolling Stone*, accessed August 15, 2016, <http://www.rollingstone.com/tv/news/george-r-r-martin-the-rolling-stone-interview-20140423>.

three books only and changed his initial plan to four books, six books and eventually to seven books.²¹

The second part of the story – *A Clash of Kings* – was released in 1998 and it was the first one to make it to the best-sellers lists. The story started to draw attention of various filmmakers, who wanted to adapt it as a feature film, but George refused them all. He had an experience in movie industry and knew it could not be done without cutting out too many storylines and settings.²²

Martin was several months late turning in the third instalment – *A Storm of Swords* – mostly because it was the longest one at that time – 1500 pages in manuscript, but it eventually came out only two years after *A Clash of Kings*, in 2000.²³ The number of producers' offers increased after the global success of *The Lord of the Rings* movies, but Martin knew the only way his books could be remade is a series – a series made by someone like HBO who would not be scared of its violence and sexuality.²⁴

At this time Martin was working with the idea of hexalogy and him being in the middle of the story. He initially wanted to make a five-year story gap between the third and the fourth book to let his younger characters grow older, but he later realized he does not like all the flashbacks and retrospective that was needed for this and decided to include another book in the series.²⁵ He transformed his already written 250 pages long prologue into point of view chapters and kept writing until there was around 1700 pages of manuscript and he was not done yet.²⁶ A friend of him suggested to split the story geographically into two volumes with *A Feast for Crows* covering mostly the characters from King's Landing, the Iron Islands and Dorne and the later volume *A Dance with Dragons* telling the stories of characters from the North and those currently across the Narrow Sea – “to tell the story completely for some characters in *A Feast for Crows*, and to tell the story for some different characters, but within the same time frame, in *A Dance with Dragons*. In

²¹ “His Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy: George R. R. Martin Talks ‘Game of Thrones’,” The New York Times, accessed August 15, 2016, <http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/04/01/his-beautiful-dark-twisted-fantasy-george-r-r-martin-talks-game-of-thrones/>.

²² “His Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy: George R. R. Martin Talks ‘Game of Thrones’.”

²³ “Interview – George R.R. Martin.”

²⁴ “His Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy: George R. R. Martin Talks ‘Game of Thrones’.”

²⁵ “George R.R. Interview,” Fantasy Online, accessed August 15, 2016, <http://web.archive.org/web/20040818173139/http://www.fantasyonline.net/cgi-bin/newspro/101242423282166.shtml>.

²⁶ “A Fantasy Realm Too Vile for Hobbits,” The New York Times, accessed August 15, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/12/books/a-fantasy-realm-too-vile-for-hobbits.html>.

that sense, *A Dance with Dragons* is not the fifth book, but is more like four B. The two books run in parallel, and both begin five minutes after the end of *A Storm of Swords*.²⁷

A Feast for Crows was eventually published in 2005, including the author's note at the end of the book promising the fifth volume coming out the next year. That, however, did not happen and the growing fandom had to wait until 2011 for the next instalment. The *Feast* went straight to the top position on the *New York Times* best-sellers list²⁸ and it was also after its publication when Lev Grossman from the *Time* magazine made the famous proclamation about George Martin being "the American Tolkien".²⁹ According to the *New York Times* Martin was thrilled by this comparison, but he did not forget to mention he has already outdone Tolkien in at least one respect – "all three of *The Lord of the Rings* books are the size of just one of my books," he commented.³⁰

In the meantime between publishing the *Feast* and the *Dance*, HBO acquired the rights to turn the books into a dramatic series, produced and written by David Benioff and D. B. Weiss.³¹ As Martin has said, meeting the producers personally played a big role in changing his mind about the possibility of adaptation. He recalls:

"We had a lunch together and they had read the books, and I did not know them beforehand but they said all the right things. They seemed real. You meet a lot of people in Hollywood who say, "Yeah, I love it, love it, love it." But it doesn't seem quite real. But I could tell, or at least it seemed to me, that David and Dan were real and they wanted to make the kind of show I wanted made."³²

The first season of the *Game of Thrones* series aired in 2011 – the same year *A Dance with Dragons* was finally released.

²⁷ "George R.R. Martin on Sex, Fantasy, and 'A Dance With Dragons'," The Atlantic, accessed August 15, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2011/07/george-rr-martin-on-sex-fantasy-and-a-dance-with-dragons/241738/>.

²⁸ "Best Sellers: November 27, 2005," The New York Times, accessed August 15, 2016, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9B0DEEDB113EF934A15752C1A9639C8B63>.

²⁹ "The American Tolkien," Time, accessed August 15, 2016, <https://web.archive.org/web/20081229125934/http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1129596,00.html>.

³⁰ "A Fantasy Realm Too Vile for Hobbits."

³¹ "HBO turns 'Fire' into fantasy series," Variety, accessed August 15, 2016, <http://variety.com/2007/scene/markets-festivals/hbo-turns-fire-into-fantasy-series-1117957532/>.

³² "His Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy: George R. R. Martin Talks 'Game of Thrones'."

While waiting for the fifth volume there were fans who got angry at George Martin for writing at slow pace – they even formed online groups to harass him, such as “Finish the Book, George” blog. “The nadir, according to Martin, occurred when so-called fans suggested he might deny their pleasure by “pulling a Jordan” on them - referring to author Robert Jordan, who died before he was able to finish his *Wheel of Time* fantasy series.”³³ Angry Martin responded to this kind of treatment with a Tolkien analogy, saying: “I loved *Lord of the Rings* back in the 60s and like many millions of other people I was eagerly looking forward to *The Silmarillion*. But it never would have dawned on me to write to Professor Tolkien and say, 'You better hurry up with *The Silmarillion* before you die, old man.' What kind of cretin does that?”³⁴ This eventually stopped for a while with the publication of the *Dance* and the HBO series premiere, only to become even worse a few years later when in 2016 the fans are still waiting for the release of the sixth instalment – *The Winds of Winter*. The current situation is now even more complicated by the fact that the *Game of Thrones*’ sixth season’s story is already covering the story of the yet to be published *Winds* and many of the original book fans are afraid of being spoiled by the series fans on the internet. Worth mentioning that the five years of waiting is not that much, because during that time, simultaneously with *The Winds*, Martin was also working on his “Westeros history book” titled *The World of Ice and Fire* with Elio M. García and Linda Antonsson, which was released in 2014.

Right now the fans are eagerly waiting for George to write on his “Not a Blog” anything concerning a possible release date for *The Winds*, but even in the most recent *Ice and Fire* related article (concerning the twentieth anniversary of publishing the first book – *A Game of Thrones*) he explicitly mentions even he himself does not know when he will be done, saying: “Here I am, twenty years later... still working on book six... (and no, sorry, I have no announcement to make on *that* front)”³⁵.

³³ “George R.R. Martin: At the top of his Game (of Thrones),” *The Globe and Mail*, accessed August 15, 2016, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/books-and-media/george-rr-martin-at-the-top-of-his-game-of-thrones/article4259412/>.

³⁴ “George R.R. Martin: At the top of his Game (of Thrones).”

³⁵ “The Long Game... of Thrones,” George Raymond Richard Martin, accessed August 15, <http://grm.livejournal.com/496185.html>.

3 Fantasy and its subgenres

In this middle chapter I will try to briefly describe the fantasy genre and its subgenres, even though it is a very complex and broad genre. For this part of the thesis I chose *The A to Z of Fantasy Literature* by Brian Stableford as the general source, since it offers rather extensive information on the genre, its history and its authors.

3.1 What is a fantasy?

There are many definitions of “fantasy” or “fantasy literature” varying author from author. For example Gary Burns in his *A Companion to Popular Culture* defines fantasy with respect to its “sister genre” – science-fiction.

“Like science fiction, fantasy – as a genre of popular fiction – also speculates or extrapolates narratives set in the past, present, or future, in stories set on Earth or in otherworldly dimensions, but whereas science fiction involves the logical application of science and technology, fantasy uses magic and magical beings that may or may not have any scientific basis in known fact.”³⁶

To sum it up we can say fantasy is a literary fiction genre dealing with supernatural elements, such as magic or magical creatures. The story often takes place in an alternative world with different laws of nature or a world inhabited by completely different species.

3.2 Subgenres

The genre is still developing and new subgenres are appearing with almost every new fantasy series. The updated “Fantasy Subgenres Guide” by the online community standing behind *bestfantasybooks.com* offers sixty four subgenre categories including categories like “Gritty Fantasy”, “Mundane Fantasy”, “Portal Fantasy” or “Gunpowder Fantasy” next to more classical ones such as “Heroic

³⁶ Gary Burns, *A Companion to Popular Culture: Blackwell Companions in Cultural Studies*, 38 (Chichester: John Wiley&Sons, 2016), 115.

Fantasy”, “Romantic Fantasy” or “Sword and Sorcery Fantasy”.³⁷ They are often overlapping and can be put in some sort of subdivisions.

The first step in dividing the subgenres would be to decide if the work should be considered “High Fantasy” or “Low Fantasy”. Stableford works with Kenneth J. Zahorski and Robert H. Boyer’s taxonomy, stating “high fantasy consists entirely of fiction set in secondary worlds, while the “low fantasy” with which it is immediately contrasted consists of fiction set in the primary world, into which magical objects and entities are introduced piecemeal”.³⁸ On the other hand, Burns focuses more on the characters than the settings, saying “high fantasy offer stories that depict large-scale confrontations between the forces of good and evil. Good and evil are clearly represented. High fantasy also presents larger-than-life heroes who undertake grand quests to save the world from the powers of evil”.³⁹ He also mentions the interchangeability with the term “epic” fantasy, stating this subgenre was popularized in the twentieth century by C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien. Speaking of low fantasy, he describes it as “much more intimate and private than high fantasy. It features stories that deal more with individual problems at a personal level, and less with world-shaking conflicts”.⁴⁰ At this point he also says the subgenres of low fantasy encompass “swords and sorcery” fiction, featuring “mighty-limbed warriors combating wizards and dark magic”.⁴¹

Even with this most basic division, the authors differ in their opinions about what is the most defying element, and also about the interchangeability of the terms. However, it is quite clear that Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* can be considered a prototype of the high/epic fantasy subgenre – the story is happening in a secondary world and presents a hero Frodo going on a dangerous journey to save the Middle Earth from the reign of the evil Sauron. It is quite hard to find some “grey” characters as well – broadly speaking there are the good ones (against Sauron) and the bad ones (with Sauron).

Martin’s *A Song of Ice and Fire* is often put in the same category, mainly because the amount of characters, and the rich world building he used to create

³⁷ “Fantasy Subgenres Guide,” Best Fantasy Books, accessed August 15, 2016, <http://bestfantasybooks.com/fantasy-genre.php>.

³⁸ Brian Stableford, *The A to Z of Fantasy Literature: The A to Z Guide Series*, 46 (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 198.

³⁹ Burns, *A Companion*, 115.

⁴⁰ Burns, *A Companion*, 115.

⁴¹ Burns, *A Companion*, 115.

Planetos. But many aspects of the long and complex story complicates its categorization and going with the already mentioned “Fantasy Subgenres Guide” we could as well put the *Song* into “Modern Heroic Fantasy” or “Alternate World Fantasy”, but it also shows some elements of “Swords and Sorcery”. Martin himself admitted he has always wanted to write some epic fantasy work because he loved Tolkien since he was a kid.⁴² But he has also said there were aspects of Tolkien’s world he did not like, mostly the “if you are good you will live a long and happy life” approach. He described this problem for the Rolling Stone, saying:

“Ruling is hard. This was maybe my answer to Tolkien, whom, as much as I admire him, I do quibble with. *Lord of the Rings* had a very medieval philosophy: that if the king was a good man, the land would prosper. We look at real history and it's not that simple. Tolkien can say that Aragorn became king and reigned for a hundred years, and he was wise and good. But Tolkien doesn't ask the question: What was Aragorn's tax policy? Did he maintain a standing army? What did he do in times of flood and famine? And what about all these orcs? By the end of the war, Sauron is gone but all of the orcs aren't gone – they're in the mountains. Did Aragorn pursue a policy of systematic genocide and kill them? Even the little baby orcs, in their little orc cradles? In real life, real-life kings had real-life problems to deal with. Just being a good guy was not the answer.”⁴³

Most characters in the *Song* are grey characters – the reader is led to hate some of them at first only to like them thousands of pages later... and them being killed in the most unexpected moment another hundreds pages later. The characters that seem to be the protagonists die. Characters whose goals were not revealed even after five thousands pages survive. The reader cannot be sure his favorites, or at least some of them, will make it to the end. And what is the end? What is this story about? The final war with the Others, when almost nobody in Westeros believes in their existence? The characters are playing their game of thrones and the time passes. And with George Martin behind the typewriter we cannot even be sure this will have some epic-worthy ending, since he seems to break so many “rules” of the genre, rules established mainly by Tolkien.

⁴² “EW interview: George R.R. Martin talks ‘A Dance With Dragons’,” Entertainment Weekly, accessed August 15, 2016, <http://www.ew.com/article/2011/07/12/george-martin-talks-a-dance-with-dragons>.

⁴³ “George R.R. Martin: The Rolling Stone Interview.”

4 The Worlds

In the last part of my thesis I will focus on the worlds J.R.R. Tolkien and George R.R. Martin have created for their characters to live in. Going with the theory of world building I will talk about the aspects of these worlds that are necessary for a fictional world to be believable, to seem real. For this chapter I chose Mark J.P. Wolf's *Building Imaginary Worlds* as the main source of information on this topic, because I agreed with his subdivision the most.

4.1 Primary and Secondary Imagination

Wolf introduces the whole idea of building an imaginary world by presenting Coleridge's idea of Primary and Secondary Imagination, with the Primary Imagination being the part of our mind which "allows us to coordinate and interpret our sensory data, turning them into perceptions with which we make sense of the world around us", while the Secondary Imagination "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates the concepts and elements of the world around us so as to recreate something new with them".⁴⁴ The conscious and deliberate use of Secondary Imagination can eventually result in the construction of an imaginary world, whether it is a city, a country or a whole planet. This idea was later developed by other authors such as George MacDonald and J.R.R. Tolkien. Tolkien extended the idea of Primary and Secondary Imagination to the worlds they refer to. In his concept the material intersubjective world we live in is referred to as the Primary World and the imaginary worlds created by authors as secondary worlds. The secondary worlds rely on the Primary World and exist within it.⁴⁵

4.2 Subcreation

It was Tolkien as well who coined the term "subcreation", with respect to his belief that God created man and made him a creator too, "but the creative activity by which a secondary world is made differs in both degree and kind from

⁴⁴ Mark J.P. Wolf, *Building Imaginary Worlds: The Theory and History of Subcreation* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 21-22.

⁴⁵ Wolf, *Building Imaginary Worlds*, 23.

God's *ex nihilo* ("from nothing") creative power used to bring the Primary World into being".⁴⁶ This makes an author who deliberately builds an imaginary world for bigger reasons than providing a background for his story a "subcreator".

According to his theory subcreation involves new combinations of existing concepts known from the Primary World, which, in the process of building a secondary world, become the inventions that replace or reset Primary World defaults. More changes makes the secondary world more different from the Primary World. Wolf however points out that "it is not surprising, that secondary worlds will in many ways resemble the Primary World; not only because it is the source of material, but also because it is this familiarity that lets us relate to a secondary world, especially to its characters and their emotions".⁴⁷

4.3 Structuring the World

But what are the structures that help create a believable secondary world? Wolf works with eight of them, out of which three are the basic elements needed for a world to exist – *a space* in which things can exist, *a span of time* in which events can occur and *the characters* to live in the world. The next five structures are physical and philosophical systems, which build upon each other and comprise the world itself. *Nature* comes first with the flora and fauna of the world and sometimes even different laws of physics, then *culture* built by the inhabitants of the world and determined by the nature. With culture we inevitably must deal with the *language* – a way how people of the culture can express themselves and about what. Then we can speak about the *mythology*, about how the culture understands, explains, and remembers its world and lastly there is a *philosophy* – the ideas and ideologies of the world's inhabitants and the ones the author tries to express through his work.⁴⁸ These structures can be found in different worlds in varying degrees, with some of them not necessarily be always present. They can be clearly stated and described through maps, timelines or even within the story, but the author can sometimes deliberately withhold some of these information and let his reader guess some of the world's infrastructure on his own.

⁴⁶ Wolf, *Building Imaginary Worlds*, 23.

⁴⁷ Wolf, *Building Imaginary Worlds*, 24.

⁴⁸ Wolf, *Building Imaginary Worlds*, 154-155.

For the purpose of this thesis I will focus on the three basic elements of the secondary worlds – the space, the span of time and the characters to analyze, with occasional mentions of some of the other aspects if needed.

4.3.1 The space

Both Tolkien and Martin are very thoroughgoing concerning the most important part of building a new world, the creation of a place for his characters to live in. Both of them also said their worlds are placed on Earth, with Tolkien meaning a false history preceding our times⁴⁹ and Martin meaning alternative, “not our”, Earth⁵⁰. The factual information in this chapter comes from *The Silmarillion* for 4.3.1.1 and *The World of Ice and Fire* for 4.3.1.2, if not stated otherwise.

4.3.1.1 Arda

Tolkien’s world is called Arda and he even wrote a whole story about its creation, named *Ainulindalë – The Music of the Ainur*. This story was later published in *The Silmarillion* as the very first story of the book. Arda was originally created through the music of the Ainur, instructed by Ilúvatar, for his “children” – meaning Elves and men. After its creation it was flat and symmetrical, perfect, but through the ages the wars between Valar and Melkor (and later Elves and Sauron as well) ruined its symmetry. Some lands were destroyed and vanished in the ocean, some new continents were created.

The biggest change of its shape happened at the end of the Second Age when Númenóreans – men from the island Númenor gifted with longer lives than other men – rebelled against the Valar and the Elves, because they were jealous of their immortality. This caused Valar to seek the help of Ilúvatar and he intervened. He moved the continents and seas, sank the island of Númenor and most importantly rounded Arda and removed Aman, the home of Valar, from the physical world. Since that day Arda looks the way we know it from *The Lord of the Rings*.

Tolkien provided his readers with detailed maps of the Middle Earth, the central place for his hobbit stories, but unfortunately no other continents besides it.

⁴⁹ John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *The Letters*, No. 211, 298.

⁵⁰ “EW interview: George R.R. Martin talks ‘A Dance With Dragons’.”

From the edges of the maps and brief mentions we know that the lands south of Gondor and Mordor are named Harad and Khand and the lands in the further East are called Rhûn, but not much geographical information is given on them. Rhûn is described in *The Fellowship of the Ring* as “wide uncharted lands, nameless plains, and forests unexplored”⁵¹ and speaking of the South, we only get a small note concerning “apes in the dark forests of the South”,⁵² suggesting probability rainforests or jungles.

4.3.1.1.1 Middle Earth

The Middle Earth itself can be divided into smaller regions. Western from the Misty Mountains there are the lands of Eriador, containing The Shire – home of hobbits – and the Rivendell. Eriador is bordered by the Misty Mountains from the east and the Blue Mountains from the west. Behind the Blue Mountains lie the Gray Havens, the place through which the Elves left the Middle Earth for good. North from Eriador lies the Northern Waste and South from it much smaller land named Enedwaith.

Easter from the Misty Mountains we can find the lands of Rhovanion and the biggest river in the Middle Earth – Anduin. Between the mountains and the river there lies the Elvish kingdom Lothlórien – home of the oldest elf of Middle Earth, Galadriel – and the forest Fangorn, home of the Ents. A big part of Rhovanion is occupied by the large forest named Mirkwood, which used to be known as Greenwood in times before the Necromancer. Other important place of Rhovanion is Erebor, the Lonely Mountain – the place Bilbo and the dwarves were fighting for in *The Hobbit*.

South from Rhovanion and the Misty Mountains lie the kingdoms of Rohan and Gondor, inhabited by the Men and finally to the East from Gondor there is Mordor, the land of Sauron armed by high mountains from the North, West and South as well.

Most of the lands of Middle Earth are quite pleasant places for living with their meadows, fields and smaller hills, with the exception of places ruined by

⁵¹ John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1986), 520.

⁵² John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1986), 172.

Sauron, such as Mirkwood and the lands surrounding the borders of Mordor. The Shire, for example, is based on rural England as Tolkien has confirmed many times,⁵³ build upon his childhood memories of Sarehole, representing everything good about the world. Interestingly, it lies diagonally as far as possible from Mordor, the equivalent of evil.

4.3.1.2 Planetos

Martin's secondary world still does not have a name, which made some of his fans come up with their own unofficial name – Planetos (based on the names of known continents – Westeros, Essos, Sothoryos and Ulthos) to refer to it.

4.3.1.2.1. Westeros

Majority of Martin's story is taking place in Westeros – the westernmost continent of the planet. The long and narrow continent offers almost all kind of lands, from the deserts of Dorne to the Lands of Always Winter – lands far North beyond the Wall, where the snows and ice never melts. The lands south from the Wall used to be divided into seven independent kingdoms before Aegon the Conquerer united them all under the name of Seven Kingdoms.

The largest region of Westeros is the North, described as consisting of “great forests, windswept plains, hills and valleys, rocky shores, and snow-crowned mountains”.⁵⁴ Given the cold weather the region is far less fertile than the rest of the Westeros, the snow sometimes falls there even in the summer. It borders the Wall in the North and the Neck in the South. Southeast from the North lies the Vale, beautiful and rich region surrounded by the mountains and southwest from it the Riverlands, the region devastated by every war that has even taken place in the Westeros, due its unfortunate position in the middle of the continent. The westernmost region is called the Westerlands, a place of “rugged hills and rolling plains, of misty dales and craggy shorelines, a place of blue lakes and sparkling rivers and fertile fields, of broadleaf forests that teem with game of every sort,

⁵³ John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *The Letters*, No. 190, 267.

⁵⁴ George Raymond Richard Martin, Elio M. Garcia and Linda Antonsson, *The World of Ice and Fire: the Untold History of Westeros and the Game of Thrones* (New York: Bantam Books, 2014), 135.

where half-hidden doors in the sides of wooded hills open onto labyrinthine caves that wend their way through darkness to reveal unimaginable wonders and vast treasures deep beneath the earth”.⁵⁵ To the south from the Westerlands we can find the richest and the most populated region – The Reach, which borders the Stormlands in the east and the Dorne in the southeast. A small part of the country, east from the Westerlands and north from the Stormlands is called the Crownlands and it surrounds the capital city of the Seven Kingdoms – King’s Landing.

4.3.1.2.2 Essos

The eastern continent – Essos – lies across the Narrow Sea from Westeros and north of Sothoryos and Ulthos – it is the largest of them all. It “teems with strange, exotic, and ancient civilizations, some still extant and striving, others long fallen and lost to legend”.⁵⁶ Even the climate varies greatly, which is not a surprise considering its expanse. The western coastline goes from temperate climate in the north to hot and dry in the south, the middle part of the continent is hidden under the grass of Dothraki Sea and southeast from it a large dangerous wasteland of red sand called Red Waste can be found.

Among the more important parts of Essos we can mention The Free Cities as well – nine independent cities located in the western part of the continent, which are more developed than majority of Westerosi cities. The smoking ruins of old Valyria are also worth mentioning as they are considered haunted, which can be “proved” by the fact that almost nobody who went there never returned. Beyond the Red Waste, on the shores of the Jade Sea the lucky ones can find Qarth, an ancient city and home of warlocks, the gateway between the East and the West. Eastern from the Qarth lie the Bone Mountains, stretching from the north to the south coast and thus creating a natural barrier between the western part of Essos and the more exotic eastern part. Places such as Yi Ti, Grey Waste, Asshai or Shadow Lands lie behind the colossal mountain range and very little is known about them.

The southern coasts of Westeros and Essos are today visually connected by a chain of small islands called the Stepstones. Most Westerosi scholars, the

⁵⁵ Martin, García and Antonsson, *The World of Ice and Fire*, 195.

⁵⁶ Martin, García and Antonsson, *The World of Ice and Fire*, 253.

maesters of the Citadel, do agree that Essos and Westeros were once joined, since “a thousand tales and runic records tell of the crossing of the First Men”.⁵⁷ Also, both of these continents experience the irregular pattern of changing of the seasons, with seasons that usually last few years each, even though Essos is less affected by the winters, because it is not situated that far north.⁵⁸

4.3.1.2.3 Sothoryos and Ulthos

Even less is known about the other two continents – Sothoryos and Ulthos. Sothoryos lies south of Essos across the Summer Sea and it is a large continent “covered by impenetrable jungle, where ancient cities full of ghosts lie in ruins beside great, sluggish rivers,”⁵⁹ although it is not known how large it actually is, since its bottom was never reached by a ship. As the times passed many Essosi cultures tried to colonize its lands or find some hidden treasures, but all the colonies planted here wither and die soon. “Only the boldest [explorers] ever venture far from their coastal garrisons and enclaves to explore the mysteries of the continent’s vast interior. Those that dare more oft than not set forth into the green never to be seen again.”⁶⁰ Martin has said he deliberately kept Sothoryos mysterious, to echo real-life history. “It is beyond the world they know. (...) Even though Africa was known to Europe from earliest days of ancient Greece we knew relatively little about sub-Saharan Africa.”⁶¹ Almost nothing is known about Ulthos, including the information about it being really another continent.

4.3.2 The span of time

Both writers provide their readers with some information concerning timelines, but this time Tolkien is much more precise, offering the dates of the historical events often including days – both in his narrative and in the appendices

⁵⁷ Martin, García and Antonsson, *The World of Ice and Fire*, 237.

⁵⁸ “Transcript of Chat with George R. R. Martin on March 18, 1999,” Event Horizon, accessed August 15, 2016, <http://web.archive.org/web/20001005212114/eventhorizon.com/sfzine/chats/transcripts/031899.html>.

⁵⁹ Martin, García and Antonsson, *The World of Ice and Fire*, 284.

⁶⁰ Martin, García and Antonsson, *The World of Ice and Fire*, 285.

⁶¹ “George R.R. Martin on What Not to Believe in Game of Thrones,” Vulture, accessed August 15, 2016, <http://www.vulture.com/2014/11/george-rr-martin-new-book.html>.

of his books. Martin only refers to time in the narrative and the reference book, but his fans were able to write down the timeline from the hints in the books on their own.⁶² Both of them also share detailed genealogies of many families.

4.3.2.1 Arda

The story covered in *The Lord of the Rings* is happening at the end of the Third Age. The time in Middle Earth is counted in days and years, the same as we are doing it now, but there also exists the term “age” which covers irregular number of years every time. The age in Middle Earth usually starts and ends with some really important event.

The First Age started with the awakening of the Elves in Cuiviénen, because the ages generally count the times of the Children of Ilúvatar on Arda. However, these were still the times when years were counted with so called Valian Years and even Tolkien changed his opinion on their length many times during his lifetime. Due to this it is almost impossible to date the events that happened before the time started to be counted in solar years. In about 4500 the Elves were woken up and in about 5000 Ilúvatar’s younger children – Men – woke up in Hildóren. It was the same year the Valar created the Sun, thus since this moment the days and years were counted according to the Sun, starting again with the year 1. The First Age ended in the year 590 after the War of Wrath and casting Morgoth into the Void.⁶³

The Second Age, which saw the uprising of Sauron and creation of the Rings of Power, as well as the rise and fall of Númenor ended in 3441 after the battle with Sauron. In this battle Sauron was defeated, his physical form destroyed and the One Ring was taken by Isildur.

The Third Age ended in 3021 after the final defeat of Sauron and the destruction of the One Ring. The events from the Shire, written at the end of *The Return of the King* are already happening in the Fourth Age.⁶⁴ In a letter Tolkien explains the Age we are living in now is probably the Fifth Age or later, saying: “I

⁶² “Most Precise ASOIAF Timeline in Existence,” Reddit, accessed August 15, 2016, https://www.reddit.com/r/asoiaf/comments/1c07jw/spoilers_all_most_precise_asoiaf_timeline_in/?st=irvpdaa9&sh=093e1b2b.

⁶³ John Ronald Reuel Tolkien. *The Grey Annals: The War of the Jewels*, edit. Christopher Tolkien (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1994), 3-170.

⁶⁴ John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*. (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1986), Appendix B, 456.

imagine the gap [between the Fall of Sauron and our Days] to be about 6000 years: that is we are now at the end of the Fifth Age, if the Ages were of about the same length as [Second Age] and [Third Age]. But they have, I think, quickened; and I imagine we are actually at the end of the Sixth Age, or in the Seventh.”⁶⁵

4.3.2.2 Planetos

The first events in *A Game of Thrones* are happening in 297 AC (after Aegon’s Conquest).⁶⁶ The days and years in Westeros are counted with respect to Aegon the Conqueror’s landing in the Seven Kingdoms. “The maesters of the Citadel who keep the histories of Westeros have used Aegon’s Conquest as their touchstone for the past three hundred years. Births, deaths, battles, and other events are dated either AC (After the Conquest) or BC (Before the Conquest).”⁶⁷

It is not known when exactly the world began, but it had to be thousands years ago, in the age when men were not lettered. The age before the arrival of the First Men is called the Dawn Age. Those were the times when the lands of Westeros were inhabited by the Children of Forest and giants.⁶⁸

Somewhere from 12 000 – 8000 years ago the First Men crossed the Arm of Dorne and came from Essos to Westeros. They were fighting the Children of Forest for the lands for many years and then they eventually formed a Pact. This meant the end of the Dawn Age.⁶⁹

The next age in the history of Westeros is called the Age of Heroes, starting after the Pact of the First Men and the Children. It was the Age that lasted for thousands of years and is full of heroic stories and acts of the First Men. After some thousands of years of peace the Long Night came and it was the worst winter in the history of mankind. According to the records it lasted a generation – “a generation in which children were born, grew into adulthood, and in many cases died without ever seeing the spring”.⁷⁰ Legends also say that from the Lands of Always Winter there came Others, creatures bringing the cold and darkness with them and southing

⁶⁵ John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *The Letters*, No. 211, 287.

⁶⁶ “Most Precise ASOIAF Timeline in Existence.”

⁶⁷ Martin, García and Antonsson, *The World of Ice and Fire*, 31.

⁶⁸ Martin, García and Antonsson, *The World of Ice and Fire*, 5.

⁶⁹ Martin, García and Antonsson, *The World of Ice and Fire*, 8.

⁷⁰ Martin, García and Antonsson, *The World of Ice and Fire*, 11.

to extinguish all the light and warmth. The Long Night is said to be ended by the “lash hero” with help of the Children of Forest – he and many other men formed the Night’s Watch and won the Battle for the Dawn.

After the Long Night the Andals came to Westeros and brought the Faith of the Seven with them, fighting both the Children and the First Men and their faith in the Tree Gods (later called Old Gods). Their conquest was quite successful and they eventually merged with the First Men.⁷¹

Lastly, Aegon Targaryen, his sisters and their dragons landed on the shores of Westeros, to conquer the Seven Kingdoms and unite them under one ruler. Since that day we count the years as the years after the Conquest.

4.3.3 The characters

Tolkien’s main characters are almost always made interesting on their own, even if it should be only because they are other species than Men, they have unexpected ancestors or they are dealing with a dangerous quest. On the other hand, most of the time they are genuinely good or evil from the beginning of the story (as the rules of the genre require), which can get little boring with time. Unlike Tolkien, Martin often creates his characters grey and unpredictable, without any clear intentions and purpose – everything comes gradually. There is also a bigger percentage of women among his main characters, but both of these differences are fully understandable, considering the fifty years gap between publications of these stories. The factual information in this chapter was taken from *The Silmarillion* for 4.3.3.1 and *The World of Ice and Fire* for 4.3.3.2, if not stated otherwise.

4.3.3.1 Arda

The Middle Earth at the end of the Third Age is inhabited by many different species, with the majority of the “younger children of Ilúvatar” – *the Men*. They are living mostly in the kingdoms of Gondor and Rohan, but also in Rhûn, Harad, Khand and probably other distant lands we do not know much about. The languages used by Men are Adûnaic, “The Common Speech” and Rohirric.

⁷¹ Martin, García and Antonsson, *The World of Ice and Fire*, 17-20.

The first born of Ilúvatar – *the Elves* – are still present in the Middle Earth as well, although their time there is almost at the end (the last ones leave before the beginning of the Fourth Age). The Elves share many characteristics with the Men, mainly visually, but they are more ethereal, inhumanly beautiful and most importantly – they are immortal. There is a story in *The Silmarillion* explaining how it happened that there are so many clans of Elves on Arda, with the main distinction being between the Light Elves (Calaquendi), who accepted the invitation of Valar and went to see the light of the Two Trees in Aman and the Dark Elves (Moriqendi), who refused the offer or changed their mind before they left Beleriand. The Elves speak two main languages – Quenya and Sindarin.

Another quite numerous race of the Middle Earth are *the Dwarves*, created by Vala Aulë behind Ilúvatar's back. He wanted to spread his wisdom and craft and it was still too soon for Ilúvatar's children to be woken up. He had no idea how the children should look like, so he created them the best way he could think of and after some explaining Ilúvatar approved them under the condition they will be woken up after the Elves. Because they are the children of Aulë they live under the ground and are very skillful in handwork. Their language is named Khuzdul.

The last of the main races are the ones Tolkien created as an image of the Englishmen – *The Hobbits*. In the prologue to *The Fellowship* he describes them as unobtrusive but very ancient people, who love peace and quiet and good tilled earth. They do not like machines more complicated than a water-mill, though they are skillful with tools. They are also quick of hearing and sharp-eyed and they are inclined to be fat. They are smaller than Dwarves, but they are relatives to the Men.⁷²

The creation of the shepherds of trees, *the Ents*, is connected to the creation of the Dwarves. When Vala Yavanna heard about another children being created to eventually ruin all of her work (fauna and flora), she started to think about something that could repay to those who would cut down the trees. And Ilúvatar created the Ents to protect them from not only the Dwarves, but also his own children.

Even if it is not that obvious we can still find the angelic beings – *Ainur* – created by Ilúvatar to help him create Arda, in the Middle Earth by the Third Age.

⁷² Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 17-18.

Those are all the Istari (Wizards) – including Gandalf or Saruman, but also the evil Maiar in the forms of Balrogs or Sauron.

The Orcs, Trolls and Goblins are all created by Morgoth as mockeries of the Children of Ilúvatar and Ents. All are generally evil and made to serve Morgoth.

4.3.3.2 Planetos

The inhabitants of Westeros and Essos are by the time of *A Song of Ice and Fire* mostly the *Men* as well. Different cultures of Men live all around his world, on all of the continents, in the deserts as well as in the never ending winter beyond the Wall. They also speak many languages – next to the Common Tongue of Westeros, for example High Valyrian, Ghiscari or Dothraki. Unlike Tolkien's languages, these were not created by Martin as whole languages at all, as he confessed he only created few words for each of them that were necessary for the story, saying:

“Tolkien was a philologist, and an Oxford don, and could spend decades laboriously inventing Elvish in all its detail. I, alas, am only a hardworking SF and fantasy novel writer, and I don't have his gift for languages. That is to say, I have not actually created a Valyrian language. The best I could do was try to sketch in each of the chief tongues of my imaginary world on broad strokes, and give them each their characteristic sounds and spellings.”⁷³

It is also important to mention, that many of the humans do not believe in the actual existence of the other species. Until they see them with their own eyes the next species remain legends for them.

First of them, the original inhabitants of Westeros – the *Children of Forest*. They are as small as real children, but dark and beautiful creatures, who live in the caves of deep forests. They cannot work metal, but they are amazing with obsidian (dragonglass) when creating tools and weapons. They wear clothes made of leaves and bark and also can make a bow of weirwood. They believe in the gods of nature, the Old Gods and have their own speech.⁷⁴

⁷³ “Yet More Questions,” The Citadel – So Spake Martin, accessed August 15, 2016, <http://www.westeros.org/Citadel/SSM/Entry/1250/>.

⁷⁴ Martin, García and Antonsson, *The World of Ice and Fire*, 5-6.

A little is known about the *Giants*, since they are almost extinct and live only far to the North. From the reports of the Men of the Watch they are huge and powerful creatures, but simple. They wear no clothes, but have thick fur all over their bodies. They also do not make homes and cannot make tools or weapons. “They remained creatures of the Dawn Age even as the ages passed them by, men grew even more numerous, and the forests were tamed and dwindled.”⁷⁵

The last known different species – *The Others* – are the ones that are considered the most unreal among the Westerosi people. The tales describe them as creatures, who come from the frozen Land of Always Winter to bring the cold and darkness and spread it through the world. They are supposed to ride giant ice spiders and dead horses resurrected by them to serve them, just as they resurrect dead men to fight for them.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Martin, García and Antonsson, *The World of Ice and Fire*, 5.

⁷⁶ Martin, García and Antonsson, *The World of Ice and Fire*, 11-12.

5 Conclusion

In this thesis I attempted to introduce two famous and talented authors of fantasy fiction, namely J.R.R. Tolkien and George R.R. Martin, and their fictional secondary worlds. At first I presented their biographies with a special attention being paid to various sources of inspiration, influences and the key moments of their lives. Then I briefly described fantasy as a modern dynamic genre and its subgenres with respect to the two selected works – Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire*.

In the last part of the thesis I introduced the basic concepts of the World Building theory and the aspects of secondary worlds needed for the world to be complete and functional. I chose to follow Mark Wolf's set of structures and his division on the necessary and possible aspects, because I agreed with his logic and I did not find any better source than his book. After providing some essential theoretical background concerning the World Formation I tried to describe the two worlds selected by me with respect to it. Initially it was my plan to deal with all the eight aspects Mark Wolf discusses, but during the work on the thesis I realized this would require much more extensive and detailed analysis than the one I could be able to provide in this thesis. Then I decided to focus on the three basic structures as divided by Wolf.

After I described these structures I came to the conclusion it is not necessarily the similarity of certain aspects of these worlds, that makes George R.R. Martin's fantasy series so successful, since from what I wrote in the chapter 4, it is now quite clear they are really not that similar, but mainly the balanced amount of the traditional and modern approaches to creating his world and his characters.

7 Resumé

J.R.R. Tolkien a George R.R. Martin jsou oba uznávaní a obdivovaní autoři žánru fantasy. Tolkien je pokládán za otce moderní fantasy, vzhledem k tomu, jak originální a inovátorské dílo za svého života stvořil. Prožil velmi zajímavý a bohatý život, i přesto, že jako malý postupně přišel o oba rodiče a neminula ho ani jedna ze světových válek. Jako dítě i jako dospělý se často stěhoval a je poměrně s podivem, jak i s takovýmto zázemím dokázal zazářit. Jeho mimořádná inteligence a nadání na jazyky se projevovaly už od raného dětství a jeho matka dělala vše, co bylo v jejích silách, aby mu dopřála vyhovující vzdělání. Možná i díky její péči jako dospělý získal titul z Oxfordu a stal se vysokoškolským profesorem, jak bylo už od mládí jeho snem. V osobním životě se mu dařilo také velmi dobře, za manželku si vzal svoji první lásku a společně měli tři děti. Celý svůj život pracoval na své vlastní mytologii – mytologii, kterou chtěl věnovat své milované Anglii. Když později přišel s myšlenkou hobita, brzy věděl, že i tento půlčík je její součástí. Příběhy ze Středozemě přinesly Tolkienovi nečekanou slávu a uznání, v takové míře, že ve stáří už ani sám nezvládal komunikaci se svými čtenáři, na čemž si vždy zakládal. Zemřel, aniž by svoji mytologii dokončil, udělal to za něj však jeho syn Christopher a věnoval tak světu *Silmarillion*.

George Martin jako malý trpěl opačným problémem, než Tolkien – byl stále sám. Nejprve trávil čas vymýšlením kovbojských příběhů na dvorku u babičky a později představami o vzdálených zemích, při pozorování lodí a trajektů z okna obývacího pokoje. Jeho svět se skládal pouze z malého kousku města Bayonne, mezi školou a domovem. Není tak divu, že využil příležitosti a na Univerzitu odjel do státu Illinois, kde později získal titul z žurnalistiky. Jeho osobní život není tak příkladný, jako Tolkienův – jeho první láska neměla dlouhého trvání a s první manželkou se po několika letech rozvedl, pak si ale našel družku na zbytek života a byl konečně šťastný. Za svého života si vyzkoušel práci učitele, scénáristy i spisovatele na plný úvazek. Proslavila ho ale až knižní série *Píseň ledu a ohně*, které se průběžně věnuje posledních dvacet let.

Teorie výstavby světů se zaměřuje na několik nezbytných aspektů struktur, které musí obsahovat každý druhotný svět, aby mohl plně fungovat a být nezávislý. Mark Wolf je ve své knize představuje jako následující: tři nezbytné prvky, bez kterých se žádný sekundární svět neobejde – místo, čas a postavy, plus pět

doplňujících a překrývajících se struktur, které být přítomné nebo vyjádřené nemusí – příroda, kultura, jazyk, mytologie a filozofie. S ohledem na tyto aspekty můžeme popsat Tolkienův svět jako planetu jménem Arda (která se v budoucnu stane Zemí), na které se nachází centrální kontinent Středozemě. V tomto světě žijí společně lidé, elfové, trpaslíci, hobiti a enti a jejich čas je měřen na věky. Martinův svět je poté popsán jako Planetos – alternativní Země, na které se nacházejí čtyři velké kontinenty. Tyto kontinenty obývají převážně lidé, kteří navíc ani nevěří v existenci dalších ras – ty však v tomto světě existují, jsou jimi děti lesa, obři a Jiní, jejichž čas je určován především nepravidelným střídáním ročních období v dobách 300 let po Dobyti.

V této práci jsem představila oba autory, jejich životy a literární dílo, především pak fikční světy v *Pánovi prstenů* a *Písni ledu a ohně*. Na základě teorie výstavby světů jsem tyto světy popsala a snažila se upozornit na rozdíly v práci těchto autorů a na případný vliv J. R. R. Tolkiena na George R. R. Martina.

8 Abstract

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This thesis focuses on British writer John Ronald Reuel Tolkien and American novelist George Raymond Richard Martin and their different approaches to creating fantasy worlds. In the first part of the thesis I introduce both writers, their lives and literary work. In the second part I briefly define the fantasy genre and its subgenres and in the last part I analyze the fantasy worlds in The Lord of the Rings and A Song of Ice and Fire sagas. The main purpose of this thesis is to compare the strategies of both authors used to construct their fictional worlds and ascertain if J. R. R. Tolkien's influence on G. R. R. Martin's work can be a reason of Martin's success among fans of fantasy.

9 Anotace

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Klíčová slova:	Tolkien, Pán prstenů, Martin, Píseň ledu a ohně, fantasy, world building

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá britským spisovatelem Johnem Ronaldem Reuelem Tolkienem a americkým spisovatelem Georgem Raymondem Richardem Martinem a jejich rozdílnými přístupy k vytváření fantasy světů. V první části práce představují oba autory, jejich životy a literární dílo. V druhé části práce stručně definují žánr fantasy a jeho podžánry a v poslední části práce analyzují fantasy světy v Pánovi prstenů a v Písni ledu a ohně. Hlavním cílem této práce je porovnat strategie obou autorů použité k vytvoření jejich fikčních světů a zjistit, zda vliv J. R. R. Tolkiena na práci George R. R. Martina může být příčinou jeho úspěchu mezi fanoušky žánru fantasy.

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