



Pedagogická
fakulta
Faculty
of Education

Jihočeská univerzita
v Českých Budějovicích
University of South Bohemia
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Bakalářská práce

The Dragon Motif
in the Work of J.R.R. Tolkien and Christopher
Paolini

Motiv draka
v díle J.R.R. Tolkiena a Christophera
Paoliniho

Vypracoval: Jaroslav Bouda, 3. ročník, Aju-SV
Vedoucí práce: PhDr. Kamila Vránková, Ph.D.
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Anotace

Práce se bude zabývat motivem draka v dílech J.R.R. Tolkiena a Christophera Paoliniho s přihlédnutím k literárně-historickému kontextu evropských a asijských mytologií. Teoretickým východiskem bude přiblížení draků, figurujících ve vybraných mytologiích, spolu se symbolickou funkcí těchto bytostí. Samostatná kapitola bude věnována životu a zdrojům inspirace J.R.R. Tolkiena a Christophera Paoliniho. V praktické části bude hlavní pozornost věnována postavám draků z příběhů obou autorů a jejich rolí v příbězích. V závěru práce budou tito draci mezi sebou porovnání.

Abstract

The thesis deals with the dragon motif found in the works of J.R.R. Tolkien and Christopher Paolini with regard to the literary-historical context of European and Asian mythologies. The theoretical aim is familiarizing dragons found in selected mythologies and their symbolical function. A separate chapter is dedicated to the biography and source of inspiration of J.R.R. Tolkien and Christopher Paolini. The main focus of the practical part is devoted to the dragon characters found in both authors' works. Finally, in the last chapter, these dragons are compared.

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Introduction

Dragons have made their mark in many different cultures, in numerous regions, and in countless literary works of various origins. However, despite their worldwide popularity, they are the beings of legends and fantasy. Therefore, many people can interpret dragons differently. How many heads does it have? Does it breathe fire? Can a dragon fly? Since dragons are fictional, it comes down to each person's imagination to assign many different attributes to their understanding of a dragon. Nevertheless, most people are influenced by the fantasy authors, who pen down their ideas. Among the authors that shared their impression of a dragon were J.R.R. Tolkien and Christopher Paolini. Both authors seem to have a similar understanding of the dragon's physical properties. However, as the reader delves deeper into their works, how diverse these fantasy beings are portrayed can be noticed. This thesis aims to highlight and comment upon these distinctions with regard to their mythological antecedents.

The thesis consists of two parts: the first part is theoretical and provides a background for many dragons found in four selected mythologies. After highlighting the particular dragons, a sub-chapter is dedicated to their role in the stories. Another chapter consists of the biographies of J.R.R. Tolkien and Christopher Paolini, with a sub-chapter dedicated to their source of inspiration.

The second part is practical, and in two chapters, selected dragons from J.R.R. Tolkien and Christopher Paolini, respectively, are described. One sub-chapter is dedicated to the dragon's symbolic function. The fifth and final part of this thesis is devoted to comparing the dragons in both fantasy worlds.

1 Mythologies featuring a dragon aspect

1.1 Norse Mythology

1.1.1 Fafnir

Fafnir was a dwarf born into a wealthy family of Hreidmar, who possessed many riches. He had two brothers, Otr and Regin. Fafnir was the strongest and most aggressive of all Hreidmar's sons. Otr was a great fisherman, who often came to Andvari's Fall to fish. However, when he was dozing at the riverbank with his catch laid in front of him, Loki, traveling with Odin, struck Otr to death with a stone and skinned him. It was not entirely Loki's fault as Otr would take on the form of an otter during the day.¹

When Hreidmar learned of this deed, he demanded that Loki and Odin would fill Otr's skin with gold as a ransom. Loki thus ventured back to Andvari's Fall and caught a pike, who would reveal to be the dwarf Andvari, the son of Odin. Loki took Andvari's gold ring together with his immense gold pile. Andvari warned him, however, that whoever owned the gold and the ring would soon meet death. Loki presented the gold and the ring to Hreidmar.²

After the ransom was paid, Fafnir killed his father and ventured to the wild together with the treasure and the ring. The greed consumed him, and later, he transformed into a dragon. In his dragon form, Fafnir is later killed by Viking hero Sigurd The Volsung, who roasts the dragon heart after slaying his foe. The Saga of the Volsungs depicts the fight and states that, unlike Beowulf, Sigurd's dragon-slaying did not bring order or safety to the world.³

1.1.2 Nidhogg

There is very little information regarding Nidhogg, whose name roughly translates to Malice Striker. Nidhogg is a dragon that lives under the roots of Yggdrasill, the world tree. The Poetic Edda mentions that Nidhogg gnaws Yggdrasill's roots, while the Stags Dain, Dvalin, Duneyr, and Durathror run in the branches, feeding on the foliage.⁴ Furthermore, at the top of the tree sits an unnamed eagle. A squirrel called Ratatosk

¹ BYOCK, J. *The Saga of the Volsungs*. 2000. Chapter 18.

² Ibid

³ BYOCK, J. *The Saga of the Volsungs*. 2000. Myths, heroes, and social realities

⁴ STURLUSON, S. *Edda*. 1995. p.19

traverses through the Yggdrasill and works as a messenger that brings malicious messages between the eagle and Nidhogg.⁵ Nidhogg is also a tormenter of murderers, rapists, and oath-breakers bound in Nastrand, an enormous hall of Hel, which is woven out of snakes' bodies, whose heads spit poison that runs in rivers throughout Nastrand. There Nidhogg torments the bodies of the dead.⁶

1.1.3 Iormungand

Iormungand, more commonly referred to as Midgard serpent, is the son of Loki and giantess Angrboda. Together, with his siblings Fenriswolf and Hel, he was part of the prophecy of Ragnarok or the Norse equivalent of the apocalypse. When Iormungand was born, Odin took him from Jötunheim to Midgard and threw him into the ocean. He has grown to such a length that he was able to encircle Midgard and bite his own tail, which became the symbol of Ouroboros. This is the reason he is called the World Serpent.⁷

The prophecy of Ragnarok states that Iormungand will be enraged and make his way ashore, thus shifting the oceans to surge up on the lands. Furthermore, he will spit poison into the sky and sea, wreaking havoc. Finally, he will join his siblings in the fight against the gods. Thor engages Iormungand and kills him; however, the Midgard serpent releases poison which Thor succumbs to in the end. Thor lies dead, and immediately after his demise, Odin is swallowed by Fenriswolf and killed.⁸

1.1.4 Symbolic function

Dragons in Norse Mythology are often called serpents, thus implying their lack of wings alongside the ability to breathe fire. Winged, fire-breathing dragons with legs appeared in later sagas following the import of Christian texts, where dragons are depicted as such.⁹

Although early Norse dragons did not breathe fire, some dragons spat poison, as seen with Iormungand. All dragons are connected to gods or giants in some way. Fafnir is driven mad and greedy by the gold given to him by Odin and Loki. Nidhogg lives under the roots of the Yggdrasil and serves as a tormenter of the dead in one of the halls of Hel. Finally, Iormungand is a son of Loki and a premonition of death and apocalypse.

⁵ STURLUSON, S. *Edda*. 1995. p.18-19

⁶ Ibid p. 56

⁷ Ibid p. 26-27

⁸ Ibid p. 53-54

⁹ ACKER, L. *Revisiting the Poetic Edda*. 2013. p.60

Nevertheless, while each has its individual purpose, one thing they seem to have in common. They are unmistakably evil.

1.2 Ancient Greece

1.2.1 Ladon

Ladon is a serpent-like dragon with one hundred heads, each having its own voice. He was guarding the tree of the Hesperides at the top of Mount Atlas in the Land of the Hyperboreans. Furthermore, he is said to be the offspring of the Typhon and Echidna. Ladon is mentioned in the 11th labor of Heracles, where Eurystheus task Heracles to bring three golden apples from the Garden of the Hesperides.¹⁰

In one version of the story, Ladon is simply mentioned as a security measure overcome by convincing the titan Atlas to venture out to the Garden of the Hesperides instead of Heracles. Atlas is the father of the Hesperides and is tasked with holding the skies upon his shoulders. He agrees to help Heracles if only Heracles holds the skies in his stead. Heracles agrees, and Atlas returns with the apples. However, Atlas does not wish to hold the skies any longer and says that he will take the apples to Euresstheus himself while Heracles will take over his task of holding the skies. Heracles then asks whether Atlas could hold the skies just for a minute longer to allow Heracles to pad his head with a pillow so he could be more comfortable. Atlas agreed, knowing the hardship of this ordeal, but after he switched with Heracles, he understood that this was a ruse as he saw Heracles walking away with the apples.¹¹

However, an alternative version of this story implies that Heracles never talked to Atlas and decided to fight Ladon instead. In this story, Heracles manages to kill Ladon with a bow and arrow and proceeds to take the apples to Euresstheus right away.¹²

1.2.2 Lernaean hydra

Lernaean hydra was the second labor that Euresstheus tasked Heracles. Lernaean hydra lived in the swamp of Lerna. The hydra had a body of enormous size and nine heads, of which eight were mortal, but the one in the centre was immortal. Heracles had the help

¹⁰ APOLLODORUS. *The Library of Greek Mythology*. 1997. Eleventh labour: the apples of the Hesperides

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Ibid

of Loloas for this task. When he discovered the hydra's lair, he forced it to emerge, then he swiftly seized it and struck one of the hydra's heads off with his club. Unfortunately, by striking one of the heads off, two grew in its place. Heracles understood that he would achieve nothing with this strategy, so he called Loloas to help him. Loloas, using the fire from the neighboring forest, burned the roots of the hydra's heads to prevent them from regrowing. The task turned out to be a very successful strategy, and soon just the immortal head was left. Heracles buried the immortal head and put a massive boulder over it.¹³

1.2.3 Colchian dragon

Upon commentary of the legendary tale of Jason and the Argonauts, we can note a few dragon elements. According to the legend, Pelias is told by the oracle to beware a man with one sandal. During a sacrifice to the sea god Poseidon, many come to pay their respect. One of many is Jason, who is wearing just one sandal. King Pelias tasks Jason to bring him the golden fleece, for this is no easy task that will surely bring Jason's demise. The golden fleece is to be found at Colchis pendent on an oak tree “*and guarded by a dragon that never slept*”.¹⁴

After reaching Colchis, Jason asked the Colchis ruler Aietes for the fleece. He agreed to give the fleece to Jason if he would solve two tasks without assistance. The first task was to yoke fire-breathing bronze bulls. While fire breathing was not entirely the theme for dragons in Greek mythology, the ability needs to be mentioned as the most common theme for dragons in modern culture. The second task was not less demanding than the first one as Jason was supposed to sow dragon's teeth, from which armed men would emerge and attack the sower.¹⁵

While contemplating his tasks, Jason fell into the lustful gaze of Medea, a sorceress and Aietes's daughter. Medea fell in love with Jason, and she helped him immensely with his tasks while worrying about his life. Although the tasks were finished, Aietes, suspecting a ruse, did not want to part with the fleece; furthermore, he wanted to murder Jason and his crew. Medea found it out and ventured to the oak tree, where she used her magic to

¹³ APOLLODORUS. *The Library of Greek Mythology*. 1997. Second Labour Lernean hydra

¹⁴ Ibid Jason and the Argonauts: Pelias orders Jason to fetch the golden fleece

¹⁵ Ibid Jason, Medea, and the seizure of the fleece.

exhaust and tire the guardian dragon. Finally, putting him to sleep, she stole the golden fleece and departed with Jason and the Argonauts.¹⁶

1.2.4 Symbolic function

While other mythologies seem to set grounds on whether dragons are beings of evil or good, Greek mythology does not explicitly state one or the other. Instead, dragons serve their purpose as guardians or challenging obstacles the heroes must overcome. The way those heroes overcome these dragons is not outright by force but more often than not by wit, ruse, or someone's help:

1. Ladon is reasoned with by Atlas rather than Heracles.
2. Burning the roots of the Lernaean hydra's heads with fire carried by Lolaos.
3. Medea putting the never-sleeping dragon to sleep with her magic.

While the legend states that the Lernean hydra was destroying the cattle, that does not necessarily make her evil. Cattle are also threatened by wolves, foxes, or other predators, yet we do not view them as evil but simply animalistic.

The apples and the fleece are golden, which signals the reader that they are something immensely precious, guarded by a dragon, viewed as a supernatural creature of legends and almost unbeatable. Ladon and the dragon of Colchis serve as guardians, which also influenced the cultural understanding of a dragon not only in modern Greece but throughout the modern world. With the foundation of Greek Mythology, we also draw the general nature of a dangerous dragon, but not entirely evil. The aspect of a mighty, proud, supernatural yet inculpable dragon that the Greeks visioned remains within the pages of many modern fantasy authors.

1.3 Medieval Europe

1.3.1 Beowulf

The famous Anglo-Saxon epic poem is the oldest piece of English literature. Moreover, it features a hero slaying monsters and, most notably, functions as one of the few dragon-slayer tales. The other example is the tale of Sigurd and Fafnir, which was touched upon

¹⁶APOLLODORUS. *The Library of Greek Mythology*. 1997. Jason, Medea, and the seizure of the fleece

already. Unfortunately, historians are not settled on an exact date of *Beowulf's* composition; nevertheless, the most probable period is 750 AD to 950 AD.¹⁷

After killing Grendel and its mother, Beowulf ruled the Geats of southern Sweden for fifty years. However, the ruling would not last as the third and final monster of the poem awakes to plunder. The monstrous fire-breathing dragon is stirred in his sleep as a fugitive slave steals his hoard. Destroying and bringing desolace to the land of Beowulf, the veteran warrior king, determined to meet his foe in battle, rides out with his thanes. Upon laying their sight at the enormous, winged, fire-breathing dragon, the thanes flee in terror. While they desert their king, only Wiglaf remains to support his kinsman. Eventually, he lands a critical blow to the dragon's lower body, enabling Beowulf to cut the dragon in half. Unfortunately, Beowulf ends up significantly wounded from the dragon's poisonous blood, and after several words of inheritance to his staunch companion Wiglaf, he succumbs to his injuries.¹⁸

The dragon of *Beowulf* tremendously influenced the way how we view dragons today. Having introduced fire-breathing capabilities together with wings, it set a foothold for any future dragon motifs that were to come. Tolkien was one of the authors that drew heavily from the imagery through which *Beowulf* presented us with what a dragon should look like.

1.3.2 Saint George

The Golden Legend of Saint George is one of many Christian legends. According to the legend, in one Libyan city, where the rulers were pagans, God sent a dragon to punish them for rejecting the faith. The dragon lived near a lake that was specified to be enormous as it was compared to the sea. The dragon itself had two heads, breathed fire, and was of incredible size. It wrought havoc on the region and had to be appeased by presenting sacrifices. At first, they were in the form of cattle, sheep in particular, however, the dragon grew picky, and soon human sacrifices had to be offered. This legend is similar to the Greek myth of Perseus and Andromeda because, after some time, the king's daughter was selected for sacrifice.¹⁹

¹⁷ Rauer, C. *Beowulf and the dragon: Parallels and Analogues*. 2000. p. 17-18

¹⁸ *Ibid* p. 24-25

¹⁹ FONTENROSE, J. *Python: A study of Delphic Myth and its Origins*. 1980. p. 515-516

With the princess's life at stake, God called upon the knight George to kill the dragon and save the princess. Furthermore, he was supposed to convert the people to Christianity. George arrived and saw the princess in the bride's dress upon the lakeshore. George was depicted as young and handsome, and the princess was so fascinated by his beauty that she wanted him to turn away and save himself. However, George stood his ground and prepared for a fight with the dragon. After this moment, the two versions of the story start to differentiate. In the classical folktale, George was supposed to kill the dragon with his lance. However, in the Christian texts where George is canonized (the process of someone becoming a Saint), it is described how George used his cross and subdued the dragon into submission. Together with the princess, they led the dragon into the town where George executed the dragon by beheading him but not before he got the people's and the king's promise to become converted to Christianity.²⁰

While Perseus married Andromeda as her savior, George would not marry the princess as he was pronounced Saint. However, it must be noted that in another version of the story, George marries the princess and becomes the king. Finally, after killing the dragon and converting the town to Christianity, George vanished, and a church was erected in his honor.²¹

1.3.3 Symbolic Function

Upon closer inspection of selected works from Medieval Europe, it becomes apparent that the dragon element took its turn towards the more typically viewed function. Dragons function as an impending danger that has to be dealt with by force. The familiar dragon-slayer tales originate from these narratives. Furthermore, Saint George and Beowulf present the dragon as an evil that desolates the land and plunders resources. Undoubtedly, *Beowulf* is the more popular and commonly known of the two selected narratives. However, Saint George connects the religious canonization legend with the classic folk tale, spreading the dragon motif throughout different social groups.

Furthermore, it is believed that fire-breathing dragons originated from these tales, as previously mentioned in Norse Mythology. Unlike Norse mythology, the dragons here do not share invincibility by normal means. They can, in fact, be killed by a stroke of a sword or a thrust of a lance. The dragon slayers are viewed as fabled warriors, often attributed

²⁰ FONTENROSE, J. *Python: A study of Delphic Myth and its Origins*. 1980. p. 515-516

²¹ *Ibid*

with godly powers, but before they slew the dragon, they were mortal and ordinary men. This makes the slaying of a dragon a deed that can be achieved by a mortal man with enough dedication, which is crucial to the overall dragon theme we draw from the stories. Dragons were not retained only for demi-gods anymore but became an achievement that could be strived for by every warrior. This plays a vital role in future stories.

1.4 Chinese Mythology

1.4.1 Chinese Dragon

While other previously stated mythologies feature the dragon as one element among many that are remarkably more imperative to their respective myths, the dragon in Chinese Mythology is of tremendous substance to the entire Eastern culture. While dragons in western stories are often depicted as evil, terrible creatures that seek to plunder and burn everything in their wake, the dragon of Chinese is viewed as a creature of good fortune, divinity, wisdom, nobility, and many other predominantly positive attributes.

Regarding the physical appearance of dragons, we can see that it differs significantly from its Western counterpart. Most notably, they can fly even though they are wingless. Furthermore, their body combines the features of various animals such as bull, eagle, carp, and others. Furthermore, the number of animal characteristics that make the body of a dragon seems to be always nine. Moreover, the number of scales the dragon has is nine times nine of yang essence and nine times four of the yin essence.²² The numbers play a tremendous role in Chinese mythology, with nine being one of the lucky numbers and four being the unlucky number.²³ Therefore, it is deducible to regard the four as a reference to the negative essence of yin. Following this numerology theme, we can also notice that the Dragon King has nine children and the Chinese Emperors often put nine dragons on their robes.

While western dragons reside in caves or hide in the mountains, most Chinese dragons live within bodies of water, for example, at the bottom of the sea or in marshes. Other dragons dwell beneath the ground and guard precious minerals, silver, and gold. Furthermore, some guard the hearth of the gods and soar in the sky.²⁴

²² INGERSOLL, E. *Dragons and Dragon Lore*. 1928. p. 45-46

²³ Dr. HETALKUMAR DOSHI, *Chinese Numerology*. 2017. [Powerpoint Slides]

²⁴ INGERSOLL, E. *Dragons and Dragon Lore*. 1928. p. 45-53

While western dragons are usually within the darker color pallet ranging from brown to black, Chinese dragons are much more colorful. Each color represents a specific attribute or function the particular dragon has. Blue and green dragons (sometimes called azure dragons) symbolize nature, healing, and growth, the same as a little plant from which emerges a tree. White dragons represent purity and virtue, and black dragons are linked with catastrophes like storms and floods. They also represent vengeance and fury. Thus, the Black dragon became the symbol of tattoos worn by criminals. While criminals print black dragons upon their bodies to manifest fear, other people decorate their houses with pictures of the red dragon, the luckiest color in China. The red dragon, therefore, represents good fortune. Another dragon that also represents good fortune is the yellow dragon; however, the yellow dragon also symbolizes wisdom and power, the noblest of attributes. It is no surprise then that the yellow dragon became a symbol of Chinese emperors as well as the yellow color in general. Lastly, the golden dragon makes its mark where gold and plentiful harvest are. They symbolize wealth, prosperity, strength, harvest, and power.²⁵

Perhaps the most revered and worshiped out of them are four dragons. The first spot belongs to Shen Lung, the skyborne bringer of rain. He drafts between the clouds and brings water to the crops, which is why he is worshiped by the farmers who fear his anger and wish to appease him, especially during droughts. However, he is also viewed as an imperial dragon and, in fact, a symbol of the Chinese emperor who was the only one that could decorate his regal clothes with the depiction of Shen Lung. If anyone attempted to put the master of storms upon their clothes, they would face the death penalty. When we look closely at the name of this dragon, we can determine that Shen means "god" or "divine" and lung means "dragon." Interestingly, it also translates to "deaf." This means that although dragons are depicted with ears, their ears are not functional.²⁶

Within the theme of gods, we find the guardian of heavenly abodes, T'ien Lung. He is called the celestial dragon as he roams the sky and protects heaven. While there are four most essential dragons, T'ien Lung remains the most known, although his breed is the rarest. Interestingly, the celestial dragons were featured in the famous MMORPG game World of Warcraft.²⁷

²⁵ CHINA HIGHLIGHTS. *Chinese Dragons – facts, culture, origins and art.* [online] [cit.28.06.2022.]

²⁶ SHUKER, K. *Dragons: a natural history.* 2003. p. 88-89

²⁷ Ibid p. 89

The last two dragons can be categorized as land dragons. Ti-lung lives in streams, rivers, and the bottom of the sea, but he also visits the land and the skies. He governs all land bodies of water, from streams to rivers, from ponds to oceans. Furthermore, he is portrayed as spitting water. Last but not least, the Fu-ts'ang Lung lives underground and hoards jewels and precious metals within the darkest, deepest vaults of the earth. When he emerges from the ground to report to heaven, the legends say he causes volcanos to erupt.²⁸

1.4.2 Symbolic Function

Chinese perception of the dragon is entirely different from the European one, or for that matter, western altogether. Not only are the dragons viewed as good, but they are also seen as heavenly, sublime, and regal; they are also regarded as bringers of good luck. While dragons in western stories are detested and feared, Chinese dragons are loved and embraced. Where dragon in Europe is hunted and killed, the Chinese dragon is worshipped and protected. It has to be stated that Chinese dragons are not entirely harmless; they do feel anger and bring vengeance upon those that show them disrespect. This is also one factor that accounts for a dragon's status as godly. If God only showed love, he would not be that rigorously followed. Where compassion and faith are not enough, fear will keep them in line.

The Chinese also introduced the color symbolism of dragons, which can also be seen in *The Inheritance Cycle* and Tolkien's *Legendarium*. They control the water and, more particularly, rainfall, floods, and typhoons. Not gaining the power over other elements make them not outright gods but rather some lower form of them. Nevertheless, it cannot be argued that they are indeed godly. Chinese worship them and attend events devoted to them, for instance, the famous Dragon Dance. Dragon is also part of the Chinese zodiac. While we use dragons in stories where we want to highlight the skill and valor of a particular knight by killing the ultimate beast, the Chinese go about the dragon differently and build their entire culture around them.

²⁸ SHUKER, K. *Dragons: a natural history*. 2003. p. 89

2 Establishment of the authors

2.1 J.R.R. Tolkien

2.1.1 Biography

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien was born on January the 3rd, 1892, in Bloemfontein, South Africa. His father, Arthur, a banker by occupation, died when John was four years old. Shortly after his father's death, Tolkien's mother Mabel settled near Birmingham in England. Tolkien found salvation in faith, more precisely Roman Catholicism. Seeing Tolkien's devotion, his mother converted to Roman Catholicism in 1900. Unfortunately, she died of diabetes four years later. Along with his younger brother Hilary, Tolkien became a ward of a catholic priest.²⁹

During his studies at King Edward's School in Birmingham, Tolkien fell in love with Edith Bratt, an orphan. He married her ten days after his 21st birthday.³⁰ She was also the source of inspiration for his fictional character Lúthien Tinúvieln, who appeared in his legendarium, which later became *The Silmarillion*.³¹

After receiving B.A. at Exeter College, Oxford, Tolkien got drafted into the military and fought in the Battle of the Somme during World War I.³² Following the Armistice, Tolkien got his M.A. and was briefly part of *The New English Dictionary* staff, later renamed to *The Oxford English Dictionary*. Passing on his passion for linguistics, he taught the English language, particularly Old and Middle English and literature, at the Universities of Leeds and later Oxford University up until 1959.³³

Tolkien was always influenced and intrigued by legends, myths, and linguistics. He decided to create his languages with a complete set of different words and grammar rules. Quenya and Sindarin, spoken by the elves, were the most prominent and complex. Alongside them he created Dwarvish, the Black speech, and Entish.³⁴ He wanted to use

²⁹ CARPENTER, A. *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography*. 1977. Bloemfontein; HAMMOND, Wayne. *J.R.R. Tolkien Biography* [online]. 2009 [cit. 2022-07-03]

³⁰ CARPENTER, A. *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography*. 1977. Private Lang. – and Edith; HAMMOND, Wayne. *J.R.R. Tolkien Biography* [online]. 2009 [cit. 2022-07-03]

³¹ CARPENTER, A. *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography*. 1977. Lost Tales; HAMMOND, Wayne. *J.R.R. Tolkien Biography* [online]. 2009 [cit. 2022-07-03]

³² CARPENTER, A. *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography*. 1977. Breaking of the Fellowship; HAMMOND, Wayne. *J.R.R. Tolkien Biography* [online]. 2009 [cit. 2022-07-03]

³³ CARPENTER, A. *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography*. 1977. He had been inside language; HAMMOND, Wayne. *J.R.R. Tolkien Biography* [online]. 2009 [cit. 2022-07-03]

³⁴ BURNS, M. *Celtic and Norse in Tolkien's Middle-earth*. 2005. p. 6

the languages, so he wrote fantasy tales often filled with a sombre and gloomy atmosphere. These stories would later be set in one collection known nowadays as the *Silmarillion*. Around the time, he and his wife Edith started a family. He has written much more cheerful, adventurous, and often comical fantasy stories to satisfy his sons and daughter's need for a bedtime story. Of those, the most important and the longest one was *The Hobbit* which follows the adventurous tale of a hobbit going on a quest into lands unknown to find a dragon's treasure. Seven years later, *The Hobbit* was published and received so much appraisal that the publisher asked Tolkien for a sequel. Thus, 17 years later, *The Lord of the Rings* came into existence as one of the most famous and influential fantasy epics of all time. *The Lord of the Rings* presented a sequel to *The Hobbit* giving us a backstory of the One Ring; furthermore, it drew from the tales of his legendarium. Tolkien gave the literary world a general understanding of a plethora of fantasy creatures, such as elves, dwarfs, and orcs. Moreover, other authors' future fantasy books more or less correlate with Tolkien's image of supernatural creatures, among other things.³⁵

Due to his old age, Tolkien failed to fully complete *The Silmarillion*, regarded as a prequel to *The Lord of the Rings*, however, he has given the trust to his son Christopher to finish the stories. Christopher edited and published *The Silmarillion* in 1977, four years after his father's death. Given his extensive research of his father's work and the necessary funding *The Silmarillion* has provided, Christopher also managed to publish and edit other of his father's works.³⁶ Tolkien died at the age of 81 while living in Bournemouth, where he lived with his wife who died two years prior to his own peaceful death.

Tolkien had the ordinary life of a scholar of his time. Nevertheless, nobody would be of the opinion that Tolkien himself was an ordinary scholar. He has captivated several million readers and painted the world of fantasy that we picture ourselves.³⁷ Through his ideas, he had reinforced and directed the boat of our imagination.

³⁵ HAMMOND, Wayne. *J.R.R. Tolkien Biography* [online]. 2009 [cit. 2022-07-03]

³⁶ CARPENTER, A. *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography*. 1977. Appendix D; HAMMOND, Wayne. *J.R.R. Tolkien Biography* [online]. 2009 [cit. 2022-07-03]

³⁷ CARPENTER, A. *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography*. 1977. Photographs Observed

2.1.2 Source of inspiration

In contrast to what we can spot with other authors, Tolkien was not necessarily influenced by critical events in his life. As previously stated, Tolkien's life was not exceptional but rather quite ordinary, but some things have to be mentioned anyway.

Firstly, Tolkien fell in love with Edith Bratt when he was 16 years old. She was also an orphan, and they kept their relationship hidden from their ward Farther Morgan. However, he found it out and separated them to stop their seeing each other. He ordered that they wait until Tolkien came of age since Edith was three years older than him. When Tolkien was 21, he expressed his affection to Edith but was appalled when he learned that Edith was inclined toward marriage with another man. He did not give up and proceeded to win Edith back and succeeded eventually. This idea of estranged lovers, whose relationship is not approved by a father figure, is found in Tolkien's works, for instance, in the relationship of Aragorn and Arwen. Aragorn falls in love with Arwen during his stay in Rivendell under the hospitality of Lord Elrond. Lord Elrond wants his daughter to leave Middle-Earth, and Aragorn travels as a ranger with thoughts of Arwen still present in his heart. Eventually, Arwen manages to convince her father to accept Aragorn, which also results in reforging Andúril Flame of the West from the shards of Narsil. Aragorn leaves his Ranger's life, becomes the King of Gondor and marries Arwen.

Secondly, the First World War provided Tolkien with first-hand experience of the tragedies and desolation war conflicts inflicted on people and land. Like many of his close friends, Tolkien entered military service and took up arms. Unfortunately, the war took its toll, and death soon spread throughout his group of friends and brothers in arms. However, Tolkien managed to withstand the winds of war and survived The Battle of the Somme, which made its mark in history books as one of the bloodiest battles ever recorded. Over one million lives perished, and only desolate and devastated fields remained, with neither side gaining anything strategic by this conflict.³⁸ Tolkien returned to his country with Trench Fever, and while recovering in hospital, he began writing many of the pieces which would later be part of his legendarium.³⁹

Devastation, death, the individual's soul torn to shreds, following blindly into the fray of battle, becoming just a simple statistic in the reports being handed over by dark

³⁸ ROBERTS, A. *Elegy: The First Day on the Somme*. 2015. p. 204-205

³⁹ GARTH, J. *Tolkien and the Great War: The Threshold of Middle-earth*. 2004. p. 191-192

bureaucratic overlords. Tolkien made sure to feature the machines of war in his works, whether it would be the foul and wretched forces of evil or the desolate wasteland they left behind. One of the more direct references would be the character of Samwise Gamgee, who is, in Tolkien's words, "*the reflexion of the English soldier, of the privates and batmen I knew during the 1914 war, and recognized as so far superior to myself*".⁴⁰

Thirdly, Tolkien gave lectures on *Beowulf* as one of the greatest works of English literature and was deeply influenced by this enormous poem. He based most of his monsters on the characters from *Beowulf*, especially Grendel and the dragon. It is widely believed that Gollum was based on Grendel⁴¹, and Smaug on the dragon in *Beowulf*⁴². Gollum and Smaug were both the main mysterious dangers Bilbo had to face and he evoked unquestionable heroism when he managed to beat them in his own ways.

Gollum, same as Grendel, liked hunting with his bare hands and lived in seclusion in damp and gloomy places. Same as Grendel, Gollum is viewed as an outcast and a wanderer. They also share their animalistic approach to consuming food. Raw and often still alive, Gollum consumes fish, goblins, or anything else that might wander unaware to his grasp. He also takes some inspiration for Gollum from Norse mythology, particularly Fafnir. Like Fafnir, Gollum guards his precious ring and is transformed into an entirely different being because of greed.⁴³

Smaug is a dragon possessed by greed for his treasure, the same as the dragon in *Beowulf* and Fafnir. When Bilbo first encounters Smaug, their dialog closely resembles Fafnir and Sigurd's. The only difference relates to the following moment: when Bilbo speaks to Smaug, he is in mortal peril, while Sigurd speaks to Fafnir after he has already defeated him.⁴⁴

When it comes to naming characters, places, or objects, Tolkien took inspiration from Old English. This is most common with the land of Rohan and its people since the language of Rohan is just a refurbished version of Old English. They call their land the Mark, a nod towards Mercia, one of the seven Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Mercia was a

⁴⁰ GARTH, J. *Tolkien and the Great War: The Threshold of Middle-earth*. 2004. p. 285-286

⁴¹ DONAHOO, A. *A closer look at Grendel and Gollum as Villains*. 2017. [online]. [cit. 2022-07-03]

⁴² ESCHNER, K. *J.R.R. TOLKIEN Gave the World His Childhood Fascination With Dragons in "The Hobbit" 2017*. [online]. [cit. 2022-07-03]

⁴³ DURIEZ, C. *Tolkien and The Lord of the Rings: a guide to Middle-earth*. 2013. p. 224-225

⁴⁴ Britannica.*Fafnir*. 2009. [online] [cit. 23.03.2022]

large part of today's England. Notably, it is the part of England where Tolkien lived given that Oxford was part of Mercia.

The Old English word for "horse" is "Eoh," and many of Rohan's notable characters begin with "Eo." Eomer - Eo+mere (OE for "mare"), Eomund – Eo+mund (OE for "protector"), Eowyn – Eo+wyn (OE for "joy"). Then we have king Theoden, whose name corresponds with his title for "peoden" is Old English for "king." Theoden's mind was poisoned by Grima (OE for "specter/mask") Wormtongue, who is driven away by Gandalf Grayhame (OE "graeghama" means "grey covering") whom Grima refers to as Gandalf Lothspell (OE "laftspell" means painful story). Those are just a few of many other Old English words used in the language of Rohan, which is Old English.⁴⁵

Lastly, Tolkien drew from Norse and Celtic mythology as well as Greek. The gods in Tolkien legendarium are called the Valar. They bear many resemblances to the gods of Olympus in terms of hierarchy, their respective fields of godly influence, and most importantly, where their godly plane is located, which is a mountain in the clouds far off any mortal eye could see.

When it comes to Tolkien's Germanic influences, the one of Norse comes up, particularly as the one more visible. If we look closer at the character of Gandalf the Grey, we can regard many things he has in common with Odin the All-father. They both make sacrifices and "perish" in trials out of this world. Furthermore, they return from the other worlds and travel in disguise, and in both cases, they travel on a horse, although these steeds are nothing alike. Another factor is their symbolic connection to birds. For Odin, we have the ravens who bring him the news. This is mirrored with the raven in the *Hobbit*, however, through the other stories, we can determine that the eagle is Tolkien's bird of choice. Eagles save Tolkien's heroes on many occasions throughout *The Silmarillion*. Furthermore, in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, eagles save Gandalf and his companions from death and transport them to safety.⁴⁶ "It is the eagles of the northern mountains, 'the greatest of all birds,' that remove Bilbo and his party from the burning trees; it is eagles that bring Sam and Frodo back from 'the end of all things'; it is Gwaihir,

⁴⁵ TINKLER, J. "Old English in Rohan" in *Tolkien and the Critics*. 1968. p. 106-109

⁴⁶ BURNS, M. *Celtic and Norse in Tolkien's Middle-earth*. 2005. p. 71-72

*'the Windlord,' who rescues Gandalf first from Saruman's tower and later from the high peak of Celebdil where he lies naked after his Moria battle 'under the living earth.'*⁴⁷

2.2 Christopher Paolini

2.2.1 Biography

Christopher James Paolini was born on November 17th, 1983, in Los Angeles, California but has lived in Paradise Valley, Montana to this day. His mother, Talita, was a Montessori preschool teacher, and when Paolini was born, she has devoted all her time to raising his son. Paolini's parents decided to devote all their time to support Paolini, providing him with a home school education using the Montessori method. Talita was very creative in producing a curriculum for both Paolini and his younger sister Angela. She was very successful at using the Montessori method, and by the time Paolini was three years old, he was already working with first-grade level materials without any problem. However, when it was time for Paolini to attend a traditional school, his parents had doubts about the possible foreign feel of the traditional curriculum Paolini might face. After long deliberation, they decided to continue to educate Paolini at home.⁴⁸

Paolini's education was not without obstacles, for there was a relatively passive approach to reading from his end. Paolini did not read much until one day he ventured into a library and picked up his first book. This was indeed an eye-opening moment for Paolini as he began reading vigorously, unraveling many fantasy worlds. He particularly drawn towards those which featured swordfights, elves, adventures, and above all, dragons.⁴⁹ He was so fascinated by dragons that he often daydreamed about them, visualizing them everywhere he went. Eventually, he began to write down some of his fantasies on paper, mostly turned into short stories or poems.

Paolini spent much time outside, often in the mountains. He loved camping and taught himself many survival skills, such as making a fire or tracking game. He also began artisan projects such as forging and sharpening his own knives and swords, fletching arrows, making his own bow, spinning wool, building survival shelters, and even making chain mail. All of these skills gave him a better understanding of life in medieval times. They also sharpened his ability to transcribe stories focused on hunting and stalking prey.

⁴⁷ BURNS, M. *Celtic and Norse in Tolkien's Middle-earth*. 2005. p. 72

⁴⁸ Encyclopedia of World Biography. *Christopher Paolini Biography*. 2004. [online] [cit.28.03.2022]

⁴⁹ Ibid

Around this time, Paolini finished high school and began writing his first much longer story to challenge himself. He did not intend to publish it at first, but one day, a stepson of author Carl Hiaasen read it, told his dad about it, and Carl contacted publisher Alfred A. Knopf who contacted Paolini. After some time of editing, *Eragon* was published. Paolini was astonished because *Eragon* instantly became an enormous success. Soon after its publishing, *Eragon* became New York Times Best Seller making Christopher Paolini the youngest author ever to produce a bestseller.⁵⁰

To interact with the growing fan base that *Eragon* attracted, Paolini went on an extended tour through the United States of America and the United Kingdom. When he returned to Montana, he began writing a sequel. After a year of attentive work and editing, *Eldest* was published in August 2005. Paolini toured once more, and this time was venturing to other European countries such as Germany, Italy, Spain, and France. As he began writing the third book, Paolini realized that many storylines would progress as much as he wanted them to. This was because the sequel presented so many new characters and political developments. Therefore, Paolini decided to expand his thought so trilogy into a Tetralogy. His third book *Brisingsr* was published in September 2008.⁵¹

The story of a young farmboy turned dragon rider, Eragon Shadeslayer, and his Dragon Saphira was finished with the publication of *Inheritance*, the final book in the *Inheritance Cycle* series, in November 2011. After that, Paolini went on his longest tour yet, this time reaching even New Zealand and Australia. He remains grateful to all his fans and answers questions about his books to this day. His latest debut science fiction novel, *To Sleep in a Sea of Stars*, was released in September 2020.⁵²

2.2.2 Source of Inspiration

Like many modern authors, Paolini himself was inspired by J.R.R. Tolkien. The first thing we can observe when we open *Eragon* is a map of Alagaësia. When we compare this map to Tolkien's map, we can spot a few similarities. In the north, there is a massive forest ruled by the elves and a sea in the south that borders a kingdom. Moreover, there is a massive mountain range in the west that is split by a lake. When we compare the capital

⁵⁰ PAOLINI, C. *Christopher Paolini*. [online] [cit.28.03.2022]

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² Ibid

cities of the human race, Minas Tirith and Urû'baen, we notice that both stand against a substantial natural wall. Throughout the city are countless towers and walls.⁵³

When it comes to fantasy races such as elves, dwarves, and orcs, many authors were inspired by Tolkien when depicting them. However, Paolini went even further than most and featured two versions of a standard orc. Paolini's Urgals and their stronger and larger version, the Kull, are similar to the Saruman's orcs and the Uruk-hai from Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, however, we can spot a significant difference in their nature. Tolkien's orcs are evil by nature and want to annihilate other races. In comparison, Paolini's Urgals are brute, live in tribal society, and their main passion is war. However, they are not necessarily evil, and eventually, they fight alongside the humans, elves, and dwarves.⁵⁴

Elves bear many physical and mental similarities. Both Tolkien's and Paolini's elves are tall, immortal and considered wise and fair by other races. They are in touch with nature since they live in forests. They are skilled archers and possess keen senses. In contrast, Paolini's elves are atheists and vegetarian by choice, while Tolkien's elves eat meat, and religion is an integral part of their society. Paolini's elves are also naturally gifted in the art of magic, while Tolkien's elves are magical only to a certain degree, and not all of them can use magic.

It must be stated that magic in Tolkien's universe is vastly different from Paolini's. Both Tolkien's and Paolini's elves are exceptional smiths (although in Tolkien's universe, dwarves seem to be far better smiths). Their swords are very light and imbued with magic runes and therefore fortified to withstand enormous force. Paolini's legendary blacksmith Rhunon makes swords for dragon riders, each unique to its user fighting style and the appropriate color of their respective dragon. It is outright stated that they are made from meteorite ore called the Brightsteel and imbued with spells during the forging process. Combining these elements makes the dragon rider's swords unbreakable and impossible to blunt. Tolkien's swords of Gondolin also glowed blue when orcs or goblins were nearby; and Eragon's sword Brisingr would become engulfed in blue flames when Eragon voiced its name.⁵⁵

⁵³ INHERIWIKI. *Criticism of the Inheritance Cycle*. [online] [cit.29.03.2022.]

⁵⁴ Ibid

⁵⁵ Ibid

Nevertheless, not only Tolkien was the source of inspiration for Paolini. When he was young, Paolini read *Dragon Hatcher*, written by Jeremy Thatcher, and he mentioned the inspiration from the story in interviews. All the dragons communicate with other races telepathically in *Inheritance Cycle*, the same as the dragon Tiamat in *Dragon Hatcher*. Paolini also mentioned he was influenced by David Eddings's fantasy epic *The Belgariad*. We can notice this in how Eragon learns to draw energy from his surroundings, completely withering them in the process.

However, the most considerable influence in terms of magic was Ursula Le Guin's *Earthsea Cycle*, where magic is done by knowing the true name of objects or people. These names are in the ancient language that is still spoken by the dragons, similar to how elves still communicate in the ancient language. Of course, this is very prominent in *Eragon*, although Paolini did alter it to a degree. Nevertheless, true names still remain the vital aspect of magic in the *Inheritance Cycle*.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ INHERIWIKI. *Criticism of the Inheritance Cycle*. [online] [cit.29.03.2022.]

3 Dragons in the works of J.R.R. Tolkien

3.1 Glaurung

Glaurung, gaining the title Father of the Dragons, was the first dragon Morgoth created. While it is true that Glaurung had offspring, he did not father the winged dragons, therefore the title “*Father of the Dragons*” is somewhat contested. According to the information that Tolkien revealed to us, it seems the title states that he bred the first wingless dragons; furthermore, he was the first creation of Morgoth that marked the beginning of dragons in the Tolkien universe.

While Tolkien did spend a lot of his time and devotion on the poem of Beowulf, Glaurung was not the adaptation of the Beowulfian dragon, at least not entirely. He was enormous and breathed fire which was also the property of the dragon in Beowulf. However, he did not have wings; therefore, he could not achieve flight. Glaurung could speak and, to that end, understand speech. This would link him more towards Fafnir of the Norse mythology. Fafnir is also described as enormous and is not ever mentioned as having wings. Glaurung was also called the Great Worm, which closely resembles the “serpent” title that Norse mythology would bestow on its dragons. When it comes to his color, he is illustrated as black with golden scales.

Glaurung was created to be evil as the evil lord Morgoth created Glaurung to destroy his enemies during the Siege of Angband. Morgoth could not create life out of nothing, so the creation of dragons is said to be by corrupting already existing beasts, probably a lizard, although this theory is heavily speculated. When Glaurung emerged at the siege of Angband, he was still very young and not in his full strength with very little protection since his scales were not yet fully grown. Still, he managed to drive off the elves; however, just for a while because Fingon charged Glaurung with a group of archers, and Glaurung was forced to retreat.⁵⁷

Morgoth was not pleased with Glaurung revealing himself before he reached full power, and furthermore, he leaked the existence of dragons. Twenty years after the siege of Angband, Glaurung, with his brood, would have joined the counterattack against the races of men, elves, and dwarves in the battle of Nirnaeth. When the battle seemed lost for Morgoth, he sent forth his final attack on the third morning, where wolves and their riders,

⁵⁷ TOLKIEN, J. *The Silmarillion*. 1977. Of the Return of the Noldor

Balrogs, dragons, and Glaurung emerged to turn the tide of battle. Glaurung was indeed very powerful, having withered both Elves and Men and swept apart the hosts of Maedhros and Fingon. It would also be his visage that made many of the Easterlings flee in terror. Furthermore, the sons of Ulfang would join Morgoth and his forces. While Men and Elves were devastated by Glaurung, the Dwarves of Belegost stood their ground valiantly as they were more accustomed to fire. Their axes made their way through Glaurung's armor, and he turned in fury towards the leader of the Dwarves, Azaghâl, Lord of Belegost. Glaurung would crawl over him and strike him down; however, with his dying breath, Azaghâl would pierce Glaurung's belly with his knife, thus making him retreat. Gothmog, the Lord of Balrogs, would assume command instead of wounded Glaurung, and together with other Balrogs, he would win the battle for the forces of Morgoth.⁵⁸

After this battle, Morgoth decided to attack Nargothrond (an ancient Elven city). Glaurung, with a company of orcs, met with Elves who chose to march out of Nargothrond and charge Glaurung's army in the battle of Tumhalad. However, this decision turned out to be a disaster. King Orodreth was slain, and the Elves themselves were dominated. The leader of the elves, a human, named Túrin Turambar, tried to hold Glaurung back, but he was unsuccessful, and Glaurung and his army entered Nargothrond. While his army was sacking the city, Glaurung emerged out of the doors of Nargothrond just in time when Túrin arrived. Glaurung gazed at Túrin and put him under a spell. While Túrin could not move, Glaurung told him that he had to choose between saving his lover Finduilas or his mother and sister. Túrin decided to save his family and traveled to rescue them. This was a ruse by Glaurung because Túrin's family was safe in Doriath. Meanwhile, Glaurung took down a bridge that was the only path inside Nargothrond, forced all of his orcs out, and fell asleep on a hoard of gold and other valuables he had ransacked.⁵⁹

For a time, Glaurung slept, but he was awakened by a group sent to learn the fate of Túrin. In this group were, among others, Morwen and Nienor, Túrin's mother and sister. Glaurung submerged himself into the water, and because of the heat his body produced,

⁵⁸ TOLKIEN, J. *The Silmarillion*. 1977. Of the Fifth Battle: Nirnaeth

⁵⁹ TOLKIEN, J. *The Tale of the Children of Húrin*. 2007. The Fall of Nargothrond

he created a mist in which he ambushed Nienor and put her under a spell, similar to the one he cast on Túrin; however, in this case, it completely erased Nienor's memory.⁶⁰

During the following years, Glaurung built his own army of orcs and became the dragon king. During this time, Nienor wandered into Brethil, where she encountered Túrin, and they fell in love. It happened because Túrin had never met his sister, and Nienor was still under the influence of Glaurung's memory spell. Glaurung sent waves of orcs to attack Brethil and Túrin decided to kill Glaurung by stealth because he was sure they could not overcome him by force. He hid in a gorge, and when Glaurung was traversing said gorge, he emerged and drove his black sword Gurthang into Glaurung's soft and unprotected belly.⁶¹ This turned out to be a fatal blow, but before Glaurung died, Túrin lost consciousness due to Glaurung's toxic blood; Glaurung then revealed his deeds to Nienor, who was washed over by a wave of anguish, understanding the actions she took, and upon the scene of her brother's dead body she decided to leap from the cliff to end her life. After a while, Túrin awoke, and realizing what had happened, he performed seppuku, killing himself with his black sword Gurthang. The ending of the *Tale of the Children of Húrin* closely resembles *Romeo and Juliet* from the pen of William Shakespeare. Tolkien took inspiration from *Beowulf*, so it would be no surprise if he were to take inspiration from another English classic.⁶²

3.2 Ancalagon the Black

After the Glaurung was defeated, Morgoth was determined to create more powerful dragons. Having destroyed most of the Elves and the Men of Beleriand, he wanted to wipe them off for good. With Morgoth growing more powerful every day, Eärendil, the half-elven half-human, built a ship Vingilótë and sailed away to seek help. During his voyage, Elwing brought Silmaril (a potent magical gem containing the light of the two trees of Valinor) after being transformed into a bird by the Valar (god) Ulmo (Lord of the Waters). With Silmaril in his possession, he managed to break the spells of the sea and enter Valinor. There he begged the Valar for help, and they settled the matter by mustering the Host of Valar and sailing to face Morgoth.⁶³

⁶⁰ TOLKIEN, J. *The Tale of the Children of Húrin*. 2007. The journey of Marwen and Nienor to Nargothrond.

⁶¹ Ibid *The Death of Glaurung*

⁶² Ibid *The Death of Túrin*

⁶³ TOLKIEN, J. *The Silmarillion*. 1977. Of the Voyage of Eärendil and the War of Wrath

Things get very complicated during the War of Wrath, regarding power scaling. The Host of Valar are comprised of Maiar (demi-gods), an ancient army of Elves of Valinor (a much stronger version of the Elves seen in Beleriand), and they were all blessed by the Valar. With this army, most of the Balrogs were killed save for a few that hid in deep caverns (e.g., Durin's Bane). In addition, legions of Orcs were annihilated as they were no match for the magically imbued Elves and Maiar. When the war was seen as won for the Host of Valar, Morgoth sent forth his final force.⁶⁴

*Then, seeing that his hosts were overthrown and his power dispersed, Morgoth quailed, and he dared not to come forth himself. But he loosed upon his foes the last desperate assault that he had prepared, and out of the pits of Angband there issued the winged dragons, that had not before been seen; and so sudden and ruinous was the onset of that dreadful fleet that the host of the Valar was driven back, for the coming of the dragons was with great thunder, and lightning, and a tempest of fire.*⁶⁵ And the leader of those winged dragons was Ancalagon the Black. He is described as the mightiest of the dragons and the most colossal. His size is heavily debated and the only information we have on his size is that when he fell, his body destroyed Thangorodrim (three enormous volcanoes, each with a height of 10.6 kilometres): It means that he must have been gargantuan. It comes as no shock that the Host of Valar stopped in their push and were transfixed by the monstrosity. Nevertheless, Ancalagon, with his dragons, managed to destroy a significant portion of the Host of Valar and pushed them back. This was an extraordinary feat as we must remember that the Host of Valar was an army of demi-gods.⁶⁶

However, Ancalagon did not overcome the Host of Valar as Eärendil came from Valinor on board Vingilotë, which was now blessed by the Valar and flew in the skies. With him came the eagles with their captain Thorondor and with the power of the Silmaril, they managed to defeat the dragons, and Eärendil slew Ancalagon after a whole day of combat. As Ancalagon fell from the sky, his body destroyed the towers of Thangorodrim (three enormous volcanoes, each with a height of 10.6 kilometers).⁶⁷

Ancalagon was not Maiar, let alone Valar, so how exactly did he manage to wreak so much havoc? When we analyze the first line of the extract, we can see the answer.

⁶⁴ TOLKIEN, J. *The Silmarillion*. 1977. Of the Voyage of Eärendil and the War of Wrath

⁶⁵ Ibid

⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁷ Ibid

Morgoth was a Valar and arguably the most powerful out of all of them. He drew some of his power with his creations and dispersed it into smaller portions among his army. When the time of the battle came, and the Host of the Valar came to the gates of Angband, he was too weak to face them. This would mean that he has granted the most considerable portion of his power to his most incredible, most terrible servant yet – Ancalagon the Black.

3.3 Smaug

After Morgoth's defeat in War of the Wrath, many of his dragons survived and began to live in seclusion. Many of these dragons made nests in the Grey Mountains of Middle Earth. After disturbing the Balrog that lived in the caverns of Moria, the Dwarven king Durin the VI. perishes in flames, and the Dwarves are forced to leave Moria and settle somewhere else. Eventually, they settle in the Grey Mountains and live there peacefully until encountering the dragons of the North, who begin a war with the dwarves, and although the Dwarves are resilient, they too are forced to move. This time they go straight to the Lonely Mountain, where some dwarves already live, and Thrór becomes the king of Erebor. Some of these Dwarves also continue east and take up residence in the Iron Hills.⁶⁸

It is uncertain whether Smaug takes part in the conflict in the Grey Mountains as he is referred to as very young both by Gandalf and by himself.⁶⁹ After the war with the dragons, the kingdom of Erebor thrives, and the Dwarves become wealthy, and with them, the town of Dale also flourishes. Unfortunately, this period of bloom ends with the invasion of Smaug. Smaug burns the local forest and eventually attacks the city of Dale killing the Lord of Dale Girion. He then points his attention on Erebor and breaks into the keep leaving no Dwarf alive. Only king Thrór and his son Thrain II escape the fiery doom of Smaug by exiting through a hidden door in the rock. Smaug becomes the master of treasure and rests upon the mountains of gold and gems, occasionally venturing out to destroy more of Dale, which becomes known as the Desolation of the Dragon.⁷⁰

Smaug is described as a red-golden dragon with immense intellect and cunning. He is winged and breathes fire. Tolkien's fantasy world is regressive, meaning that Smaug is

⁶⁸ TOLKIEN, J. *The Lord of The Rings*. 2009. The Appendix A: Durin's Folk

⁶⁹ TOLKIEN, J. *The Hobbit*. 2009. The Unexpected Party

⁷⁰ Ibid On the Doorstep

nowhere near the size and power of his predecessors like Glaurung or Ancalagon. However, his power is not to be taken lightly. He has six limbs in total featuring four legs and two wings, while in the movie version, he is portrayed as a wyvern (different species of dragon with two hind legs and two wings with claws). The size difference is also noticeable between the book and the movie. In the movie, he is 150 meters in length, making him larger than Glaurung, which is incorrect. In the book, he is described as unable to fit his head in a 1.6-meter door which would make his size about 18 meters in length. Still, he is the greatest dragon of the Third Age.⁷¹

After almost 200 years of undisturbed rest after the sacking of Erebor, Smaug's slumber is disturbed by Bilbo Baggins, who follows the quest, which is the story of *The Hobbit*. Bilbo steals an enormous gold cup and returns it to the Dwarfs. Smaug, now much older and in full power, is woken by the draft of air coming from the secret door and discovers the cup missing, which angers him greatly. When Bilbo returns next (invisible as the effect of him wearing the One Ring), Smaug pretends to be sound asleep, and when he smells Bilbo, he confronts him, beginning a conversation. In this part, we see Smaug's immense intellect and cunning, as well as his greed for gold.

"Well, thief! I smell you and I feel your air. I hear your breath. Come along!

Help yourself again, there is plenty and to spare!

But Bilbo was not quite so unlearned in dragon-lore as all that, and if Smaug hoped to get him to come nearer so easily he was disappointed.

"No thank you, O Smaug the Tremendous!" he replied. "I did not come for presents. I only wished to have a look at you and see if you were truly as great as tales say. I did not believe them."

"Do you now?" said the dragon somewhat flattered, even though he did not believe a word of it."⁷²

In this conversation, we can see the undeniable inspiration Tolkien took from the story of the gold-greedy dragon Fafnir. The dialog Sigurd has with Fafnir resembles that of Bilbo and Smaug. Furthermore, a dragon that protects his golden hoard against an intruder

⁷¹ FONSTAD, K. *The Atlas of Middle-Earth*. 1992. Laketown

⁷² TOLKIEN, J. *The Hobbit*. 2009. The Inside Information

became a story classic that became the familiar image of a dragon often found in Fairytales (perhaps with the addition of a princess).

They start exchanging their titles, and Bilbo boasts about being "the barrel rider". This alerts Smaug about the involvement of the people of Laketown in the plot to take his treasure, and he flies out of Erebor to attack the town. The archers fire at Smaug vigorously, but all the arrows bounce off his scaly armor. Smaug burns one building after another until his rampage is stopped by Bard, who reaches for the last arrow in his quiver. As it happens, it is the magical Black Arrow that was passed on to him by his father Girion, and he sends forth the arrow into the bare patch in the Smaug's otherwise impenetrable armor. The arrow pierces Smaug's heart, killing him instantly.⁷³

Smaug was the greatest dragon of the third age and the last great dragon to appear in Tolkien's tales. While he pales in comparison with his predecessors, he did strike terror in the hearts of many. He was arguably the most intelligent of all the dragons and undoubtedly the most talkative and arrogant. The idea of his impenetrable armor was ultimately his downfall as he failed to cover the weak spot at his belly. Smaug also had the most extended appearance of all the dragons, and his was also the most memorable. While Ancalagon the Black was the greatest dragon in Tolkien's universe, his appearance lasted for two paragraphs.

3.4 Symbolic Function

When discussing the question of evil or good, there is no denying that Tolkien's dragons are inherently pure evil, and it is no surprise that this is the case as they were created for this very reason; to be evil and destroy the races of the good. During the many tales dragons appear in, we will hardly find a moment where a dragon would show remorse or mercy. Perhaps it can be argued that during Túrin's encounter with Glaurung at the gates of Nargothrond, Glaurung did spare Túrin's life. He had him paralyzed and could end his life in an instant. Nevertheless, this was not an act of mercy but rather of torment. By doing so, he wanted Túrin to suffer and put before him Sophie's choice by letting Túrin decide between saving his lover or mother and sister. Furthermore, when Túrin rushed to save his family, leaving Finduilas behind, he realized this was an evil ruse by Glaurung since his family was not in mortal peril but relatively safe and sound. However, this was

⁷³ TOLKIEN, J. *The Hobbit*. 2009. Fire and Water

not the case for Finduilas, for when Túrin finally got to her, she was already butchered by Glaurung's orcs. Another point of a dragon prolonging the hero's life to have a conversation was during Bilbo's title exchanges with Smaug; however, this was simply a show of Smaug indulging in the desperation that Bilbo felt and his arrogance. Enjoying the suffering of their foes is a common theme for both Glaurung and Smaug, which would further portray their evil cunning.

Morgoth created dragons to make them his servants that would heed his every command. This would not be the case as dragons were indeed intelligent and acted upon their free will as seen when Glaurung took down the bridge in Nargothrond and became the dragon-king. Glaurung also made a hoard of gold and gems. This would be the same for Smaug who took Erebor by his own will and slept on a hoard of treasure similar to that of Glaurung. Who knows what would happen if Ancalagon the Black survived the War of Wrath and decided to go on on his own. It should be also noted that dragons are immortal, same as Elves, meaning that if the Black Arrow would have missed, Smaug could very well be living in Erebor forever.

Regarding the dragon hoards, it would seem that Tolkien wanted to highlight the dragon lust for gold. This would be reference to Fafnir who became so obsessed by the gold given to his father by Loki that he would murder his father and take the gold himself transforming into gold-greedy dragon. Glaurung was so hungry for gold that he forced out all his orcs from Nargothrond to make it his own abode. Smaug's gold-greediness made him to wake from his sleep when Bilbo stole one goblet from his hoard, and in anger at this theft, he looked everywhere in Erebor, ate the ponies of the dwarfs and eventually gone so far to storm the Laketown in furious savagery.

4 Dragons in the works of Christopher Paolini

4.1 Saphira

When Brom with his friend Jeod managed to sneak into the evil King Galbatorix's storeroom and steal one of the dragon eggs, Arya, the daughter of the Elven Queen Islanzadí, ferried the egg between the races of Elves and Men in hope that dragon inside the egg would hatch and thus begin the new era of Dragon Riders. During one of the rides between the Varden and Elves, her Elven party is ambushed by the Shade Durza and his Urgals. Arya in a desperate attempt sends the egg away to Brom in Carvahall, but with the assistance of certain third party located on Vroengard, it so happens that the egg instead goes to Eragon, a 16-year-old farmhand. From the egg hatches Saphira, a sapphire blue female dragon. The story of *The Inheritance Cycle* begins.

All the dragons in the *Inheritance Cycle* communicate telepathically with their riders or other beings but the link between the rider and his dragon is the strongest. For when the bond is severed by killing either the dragon or the rider the trauma is usually so great that the other being goes mad or dies of grief. Dragons are beings of magic, in fact, the only reason their riders can cast spells is because of their dragons. However, dragons cannot cast magic at will as their riders can. The magic seems to just happen around dragons. Nonetheless, when a dragon does produces magic in some way it is usually not bound by the common rules of magic.

Saphira grows up to be a formidable opponent, and she particularly excels at flying. Each dragon has its unique personality. Saphira is fierce and protective, but at the same time playful and caring. When Eragon does something stupid, she is there to save him, and often lectures him. Throughout the story, we can see the character development of both Eragon and Saphira. In the beginning, they are weak and ignorant of many things as well as rash in their actions. However, this gradually changes as the story progresses. Their senses become keen, and their decisions become calculated and thought of.

Saphira also has moments where she experiences existential dread of being the last of her kind. Her longing to meet someone of her race is visible through the many conversations she has with Eragon. We also know that her being the last female dragon is the only reason for their survival. Through all their adventures and conquests, they have to deal with many different servants of the evil King Galbatorix. However, they also mention on

numerous occasions that if the King wanted them dead, he would fly out of his keep and destroy them instantly. Later, we get to know the reasoning behind his inaction. Galbatorix wants to breed dragons again, and since Saphira is the last female dragon to exist, it is of vast importance to him that she stays alive so he could mate her with another dragon inside the two yet unhatched eggs. In the second book she meets Glaedr, an old golden dragon who becomes her and Eragon's mentor. Saphira experiences immense ecstasy as she realizes that she is not alone and that another member of her race breathes in front of her eyes. She admires Glaedr and is often playful around him. However, he does not wish to mate with her, which saddens Saphira greatly. This happens around time when Eragon's love for Arya is also rejected and so Eragon and Saphira grieve together.

Saphira is also presented as competitive when fighting with Thorn, newly hatched male red dragon that carries Eragon's half-brother Murtagh. They meet in battle on numerous occasions with both couples trading upperhand. Both Murtagh and Eragon do not wish to kill each other as they were friends until Murtagh was kidnapped and forced to serve Galbatorix. In the end, Eragon thinks of a plan to free Murtagh and Thorn from the magical grasp of the King and together they defeat him by stealing the last egg from which Fírnien, a green male dragon, hatches for Arya. Saphira finds a love partner in Fírnien, and they share many wonderful moments with each other before Saphira and Eragon have to depart Alagaësia forever.

Saphira, being the main protagonist of the story, offers us a deep understanding of the nature of a dragon in Paolini's world. Dragons, similarly to humans, possess unique personalities and traits. They are magical, noble, caring but also ferocious and protective. They are not seen as beasts but rather as a race of higher power. They are rigorously worshiped by the Elves, however, respected and somewhat feared by other races. With the fall of the Dragon riders of old, Saphira and Eragon need to establish the ancient order again, viewed as heralds of a new era.

4.2 Glaedr

Glaedr is a golden dragon hatched for the Elf Oromis during the era of the Dragon Riders. As Oromis received training from the leader of the Dragon Riders, Vrael himself, he quickly rose to be one of the most talented Dragon Riders. However, when Galbatorix's dragon was killed, Oromis was one of the elders that refused to provide Galbatorix with a new dragon. During the Galbatorix rebellion that followed, Oromis and Glaedr were

trapped by two of the forsworn. They managed to kill them; however, Glaedr lost one of his legs, Oromis was cursed by one of the Forsworn, and he could not cast magic effectively for the rest of his life. After their fight, they returned to Ellesméra, and the Queen decided to shelter them and hide them from Galbatorix's sight so they could instruct a new dragon rider if they ever emerged in Alagaësia.

During Eragon's fight with the Shade, Durza Glaedr and Oromis focused their power, helped them in their battle, and told them to come to Ellesméra for training and instruction. When Eragon and Saphira arrived in Ellesméra, Queen Islanzadí made them swear secrecy in the ancient language so the existence of Glaedr and Oromis would remain hidden. Oromis began training Eragon in the art of magic, and Glaedr taught Saphira in navigation, air currents, battle tactics, survival and other skills. They would also teach them the importance of cooperation and sharing their knowledge.

During the training, Saphira often flirted with Glaedr, but he ignored her remarks. Then, one day Glaedr decided to show Saphira an abandoned nesting place of wild dragons, and Saphira tried to mate with Glaedr, but he rejected her, and they got in a fight, wounding each other greatly. After this incident, Saphira never flirted with Glaedr again.

When the final part of the training was completed Glaedr and Oromis decided to fly out of Ellesméra to aid Queen Islanzadí in battle. As Eragon's and Saphira's training was finished and there was nothing else to teach them, they would come to the conclusion that their best course of action would be to aid their brethren in battle to give them hope, even if this would mean their death. However, before they departed Glaedr revealed to Eragon and Saphira the true source of Galbatorix's power. Each dragon has a secret gem hidden in their stomach called the Eldunari (The Heart of Hearts). Dragon could willingly remove their Eldunari and give it to someone. That someone would be able to communicate with the dragon even if he were far away. Furthermore, if the dragon would die his soul would continue to live inside the Eldunari meaning the person would have access to their magical energy and could continue communicating with them. Galbatorix had in his grasp hundreds of Eldunaris and their combined power allowed him to overcome any foe since dragons have more energy than regular spellcasters. After explaining this to Eragon and Saphira, Glaedr gave them his own Eldunari.

When Glaedr and Oromis arrived at the dawn of battle they quickly destroyed a good chunk of Galbatorix's army. However, Murtagh with his dragon Thorn appeared and

engaged them. While old and crippled, Glaedr and Oromis managed to gain the upperhand and wound them. In that moment Galbatorix took control of Murtagh's body and attacked them. Oromis drew power from the jewel set in his sword, and when Galbatorix's discovered Oromis's source of power, he disarmed him and fatally wounded him. Glaedr, engulfed in rage at his dearest companion's death, charged Thorn clawing and biting. However, soon he was killed as well. It took a long time before he ever spoke to Eragon and Saphira from his Eldunari, and even after Eragon managed to kill Galbatorix with Glaedr's help, Glaedr never truly recovered from the loss of his other half.

4.3 Shruikán

Shruikán and Glaedr were the only dragons that survived the Riders' fall in their physical form. However, for very different reasons. As mentioned earlier, Galbatorix's dragon perished at the hands of the Urgals, and when he demanded the elders for a new dragon, they rejected him. With the help of Morzan, he killed one of the dragon riders, and using black magic, he enslaved his dragon and made him serve him. He tormented him into submission and gave him the name Shruikán, another transgression against this dragon as dragons choose their name themselves.

Shruikán was black and since Galbatorix magically enhanced his growth he has grown into massive proportions. At the end of the fourth book his head was as large as entire body of Saphira. He truly was a behemoth however this came at a cost since his growth was not natural and together with the mental torment, he experienced made his mind broken beyond repair. When Eragon and Saphira gazed into his bright, gem-like, blue eye they saw just a desolate mental plain filled with anger and madness of a previously majestic dragon.

When the fight broke out in the throne room, Saphira and Thorn distracted Shruikán while Arya stabbed Shruikán through the eye with Dauthdaert (ancient Elven lance made for killing dragons). This has upset Arya greatly as Elves worship dragons. It needs to be mentioned however that Arya set Shruikán free from his ceaseless torture. The story of Shruikán is a tragic one filled with despair and madness. After the formation of the Forsworn (Galbatorix's group of evil dragon riders) the remaining dragons joined in unison and performed a complicated spell known as Banishment of the Names. This spell deleted the names of the dragons that served the Forsworn. They would disappear from

all the texts, mentions and most notably from the minds of the Forsworn and the dragons themselves. Rendering them as mere beasts. Only dragon that was spared was Shruikan.

4.4 Symbolic function

Undeniably, Paolini's dragons serve an entirely different purpose than those found in Tolkien's works. They are viewed as beings of a higher, more graceful race and simultaneously retain some of their animalistic impulses. Throughout the story, we can witness many aspects of a dragon's nature, from being compassionate and proud to being protective and ferocious.

Each dragon is unique in terms of his personality. Saphira is impulsive, playful, and caring and treats Eragon with motherly care. Glaedr is proud, wise, and experienced but is not afraid to show anger and distaste. While we do not learn much about Thorn's personality, we can confidently say that he is determined, brave, pleasant, and able to show respect and gratitude. Fírnen is still very young when we encounter him in the story. However, he is energetic and ambitious. And perhaps the noblest and most regal of the dragons is Umaroth, the dragon of the late leader of the Dragon Riders Vrael.

While dragons are proud and often show ferocity, they serve the powers of the good. However, they can be corrupted by their riders and so change their nature. This is only true for dragons that bond with a rider, as others do not easily influence wild dragons. They also retain more animalistic impulses than bonded dragons do. Furthermore, dragons, in general, are very honest. We do not meet a dragon that would lie or trick somebody. This is also the reason why so many of them perished as they trusted other members of their order.

5 Tolkien's and Paolini's dragons: Comparison

5.1 Physical Aspects

Both Tolkien and Paolini seem to have created one dragon that was of gargantuan size. However, Shruikan pales in comparison to Ancalagon the Black as the dragon of the War of Wrath remains among the most enormous dragons ever found in fantasy literature. A point has to be made about the way the dragons grow. While in Tolkien's universe, the general rule seems to be that dragons reach a specific size and stay the same for the rest of their lives. However, all the dragons in the Inheritance Cycle never stop growing. This is confirmed when Eragon and Saphira discover the skeletal remains of Belgabad, who was an ancient wild dragon that rose to the size of Shruikan. Paolini made Shruikan and Belgabad enormous to evoke fear. All the other named dragons in both authors' works seem to be around a similar size, with the exception of Glaedr and Glaurung, being around three times bigger than the others.

The dragons' color also seems symbolic in terms of their function in the stories. Ancalagon and Shruikan symbolize fear with their black color. Glaurung is portrayed as golden-black, which signifies fear with the addition of the lust for gold being presented by the golden scales. This seems to be also the idea for Smaug, where his golden scales are supplemented with red skin, illustrating the fiery destruction he causes. The bright blue scales that Saphira bears symbolize the hope people felt with the return of a dragon rider. Furthermore, the green Fírnen portrays the new seed that was planted to regrow the "tree" that was destroyed.

Undeniably, all the dragons breathe fire, both Tolkien's and Paolini's alike. However, in terms of the effectiveness of the dragon breath, Tolkien's dragons stand victorious. The armies of Elves, Men, and Dwarves feared the dragon fire for the chaos and destruction it caused in their ranks. Furthermore, the dragon fire could melt the rings of power except for the Elven ones and the One Ring. Dragons of Alagaësia fall short in terms of fire breath only because all the warriors have wards from magicians that protect them against fire, among other things.

However, where Paolini's dragons shine are magical abilities. While in Tolkien's universe, only Glaurung is seen producing magic of some sort, dragons of Alagaësia do all kinds of complicated magic. They also retain enormous reserves of energy which they

often lend to their Riders to defeat other spellcasters. Nevertheless, Glaurung is seen to use magic when needed, while Saphira and others cannot directly weave magic by will. The magic happens around dragons naturally, which is also why the Dragon Riders can cast spells themselves without magical training.

5.2 Psychological Aspects

Notoriously known for their cunning, Tolkien's dragons are very intelligent and are often seen commanding the armies of evil. Moreover, they do have the ability to speak aloud, while Paolini's dragons can only communicate telepathically. However, this does not mean that the dragons of Alagaësia would be any less intelligent. On the contrary, with the ability to continue gaining experience through the Eldunari even when they die, the dragons may possibly be the wisest among the races.

The most common emotions that the likes of Smaug or Glaurung possess are anger, greed, and malice. However, the emotional spectrum of the dragons in the *Inheritance Cycle* is far more complex and convoluted. This lack of positive emotions for the dragons in Tolkien's universe can be universally explained as the emphasis on them being evil. On the other hand, the dragons in Paolini's world have complex personalities, so they can be viewed as an intelligent race rather than mere beasts.

5.3 Symbolical Function

The contrast between evil and good is easily recognized when comparing these two fantasy universes. As we see the dragons as a noble, proud and caring race in the *Inheritance Cycle*, we might wonder about the question what is it that made dragons generally viewed as evil? A well-constructed argument is found in the *Witcher*, a Polish fantasy classic where sorceress Yennefer mentions why the dragons should be destroyed. According to the sorceress, it all comes down to human reproduction. The only way a human child can reach adulthood is by caring for it and nurturing it for a long time. When a woman is expecting a child, she needs a safe environment where she can give birth peacefully and without fear. A woman expecting a child can find such safety behind the city walls where no monster would wander. However, the dragon's fire is destructive in the densely populated settlement; it becomes the most significant danger to the pregnant woman. And not only her but hundreds of victims would be swallowed by flames if a

dragon were to attack a human city. That is why dragons are thought of as the ultimate evil.⁷⁴

The possible danger of a dragon burning down a town is well illustrated when Smaug destroys the city of Dale and later attacks Laketown. While Saphira and Eragon also attack cities together, Saphira does not burn down buildings or kill innocent people. Furthermore, Saphira is also seen respecting surrender and showing mercy. On the other hand, Glaurung does not show mercy to Túrin; even though he does not kill him, he lets him suffer and indulges in his despair. Even after Glaurung is killed, he still manages to drive Nienor and Túrin into the abyss of dread and make them commit suicide.

The image of a dragon destroying everything human is well documented in Tolkien's work. However, the dragon motif in Paolini is entirely different. Dragons are viewed as the noble race of ethical beings that surpass other races in wisdom and might. They also feel empathy, as seen when Saphira convinced Eragon to accept Urgals as his allies even though they saw them killing innocent children and women. In contrast, Glaurung looks down on orcs as vermin. He gladly sends them to battle as foot soldiers, but he drives them all away when he discovers the treasure in Nargothrond.

*“If you want to know what a man’s like, take a good look at how he treats his inferiors, not his equals.” – Sirius Black*⁷⁵

⁷⁴ SAPKOWSKI, A. *Sword of Destiny*. 2015. The Bounds of Reason, Chapter 6.

⁷⁵ ROWLING, J. *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. 2014. Chapter 27 – Padfoot returns

6 Conclusion

The theoretical part provides information on several dragons from four mythologies, three European and one Asian. With that in mind, the research shows that not only do the European mythologies differ from the Asian one, but they also differ heavily from each other respectively. Furthermore, these nonconformities do not emerge in symbolic function alone. Throughout Greece, the UK, Scandinavia, and China, dragons possess a different number of limbs, different colors, and other features. Coupled with the discrepancies in the ability to fly or breathe fire, the dragons would often not be regarded as the same species altogether.

Throughout the years, the generally accepted appearance of a dragon would slowly become more uniform. In other words, the modern fantasy authors would make the appearance of the dragon not as diverse as previously. Having said that, while Tolkien and Paolini did share the general idea, their dragons would have ground for divergence. This is especially true when the role dragons play in the author's works is questioned.

While similar in appearance, the dragons of Tolkien and Paolini are nothing alike in their disposition and behavior. Even though Paolini was inspired by Tolkien, he decided to present a different kind of dragon. While many readers would be of the opinion that Tolkien is the most exquisite fantasy author that has ever lived, Paolini managed to introduce an aspect of a friendly, caring, and relatable dragon to millions of young adults around the world.

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