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Legend, Fantasy and Reality - The Essence of "The Lord of the Rings"

Legenda, fantazie a realita - Podstata Pána Prstenů

Bakalářská práce

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Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně. Veškeré literární a ostatní prameny, které jsem v práci využila, jsou uvedeny v seznamu použité literatury.

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Abstract

This bachelor thesis is focused on life and work of J.R.R.Tolkien whose writings had a huge impact on its readers as well as on a development of fantasy genre. How Tolkien's life experiences influenced his work is a main part of this thesis. This project also deals with an influence of legends and imagination on author's written work.

1. Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to learn more about the author of *The Lord of the Rings*, John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, and to find out whether his work was based on his imagination, memories or legends. Although Tolkien is an author of many significant writings, the one which had the biggest influence on a development of fantasy was *The Lord of the Rings*.

The first part of this Bachelor project is the introduction of the author and his own life as a significant influence seen in his literature. His life demonstrates enigmatic aspects and the reason why he wrote such stories. The background of this Bachelor thesis is based on author's own life experience. Tolkien's world was full of magic and beautiful landscapes that had later been reflected in his lifeworks.

In his masterpiece, we can observe many messages that are hidden within the whole text. While reading such stories, one needs to concentrate on the context and try to understand it as a whole. The storyline of friendship and honor is highly impressive, so it makes readers think about the characters covered in the mysterious world and how their lives differ from the reality.

The following chapter deals with literature genres from the general point of view as well as the description of the main characters and their diverse personalities.

The second part of the thesis is based on real experiences that reflect Tolkien's life. We can see many aspects used in his works that we know from his real life. Apart from mentioning the nature and the environment that he used to live in as a small child he also shows the reader the aspect of the war. One can admit that his life was full of contrasts. From nature and describing wonderful environment to the evil introduced by war. He used friendship and the relationships between people from his memories of Oxford studies.

The purpose of my Bachelor project is to inform about this world-famous author as the crucial part of the literature history. The analysis of selected books is considered to inform and reveal the facts and the deepest secrets in his life.

For the entire illustration, there are some appendices from his works used at the end of this thesis.

2. Tolkien and story of his life

2.1 Early childhood

Tolkien's parents Mabel Suffield and Arthur Reuel Tolkien got married on 16th of April 1891 in Cape Town, Africa. After their wedding and honeymoon, they moved to Bloemfontein, the capital city of The Orange Free State. John Ronald Reuel Tolkien was born on 3rd of January 1892 and inherited his first name John after his grandfather, his third name Reuel after his father and his second name Ronald was given to him by his mother Mabel. Ronald was also the name his parents and family used to call him. Later he said he did not consider it his real name and also his friends and other people had a hard time deciding which name to use when talking to him. Some of his friends called him „John Ronald“ (which sounded noble) or „Tollers“ (which was his nickname) or simply „J.R.R.T.“

Tolkien's mother Mabel did not like the environment and the climate of the Orange Free State and when she discovered that little Ronald's health was deteriorating she decided to move to England. In 1895, Mabel and her two sons Ronald and Hilary (born in 1894) travelled to England alone and Arthur was meant to join them few months later. The reunion of the family never happened.

Ronald's health improved due to the colder climate and he eagerly explored the new world. His father was ill and his health was getting worse every day so Mable decided to go back to Bloemfontein to take care of her sick husband. Ronald was very excited that he would see his father again and wanted to send a letter ahead so that his father know that they were coming back. His letter, full of expressions of love, joy and happiness, was never sent. Arthur Reuel Tolkien died before he had a chance to send it.

2.2 Changing places

After Arthur's death, Mabel had to think about their future. They had almost no savings and they lived in Mabel's parent's house but it was too small for all of them. Ronald was nearly five years old and he got used to living with his grandparents very quickly while the memories of his father were fading away. Ronald became familiar with the history of the Suffield family and his aunt Grace, younger sister of Arthur, used to tell him stories from the Tolkien family's past. They sounded unreal.

In 1896, Ronald, Hilary and Mabel moved to Sarehole, a village near Birmingham. The English countryside had a strong influence on Tolkien's future life, his way of thinking and his work. He and his brother explored the surrounding areas and made a lot of valuable memories.

Mabel started teaching her sons and they were excellent students. At the age of four Ronald could read and soon after also write. His most favourite classes were languages. He was fascinated by Latin. He also loved reading fairy-tales books, especially *The Red Fairy Book*.

In 1900, Ronald started studying at the King Edward's school in Birmingham. In the same year, Mabel and her two sons moved from Sarehole to Moseley. The following four years of pure happiness became some of Ronald's fondest memories and, according to his own account, had a significant influence on his own personality.

Soon after moving to Moseley, they moved again to Edgbaston and Ronald and Hilary started studying at the Saint Phillip School. Mabel and her sons became friends with a priest named Francis Xavier Morgan.

In 1904, Mabel became ill and Ronald and Hilary were sent to their relatives who looked after them while their mother was unwell. In June that year, Mabel got better and they all went to Rednal to spend the summer in a small house which they shared with a postman and his wife. They all enjoyed being in the countryside and were very happy there. They did not know that it was the last summer they would spend together. Mabel's state of health quickly deteriorated and she suddenly died in October that year.

Ronald never really got over the fact that his mother died so soon, so young and that he did not have a chance to spend more time with her. He turned to religion, trying to fill the emptiness following his mother's death. This terrible loss had its share on Ronald's pessimism and had an impact on his personality. It tore him apart. He was a very happy person by nature, who loved meeting new people, was full of light, and had a great sense of humour. But following his mother's death, another side of his personality emerged which then prevailed in his journals and letters. Ronald suffered from sudden attacks of deep despair. He felt like nothing was worth anything, nothing would last and nothing was safe. No battle could ever be won.

Priest Francis Morgan became Ronald's and Hilary's legal guardian. He was a good choice for the job because he loved them and took good care of them. Ronald started to focus on language studies, mainly Latin and Greek and soon after also French and German. Robert Gilson, the headmaster of the King Edward's school, with brilliant teaching skills motivated Ronald and he started to be interested in the general rules of languages. In a short time, Ronald discovered the Anglo-Saxon language. He was very thrilled by this language as on one hand he had a feeling he knew it very well, like it was a part of his own past, while on the other hand it was something totally new to him, something that seemed magical and mysterious.

2.3 Fateful meeting

Ronald and Hilary lived in a small room in their aunt Beatrice's house, priest Francis decided that they were not happy there so he found another accommodation for them. It was a gloomy house on Duches Road where Ronald and Hilary were not the only inhabitants. Very beautiful girl lived on the first floor, who spent most of her time sitting by her sewing machine. She lost both her parents a long time ago. Her name was Edith Bratt.

When Ronald and Hilary moved in, Edith and Ronald became friends. Although he was sixteen and she was three years older they started to spend a lot of time together. They often went to the tea room together, came up with a secret whistle signal to let each other know that they are awake and then talked through the window, rode bicycles and during the summer of 1909, they fell in love.

It was a hard time for Ronald because he was supposed to be getting ready for the Oxford scholarship exams but all he could think of was Edith. When priest Francis found out about their relationship he was shocked and asked Ronald to end it. He also made arrangements to move Ronald and Hilary from the house on Duches Road in order to keep Ronald and Edith apart.

In December 1909, Ronald applied for scholarship at Oxford but he was not successful. He started to feel depressed as he knew he would have to work harder the following year. Ronald and Edith met a few times in secret, after priest Francis asked him to end their relationship, but they were seen together again. Priest Francis made it clear to Ronald that he could not write to her or see her until he reached the age of 21. It meant waiting another three years.

After their separation Ronald started to focus on school. He organized meetings with his friends and they started to call it Tea Club. The club members were Christopher Wiseman, Robert Quilter Gilson, Geoffrey Bache Smith and Ronald Tolkien. Ronald also started preparing for the scholarship exams at Oxford again and his hard work paid off and he was successful this time. He received a scholarship for „Open Classical Exhibition“ at the Exeter College.

2.4 Oxford

In 1911 Ronald went to Oxford. And it was the first home he had after his mother had passed away. He met many interesting people and made a lot of friends. He played rugby and participated in Stapledon – the college debate club. He then went on to set up his own debate club, mainly for new students like himself. He studied classical languages but he got bored by Latin and Greek and became more interested in German literature. He also started working on his own new languages in his free time. In 1912 Ronald met Joseph Wright who was his teacher. Ronald looked up to him because Joseph was a teacher who had a high expectations and requirements of his students and he told Ronald that he had to study hard because he was starting to feel a little bit superior to his friends and classmates who studied different subjects. Joseph also encouraged Ronald to study and recommended that he should try the Celtic language. Ronald was amazed by the Celtic language. To him it was pure beauty of a language. He loved the sound of it.

During his studies at Oxford he improved his drawing and painting skills primarily by drawing landscapes. He also worked on his handwriting and calligraphy and mastered many typing styles.

2.5 Reunion

On 3rd of January 1913 right after midnight, Ronald sat down and wrote a letter to Edith. She answered a few days later telling him she was engaged to George Field. Ronald could have just torn up the letter and forgotten about her but during the days spent on Duches Road promises were given and he could not simply give up. Edith was a source of his inspiration and a hope for the future. His love only grew stronger over the years. The only way for him to deal with this situation was to go to Cheltenham and propose to her. He expected that she would say yes to his proposal because she implied in her letter that she thought that Ronald had forgotten about her and did not want to be with her anymore.

Ronald went to Cheltenham and they talked about everything that happened during the past three years when they were not allowed to see each other. By end of the day Edith agreed that she would marry Ronald and called off the wedding with George. Ronald and Edith were a little afraid of people's reaction to their engagement but when priest Francis gave them his blessing nothing else stood in their way.

Ronald was madly happy but he had to focus on school again. He had to complete schoolwork of four terms in only six weeks. He was not very well prepared when he took the exams but he eventually passed. In the beginning of the summer term in 1913 he abandoned the studies of classical languages and started studying English.

Ronald was concerned about Edith's religion. She was a member of the Anglican Church and religion was a big part of her life but she was willing to convert to Catholicism because of him. Although she was afraid what her family and friends would say about it when they receive this news. Ronald urged Edith to become Catholic as he felt that she deceived his trust when she got engaged to George. On 8th of January 1914 Edith became Catholic and very soon after that they were officially engaged.

2.6 War

In the late summer of 1914 England declared war on Germany. Ronald wanted to postpone joining the army so that he could finish his studies. Eventually he found a programme which offered studying and training for war at the same time. He got used to this way of life and liked it. During Christmas of 1914 he went to London to meet his old friends – Wisemen, Gilson and Smith, not knowing that it was the last time they met in peace and all together.

In 1915 Ronald had to report for duty as a second lieutenant in Lancashire Fusiliers. The training started in Bedford in July that year. They moved his unit from camp to camp and Ronald felt bad during this time. There was nearly no one to talk to, the food and accomodation were horrible and he had nothing to do. He felt useless and he hated to waste time - as he called it. He wanted to become a signalling officer so he went through the necessary training and became one. Ronald knew that his departure to France was inevitable so he and Edith decided to get married before he would have to leave.

Ronald Tolkien and Edith Bratt got married on 22nd of March 1916. Edith had no permanent place to stay because they decided that that she would live as near to Ronald as possible. However on 4th of June in 1916 he went to London and then to France. Three weeks later, his unit went to the battlefield. Soldiers fought in terrible conditions for their country and also for their own lives. They had almost no rest and everything around them was a mess. Ronald later recalled this experience as a dark time with no hope in sight. He enjoyed every moment which offered any distraction from the nightmare he was living in. As the number of casualties grew Ronald knew that here would come a time when it was his turn. Fortunately he got sick with trench fever and was trasported to the hospital. Few months later, he got better but he never returned to battle.

Ronald lost two of his close friends during the war – Smith and Gilson. Once the war was over, he felt he had to start writing again. He felt the need to write, create and he started his work on *The Book of Lost Tales* later known as *Simarillion*.

2.7 Post-war period

Ronald was still recovering from his long-lasting illness when Edith told him she was pregnant. John Francis Reuel Tolkien was born on 16th of November. When Ronald recovered, he was sent to the camp and was promoted to a lieutenant. It was not likely that they would send him back to the battlefield. Whenever he had a day off, Ronald, Edith and little John would go for a walk usually to the nearby woods. Edith would sing and dance and this would become the inspiration for Ronald's later work – Legend of Beren and Lúthien. When the war ended in 1918, Ronald, Edith and John moved to Oxford. A new chapter of their lives just began but it did not last for a long time. In 1920 Ronald got a job in Leeds to teach English. Ronald's second son Michael Hilary Reuel Tolkien was born that year and in 1921 the whole family moved to Leeds. In 1924 Ronald became a professor which was a remarkable success at his age. That year, Ronald's third son Christopher Reuel Tolkien was born with whom Ronald would later form a strong bond. In 1925 Ronald became a professor of the Anglo- Saxon language at Oxford University.

Ronald's family moved back to Oxford, bought a house on Northmoor Road and stayed there for the next twenty-one years. Priscilla Mary Reuel Tolkien was born in 1929 as the fourth and last child of Ronald and Edith Tolkien.

In the years that followed Ronald was occupied with his work. He worked as a professor at Oxford so his days consisted mainly of lectures, grading tests and essays and tutoring and

helping students. However he also took care of his family, devoted time to his children and spent time writing. Ronald was very cautious about everything related to his writing and he could be correcting it for ages, never really satisfied with the result.

Ronald as a person was very humble, friendly and kind. He also was quite strange and complicated and sometimes his mood changed faster than the colours on the traffic lights. Sometimes he would make fun of himself, he could laugh at anybody but mostly at himself. Deep inside his heart, there was a part of him which remained a playful child. Religion also played a significant part in his life and influenced who he was.

2.8 Friendship

In 1926 Ronald met Clive Staples Lewis. Although they both had prejudices about each other they overcame them and became close friends. They had a lot of topics to talk about and they felt free and comfortable discussing any of them with other friends. The meetings meant a lot to them. Clive and Ronald would also exchange their own written works and judge them. They started calling their group of friends, who regularly met, „The Inklings“. It was an informal group of men who were friends, Christians and loved talking about literature. *The Inklings* had a lot of members who changed over the years but one member had a crucial role in following development of Ronald's and Clive's friendship. His name was Charles Williams. Clive was amazed by this new member and Ronald suddenly found himself sidelined. Ronald could not understand what was so great about this man and felt angry and jealous.

2.9 Written works

Ronald wrote many pieces of work during his life but the real milestone was the year 1937 when *The Hobbit* was published. After this major success of *The Hobbit*, the publisher

wanted Tolkien to write a sequel to *The Hobbit* and so did his readers. *The Silmarillion* was politely refused by the publisher and they asked for another book about Hobbits. Ronald started the first chapter of *The Lord of the Rings* in 1937 and it took him twelve years to complete it. There were several reasons which obstructed him to continue writing, for example the World War II., his ubiquitous perfectionism or simply lack of motivation towards writing. He was full of remorse about not writing but he always buried those thoughts deep inside in his mind. He also consulted a lot of things about *The Lord of the Rings* with his youngest son Christopher. Mainly because Christopher was familiar with the story and also helped to create some parts of it, drew maps and helped his father decide on certain aspects of the story. In 1949 *The Lord of the Rings* was finally finished and ready for publishing but Ronald would only agree to it on the condition that both *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings* would be published together. Milton Waldman from the Collins publishing house accepted this and Ronald was delighted about it. However the negotiation did not go so well and Waldman asked Tolkien to shorten *The Lord of the Rings*. Tolkien refused and was furious about it. He wrote a letter to the Allen & Unwin publishing house and after two long years of preparations, *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* was published in summer 1954. Book was divided into three parts even though Tolkien was not really keen on that idea. The second part of the book *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* was published in November of the same year and the third part *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* in October 1955.

2.10 Life after The Lord of the Rings

Tolkien was rather surprised by his fame and was very patient with his fans and readers. He tried to reply to all letters from the fans. He also continued to work on *The Silmarillion* and always rewrote pieces of work which he had previously written. In 1968, he and Edith

moved to Bournemouth because of Edith's poor state of health. Edith liked the new place very much, she made a lot of friends and finally felt she was home. Her health improved and she felt happy which was a priceless gift for Ronald who loved her very much and always wanted the best for her. In 1971, one of the most important chapters of Ronald's life ended. The love of his life passed away.

In 1972 Ronald moved back to Oxford to Merton Street. The loss of Edith was a horrible thing for him because they spent their whole lives together but it did not break him. He frequently visited his children, mainly Christopher and Priscilla, and also his younger brother Hilary.

Ronald started to suffer from indigestion and he had to be on diet. He got better for a short while but he became ill again and had to be taken to the hospital. John Ronald Reuel Tolkien died on 2nd of September in 1973. (Carpenter, 1993)

Tolkien's life was filled with experiences – both good and bad, but no one can go through his life without being hurt or feeling down. Tolkien was hurt many times and it nearly broke him but somehow he always stood up again and he always had a will to go on. If his life would be different then his pieces of work might change because of diverse circumstances. Being familiar with his life story is a requirement to understand his endless imagination, his sense of what is good and bad, the importance of religion in his life, and also happiness and darkness which he could express so vividly.

3. Literary genres

The first literary genre which influenced him was legend. Legend is an epic literary genre which is connected to folk literature. It can be written in prose or poetic form. Legend is based on real events but since it was passed on only orally for many generations it loses its objectivity during the time. Legend is always connected to some time, place and person or people. It can express some moral lesson. Some legends can be understood as a record of real historical events. (Stanton, 2003)

Another literary genre in which he was interested was fantasy. Fantasy is a literary genre which is different to realistic prose and sci-fi. It connects the real world with imaginary worlds and it focuses on magic and mysticism. The main characters are usually – a hero (or heroes), a mentor or a guide, an enemy and imaginary creatures. The plot often takes place in some imaginary world and the main theme is a journey which symbolizes adventure, assignment, life journey and the ways how the main character changes. Fantasy is divided into two categories - traditional and modern fantasy. Traditional fantasy includes fairytales, so called unbelievable stories, fables, myths, epics, ballads, legends and religious stories. On the contrary, modern fantasy is usually narration with unusual heroes, revived toys and things, little men, imaginary worlds and narration with time differences. Modern fantasy also includes so-called high fantasy which is considered the best fantasy story as it contains six factors which are typical for this genre – magic, other worlds, heroism, supernatural characters, magical items and the struggle between good and evil. Fantasy has its roots in human imagination and probably evolved from legends, myths, fables and fairytales. It became popular in the second half of 19th century and even more in 20th century mainly because of John Reuel Ronald Tolkien and his work. (Carter, 2002)

4. Main characters

Hobbits

Hobbits are inconspicuous but ancient nation. They love to live in peace in the countryside and they admire gardening. Hobbits are of small stature, they have a good sense of hearing, sharp sight and they tend to gain weight. They dislike to rush and master disappearance when they need to vanish. Hobbits of the Shire are a cheerful nation, they enjoy wearing colourful clothes and making funny jokes about others. They like food in a large amount and anytime during the day. They are very hospitable and they love getting presents as much as they love to give them. There are many clans of Hobbits, the most important for us is the Baggins. The most known is Bilbo Baggins and his nephew Frodo. (The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring, 2001)

Elves

Elves are one of the nation in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. They are the most beautiful and wisest of all nations. If not killed violently they live for centuries. They are tall, have straight hair and pointy ears. They are well-known for their bright senses. Especially sight and hearing. They have their specific languages such as – Avari, Quenya, Nandor. Famous Elves from *The Lord of the Rings* are Legolas, Haldir, Glorfindel, Galadriel, Arwen and Elrond. (The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring, 2001)

Mankind

People in *The Lord of the Rings* are described as tall and big (in a comparison with Hobbits). Two main empires of man are Gondor and Rohan. In Gondor rules Denethor, who has two sons – Faramir who protects the city against enemies and Boromir who is a member of the fellowship of the ring. In Rohan rules king Théoden who is controlled by Saruman

which has a very bad impact on his kingdom. He is freed by Gandalf the White. Very important character is also Aragorn, called Ranger or Strider, who helps hobbits on their journey to Mordor and who is also a descendant of a king Isildur. He waives his right to become a king. He wants to deserve to become one. (Stanton, 2003)

Wizards

Gandalf the Grey appears in the beginning of the first book *The Fellowship of the Ring* and after Bilbo disappears he tells Frodo about the Ring, how dangerous it is and that Frodo have to leave the Shire to protect the Ring so that their enemy would not find it. He helped Frodo during his journey but he fell in the mines of Moria (see Appendix 1). He comes back in *The Two Towers* as Gandalf the White. He represents good and wants to defeat their evil enemies. On the contrary Saruman unites with Sauron, the Dark Lord who stands for evil and wants to defeat good once and for all and conquer the rest of the Middle-earth. (Stanton, 2003)

Dark creatures

In *The Lord of the Rings* there are many kinds of creatures. For example Orcs and advanced breed of Orcs which are called Uruk-hai, who both serve Sauron and Saruman. Nine Men who submitted to the power of Dark Lord Sauron and become wraiths without free will are called Dark Riders, Black Riders or Nazgul (see Appendix 2). They are sinister and horrifying. Dragons, Ghost Barrows, Crebains, Old Man Willow, Balrog, Odula, Ogres and Mountain giants are another dreadful characters which appear in this masterpiece. (Stanton, 2003)

Dwarves

In Tolkien's writings Dwarves are proud, brave, strong and tough. They are of small stature and their average age is about two hundred and fifty years. They build huge stone halls

and buildings. They are skilled blacksmiths and workmen. Interesting thing about Dwarves is that women are hardly recognizable from men because of their appearance, voice and also a beard. Based on this tale, a legend was created that Dwarves just come out of stone. Relations of Dwarves and Elves are not so good as we can see in the beginning of *The Lord of the Rings* but we can also see a developing friendship of Gimli and Legolas which will last a lifetime. (Lord of the Rings Fantasy World, 2009)

5. Brief description of the books

*„Three Rings for the Elven-kings under the sky,
Seven for the Dwarf-lords in their halls of stone,
Nine for Mortal Men doomed to die,
One for the Dark Lord on his dark throne,
In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie,
One ring to rule them all, one ring to find them,
One ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them
In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.“*

(The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring, 2001, epigraph)

This epigraph vividly shows the theme and the atmosphere of *The Lord of the Ring*. It reveals the darkness hidden in the rings and mainly in One Ring which power is controlled and used by the Dark Lord Sauron. Readers of the book are surely looking forward to further reading because this introductory poem is so impressive. In those few verses we can imagine the whole darkness and helplessness of the story and how the characters felt.

One ring is the main theme of *The Lord of the Rings*. It was made by Dark Lord Sauron so that he could take over Middle-earth and destroy everyone who would not obey him. One ring is just a tool of evil but it has its own dark power and it wants to be reunited with his master.

The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring

In the first book, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, we meet Bilbo Baggins who celebrates his one hundred and eleven birthday and disappears after celebration, leaving his property to his nephew Frodo. Including a golden ring.

Some time goes by when Gandalf the Grey, wizard and a friend of Bilbo and Frodo, discovers that Frodo's ring is the One Ring. A Ring of a Dark Lord Sauron who wish nothing else than to take over Middle-earth. So Frodo and his friends Sam Gamgee, Merry Brandybuck and Pippin Took leave Hobbiton and with a help of Aragorn they get to Rivendell to the house of Elf Elrond and his daughter Arwen. Elrond's council decides that Frodo will continue on his journey to Mordor to the Mount Doom, which is the only place where the ring can be destroyed, with eight companions – Aragorn, Boromir, Legolas, Gimli, Gandalf, Sam, Merry and Pippin. They are called The Fellowship of the Ring.

Members of the fellowship try to cross defile of Caradhas but they fail and are forced to take more frightening path – through the mines of Moria. Gandalf the Grey is defeated after a fight with the creature of the darkness, Balrog. The rest of the fellowship escape and continue on their journey. They meet Elves in Lothlórien and stays for a while. Mrs Galadriel gives them highly-valued gifts. Members of the fellowship also notice that they are followed by Gollum.

They have to decide whether to go to Mordor or to Gondor. After Boromir's attempt to take the ring from Frodo by force, Frodo realizes that he has to continue in his hopeless journey alone but Sam insists on going with him. The story ends when Sam and Frodo leaves on a boat. (The Lord of The Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring, 2001)

The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers

Second book begins when Aragorn finds dying Boromir. Then himself, Gimli and Legolas trace Orcs who captured Merry and Pippin. They meet Rohirrim riders with their leader Éomer who tells them that they have slaughtered a group of Uruk-hai's last night leaving no one alive.

Story continues with a description of Merry's and Pippin's escape during the battle. They flight into the Fangorn forest where they meet Treebeard. Later on, them and Treebeard attack Isengard because Treebeard once used to like Saruman and his love for trees but when he saw what Saruman done to the nature around Isengard he is angry at him.

Aragorn, Gimli and Legolas enter Fangorn forest as well and they meet Gandalf the White. They talk about everything what happened since the last time they saw each other. Together they ride to Rohan and free king Théoden from Saruman's compulsion. Théoden takes his people to Helm's Deep where they undergo a tough battle but they win. After the battle they go to Isengard where Gandalf confronts Saruman. Curious Pippin sees a fragment of Sauron's plan in a magical tool which Gandalf guarded and after that Gandalf rides to Minas Tirith, the capital of Gondor.

Meanwhile Frodo and Sam meet Gollum who joins them and Frodo wants him to be their guide to The Black Gate. Frodo feels sorry for him and Sam does not trust him. They also meet Faramir, brother of Boromir and exchange news. After that, they try to get to Mordor by a tunnel where a horrible creature Odula lives. Fortunately Galadriel's light saves them but Odula attacks them again and Sam thinks Frodo is dead, he takes the ring and is determined to finish his master's task. But then he hears two orcs talking and realizes Frodo is not dead, just paralyzed. That is the end of the second book. (The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers, 2001)

The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King

Final part of The Lord of the Rings – The Return of the King starts when Gandalf and Pippin arrives to Gondor, they meet Denethor, regent of Gondor, and they inform him of the danger. Denethor is broke by the news that his beloved son Boromir died.

Aragorn, Gimli and Legolas leave with king Théoden to the camp of Rohirrim. A gift from Arwen is brought – a king's flag. Aragorn, Gimli and Legolas take The Path of the Dead through the mountain. Minas Tirith is enclosed by enemies and their only salvation would be if Rohan came to help them. Faramir is wounded and his father Denethor, goes mad and wants to burn himself along with his son. Gandalf saves Faramir and he is eventually healed by Aragorn. Gandalf is now in the command of the city and faces the Lord of Nazguls when Rohan's riders come. Théoden is killed and Éomer is a new ruler of Riddermark. Battle continues and Aragorn, Gimli and Legolas come with the army to help. Battle is finally won. After a short rest they all ride to the Black Gate of Mordor to give Frodo a chance to get to the Mount Doom unseen.

Sam saves Frodo from the orcs and after a horrible, long march they are finally in the middle of Mount Doom, the only place where the ring can be destroyed. Frodo refuses to give up the ring. Gollum appears, bites off Frodo's finger with the ring, stumbles and falls down into the core of Mount Doom. Ring is finally destroyed once and for all. Giant eagle ridden by Gandalf saves Sam and Frodo. After their recovery, hobbits come back to the Shire which is destroyed and they restore it. Frodo is not healed completely and he knows that in Middle-earth he never will be. He decides to leave with Bilbo and Gandalf to Valinor. Sam stays in the Shire. (see appendix 3) (The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King, 2001)

6. Reality – Tolkiens life experiences

Although Ronald was a man with a vivid imagination, a lot of things in his pieces of work were related to his previous life experiences. When he started to walk he stepped on tarantula and it bit him. Scared to death he was running around the garden until his nurse grabbed him and sucked out the poison. Although he did not admit that he remembers it, in his work we can find several monster which look like a giant spider. One is to be found in *The Lord of the Rings* and it is called Odula. Terrifying creature of darkness which dwells in the defile of Cirith Ungol. (Carpenter, 1993)

His love for nature had its roots in his early childhood when he was surrounded by trees and plants mainly grew by his father. Ronald's father was a very occupied person and because of his work he stayed in Bloemfontein, little Ronald watched him painting family luggage and that is the only clear memory Ronald had about him. Ronald's father wanted to come to England to his wife and children but he never got the chance to do so. (Carpenter, 1993)

In my opinion this was a huge breakpoint in Ronald's life because if his father lived his life would probably be different. Suddenly there was just his mother who had to take care of him and his brother, and their financial situation was not very good as well.

Village Moseley and beautiful nature which surrounded it, would be another memory which stayed in Ronald's mind for the rest of his life. I suppose Sarehole Mill in which he spent his afternoons playing and exploring might have been the first pattern for Hobbiton, peaceful village in the middle of the woods and meadows. According to Carpenter (1993) there was a story of an old farmer who once chased Ronald because he was stealing his mushrooms. This incident is also used in *The Lord of the Rings*.

I think Sarehole and Ronald's life there influenced him a lot. His love for nature evolved each day he spend playing and exploring. After his mother's death his memories of her were bounded with Sarehole, its beautiful nature and happy years which they spent there.

Archetype for the character of Gandalf lies in Ronald's summer holiday in Switzerland. Ronald bought a couple postcards, on one of them was a copy of a picture painted by Madlener called Der Berggeist – the spirit of the mountains. There is an old man with a white full beard, a hat and long cloak with a compassionate and amused expression on his face. Many years later Tolkien said that it was the archetype for Gandalf (see appendix 4). (Carpenter, 1993)

Tolkien collected these fragments of experiences a hold them in his mind throughout his life and finally used and linked them to create *The Lord of the Rings*. I think everyone can find himself in Tolkien's pieces of work. He used real events and stories which happened to him or his friends and created believable world and people. People with real personalities and behaviour. You can recognize your envious neighbours or nosy friend in the characters of Hobbits who live in Hobbiton.

Another location which took Ronald's breath away and which become for him a perfect landscape was Cornwall. He was excited to explore Cornwall's nature. (Stanton, 2003)

Very important for Tolkien's future work was the World War I. No one who experienced war can ever forget it and Tolkien never did. Olsen (2010) claims that Tolkien never denied that war influenced him. He was surprised how horrible it was and it shaped him and made him think about his life. In this war Tolkien also met one of the most important people for his future work. He got to know servants who took care of officer's equipment and many years later he stated: „My „Sam Gamgee“ is indeed a reflexion of the English soldier, of the

privates and batmen I knew in the 1914 war, and recognised as so far superior to myself.
(Carpenter, 1993, pg 78)

„May you say the things I have tried to say long after I am not there to say them‘
(Carpenter, 1993, pg 85). Those words written by G.B. Smith were a clear call to Ronald to begin his work and to create an entire mythology. Firstly he was interested in creation of new languages but afterwards he realized that to create a believable language he needs to create a history for that. He also wanted to express his feelings in poetry and create a mythology for England.

Very interesting thing about Tolkien's work is that he wrote it as it was a part of history and he also admits that: *„They arose in my mind as „given“ things, and as they came, separately, so too the links grew. An absorbing, though continually interrupted labour (especially, even apart from necessities of life, since the mind would wing to the other pole and spread itself on the linguistics): yet always I had the sense of recording what was already „there“, somewhere: not of „inventing“.* (Carpenter, 1993, pg 87)

Although Tolkien wrote *The Lord of the Rings* like he was recording history, some features had its roots in his life experiences. His aunt Jane hired a farm in Dormston in Worcester. It was at the end of the road which led no further, and local people sometimes referred to it as *„Bag End‘*. Such name later Tolkien used in his work for a house where Hobbits lived. (Stanton, 2003)

Another interesting thing about Tolkien's life and work is that he was not much of a traveller. His imagination did not need to be developed by different cultures and landscapes. (Stanton,2003) Most of the places which has a huge role in his pieces of work was created in his head. We can hardly imagine how amazing this is, when you can see whole new world with every single detail in it, in your head. I wonder if Tolkien ever felt bounded by

something, his life, his university career, his family but on the other hand I think that he lived a happy life, not all the time of course, because people need to overcome obstacles and adversity.

Which surprised me was the fact that Tolkien cared about environment and he was sad when he saw how badly people can influence and change environment. For example when he visited village Moseley where he lived with his mother and brother and where he collected many beautiful memories. He felt horrible when he saw what happened to that lovely village he remembered. Cars and traffic were everywhere he looked and everything he loved about Moseley's surroundings was gone. (The Council of Elrond, 2014)

Tolkien's personality is another remarkable feature which shaped his life and work. He spoke quickly and indistinctly, his speech was rather a stream of thoughts and he changed topic very often, sometimes the listeners did not even noticed. He spoke in hints and had a tendency to talk to himself. He was a very moody person. He could feel indescribable joy and a few minutes later he drawn himself in despair. In his gloomy mood he felt that there is no hope for him, nor for the world. Strong part of his personality was comprised by religion. (Carter, 2002)

The beginning of amazing piece of work *The Lord of the Rings* dates from one summer day when Tolkien marked School Certificate exam papers. Years later he recalled: *„One of the candidates had mercifully left one of the pages with no writing on it (which is the best thing that can possibly happen to an examiner) and I wrote on it: „ In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit“. Names always generate a story in my mind. Eventually I thought I'd better find out what hobbits were like. But that's only the beginning.*' (Carpenter, 1993, pg 154)

This is another sign that shows how much the story of One Ring was real for his creator John Reul Ronald Tolkien. His world of Hobbits, Wizards, Elves, Dwarves and many other

amazing creatures from the Middle-earth felt real to him and he considered himself only as a narrator of long gone history.

Hobbits as a nation of small significance in the beginning and huge at the end can be, in my opinion, compared to ordinary people. I think that in the beginning of the story we might get the idea that hobbits have just one point of view about everything. That they do not care about others (unless it is some funny gossip) and that they are selfish. We see them as a small nation with their own problems such as for example - whose garden has more beautiful flowers or where can they get more food which are not of course real serious problems but I think it somehow makes fun of people. I think it might describe today's society, mainly here in our country. I think there are still some fragments of bad memories from war and communism which stayed in people's minds even though they may not even know about it. But in *The Lord of the Rings* we can also see the change. Not in a whole nation because that's improbable, but in a few members of it. That members would be – Frodo, Sam, Pippin and Merry. Four hobbits who have abandoned the comfort of Shire and went on a dangerous journey far away from their homeland. (Robertson, 2008) After all those things which they have been through, they gain life experiences and they see things differently. When they came home, among their ordinary people, they feel like they do not fit to that society anymore. It is really hard for them to go on after everything they have been through. I think Tolkien wanted to show us that even if we feel like nobody we can reach for the stars, we can do something, change our life and point of view. He wanted to show us that we are not all the same and that we have that powerful tool of choice.

Another thing which surely has its roots in Tolkien's life is pipe smoking. He loved to smoke and just think, not about anything particular. One of a few hobbies of hobbits is smoking Nicotiana. (*The Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Rings*, 2001) I suppose Tolkien used his habits to create wonderful world of hobbits. According to Carpenter (1993) he once

said that in everything except for height he is a hobbit. He loved gardening, smoking, wearing colourful vests and so did hobbits.

Treebeard, who lives in a Fangorn forest, is also one of the characters who has its roots in real experiences. Treebeard was an expression of Tolkien's deep love and esteem for nature which accompanied him throughout his life. Tolkien also stated that he was inspired by C. S. Lewis's voice while creating Treebeard's low-pitched voice. (Habermann, Khun, 2011)

Another interesting feature of *The Lord of the Rings* is a lack of feminine participation in battles or in the fellowship which is a rather stereotypical approach. Masculine and feminine roles are strictly divided, except for the scene when Éowyn kills the Nazgul. (Enright, 2007) In my opinion, this division fits the story of Middle-earth and I do not see a reason to change that.

Frodo, as the main character, experiences horrible situations. According to Wendorf (2002) Frodo is a type of a 'reluctant hero.' He did not want to go but he still feels in his heart that he has to. He is trapped in landscapes characterized by heat, desolation, dirt and danger. I think this refers to Tolkien's feelings when he was depressed and found himself in a vicious circle. As we know, due to his life experiences, he tends to be moody. He did not control it but once he felt helplessness about this world, he could fall into deep despair, once he was happy and joyful he felt that world is a great place to live. These changes of mood were very frequent and I think his Frodo Baggins is a reflection of himself. Hard life milestones and a strong will to go on even if there is no hope anymore.

7. Legends

Tolkien built his love for legends when he was a kid. He admired Arthur Legends and he was excited when he read *The Red Fairy Book* because he loved the Legend of Sigurd who killed dragon Fafnir. (Day,1999) He was also influenced by the legend of Atlantis and he stated that for several years he had the same dream with a huge wave which took everything. Poem *Beowulf* really took his breath away, he read it in its original language and found it as one of the most interesting poems of all times. After *Beowulf* Tolkien discovered a poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* which woke up his imagination. *Edda* which roots dates back to thirteen century made a huge impact on Tolkien. He was also influenced by German and Celtic legends. From the Norse legends we can see an example of similarity in the tale of God Odin who owned a very powerful ring Draupni, which had its own power and also produced smaller rings so that Odin could become the most important giver of the rings (which was very important in Norse world). The same feature we see in *The Lord of the Rings* where Dark Lord Sauron owns the most powerful ring, the One Ring, and gives nine rings to the men (who became Black Riders), seven to the rulers of Dwarves and three to the kings of Elves. Another similarity can be found in a tale of *Ragnarok* about two Gods – Frey and Surt who fight and the bridge under them collapses and they fall into the flames. Resembling is a scene where Gandalf fights Balrog, bridge of Khazad-Dum collapses and they fall into flames as well.

Tolkien was also influenced by *The Song of the Nibelungs*, *Siegfried Legend* and *Paradise Lost*. According to Day (1999) Tolkien was also influenced by some motives from Bible and we can see this on a story of Gollum who attacked Frodo, bit of his finger and fell into Mount Doom. His evil intention turned into a good deed because at the point when Gollum appears Frodo was determined to keep the ring.

8. Imagination

Tolkien was sometimes called The Lord of Imagination and I think deservedly. (Catholic Education Resource Center, 1994) His imagination was something which you can not learn or gain by anything you try. I think it needs to be a part of yourself so that you can only develop and stimulate it. But Tolkien did not even need to do that. Amazing things appeared in his mind just like the snap of the fingers and he was not ashamed to go for it. It was his gift and he used in the best way possible. He used to create an amazing world where people sometimes can forget about their problems and issues, about their lives and live the lives of main characters. Witness an ancient world full of adventures, bravery, love, sadness, betrayal, friendship, hope and despair. All that thanks to one amazing person who created all of this and maybe made people dream more, imagine astonishing things and places.

What I found interesting is the main idea of the whole book. Which is the ring. Giving the attributes of such power to something so small. Eventhough Tolkien was probably inspired by the legend of Silvanus (Horton, 2014) it was still his idea to equip the ring with such strength. In our ordinary world it would sound absurd, that a ring can rule the whole world and every single person on earth should be scared of its power. That is why I like the idea of it so much. Because it is unusual and genius.

9. Interesting features

Religion

Eventhough it is not seen openly, religion forms a major part of *The Lord of the Rings*. According to Hartley (2012) there is no God in *The Lord of the Rings* and he does not need to be. The importance is in the thing that Good fights with Evil. Aragorn and Gandalf do not need to be considered Saint but they stand for hope and strenght. Frodo does not need to be Christian to find the true faith in his heart and to follow it. Also God does not pusnish Frodo for not resisting the ring, nor he punishes Gollum for making all horrible things.

Good versus Evil

Both Good and Evil take a huge part in *The Lord of the Rings*. Cooper (2000) claims that to her Evil represented by Mordor and all spiteful creatures devoted to its power, seemed like a War World II. all over again. She says that all she can remember is bombing, omnipresent fear and two sides fighting each other – Allies versus Nazis, Light versus Dark, Us versus Them. After reading *The Lord of the Rings* she states that she experienced Mordor, only in a different time and the Evil was called Adolf Hitler. The fight of good and evil in *The Lord of the Rings* is very complicated and long. As a readers, we experience a lot of passages where the hope is nearly lost and just in the moment when we think it can not end well, something appears and the characters are saved again. Some of them fall along the way and we grieve for them but as the case of Gandalf shows - there is always hope and we regain it the second Gandalf the White walks back into the story. It is so nice to watch good defeat evil, it gives us hope, that there is still good, even in our world.

The Ring

According to Horton (2014) Tolkien was influenced by a legend of Silvanus whose ring was stolen by Senicianus and Silvanus called a curse upon him after he realized who did it. We can notice a similarity with the story of Gollum whose ring was stolen by Bilbo.

The Ring is an object with supernatural strength. It wants to get back to his master, it wants to be found and to serve Evil. The Ring influences people, their thoughts and behaviour and it is up to them to decide if they will surrender or if they will overcome this obstacles and stay strong. It can be considered as a form of a test, for example when Frodo comes to Lothlorien and meets Galadriel. He offers her the ring but she passes the test and would not surrender to its power.

Development of relationships

Relations and friendships in *The Lord of the Rings* form a strong part of this piece of work. We can observe changes in relationships. For example Frodo and Sam. Sam's respectful behaviour towards Frodo in the beginning changes during their journey. Sam becomes Frodo's best friend who always takes care of him and never let him fall. Sam can see the changes Frodo undergoes and how much strength ring takes from him. I think that without Sam, Frodo would never make it to Mordor.

Different example of changes in the relationships would be Gandalf and Saruman. Gandalf always thought that Saruman was the wisest man he knew. But when Saruman captures him, Gandalf realizes he chose the easier way which is to join Sauron and follow his evil plans instead of fighting for good.

Gimli and Legolas shows us that even though our ancestors had some disagreements and conflicts we can overcome this obstacles and become friends. Which they surely did.

10. Conclusion

The bachelor thesis is focused on life and work of J.R.R. Tolkien. The main aim of the thesis was to understand the reasons why Tolkien created a world full of magic, darkness but also beautiful landscapes and real friendships and to find out which aspects of his life influenced him the most.

The first part of the thesis describes Tolkien's life and the way *The Lord of the Rings* is written in. First part also includes characteristics of literary genres such as legend and fantasy and a description of the most frequent and interesting characters that appear in the book.

All three books – *The Fellowship of the Ring*, *The Two Towers* and *The Return of the King* are briefly described in the second part of the bachelor thesis followed by a chapter which contains Tolkien's life experiences and their usage in *The Lord of the Rings*. We can also find here few interesting features of the book, such as religion, the ring, good versus evil and development of friendships.

The project gave us the idea of Tolkien's life, process of writing his works and maybe revealed some hidden facts about this skilled writer. It also introduced Middle-earth and its inhabitants, their lives, problems and behaviour.

The essence of *The Lord of the Rings* lies in Tolkien's life experiences, his rich imagination and his obsession in legends which inspired him. These three factors are connected. Tolkien was home-schooled by his mother Mabel who tried to develop his talents. Later on, Tolkien was interested in learning foreign languages and reading old stories, especially legends. His imagination was driven by beautiful nature which surrounded him when they moved a lot after his father passed away. The author put into the creation of *The*

Lord of the Rings his heart, his darkest thoughts and wildest dreams of pure nature, his sense of good, his admiration of friendship and cooperation among people.

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11.4 Apendices:

Appendix 1: In Moria

TOLKIEN, J.R.R.; *Pán prstenů Společenstvo Prstenu*, Mladá fronta, 2001. ISBN 80-204-0925-4

Appendix 2: The Dark Riders

TOLKIEN, J.R.R.; *Pán prstenů Společenstvo Prstenu*, Mladá fronta, 2001. ISBN 80-204-0925-4

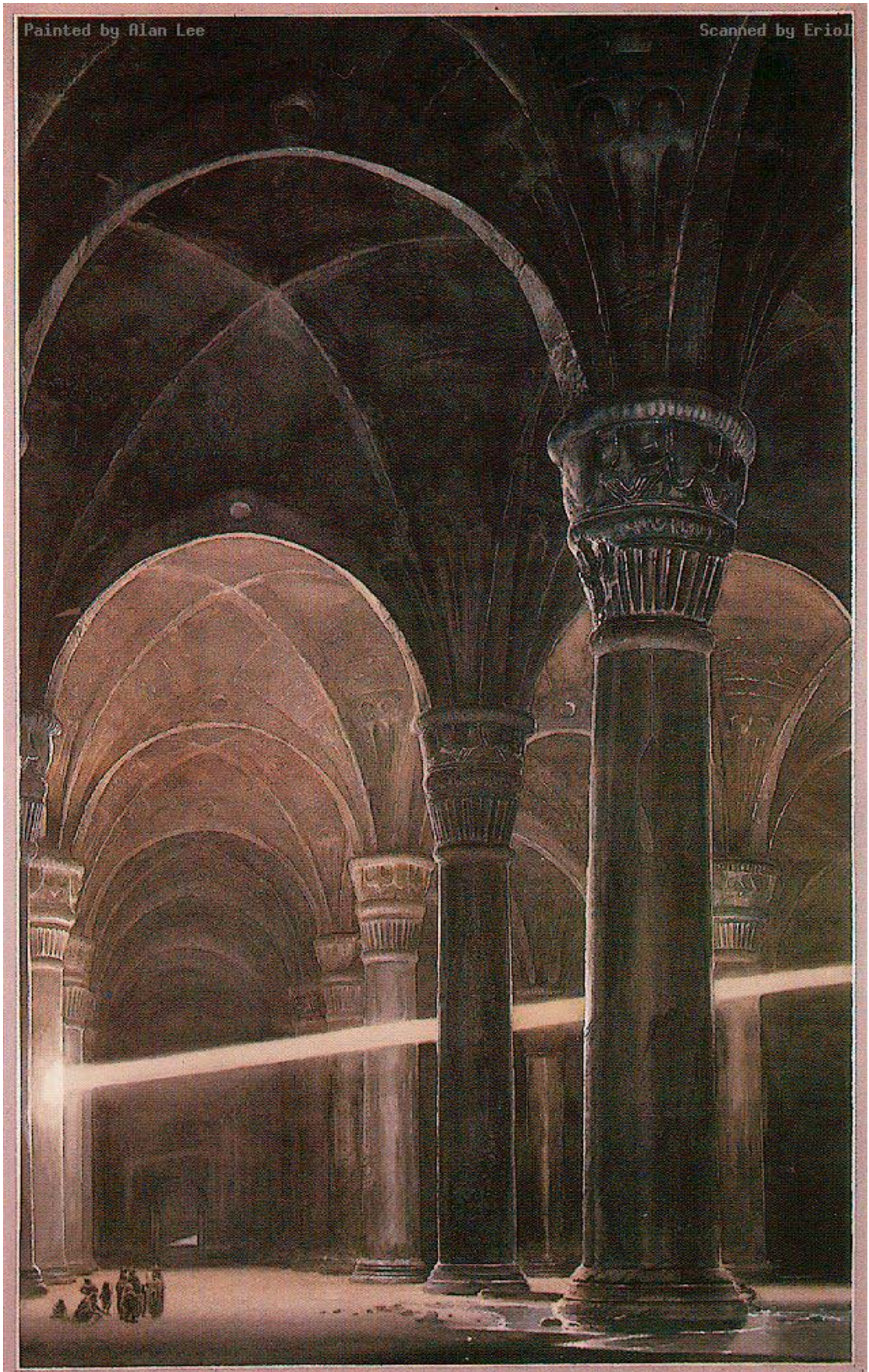
Appendix 3: The Grey Havens

TOLKIEN, J.R.R.; *Pán prstenů Návrat krále*, Mladá fronta, 2003. ISBN 80-204-0965-3

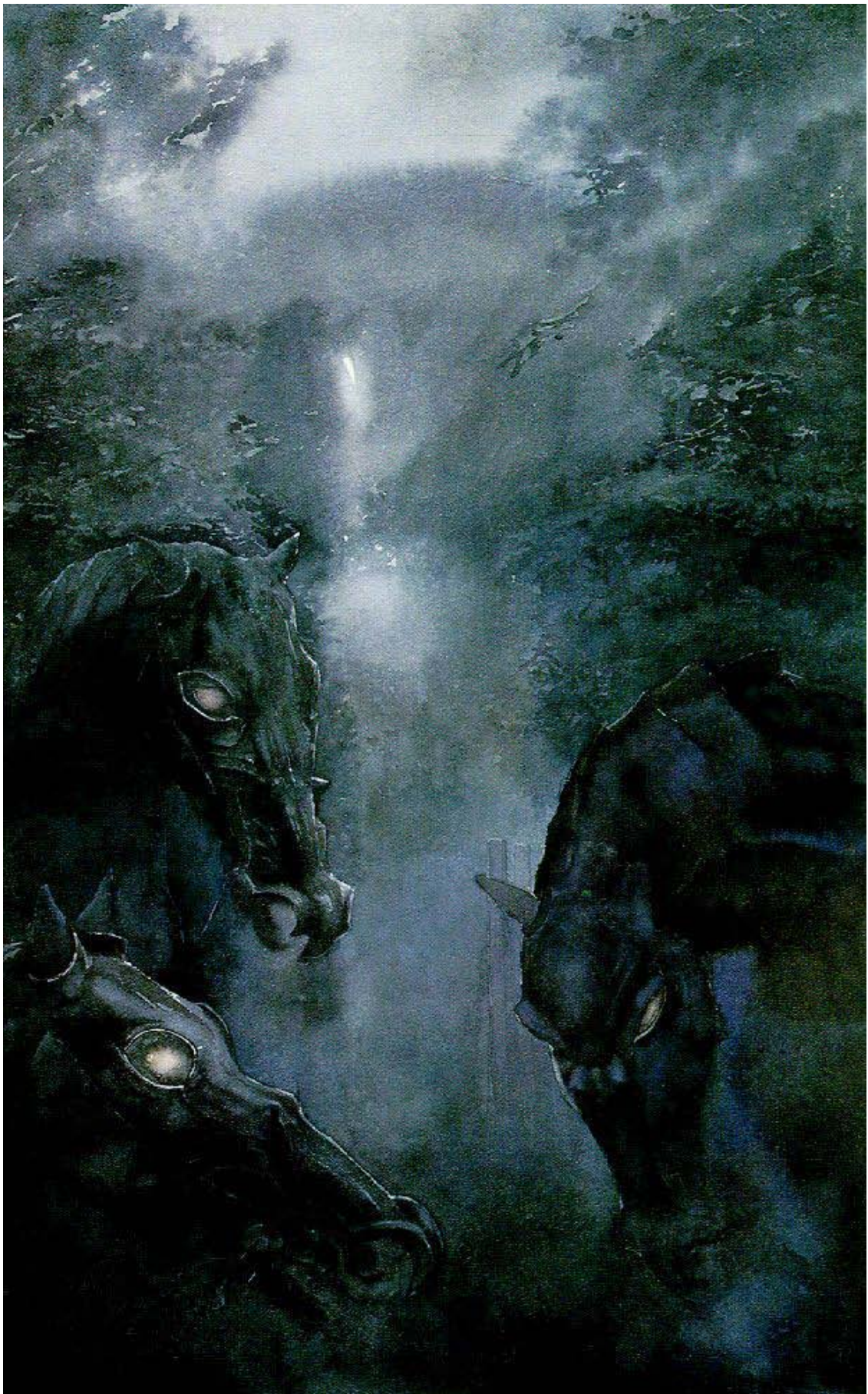
Appendix 4: Frodo and Gandalf

TOLKIEN, J.R.R.; *Pán prstenů Společenstvo Prstenu*, Mladá fronta, 2001. ISBN 80-204-0925-4

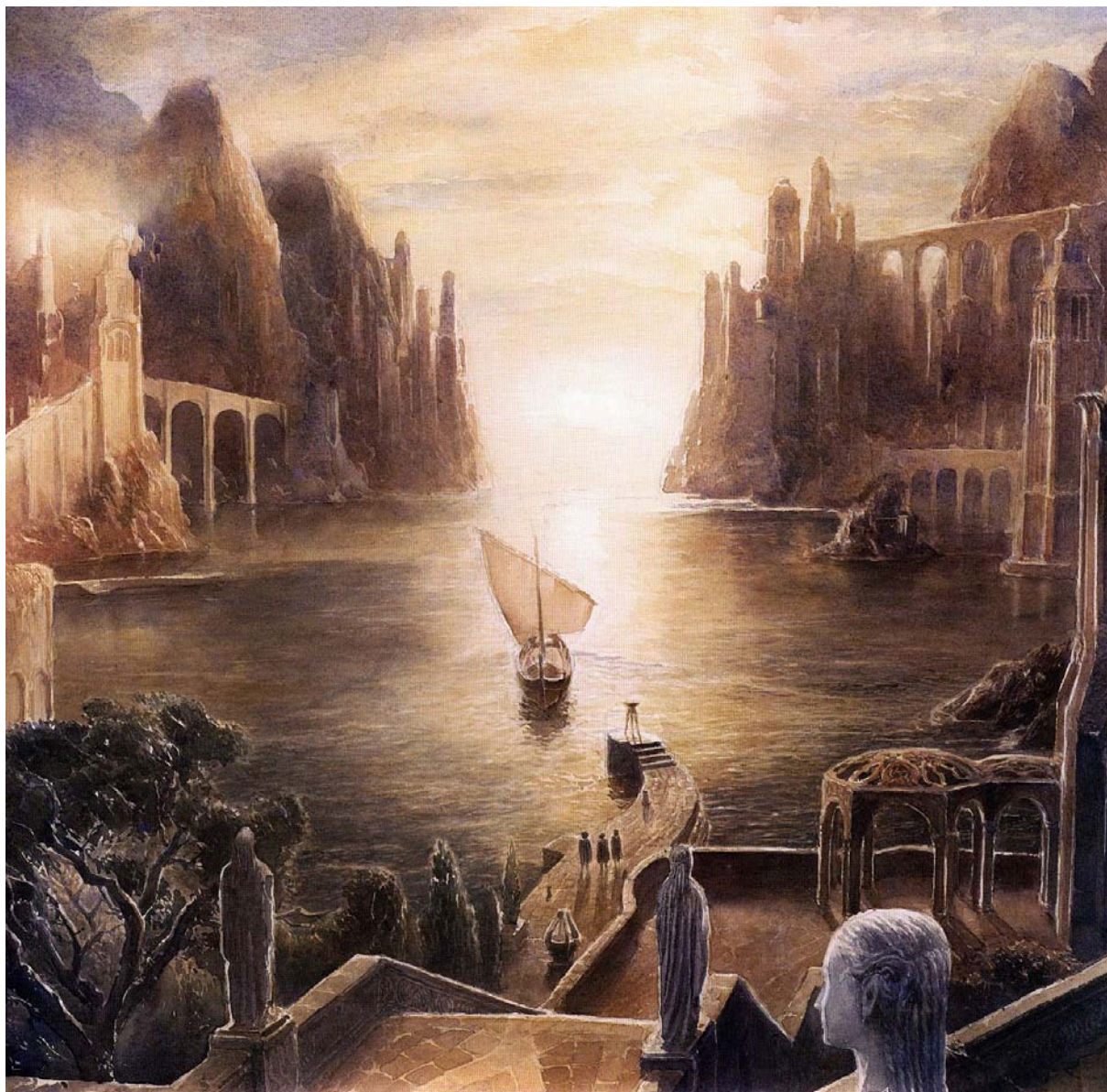
Appendix 1: In Moria



Appendix 2: The Dark Riders



Appendix 3: The Grey Havens



Appendix 4: Frodo and Gandalf



Alan Lee

Frodo and Gandalf

QMan

Annotation

Jméno a příjmení:	Martina Hubíková
Katedra:	Katedra anglického jazyka
Vedoucí práce:	Mgr. Andrea Hoffmannová, Ph.D.
Rok obhajoby:	2014

Název práce:	Legenda, fantazie a realita - Podstata Pána Prstenů
Název v angličtině:	Legend, Fantasy and Reality - The Essence of "The Lord of the Rings"
Anotace práce:	Tato práce je zaměřena na život a dílo J.R.R. Tolkiena, který svým dílem <i>Hobit a Pán Prstenů</i> navždy změnil ráz fantastické literatury. Základem pro Tolkienova díla jsou jeho vlastní zážitky, jeho bohatá představivost a také jeho záliba v legendách, kterými se inspiroval. Bakalářská práce se zabývá zkoumáním autorova života a vliv jeho zážitků na jeho pozdější dílo.
Klíčová slova:	Fantasy, životní zkušenosti, pověst, představivost, realita, zlo, dobro, prsten, společenstvo
Anotace v angličtině:	This project is focused mainly on life and work of J.R.R. Tolkien whose books <i>The Hobbit</i> and <i>The Lord of the Rings</i> influenced fantasy and its development. Main influence on Tolkien's work had his life experiences, endless imagination and his inspiration in legends. The bachelor theses researches author's life and influence which his experiences had on his work.
Klíčová slova v angličtině:	Fantasy, life experiences, legend, imagination, reality, evil, good, ring, fellowship
Přílohy vázané v práci:	4 listy příloh
Rozsah práce:	46
Jazyk práce:	Anglický

Résumé

Tato práce je zaměřena na život a dílo J.R.R. Tolkiena, který svým dílem *Hobit a Pán Prstenů* navždy změnil ráz fantastické literatury. Základem pro Tolkienova díla jsou jeho vlastní zážitky, jeho bohatá představivost a také jeho záliba v legendách, kterými se inspiroval.

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