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The Role of Female Characters in the Works of J. R. R. Tolkien
and George MacDonald

(Bakalářská práce)

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1. INTRODUCTION

The role of women in the fantasy literature has been widely discussed. Fantasy is generally a genre dominated by male heroes and the role of female characters is often overlooked. For this reason I decided to focus on the female characters more closely and observe their role in the narrative. I decided to present comparison between two very influential writers, George MacDonald and J.R.R. Tolkien, and their approach towards female characters and their involvement in the plot. MacDonald is often recognised as a founder of modern fantasy genre. His work is filled with maternal figures and strong courageous women. Another very remarkable work for the development of the genre is J. R. R. Tolkien's trilogy *Lord of the Rings*. Tolkien was greatly influenced by MacDonald's work in his younger years, but later he rejected some of his attitudes, especially allegorical nature of his stories, as could be observed from the edition of Tolkien's letters. However, he always thought well of his stories (*Letters*, 370). Nevertheless, Tolkien's attitude towards female characters was often criticized for providing very limited space for them, but his work has further influence on many other authors.

I will compare the most influential and distinguishable works of those two writers. Tolkien's trilogy *The Lord of the Rings* is the best example of modern fantasy novel and established a model for fantasy narratives, as well, it had a great influence on promoting fantasy and influenced many Tolkien's successors. Similarly, George MacDonald's *Phantastes* and *Lilith* provided new views on fantasy. The difference between MacDonald's fantasy novels and children oriented fantasy literature typical for the eighteenth and nineteenth century is the fact, that novels *Phantastes* and *Lilith* were not intended for children at all, therefore, they radiate obvious sexual and religious influences and by this provide opportunity for further development of fantasy literature beyond children's readership. George MacDonald presents women with completely different roles in the narrative than Tolkien later.

I would like to explore the way Tolkien and MacDonald managed to incorporate female characters into their works and what significance the female characters have both in the plot and in the thematic structure. From *The Lord of the Rings* I will discuss three

female most influential characters. Éowyn is the most active female in the narrative, Galadriel is the silent guardian of the main heroes and Arwen is the beautiful and inspiring presence. From the novel *Lilith*, I will focus on the characters of Lilith and Lona, who are the crucial part of the narrative and have the greatest influence on the main character and plot. Finally from *Phantastes* I will describe the White Lady who, unlike other female characters in this novel, has the most frequent interaction with the main protagonist throughout the narrative and is the object of main hero's quest. I would like to show the difference in the role of the female characters as well similarities. Both authors tend to present characters in a way typical for fantasy genre, and there is an influence of MacDonald on Tolkien's work. Both authors created strong and interesting characters, but their involvement in the narrative differs on many levels, and I will explore this difference in narrative structure, which allows characters to have significant role in the narrative.

2. NARRATIVE THEORY

In this chapter I will briefly explain the basic terms connected to the study of literary character and its relation to the plot of a narrative. I will present views on the topic and how they evolved during the centuries. I will also summarize ways of character definition and main character typologies.

2.1 Plot

In order to describe plot, we have to distinguish it from the term story. Steven Cohen and Linda M. Shires explain in *Telling Stories: A Theoretical Analysis of Narrative Fiction* that the story is reserved for chronological organisation of events, another term is narration, and is used for organisation of the process of telling. Narration is therefore a system of organising the linear structure of events into a story. Nevertheless, there are other aspects to the narration beside simple linearity. Events could be ordered either temporally, meaning their relation of succession, or logically, meaning relations of comparability or causality (Cohan, Shires, 58). The term story was used by novelist and critic E.M. Forster to specify a narrative, which manages events in temporal order; on the other hand, term plot specifies a narrative, which manages events causally as well as temporally. Plot refers to a type of story structure, one which places events in relations of subordination, not mere coordination (Forster, 85). Forster used the two sentences below as an example of the distinction of story and plot:

The king died and then the queen died (story).

The king died and then the queen died of grief (plot) (Forster, 86).

In the first sentence we are observing only linearity of narration, on the other hand, second sentence presents not only linear structure, but as well causality and logical order of events and their interconnection. Therefore, these two terms are not interchangeable and according to this theory, not every story necessarily requires plot.

2.2. Character

The narrative theory distinguishes four basic categories necessary for construction of a text. These are time, space, character and narrator. I will further focus on the category of character. Cohan and Shires explain in their analyses on narrative fiction that all events require some agency of action: characters, which are also structured as units of meaning along syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes (Cohan, Shires, 69). Characters in the story function in the relation to the events, which are occurring, and their function could shift during the narrative. The analysing of the events can assign function to the individual characters, according to the events development the function of character can also change, because each event assigns different relations to them. The concept of character was first observed in Aristotle's *Poetics*, where he states the basic units of a tragedy to be: plot, character, diction, thought, spectacle and melody. At the same time he also points out that the plot is superior to the character, because incidents are basic unit of tragedy and are only triggered by characters (Chatman, 109). Seymour Chatman mentions principles of the Greek tragedy summarized in words, "Action comes first; it is the object of imitation. The agents who perform the action come second" (Chatman, 108). On the contrary, in E. M. Forster's opinion, literary characters represent real human beings, and as such they are superior to the plot, because the plot should be in agreement with the psychological typology of the character (Forster, 66).

Another important contribution in the theory of literary character was made by Tzvetan Todorov, who argues with Forster and Henry James, that character is not a key element of the narrative. Todorov claims that character can become subordinate to the plot, and that the word character does not represent the psychological coherence or character traits. By this he differentiates two types of narrative: apsychological (plot-centred) and psychological (character-centred).

Chatman summarised this subject by stating that it is not important whether the dominant element is plot or character, because as he says, "Stories only exist where both events and existents occur. There cannot be events without existents. And though it is true that a text can have existents without events (a portrait, a descriptive essay), no one would think of calling it a narrative" (Chatman, 113). I agree on this

statement, because it seems the most reasonable solution to the question, whether or not are characters superior to the plot. In my opinion every character which appears in the narrative brings some development that cannot occur without them. Characters are the source of every story, no matter how minor they may be, they have to be present in order for story to be told. Once the character is involved in the story, it necessarily becomes plot, because characters are basic source of conflicts and resolutions.

2.3. Structuralism and Formalism

There were many studies concerned with narrative theory, but it became systematic only with structuralism in the second half of the twentieth century. This system of understanding narrative structure could be compared to the grammatical structure of a language, where each constituent has its function and understanding of this system, which is underlining the text, is responsible for the acquired sense of the narrative. There are two main approaches to the narrative theory, French structuralism and Russian formalism. French structuralism used its own distinctive terms to describe basic aspects of narration: story and plot. Those terms have fundamentally the same meaning as fable (fabule) and plot (sjuzet) used by Russian formalists. According to Chatman in structuralism and formalism concepts, characters have strictly functional status; they are products of the plot, rather than human beings (Chatman, 111). The less linguistic approach to this matter had A. J. Greimas, he was trying to build a system which is based more on narrative structure than linguistic one. Greimas presented six basic functions for division of the characters: subject, object, sender, helper, receiver, and opponent. However, it seems rather difficult to distinguish all characters only into those few roles (Fořt, 24).

The structuralist methods are not very sufficient for describing a narrative structure as well. Linguistic structures are only partially applicable on narrative and structuralism is capable to analyze only certain aspects of it (Fořt, 33). For this reason we can use system, which describes literary character in interaction with other narrative elements. David Herman came with the system, which states that in order to interpret narrative

characters we have to observe their interaction and connection within narrative world, as well as their beliefs, desires and intentions (Fořt, 34). This could be considered the motivation aspect of the character and I consider this the most sufficient way of dealing with literary characters, they have to be understood as human beings, because we need to decipher them in order to understand them, their desires, motivations and reasons.

2.4 Character Typology

Vladimir Jakovleviř Propp was the first literary scholar to be interested in the functions of characters; he examined this subject in relation to Russian fairy tales. Function, in his opinion, represents action taken by the character, which provides a structure for the narrative. "Function is understood as an act of a character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of action"(Propp, 23). He also states that functions are stable elements, independent of the character fulfilling them (Propp, 23). In other words, characters are what they are required to be by the plot. Forster presents a distinction between flat and round character. These two terms can be also used to define type of the character. Flat characters are generally described by single trait (thought or idea), they do not have the capacity to act dynamically and surprise reader by their actions (Forster, 68). On the other hand, a round character is defined by several traits, which can be often contradictory and therefore the character is highly unpredictable (Forster, 78). Flat characters might be more distinctly remembered, because there is very little to remember about them. Round characters, on the contrary, might evoke more intimate feeling in reader. Chatman says, "We remember them as real people. They seem strangely familiar. Like real-life friends and enemies it is hard to describe what they are exactly like"(Chatman, 132).

2.5 Character Definition

Character is generally defined by textual references, and even if they do represent living people as suggested by Forster, they do not have real life as explained by Chatman (Chatman, 138). On the other hand, Chatman also argues, that there is no need to reject the terms of description based on the vocabulary of psychology, morality and other area related to human experiences (Chatman, 138). In terms of text, we can distinguish direct and indirect presentation. The direct presentation represents what we are told about the character, indirect presentation represents the actions of the character. Indirect presentation requires decoding of the narrative meaning. Character could be described in several aspects: appearance, behaviour, discourse, narrative awareness and proper names (Fořt, 64).

2.6. Character Traits

In the story, characters not only perform a function, but also can be analysed according to the semantic features, which are recognised as traits. Chatman characterised traits as “relatively stable or abiding personal quality” (Chatman, 126). Those qualities are present over a part or whole of the story. According to Cohan and Shires it is also important to distinguish them from more ephemeral aspects of a human nature, like feelings, thoughts or temporal motives; nevertheless, those could be identical with the traits (Cohan, Shires, 126). Once traits are stated directly, they appear briefly at the form of adjective or adverb linked to the character’s name, or more profoundly, while describing individual character. Cohan and Shires stated: “The matching of traits to function marks certain events as signifiers over others because of the value it assigns to event” (Cohan, Shires, 75). On the other hand, Chatman found it difficult to simplify characters’ roles like this, pointing out that some aspects of character do not necessarily connect to the plot, “We appreciate character traits for their own sake, including some that have little or nothing to do with ‘what happens’” (Chatman, 112). Todorov sees a difference between agents and actual characters, he states that only when psychological traits are added to the agent, it

becomes character, otherwise it remains empty (Fořt, 31). I have to disagree on this statement, because it would be difficult to find a completely empty character, in every story characters do have some character trait, however minor. Character traits are significant, but I have to agree with Chatman on the fact that not every character has to be significant for the plot. These traits provide a bridge between literary characters and readers, making characters distinguishable and memorable.

3. FEMALE CHARACTERS IN FICTION

In this chapter I will describe the evolution of female characters in fantasy literature from the Middle Ages to the present day. I will present the basic functions and typologies of those characters and how the social situation of each period influenced their image in literature.

3.1 Middle Ages

When commenting on the role of female characters in the fiction, and particularly fantasy literature, we have to realise that literature was for a long period of time considered mostly male's field, written by and for men, therefore, the influence of female aspect was often reduced to simple romance element, especially during the period of Middle Ages. In this period "the most romances display a limited range of roles for women and focus on male heroes. Women are mainly objects of desire/love/marriage/testing" (Polack, 8). On the other hand, when we look further back at the old fairy tales and folktales, which used females to represent the natural world, we can find clear connection to the fantasy literature, which depicts female heroines as personifications. There were important and clearly feminine figures as Fortuna, Mother Nature or Wisdom. Subsequently, those elements were explored in Hagiographies, which narrated the life of the saints. There was a very strong cult of virginal martyrs (Mary, Agnes, Barbara), they were appealing, because of church's focus on the "abstinence as a path to religious perfection" (Polack, 6). The most popular at the time of Middle Ages would be story of Mary Magdalene as a redeemed sinner, and her path through marriage and prostitution to sanctity.

Middle Age's Romances even contained even some female main protagonist; those were usually focused on romantic element. When considering the place given to women in typical heroic tale, there are very clear distinctions of the roles they are expected to play. Maness describes the role of a woman in the heroic quest: "If the quest journey is the archetype of masculine heroic activity, then the woman's archetype is to maintain the „world of common day“ so that it remains a place to

which the hero may return" (Mannes, 2). In the Romance, women played either minor plot element, as in *The Alexander Romance*, which depicts the life of Alexander the Great and where episodic storylines of city of Amazons appeared, or encounter with queen Olympias of Macedonia. Another role women played was the one of a victim. "The most important difference is that, according to some medieval thought, women occupied different roles because of their intrigue nature, just as Jews did" (Polack, 2). On the other hand, the most important genre of the Medieval period which used female characters as an important aspect of the story could be considered Arthurian Romance. In these tales women played quite important roles not only as romantic interest, but also as active protagonists influencing the flow of narrative. There were such figures as Guinevere, Morgan or Iseult. Those characters were not simply victims of circumstances, but also had influential role for the whole narrative. Iseult became very important literary model as her well drawn character traits were often copied in literature. However, thanks to the popularity, which those tales received in the Middle Ages, the character of Morgan had been given a great amount of modifications in various stories. She changed over the time from a genuine magical beauty to a purely evil creature.

Women were also given significant role in the Frame tales, which presented stories within wider narrative structure. Most famous would be Geoffrey Chaucer's and Giovanni Boccaccio's tales from the fourteenth century. There are also frame tales of Arabic origin known as "Seven Sages". Within those stories female protagonist tell the narratives, as well as provide important roles for the plot.

3.2 The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century

Within the period of the eighteenth and nineteenth century the role of women changed rapidly, they became involved not only in social issues, but gained their merit as readers and writers of literature. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the social and cultural changes brought a strong shift in the attitude toward women not only in the field of literature. There was a strong movement demanding women's rights and "is certain that the period in question was tumultuous, particularly on the

issue of social roles and most particularly, gender roles”(Pilinsky, 12). Within this period, we encounter genres of writing known as gothic, Romantic and Victorian. The range of literature was quite wide, but in the genre of fantasy the gender roles did not follow the same pattern as other period genres.

While male writers tend to focus on the male oriented plots in the genre of the gothic novel, some works of female writers, like Anne Radcliffe, managed to put her heroines on the mysterious journeys filled with dangers as a counterpart to the male heroes.

Another example of the use of female characters is Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. In this novel the role of female protagonist is not substantial for the plot, but the metaphor for birth as the central female issue is noticeable and it is connected with male

protagonists. According to Helen Pilinsky, “The issue of power and gender are eloquently addressed, albeit at a remove” (Pilinsky, 14). I also have to mention the

Brönte sisters as important writers of the gothic genre. In the fiction of Brönte sisters the female protagonists are the main characters and are main focus of the narrative.

With the approach of the Industrial Revolution and the Victorian period, marked by reign of the Queen Victoria, the suffragette movement was established and women began to gain much more attention in society. These were important changes also

leading to a change of the female role in fiction. Heller states that concerning heroic properties of male and female protagonists, we have to realise the social space

available to them for their actions, “The private sphere of the woman is immeasurably smaller than the male public sphere, so a woman’s movements are necessarily constricted; moreover, since women are to be auxiliary to the quest of the man”

(Heller, 4). Therefore, the social position of women is mirrored as well in the approach they receive in literature.

Also at this period the archetypal fairy-tale female characters were carefully rewritten to serve new audience, along with the fantasy genre they were reduced mainly for children and women’s readership. In accord with this move John Ruskin wrote his only

narrative, *The King of the Golden River*, in which he intentionally removed all female characters in order to eliminate any sexual and social commentary in this children’s story. When discussing female protagonist in the fantasy literature, we have to

mention Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* as an example of the Victorian fantasy, those stories

present female roles as crucial for the narrative. On the other hand, Helen Pilinovsky points out that books were criticised for anti-female views, because of employment of hostile maternal figures (Pilinovsky, 17). Although George MacDonald was a mentoring and encouraging figure for Carroll, his work is filled with particularly pleasant maternal figures and strong courageous women. "As in much of MacDonald's work, his hero is guided by a mentoring enchantress, indicating a somewhat different mentality from that of Carroll" (Pilinovsky, 17). MacDonald is often referred to as a founder of modern fantasy genre, because of his unconventional depiction of secondary worlds, in which he differed from the period writers.

3.3 The Twentieth Century

The role of females in the twentieth century literature is quite variable; there are plenty of female and male authors and topics with various attitudes towards women. I will focus mostly on the fantasy literature in the twentieth century, as there was a rapid increase in popularity of the genre in this period. The narrative models for the genre were established in the beginning of this era and many authors published their works. The basic structure of epic fantasy consisted mostly of male hero warrior and attractive and dangerously erotic female figure. Later in the period appeared also female warriors, but they do not have any leading role for the narrative, "warrior-women are the hero's companions (and usually come to a bad end) rather than the heroes themselves" (Mains, 40). For example, those females are either companions or mistresses of the main male protagonist as in work of E. R. Eddison. On the other hand, strong female characters can be found in the books by Robert E. Howard, depicting women warriors and Amazons.

Lyman Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* presents a variety of important female figures. The main protagonist Dorothy is receiving help and support from other good female characters within the story, and confronts the evil witch as the main antagonist. Another example could be Astrid Lingren's *Pippi Longstocking*, in which the main protagonist is an unconventional girl with unusual strength and deals with various problems on her own. At this period published J.R.R. Tolkien also published his

fantasy novels. The most remarkable for the development of the genre is considered trilogy *The Lord of the Rings*.

Many female writers emerged at the time as well. Feminist writers tend to present retold versions of fairy tales in order to return to the female hero, they present their characters not as passively waiting for a rescuer, but actively taking charge of the situation. Nevertheless, in the second half of the twentieth century the roles of male and female protagonists vary, depending on writer and story, as well as genre. Fantasy literature is considered to remain male oriented, presenting females mostly as a distraction, love interest or antagonist. Of course, there are many exceptions these days.

3.4 Female Characters

In conclusion, Fantasy has its roots in folktales and fairy tales, which were filled with female characters, but those were allusive representations, not real human beings. Although in the Middle Ages narratives contained various female characters, as well, but those had generally supporting role for the male characters. They were representing love interest, enchantress and victims to be saved by hero. Generally folktales had space for female characters as long as they are personifications or symbols and medieval romance needs them to represent a passive victim opposed to the male hero taking the actions. The role given to women was always marked by their social position in the era, therefore not many of developed and influential female characters were actually presented until the eighteenth century. In the nineteenth century the fantasy genre started to develop and even some influential female writers emerged. Fantasy was for this period interchangeable for children literature, a new approach to the genre had to be applied in order to make the female role more equal to male protagonists. In my opinion, fantasy is considered as a male-centred genre, but many important female protagonists can be found when looking long enough. Their role has changed during the centuries from allusions, through victims to actual heroes.

4. J.R.R. TOLKIEN

In this chapter I will focus on the female characters depicted in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954). There are many things which could be said about Tolkien's attitude towards women within this narrative, but I would like to pay attention to the three most prominent and significant characters, warrior Éowyn, wise Galadriel and enchanting Arwen. Those three women all present certain sides of feminine power, and they are connected to the narrative in various aspects. I will first provide general characteristic of Tolkien's attitude toward women within the *The Lord of the Rings* and then describe the roles of the three characters in more detail.

4.1 J. R. R. Tolkien and Female Characters

Tolkien's works have been always subjected to strong criticism, especially his attitude towards women. Nancy Enright mentions that the absence of female characters in the battles is not necessarily an implication of Tolkien's ignorance towards females, but on the other hand, he presents counter-parts to the masculine power, offering an alternative in the form of healing and protecting female force (Enright, 93). However, he is also being accused of general disinterest in the female characters (Schlobin, 75). It is difficult to completely deny any of those views, Tolkien is not being very generous with amount of influential female characters, on the other hand, the few present are not diminished, just not very apparent. His females are still very strong and well depicted characters, even though they do not have much space to prove this.

Justine di Giovanni in her paper explains that the reason for Tolkien's treatment of female characters is based in his own life. Tolkien lost his parents very young, he was raised by a Catholic priest, and as a result he was not used to the ways of maternal love, and coped with this disadvantage by somehow omitting this relationship whatsoever (di Giovanni, 7). He was also a member of the Inklings, the literary group associated with the Oxford University and supporting fiction and fantasy writers. Candice Fredrick and Sam McBride stated in *Women among the Inklings*, that the

world of *The Lord of the Rings* is very similar to the state of the Inklings, in which the women may exist, but their significance can be easily omitted (Fredrick, McBride, 108). We cannot forget that Tolkien does manage to present several important characters as wise and powerful Galadriel, enchanting Arwen and, the most wilful and courageous of them, Éowyn. On the other hand, their part in the narrative seems very small, which I will focus on in detail later in the chapter.

Those women may not have any crucial role for the narrative, but they are incorporated as important counterparts to the male ruled world, which is at the same time approaching its end as the Third Age of Middle-earth is closing at the end of the narrative, and the elves depart to the Undying Lands. Jane Chance thinks that the characters considered weak, the females, hobbits and even elderly, actually occupy the most heroic roles in Tolkien's works (Chance, 72). I agree that those are the characters forced to stand against prejudice and underestimation, and each time they exceed the expectations.

The best example of courageous and underestimated female character is Éowyn. She is a very significant example of a woman gaining power and taking control of her own destiny. Galadriel possesses undisputable power exceeding male characters in the narrative. On the other hand, Giovanni notes, that although Tolkien obviously tries to write in a progressive manner, he is unable to allow such a rebellious and untraditional behaviour without strict restrictions (Giovanni, 15). This is present in the fact, that Éowyn actually acquires her active role through accepting male properties, suggesting that the only way she is allowed to influence the plot is by hiding inside man's disguise and Galadriel is barely given chance to show her power. Nevertheless, I do not think that it was Tolkien's intention to suppress their roles in this manner, but he was not able to provide enough narrative space for those characters to have chance to prove their power.

Even though, the role of female characters is not obvious, they present their own form of influence, more on the level of a metaphorical counter-part to the current state of the world, a sigh of the dying age ruled by masculine power. Tolkien's females are remarkable and significant in their own way, but they are not crucial part of the narrative. Even though they have symbolic meaning, which goes through the whole

story, the transition to the Age of Men, they are mostly only a background for other characters and actions.

4.2 *The Lord of the Rings* – Plot Overview

The Lord of the Rings is a set of three volumes titled: *The Fellowship of the Ring*, *The Two Towers* and *The Return of the King*. Each volume consists of two books. The story is written as a sequel to previous book *The Hobbit*, and also works with mythology established in *Silmarillion*. The narrative depicts “the secondary world” of Middle-earth and follows the main protagonist, a young Hobbit Frodo Baggins and his companions, who are forced into journey to destroy the One Ring of Power, which Dark Lord Sauron would use as a source to rule and destroy the Middle-earth.

4.2.1 Éowyn

Éowyn seems to be the most prominent female character in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy when considering her description as a literary character. She is introduced as a niece of the Rohan king Théoden. Right at the beginning she is described a fair lady, beautiful and noble, but at the same time she radiates strength and decisive will. Roger C. Shlobin in *J.R.R Tolkien and His Literary Resonances* considers her the only significant, multidimensional female character among many male ones in *The Lord of the Rings* (Schlobin, 75).

Éowyn gains her significance when king Théoden leaves to the battle and leaves kingdom in her care, even though he does not consider this option fit for a woman.

“Is there none whom you would name? In whom do my people trust?”

“In the House of Eorl,” answered Háma.

“But Éomer I cannot spare, nor would he stay,” said the king; ‘and he is the last of that House.”

“I said not Éomer,” answered Háma. ‘And he is not the last. There is Éowyn, daughter of Éomund, his sister. She is fearless and high-hearted. All love her. Let her be as lord to the Eorlingas, while we are gone.’

“It shall be so,” said Théoden. “Let the heralds announce to the folk that the Lady Éowyn will lead them!” (LotR, 512)

Éowyn received sword and corselet as a symbols of her new role, but at this moment her only duty is to maintain the place and in case of defeat supply a shelter for the survivors, she is not expected to ever use those items (LotR, 512) She has a strong will and she might be given extraordinary power but she is also constantly pushed back into traditional female roles. She demands to ride with Aragorn to battle, because she claims to be „weary of skulking in the hills, and wish to face peril and battle”(LotR, 767). On the other hand, she is quickly reminded about her duty to stay behind and govern her people (LotR, 767). Chance thinks that she actually serves Rohan better than any male warrior in the battle of Pelennor Fields (Chance, 72). She is faced with a decision, whether to obey her king and stay behind or challenge not only his orders, but as well abandon her duties and ride to the battle, and she chooses to take disguise in the man’s armour and hide her maiden beauty, at some point she must sacrifice her feminine self in order to achieve her goals. Tolkien mentions in his letters that she “like many brave women was capable of great military gallantry at a crisis”(Letters, 344). I would say she is not a hero, but a mere woman who desires to find her place in the world, she fears to be caged as a housewife, not to be able of great deeds (LotR, 767). She breaks from this metaphorical cage and carries out her greatest deed. During the battle king Théoden is fatally wounded and Éowyn, as only one of his guards, stands to revenge him with all her strength. Éowyn becomes the one, who actually slaughters the leader of enemy army, also she fulfils prophesy stated many years ago, that no man can kill the witch-king (Appendix A 1027). Witch-king is certain of his invincibility because of this prophesy: ‘Hinder me? Thou fool. No living man may hinder me!’ (LotR, 823). Éowyn answers him with pride and removes her disguise: ‘But no living man am I! You look upon a woman (RotR, 823). I consider this as moment, when her own role is expanded from simple coincidence of her choice to disobey and go into battle, into the resolution of the whole battle. The implication of this prophecy was always considered as no living human can actually slaughter the witch-king, but Éowyn brings completely different light on the statement, she is not only revenging her king, she is suddenly

being the tool of this prophecy. She was meant to be there and fulfil her role as a slayer of the witch-king.

Nevertheless, she was left gravely ill, her arm was paralysed and she had to be sent to the city for healing. She stood as a hero for a brief moment, but then she has no choice but to return to her original role. According to Mannes, "her story shows not only what women should act like but the terrible injuries and mental anguish they will experience if they act in any other way"(Mannes, 20). This statement is little too harsh in my opinion, of course some people may see the radical twist in Éowyn's role in the story as a sign of Tolkien reducing her importance, on the other hand, she had indisputably a crucial part in the battle and her choosing calm and peaceful life is hardly a punishment, more a reward. Of course, she had to undergo wounding and healing in order to fully understand her own desires in different light as any male warrior would.

Faramir, even as a man, is in a similar position, held in the healing house, unable to fight. This situation points to the conclusion, that it is not any suppression of a female character, rather a healing process necessary for every injured warrior. Enright considers the relationship Éowyn develops later with Faramir to be metaphorically linked to the destruction of the Ring, it is part of the healing process not only for two injured characters, but also for the Middle-earth, which now enters the Age of Men (Enright, 105-106). Éowyn decides: "I will be a shieldmaiden no longer"(LotR, 943). She also abandons her desires for battle and suddenly becomes pure feminine figure in eyes of society. She is described to be "golden as the sun and white as snow" (LotR, 955), but this time without any masculine properties.

Éowyn's role in the story is very brief compared to other characters, she appeared only in few chapters, but her action had significant impact, the battle of Pelennor Fields could not be won without her determination, and even though she had to hide herself in man's disguise in order to be part of the battle, she also had to be a woman in order to fulfil her role as a slayer of the witch-king. Her decision to abandon her desire for battle seems more a sigh of peace which sets upon the Middle-earth after the war is won, rather than her being reduced to a housewife. Éowyn proved herself to be not only as strong as other male characters, but even stronger, because

she had to sneak her way into the battle, similarly as Merry the Hobbit did with her assistance (LotR, 787).

4.2.2 Galadriel

Galadriel is one of the very powerful characters in *The Lord of the Rings*. She presents strong will and her role is to provide guidance and support. She played her role in the rebellion against Valar (angelic guardians) in the First Age, she was proud and refused forgiveness for this deed as she spends her life in Middle-earth and along with her husband Celeborn, she ruled the Lothlorien (*Silmarillion*). At the end of *The Lord of the Rings* she is finally redeemed by proving her strength and refusing power of the One Ring. Enright describes her as “one of the most important characters of either gender in the story”(Enright, 99). On the other hand, there is an argument that her role is eventually simply fading away and disappearing (Giovanni, 24). I have to agree that she was playing active part in *Silmarillion*, but in *The Lord of the Ring* is merely a shadow of her actual power and strength. Tolkien describes her in his letters as “the last remaining of the Great among the High”(Letters, 197). According to this, she is the last remaining great power in Middle-earth. The battle she has to fight is only with herself, as the last step for her character, in order to finish her path and depart to the West . In my opinion Giovanni is right, because Galadriel’s strength is presented only as a reminiscence of her actual power and her presence mostly in the background, not directly participating in any action. Galadriel is strong and very interesting character, but her influence is generally indirect.

There are hints in the trilogy to support the assertion of her being powerful character and that she is not a conventional female character. Enright sees her as a mover and planner whose decisions affect all people of Middle-earth (Enright, 99). This is proven by the fact that she is one of the three Elven Rings bearer and she mentions that she established The White Council and had very different intentions for the future of Middle-earth.

“I it was who first summoned the White Council. And if my designs had not gone amiss, it would have been governed by Gandalf the Grey, and then may hap things would have gone otherwise” (LotR, 348).

She also tests the weakness of the members of Fellowship by tempting them with their desires (LotR, 350), just to be later tested herself by Frodo offering her the Ring (LotR, 356). Jane Chance calls her “company’s spiritual guide”(Chance, 130). Chance also points out that Galadriel stands out as a very emphatic character, whose power is in her hospitality, understanding and forgiveness, by which she inspires other as a model for tolerance (Chance, 54). For example, her desire to forgive the hatred between Dwarfs and Elfs(LotR, 346). When her husband scolds Gimli the Dwarf for entering Moria, where Gandalf fell to shadow, she advises him to understand Dwarf’s desire to see his ancient home, and she also gains great respect from Gimli (LotR, 347). On the other hand, Schlobin argues that it is her idealised image that makes her stand beyond humanity and singular (Schlobin, 75). But Chance, on the contrary, sees her gentleness only as a mask for her wisdom (Chance, 54). These are several possibilities of understanding her character, but she is after all, one of the oldest and most powerful beings dwelling in Middle-earth, therefore she can be hardly considered part of humanity. She stands above others, but it is her wisdom and age which have to separate her from the rest of the characters. Her role is not to be equal to them, but to provide them with her knowledge and wisdom she acquired during the years, she does not give them direction, only offers options.

“I will not give you counsel, saying do this, or do that. For not in doing or contriving, nor in choosing between this course and another, can I avail; but only in knowing what was and is, and in part also what shall be” (LotR, 348).

Her greatest moment comes when she is offered the One Ring by Frodo. She is aware of the power which comes with the Ring. She realises that she would become the same as the enemy in order to defeat him and soon lose anything she stands for. Giovanni explains her choice to reject the Ring as a choice to refuse taking the power that would both save her and destroy her (Giovanni, 18). Galadriel would gain the strength to

defeat Sauron, she would become the power, which heals the land, but she also understands she would not be able to resist the power of the Ring. “‘I pass the test,’ she said. ‘I will diminish, and go into the West and remain Galadriel’” (LotR, 357). She makes her choice to retain her current strength, to redeem herself and be able to pass to the West. Galadriel presented each member of the Fellowship with a gift, always thoughtful and special. Frodo received phial with the light of Eärendil’s star (LotR, 367). This gift proves to be essential for Frodo, when he encounters spider Shelob. (LotR, 705) Schlobin explains that Galadriel presents direct opposite for Shelob, and that is why her light burns Shelob back into her lair (Schlobin, 75). She is guiding Frodo every time her gift helps him, he is reminded of her wisdom, till he can finish his task. Sam used the phial to provide light in the darkness several times, when searching for Frodo. (LotR, 882, 924)

She is not physically present, but her action is important, Galadriel stands as a shadow in the story, observing and enlightening, when darkness or peril comes. Her role is not in the story itself, but she is underneath it. Her role was described more as a reminiscence of what she has done in the past. I have to admit, that even though she is powerful beyond other characters, she is not present as a character, but as an influence of her character.

4.2.3 Arwen

The last of the females from *The lord of the Rings* world which I want to mention is elven princess Arwen. She represents the pure aspect of beauty in the narrative. In *The Lord of the Rings* is stated: “Such loveliness in living thing Frodo had never seen nor imagined in his mind” (LotR, 221). Arwen is mentioned very rarely in the trilogy itself, but her story is more explored in the Appendices in “The Tale of Aragorn and Arwen”. Tolkien considers her role much more important that might seem on the first look. “I regard the tale of Arwen and Aragorn as the most important of the Appendices; it is pan of the essential story, and is only placed so, because it could not be worked into the main narrative without destroying its structure” (Letters, 255). She is the least influential female character in the narrative, and she is not described beyond the

merits of her beauty. On this subject, Enright points out, that her beauty is not simply physical, but as well intellectual and spiritual, and that Arwen's inner power is subtly conveyed in the narrative, but still present (Enright, 96-97). Most obvious influence she has on Aragorn, who became grim and stern during his perilous journeys (Appendix A, 1036) and is refreshed and light comes to his eyes when remembers time spent with Arwen in Lórien. (LotR, 343) She offers inspiration to the characters by her beauty and purity, still there is not much to be said about her own character beyond that. She is a sort of peripheral character, but she closes the tale when she gives up her immortality for mortal life with Aragorn, and she gifts her passage to The Undying Lands to Frodo, as a way to heal damage he suffered while bearing the One Ring (LotR, 952). According to Enright her sacrifice becomes salvation for Frodo, whose actions saved the Middle-earth (Enright, 98). Arwen's father Elrond states in the Appendix that his loss may help to restore kingship of Men (Appendix A, 1036), again pointing to sub-textual significance of her character. The marriage between Arwen and Aragorn, the king of Gondor, her sacrificing immortal life, and elves departing from the Middle-earth, this all signifies the shift to the Age of Men. Compared to Eowyn and Galadriel, she does not have any active part in the narrative and her own story is told only in the Appendix. Arwen is not a crucial character, but she seems somehow to be the source of peace in the end, for Aragorn to become his queen and for Frodo to sense his wounds and advise him to depart. She is not involved in the plot and she may be significant peripherally, but at the end I have to admit that as a character she does not provide much action or influence. Nevertheless, she seems to be one of the females in the narrative, who leaves impression of a round and emotional character.

5. GEORGE MACDONALD

In the following chapters I will explore fantasy novels by George MacDonald and the role of female characters within those narratives. At the beginning I will shortly describe MacDonald's attitude toward women in his narratives and then focus on his famous fantasy novels *Lilith* and *Phantastes* and describe several key female characters in detail. In the novel *Lilith* I will focus on characters of Lilith and Lona as the most prominent female protagonists, and in *Phantastes* I will describe The White Lady.

5.1 George MacDonald and Female Characters

George MacDonald was a Victorian era writer, as many authors of the period he was influenced by romantic period and allegory and symbolism of Dante and Milton, for example in the educational journey theme in *Phantastes* and later he returned to this theme in *Lilith* (Spina 22). Many writers were later inspired and fascinated by his novels, including C. S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien. George MacDonald wrote several fairy tale books, several non-fantastic novels, but his most remarkable works in the genre of fantasy would be *Phantastes* and *Lilith*. John Pennington stated that Lilith's revolt and then submission is actually a part of nineteenth century gender politics (34). I do not agree with this statement, the story of Lilith goes much deeper than a period tale, the religious influence is very prominent in the theme itself, and Lilith as a character has a bigger role than a gender statement. George MacDonald lost his mother at young age, it seems that he dealt with this tragedy by presenting us a range of motherly figures throughout his work, and his hero is often guided by a mentoring female figure.

Bonnie Gaarden explains in her book *The Christian Goddess: Archetype and Theology in the Fantasies of George MacDonal* that both *Lilith* and *Phantastes* are stories focused on psychological development of the main character (Gaarden, 31). MacDonald used fantasy genre to explore human psychology and his novels are filled with symbolism and allusions. Jennifer Sattaur points out in that in MacDonald's plots several different female characters are necessary to provide sin and knowledge as a road to earn grace the of God (Sattaur, 24). She again describes significance of female

characters for MacDonald's plots, as well as deep religious influence. Although, folktales and fairy-tales featuring range of strong female characters were popular in Victorian era, but according to Gaarden only MacDonald „regularly Christianized these conventions“ (Gaarden, 2). Gaarden also explains that in MacDonald's work we encounter Goddess-figures; his longer novels tend to feature one complex Goddess, for example *At the Back of the North Wind*, on the other hand, in less extensive novels as *Lilith* and *Phantastes* the role has to be split between several female characters (Gaarden, 92). These figures represent aspects important for the development of the main character, they serve as mother figure, enchantress or virginal lover. MacDonald presents archetypes of female figures typical for fairy-tale genre, but as well provides them with deep theological meaning, therefore all characters in his novels have some specific role. The wise woman in *Phantastes* serves as an educator, on the other hand, White lady provides source of inspiration. Lilith is a seducer and Lona is an innocent love. All these females provide experience important for the main character, as the both *Phantastes* and *Lilith* deal with his maturing, without them the stories would lose their meaning and become simple adventure.

5.2 *Lilith* – Plot Overview

Lilith (1895) is a symbolic tale, it is also called a romance. Plot is focused on the maturing of the main character, while travelling the mystical land. This romance is based on a Christian allegory in which mankind must return to its creator (Mendelson, 198). The main protagonist is Mr. Vane, who enters another world through the mirror in his library. On his journey he encounters The Little Ones, eternal children who were saved from being killed by princess, and their leader Lona. He sets on the quest to help The Little Ones and goes with them into battle against evil princess of Bulika, Lilith, who murders all children in her city, and withholds water from the land, preventing them from growing.

5.2.1 Lilith

Lilith is not the main character of the novel, but she empowers it as a main source of conflict. She rejected her feminine role as Adam's wife and Lona's mother, she is the princess of the city of Bulika, and she slaughters all new-born children in fear of being destroyed by them, but it is actually her own daughter, Lona, she fears (*Lilith*, 136). She is also a very complicated character described in terms of dichotomy, she is a beautiful angelic being on one side, and she transforms into monster on the other. This conflict of appearance leads to Vane's confusion about her character, he becomes uncertain whether to love her for her beauty, or hate her for her actions. "...if I did less than loathe her, I should love her" (*Lilith*, 121).

The Background of her character comes from two sources, Jewish mythology, where she is a demon murdering children, and in apocryphal Jewish lore she is Adam's first wife (Mendelson 206). Both those descriptions are incorporated in the story. She is not just a secondary character. Sattaur claims that one of main focuses of the plot is actually to redeem Lilith (Sattaur, 20). John Pennington stated that she overpowers the narrative space, which forced MacDonald to silence her at the end and imprison her in his Christian myth of redemption (Pennington, 27). I do not argue with the idea, that author's resolution of Lilith's situation was abrupt, in my opinion she is not really saved, but put to sleep in Adam's chamber of death (*Lilith*, 202). To proclaim that she was silenced seems quite accurate conclusion. The Christian myth is a strong part of the narrative, but in case of Lilith her sudden change of heart is difficult to trust. The narrative is focused more around Lilith than Vane. Although Vane undergoes his adventure in order to mature into a man, at the end he serves as a rout for Lilith's penance. It can be argued that Lilith is too strong a character to be convincingly depicted in the novel. The complexity of her character exceeds the space she occupies in the narrative. She was Adam's first wife, but she rejected family, rejected the patriarchal status as a wife and mother and refused to be a slave of God's will (*Lilith*, 136). She has done all of this in order to maintain herself independent, instead of being transformed into passive figure controlled by her husband or her creator. "She counted it slavery to be one with me, and bear children for Him who gave her being" (*Lilith*, 136).

Pennington sees her as “negative transformation of female purity”(Pennington, 28). He is right, because she was created as wife and mother, but she turned into murderer and vampire-like creature living from blood. On the other hand, Sattaur states that even though being negative, she is necessary for Vane’s education (Sattaur, 22), because by seducing him she gives him chance to mature and learn difference between desire and love (Sattaur, 23). She is given role of “femme fatale” and Vane is divided between feeling of loath and uncontrollable desire towards her. He knows about her deeds, but he is fascinated by her beauty beyond common sense as he states: “For a moment I was tempted to love a lie” (*Lilith*, 121). Lilith is purely sexual creature, she does not know love and she does not seek it. Vane is first in enchanted by her, when he saves her from the trance, while she secretly feeds on his blood (*Lilith*, 98). Later he travels to Bulika to confront the princess, and he is again fooled by her beauty. She constantly evokes love and hate, pity and rage in him. She is as confusing to Vane as she is to reader, who has to decide whether she deserves to be destroyed or saved. Mendelson gives quite effective explanation, that she is irresistible because she represents the realm of unconscious desires (Mendelson, 207).

The Little Ones are children saved from Bulika, who cannot grow and mature. They are a direct product of Lilith’s sin, because she withholds the waters (*Lilith*, 69), and the Little Ones need water to grow (*Lilith*, 130). She is their saviour, as they live in eternal innocence, and tormentor, as they are trapped in eternal ignorance. Lona takes care of those children and eventually she leads them into battle against Lilith.

Lilith keeps this water in her clenched fist and it is released only as a symbol of her ultimate defeat. Even though she surrenders and repents, she is unable to open her fist on her own, it has to be amputated by Adam (*Lilith*, 202). Pennington sees act of cutting her hand as a metaphor for feminine power being silenced by patriarchal power (Pennington 34). He also claims that she is domesticated to become passive angel as other women of the narrative (Eva, Mara, Lona) (Pennington, 33). I agree that she is tamed at the end, her change is very abrupt and seems more like a result of a need to finish her story. In my opinion, Lilith is redeemed by force, which proves the clenched fist, which will not open by her will but has to be cut off in order to finish Lilith’s penance, almost like she is subconsciously still not willing to surrender, but is

too tired to fight anymore, her strong unwillingness to submit could be observed in her words.

“I will be what I mean myself now.”

“I would do after my nature.”

“I will do as my Self pleases—as my Self desires.”

“I will do what I will to do.”

“I am what I am; no one can take from me myself!”

“Another shall not make me!”

“No one ever made me. I defy that Power to unmake me from a free woman!” (*Lilith*, 184).

Lilith is desperate to preserve herself and what she believes to be freedom and independence. She makes a point that no one else is fit to judge her and destroy her, not even God, and she is fully convinced about her truth. Lilith is being convinced over and over by Mara till she surrenders and decides to repent.

Lilith is a very hard character to read, she is presented as pure evil, terrorising Bulika, keeping children from growing, and eventually killing her own daughter (*Lilith*, 170).

On the other hand, she is redeemed at the end, when she sees her real self and surrenders to Adam and to God (*Lilith*, 189). This surrender is often seen inevitable, as Lilith takes over the narrative and it is necessary to suppress her character. Pennington explains that her presence is there only to “haunt the fringes of the novel” (Pennington, 27). In my opinion, Lilith is not only the essential aspect of the narrative, even more she seems to be the focus of it. Lilith has her role as a seducer for Vane, which she fulfils perfectly, but she also overtakes the narrative for her own story, which at some point seems even more developed than the story of the main protagonist.

5.2.2 Lona

Lona is another very influential character from *Lilith*. She is Lilith’s daughter and also leader of The Little Ones. According to Gaarden she represents the maiden in the goddess trinity of Eve, Adam’s new wife as the mother, and Mara, her daughter, as

wise women (Gaarden, 170). Lona is described in terms of innocence and love. "...in Lona the dazzling beauty of Lilith was softened by childlikeness" (*Lilith*, 151). According to Sattaur she is the antithesis to destructive nature of her mother; she cares for children, which would get destroyed by Lilith (Sattaur, 24). I agree with Gaarden, that Lona, as well as all characters in *Lilith*, represents some aspect of Vane's experience (Gaarden, 170). She is an object of Vane's desire, but unlike his sexual desire for Lilith, his love for Lona is chaste. The desire for Lilith and Lona is disastrous for him, but at the same time necessary for his psychological development.

Lona is one of The Little Ones, although, she also serves as mother figure to them. Gaarden describes her by these words: „She has never cried, never developed any depth, or complexity of character“ (Gaarden, 26). This description is supported in *Lilith*, when Eva stated that she was already dead when her mother killed her (*Lilith*, 199). She is a representation of pure and innocent virgin, but she is not the whole person, she had no chance to grow and she was alive only to bring Lilith's doom. Lona leads The Little Ones to attack Bulika, and after their victory, she is killed by her mother Lilith (*Lilith*, 170). Her childlike innocence and later death are very important aspect of Vane's development into becoming matured identity. Vane advised her to take actions, and it is his grief and feeling of responsibility, that marks the worst moment of his adventure, when he has to face consequences. He carries her body to Adam to put her into his chamber of death, he watches over her all the way, protecting her (*Lilith*, 175). Sattaur believes that Lona's real role is to redeem her mother (25). She is killed while expressing her love to her (*Lilith*, 170).

'Mother! mother!' cried Lona again, as she leaped on the daïs, and flung her arms around the princess. An instant more and I should have reached them!—in that instant I saw Lona lifted high, and dashed on the marble floor. Oh, the horrible sound of her fall! At my feet she fell, and lay still. The princess sat down with the smile of a demoness (*Lilith*, 170).

According to Gaarden as well her death causes Lilith's repentance, which leads to restoration of the water and salvation of The Little Ones (*Lilith*, 170). I do not think that it was Lona's death, which caused Lilith's change of heart, but the fact that Lilith was

still afraid of her daughter even after her death (*Lilith*, 201). Lona reminds her of her sins, something waiting to turn back on her. The real reason for her surrender to Adam and God is in my opinion is not Lona's death, because Lilith never really regrets killing her daughter.

Lona is later resurrected in the Eve's house into new fullness of life (Sattaur, 25). Before that moment she was only partially alive, trapped in the ignorance and innocence of a child, now she has awoken as a woman (*Lilith*, 119). She is one of the central characters in the narrative, and even though she is not fully developed as a character, her mere presence is linked to the symbolic nature of the story. She stands as a direct opposition to the pure evil of Lilith, and she is also the way of Lilith's redemption and Vane's maturing. Lona's child-like innocence and sacrificial death leads to Vane's psychological development and is therefore necessary for his journey, she is his true lover at the end, after he managed to withstand temptations of Lilith. Therefore both females are necessary in the plot.

5.3 *Phantastes* – Plot Overview

Phantastes: A Faerie Romance for Men and Women (1858) is the first fantasy novel written by George MacDonald. Anodos, the main character, is pulled into dreamlike fairyland, where he travels to find his ideal beauty in form of The White Lady. His journey is an allegory to maturing into a man, as well as in *Lilith*, Anodos has to face temptation in order to give up his ideals and develop into grown individual.

5.3.1. The White Lady

One of many female characters in *Phantastes* is The White Lady. There are many female characters which could be considered influential, but White Lady is the focus of the main protagonist. She represents imaginative power and is a sort of Muse figure, awakening his desire for ideal beauty, which he was not aware to exist before he first saw her. "What I did see appeared to me perfectly lovely; more near the face that had been born with me in my soul, than anything I had seen before in nature or

art" (Ph., 37). She is imprisoned in a piece of marble, once Anodos sees her, he is so fascinated by her beauty that he immediately becomes obsessed by her. He attempts to free her by recalling old Greek legends about Pygmalion, because there is a bas-relief of this legend about sculptor who fell in love with his statue and woke her by kiss (Ph., 36). Anodos attempts to free her by kiss, when this fails he is inspired by another legend and decided to sing to her and she is finally freed (Ph., 37), but she immediately runs away from him (Ph., 40). This becomes the source of Anodos's motivation to follow and find his White Lady. "I gazed after her in a kind of despair; found, freed, lost! It seemed useless to follow, yet follow I must" (Ph., 40). He believes he has finally found her, but he is being deceived by Alder Maiden, another female character, who actually betrays him to the Ash tree, who wishes to destroy Anodos (Ph., 47). This episode shows how vulnerable Anodos becomes because of The White Lady, he gets himself almost killed, just because he seeks the presence of a woman he does not even know. Later he enters fairy queen's palace, where he again dreams about his Marble Lady. There is an empty pedestal among the statues in the palace, and Anodos believes it to be hers (Ph., 112). He again sings to the pedestal and makes her to appear visible (Ph., 121), but he cannot control himself while being so close to his desired beauty and tries to touch her, free her from her death state, but lady is startled by this action and she again flees away from him.

But no sooner had her feet ceased to be in contact with the black pedestal, than she shuddered and trembled all over; then, writhing from my arms, before I could tighten their hold, she sprang into the corridor, with the reproachful cry, "You should not have touched me!" darted behind one of the exterior pillars of the circle, and disappeared."(Ph., 121)

Nevertheless, he is still fascinated by her, and willing to follow her even to the places forbidden by Fairy queen, because as he says the queen is nothing to him, when he pursues his Lady (Ph., 122). He travels underground, John Docherty described his pursuit as lusty and misguided (Docherty, 26), but eventually he gives up on finding her and states: "I no longer called her to myself MY white lady"(Ph., 125). He is proud for awakening her by his song and somehow this awakens a feeling of possession in him

(Ph., 129). He was calling her his White Lady, following her in hope she would naturally return his feelings. According to Gaarden, in the Fairy Queen palace Anodos is forced to abandon the ideal of The white Lady as a erotic love-object, so he can embrace her as an internal capacity (Gaarden, 177). I agree that this is really the first time he can at least hear her talk, he can acknowledge her as real being, not just perfect and unemotional statue. The dream slowly becomes reality. White Lady keeps fleeing from him in the moments when the ideal becomes material substance. She is the centre of his desires but unreachable as a real person. He tries to search for her, not comprehending her as a real person but more as an ideal. According to Courtney Salvey, White Lady represents spiritual embodiment of beauty, and Anodos is trying to bring it into material form (Salvey, 20). His quest is to materialize this ideal, but at the same time it becomes unreachable for him. He is faced once again with the loss of her, and has to slowly become aware of the possibility that he will never be able to reach her. Eventually Anodos encounters Old Lady on the island, in her cottage he is soothed by her over the loss of his lady (Ph., 136), and allows him to enter four doors, each leading to different experience. One of those leads him to the White Lady, he listens to her conversation with Sir Percival. She admits to have feelings for Anodos because he saved her twice from enchantment, but she would never love him as she loves Percival (Ph., 147). He finally realises that his Lady will never love him back. "She was near me, and I could not see her; near me in the arms of one loved better than I, and I would not see her, and I would not be by her"(Ph., 148). He also grows great respect towards Percival, becomes his companion, willing to serve the noble man, if he cannot be noble enough himself (Ph., 184). He finally abandons his quest for ideal beauty and starts to work on his own personality, his sense of honour and respect, he matures to be a better man. In my opinion, although the White Lady is not supernatural figure and she does not possess any magical powers and does nothing except running away from Anodos, she still is an important part of the plot. Her significance is the fact, that she is the force driving the main character on his path, without her he would be just wandering the Fairyland with no purpose. White lady is inspirational impulse, setting Anodos on his path, leading him through his maturing and providing experience.

6. CONCLUSION

In this thesis I explored the role of female characters in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and George MacDonald's *Lilith* and *Phantastes*. My aim was to describe two very different approaches towards the female characters and the way they were incorporated in the plot. As a conclusion, I think that Tolkien does not deserve to be accused of sexist attitude towards female characters, even though they do not have an important role in the narrative structure, as characters they are well described and even when it may not be obvious, each of them has significance for the narrative. On the other hand, MacDonald is using his female characters in much wider range, they are closely connected to the plot, and necessary for the main character and for his journey to have meaning. But unlike Tolkien's women, they are very simply described, they symbolise steps of the maturing process of man, they seem flat and undeveloped, except Lilith, who is very complicated character, almost taking the narrative for herself. Even though both authors have similar sources for their writing, Christian symbolism, folk-tales and Tolkien even acknowledged influence MacDonald had on his secondary-world. But in other aspects they vary, Tolkien refused to use characters in the same way as MacDonald, therefore he is free to construct them with more depth and realism. On the contrary, MacDonald created them as symbols and allusions to maturing process.

Tolkien's narrative scale in *Lord of the Rings* trilogy is a much wider narrative, and therefore, there are many more characters to explore, and not all of them can receive such importance as in the less epic scale of MacDonald's novels, but we can follow even those few suppressed female protagonist through their own subplots in the main story. Tolkien was not inclined to present allegories of any kind. Tolkien's women are also in a certain way symbolic characters. They represent transition from The Third Age to the Age of Men.

The most explored character is with no doubt Éowyn, who is given her own storyline and psychological development, and in the end of the narrative her involvement in the plot of the main story could be considered significant, after all, she is the one whose actions lead to the defeat of Sauron's most powerful minion. On the other hand, Galadriel is the character who does both, influence the plot and provide guidance for

main characters, but only in the background, she is not present as a doer of actions. The last significant character is Arwen, who is depicted in the main narrative very scarcely, she is one of the characters considered significant. Nevertheless, she is not as necessary for the plot as Éowyn or Galadriel. These are three women appearing among countless men in the narrative. When compared to the works by MacDonald, it is obvious that they serve very little role in the main narrative, although they have certain significance.

I agree with the idea, that MacDonald's characters significance is deep in the composition of the story, they create complex unity and cannot be omitted. Lilith and Lona are crucial characters in the narrative, without them the main character would not be able to grow and develop. Lilith represents the temptation and sexual lust which Vane has to overcome in order to understand chaste and innocent love to Lona. Lilith is also very significant character, because she captures narrative for her own story, her redemption becomes much more prominent than Vane's psychological development. Similarly, White Lady in *Phantastes* is not only character, but also object of Anodos's quest, she is his inspiration and source of his understanding that material beauty is not as important as inner qualities. He matures, when he abandons his quest for beautiful lady and joins honourable knight.

After exploring the main female characters in these three novels, I discovered that both Tolkien and MacDonald worked with their characters in a very different manner. Tolkien did not give wide narrative space to his female characters, but they were still necessary in the narrative. I proved in my thesis that Éowyn, Galadriel and even Arwen were incorporated in the plot of *The Lord of the Rings* in a significant manner.

MacDonald created his female characters as symbols and allusions to the maturing process of the main hero. Lilith, Lona and The White Lady are undeniably deeply connected to the plot and they create unity with the whole narrative. After comparing both authors, I reached conclusion that MacDonald was more generous when proving the plot significance for his characters, but Tolkien was not avoiding or diminishing females, simply he expressed their significance in the plot in the less obvious manner.

7. RESUMÉ

Cílem této bakalářské práce bylo prozkoumat roli ženských postav v syžetu. Téma jsem zvolila s ohledem na skutečnost, že tento žánr je všeobecně spojován spíše s mužskými hrdiny, a přestože se v mnoha dílech vyskytují ženy, jejich role je často okrajová. Otázka zapojení ženských postav byla velmi diskutovaná hlavně ve spojitosti s J. R. R. Tolkienem a jeho proslavenou trilogií *The Lord of the Rings*. Zároveň jsem ovšem chtěla poukázat na odlišný přístup k problematice a proto jsem se rozhodla předložit k porovnání dílo George MacDonalda, který je obecně považován za zakladatele moderní fantasy.

Práci jsem rozdělila do několika kapitol, nejdříve jsem představila vybrané základní pojmy související s naratologií a teorií postavy. Hlavní otázkou je, jak podstatná je postava pro samotný příběh, což je otázka diskutovaná už od dob starověkého Řecka, proto jsem nabídla několik teorií na toto téma. Já sama se přikláním k názoru, že jak postava, tak příběh, musí být úzce propojeny a není možné mít jedno bez druhého. Také jsem v této kapitole přiblížila dva základní myšlenkové proudy spojené s výzkumem naratologie - formalismus a strukturalismus. Oba proudy přistupovaly k postavě, jakožto k prvku příběhu, stejným způsobem jako gramatika přistupuje k prvkům ve struktuře věty. Postava je podle nich součástí struktury a může být tedy vnímaná jako taková, spíše než jako lidská bytost. Ovšem právě proto, že se tyto teorie nezabývají postavou jakožto bytostí, se jeví jako příliš teoretické a nedostačující k plnému uchopení literární postavy v celém jejím rozsahu. Dále jsem uvedla několik typologií, podle kterých se může postava rozlišovat. Tímto se dostáváme k tématu charakterových rysů, které představují základní podklad pro bližší zkoumání literární postavy. Jak role postavy v syžetu tak její charakterové rysy přibližují postavu čtenáři a vytváří její plný obraz a formu.

V následující kapitole jsem nabídla stručný přehled role ženských postav, aby byl podán komplexní pohled na jejich vývoj a zapojení v literatuře a to hlavně se zaměřením na fantasy. Upozornila jsem, že kořeny můžeme hledat v pohádkách. Ženy zastupovaly abstraktní pojmy jako Moudrost a Štěstěna. Později, během středověku, byla jejich role značně pozměněna a redukována vlivem křesťanského učení. Ženy byly v literatuře stále přítomné, ale jejich osudy měly evokovat náboženský postoj k

sexuální abstinenci a pokání. Nejpopulárnějším žánrem ve středověku byly romance, které sice oplývaly množstvím ženských postav, ale ty byly pouze objekty milostných zájmů hlavního hrdiny. Představovaly oběti, které měl hrdina za úkol zachránit, nebo představovaly odměnu za jeho hrdinství. Za zmínku určitě stojí také poněkud odlišný přístup charakterizující artušovské romance, v nich se začínají objevovat již soběstačnější postavy a je jim dán větší prostor. Tuto polohu reprezentuje Ginevra, Morgana a nesporně také Isolda. V šestnáctém století se ženám rovněž dostalo pozornosti v rámcových příbězích. Například Geoffrey Chaucer a Giovanni Boccaccio je využívali ve svých povídkách jakožto aktivní prvky příběhu. Na přelomu osmnáctého a devatenáctého století se výrazně začalo měnit postavení žen ve společnosti a s tím byla spojena také změna v jejich zapojení do literatury. Během tohoto období se ženy projevily nejenom jako autoři, ale i jako silné literární postavy. George MacDonald také představuje svou vizi fantaskního světa plného symbolů a sexuality. MacDonaldovo dílo ovlivnilo řadu jeho současníků a také mnoho pozdějších autorů. Největší rozkvět zaznamenala fantasy ve dvacátém století, kdy se na literární scéně objevilo mnoho autorů, a žánr si začal získávat mimořádnou oblibu čtenářů. Ženské postavy byly zobrazovány nejenom jako milenky a pokušitelky hlavního hrdiny, ale také jako válečnice a silné emancipované bytosti, které se umí odvážně bránit proti nepřítelům. Právě J. R. R. Tolkien svým nejslavnějším dílem *The Lord of the Rings* významně přispěl k popularizaci do té doby přehlíženého žánru.

Po stručném přehledu teorie postavy a historie ženské postavy, jsem se konečně dostala k samotnému dílu J. R. R. Tolkiena. Nejdříve jsem přiblížila jeho vyobrazení ženských postav v obecné rovině, některé aspekty, které ho ovlivnily a celkový pohled, který převládá v hodnocení jeho práce s ženskými postavami. Všeobecně panuje názor, že se Tolkien práci s ženami vyhýbal, a že ženy dokonce záměrně vynechával z příběhu. Existuje však mnoho pohledů na jeho přístup a já se rozhodla je zhodnotit objektivně a bez předsudků. Je pravdou, že jeho ženy jsou jakoby skryty v pozadí, ale zároveň je zcela nesprávné tvrdit, že to jsou méněcenné postavy v porovnání s mužskými hrdiny. Tolkienovy ženy jsou bravurně vykreslené literární postavy, ovšem jejich role v příběhu, to už je zcela jiná otázka. Aby bylo možné posoudit roli, kterou Tolkienovy postavy hrály v rámci knihy, rozhodla jsem se představit tři prominentní ženy, které se v Pánu prstenů objevily.

Nejprve jsem se zaměřila na Éowyn, protože jako jediná žena příběhu výrazně přispěla svou aktivitou k průběhu děje. Éowyn, je prezentována nejenom jako krásná žena, ale zároveň silná a sebevědomá osoba, která je ochotná se postavit předsudkům, které vůči jejímu pohlaví mají mužští protagonisté, když se vydá do bitvy v přestrojení za muže. Podstatné je nejenom její odhodlání a vůle, ale také skutečnost, že její přítomnost na bitevním poli vedla k zásadnímu zvratu bitvy, když porazila velitele nepřátelské armády. Její vítězství je podmíněno právě faktem, že je ženou, jelikož jak bylo řečeno v proroctví, žádný živý muž nemohl přemoci Černého jezdce. Tato postava je prezentována na stejné úrovni jako mužští hrdinové v tomto díle. Není jediná, podobně jako hobiti, která byla podceňována, a která nakonec překonala všechna očekávání a prokázala své schopnosti. Je ovšem pravdou, že Éowyn se v rámci příběhu vyskytuje pouze sporadicky, ale bezpochyby zaujímá v *The Lord of the Rings* nejaktivnější roli ze všech ženských postav.

Další výraznou postavou je Galadriel, která sice není příliš aktivním protagonistou a její role v rámci struktury příběhu je spíše okrajová, ale přesto je nepřehlédnutelnou osobností a to díky moci a moudrosti, kterou vyzařuje. Galadriel je postavou, která se vyskytla už v Tolkienově díle *Silmarillion*, kde ji autor určil větší vliv než tomu bylo později v *The Lord of the Rings*. Její ohromná moc a moudrost se jen jemně promítly v příběhu. Galadriel by měla potenciál přemoci Saurona a přinést mír Středozemi, ale zároveň by musela obětovat sebe sama, a podlehnout moci prstenů, proto bylo její rozhodnutí odmítnout prsten tak zásadním pro její postavu. Jejím největším vítězstvím je její silná vůle a její schopnost uvědomit si své slabiny. Jako postava je přesvědčivá a zcela očividně velmi mocná. Galadriel je spíše stínem, který se vznáší okolo hlavních hrdinů, velmi moudrá, velmi mocná, ale není jejich rádcem ani ochráncem, pouze jim představuje možnosti a nechává je zvolit si cestu.

Jako poslední postavu z *The Lord of the Rings*, jsem vybrala Arwen. Tato elfí princezna má ze všech tří postav nejmenší prostor v knize samotné. Celý její příběh je popsán až v appendixu. Její role je velmi malá, a přesto tato postava zanechává ve čtenáři vyhraněný dojem, který ji činí pozoruhodnou. Arwen je postava, jejíž existence je významnou motivací

a inspirací pro Aragorna. Navíc její empatická osobnost dokáže vnímat škodu, kterou prsten způsobil Frodovi a proto mu nabídla cestu na západ, do zemí neumírajících, to vše proto, aby mu ulevila.

V následující kapitole jsem se věnovala dílu George MacDonalda, konkrétně jsem se zaměřila na jeho dvě fantasy knihy *Lilith* a *Phantastes*. Nejprve jsem opět přiblížila MacDonaldův přístup k ženským postavám z obecné roviny, abych později mohla rozebrat jednotlivé postavy podrobněji. George MacDonald vytvořil obě knihy jako symbolické příběhy znázorňující dospívání hlavního hrdiny během jeho putování fantaskním světem, v něm se setká s mnoha postavami, které slouží jako prvky přispívající k jeho rozvoji. Z tohoto důvodu je zřejmé, že postavy v MacDonalduv díle jsou velmi hluboce propojené se samotnou strukturou příběhu, jejich role není jen v rozmezí jejich aktivity, ale také v jejich symbolické asociaci. MacDonald je na rozdíl od Tolkiena velmi štědrý v zapojení mnoha ženských postav. Jeho díla často obsahovala centrální ženskou postavu, která v sobě nesla silný potenciál k pokoušení a nasměrování hlavního hrdiny, což přispělo k jeho psychickému zranění. Nejrozvinutější postavou, se kterou se v *Lilith* setkáme, je samotná Lilit. Přestože zastává především roli svůdkyně, která pokouší hlavního hrdinu, je Lilit i velmi komplexní postavou. Její příběh je intenzivní a prakticky přehlušuje příběh hlavního hrdiny. Lilit se zřekla Boha a svého muže Adama, odmítla život, který pro ni plánovali, a přežívala z krve jiných. Smyslem její postavy je nabídnout hrdinovi sexuální pokušení, kterému musí vzdorovat, aby mohl plně ocenit nevinnou lásku, zároveň však ona sama musí projít vykoupením a navrátit se k Bohu. Její postava je velmi komplikovaná a především v závěru knihy celý příběh zcela ovládne. Lilit není titulní postavou, avšak je v mnoha ohledech významnější a dynamičtější postavou než sám hlavní hrdina. Další podstatnou postavou v *Lilith* je její dcera Lona. Lona pro hlavního hrdinu představuje nevinnost a pravou lásku, zároveň je nástrojem pádu Lilit a také jejího vykoupení. Lona, na rozdíl od své matky, není výrazně komplexní postavou. Je popsána jako nedokončená bytost, uvězněná v těle a mysli dítěte, které nemůže dospět, je věčnou připomínkou hříchu své matky. Lona musí nejdříve zemřít, aby mohla znovu povstat jako skutečná celistvá osobnost. Podobně jako Lilit je Lona velmi úzce propojená se samotným příběhem, takže tvoří zcela nepostradatelnou součást knihy,

její nevinnost a poté smrt jsou aspekty nezbytné pro prozření hlavního hrdiny a jeho přeměnu v psychicky vyspělého muže.

Poslední postavou, kterou jsem se rozhodla blíže prozkoumat, je Bílá dáma z knihy *Phantastes*. Dáma představuje ideál krásy, po kterém hlavní hrdina Anodos pátrá. Od první chvíle, kdy jí spatřil, je jí posedlý a celá jeho cesta fantaskním světem, je vlastně hledáním tohoto ideálu. Tématem jeho pouti je podobně jako v *Lilith*, jeho psychická pout' od dětinskosti k dospělosti. Hrdina musí opustit své představy o dokonalé kráse v podobě Bílé dámy a dospět k pochopení vyšších morálních hodnot, jako je sebeobětování. Bílá dáma není aktivní postavou, většinu času stráví zakletá v mramoru nebo na útěku před hlavním hrdinou, který je posedlý touhou si ji přivlastnit, ale její existence je nezbytná. Celý příběh by nemohl fungovat, bez její přítomnosti. Ona je tím smyslem a nástrojem jeho vývoje.

Měla jsem příležitost prozkoumat blíže dílo dvou autorů s velmi odlišným přístupem k zapojení postav do syžetu. Došla jsem ke zjištění, že přestože oba autoři přistupovali k zapojení postav do syžetu zcela rozdílně, nedá se tvrdit, že by některý z nich k ženským postavám přistupoval nevyrovnaně, Tolkien sice nenabízí nijak velké množství žen, ale ty, které se v knize objeví, jsou velmi mocné, moudré a odvážné. Zároveň, i když ne tak zřetelně jako je tomu v díle MacDonalda, zasahují do děje. Na druhé straně MacDonaldovo dílo překypuje množstvím ženských figur, ale zároveň tyto postavy slouží prvořadně jako nástroj k rozvoji hlavního hrdiny. Doufám, že tato práce dokázala, že ženské postavy nehrají ve fantasy druhořadou roli, naopak, jsou zcela nezbytnou součástí příběhu, a tvoří s ním jednotný celek.

8. ANNOTATION

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This bachelor thesis is focused on the role of female characters in the plot of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and George MacDonald's *Lilith* and *Phantastes*. In the first chapter I explain the basic terminology and background to narrative theory. Then I present short overview of the female characters in fantasy during the history. Next chapter deals with work of J.R.R. Tolkien and the role of female characters in *The Lord of the Rings*. I focused on the characters of Éowyn, Galadriel and Arwen. Another part describes in the same manner George MacDonald's *Lilith* and *Phantastes*. I focused on the characters of Lilith, Lona and The White Lady.

ANOTACE

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Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na zapojení ženských postav do syžetu J. R. R. Tolkiena a jeho díla *The Lord of the Rings* a George MacDonalda a jeho díla *Lilith* a *Phantastes*. V první kapitole představuji základní terminologii postoj spojené s naratologií. Poté následuje stručný přehled role ženských postav ve fantasy literatuře v průběhu historie. V další kapitole se zabývám dílem J. R. R. Tolkiena a rolí ženských postav v *The Lord of the Rings*. Zaměřila jsem se na postavy: Éowyn, Galadriel a Arwen. Následně popisuji dílo George MacDonalda a roli ženských postav v knihách *Lilith* a *Phantastes*. Zaměřila jsem se na postavy Lilit, Lony a Bílé dámy.

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