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MALE DOMINATION AND DIVERSITY IN *THE HOBBIT*

Santa Maria, RS

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Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso apresentado ao Curso de Letras – Inglês e Literaturas de Língua Inglesa, da Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (UFSM, RS), como requisito parcial para obtenção do título de **Licenciado em Letras – Inglês e Literaturas de Língua Inglesa**.

Orientadora: Prof^a. Dr^a. Vera Lúcia Lenz Vianna

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RESUMO

DOMINAÇÃO E DIVERSIDADE MASCULINA EM *O HOBBIT*

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O presente trabalho tem como objetivo analisar a diversidade de figuras masculinas em *The Hobbit*, narrativa de fantasia escrita por J.R.R. Tolkien. São apresentados alguns elementos do gênero Fantasia, para situar o romance analisado em seu gênero literário, bem como uma breve análise da sociedade na qual a história ocorre. Tomando como base a teoria de Pierre Bourdieu sobre o patriarcado, a invisibilidade feminina neste universo é discutida de modo a introduzir este ambiente masculino diverso. Após a explanação sobre o universo diegético criado por Tolkien e sobre as normas pelas quais as diversas sociedades inseridas na narrativa funcionam, o foco de análise passa a ser os personagens actantes do romance. Através da análise de personagens de diferentes espécies – Bilbo Baggins (hobbit), Thorin Oakenshield (anão), Gandalf (mago), Elrond e Elvenking (elfos) e Beorn (troca-peles) – é possível identificar a diversidade masculina presente entre as espécies, bem como as relações sociais que ocorrem dentro deste universo. Por ser uma narrativa amplamente conhecida atualmente, tal análise é necessária para que haja um diálogo sobre o papel e o conteúdo da obra na sociedade atual.

Palavras-Chave: Fantasia, Literatura Popular, Dominação Masculina.

ABSTRACT

MALE DOMINATION AND DIVERSITY IN *THE HOBBIT*

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This paper aims to analyze the diversity of masculine figures in *The Hobbit*, a fantasy novel written by J.R.R. Tolkien. Some elements of the Fantasy genre are introduced, in order to locate the analyzed novel in its literary genre, as well as a brief analysis on the society in which the story takes place. The female invisibility is discussed based on Pierre Bourdieu's theory on the patriarchy, as a means to introduce this diverse male universe. After the explanation on Tolkien's diegetic universe and the rules in which "Middle Earth's" societies are based on, the focus of analysis will be the actant characters of the novel. Through the analysis of characters from different species – Bilbo Baggins (hobbit), Thorin Oakenshield (dwarf), Gandalf (wizard), Elrond e Elvenking (elves) e Beorn (skin-changer) – it is possible to identify the variety amongst the species, as well as the social relations that take place in this universe. Because nowadays *The Hobbit* is widely known, such analysis is necessary to start a dialogue about the novel's content and part in current society.

Keywords: Fantasy, Popular Literature, Male Domination

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INTRODUCTION

The perspective towards art, therefore, literature, has changed throughout the centuries, but it changed around the same question: what is the function of art? According to Proust (apud Compagnon, 2012, p. 24), only through art we can distance ourselves from our own cultural values and acknowledge how others see the world, a world that would remain unknown if there was no art or no contemplation of art.

Literature is a form of art expression, though there is often a prejudice against popular literature, especially those spread by the cultural industry and consumed by the mass. There are always a number of critics and scholars that usually have the inclination to assume that the majority of work massively consumed is automatically vain and has nothing to offer to the high culture. The view of popular literature as poor and not worthy of study keeps many readers away from it and its possibilities, once the intellectual and elitist view of the literary canon does not consider popular culture. Such view is reproduced inside schools and out in the society.

This perspective affects the way literature is taught at schools, once students learn what the critics are saying about the text instead of what the text is saying to the reader (TODOROV, 2009, p. 27). Nowadays, the scientific view of literature is the most reproduced at schools, where children learn how to analyze narratives according to their historical period and focusing on aspects of style instead of reading, enjoying and debating the text itself and its relations with our society and our lives. This change of values, to turn the analytical tools into the main objective of literature, limits the dialogue between reader and text, because the reader will not look at the text as knowledge or experience to be acquired, but as a register that they need to identify.

The Hobbit is a book written by J. R. R. Tolkien in 1937, and it is a prelude to the famous trilogy *The Lord of the Rings* (*TLOTR*). *The Hobbit* has not received attention from the intellectual audience, once it is not considered canonical, i.e. it is a part of popular culture, and it has been forgotten by the mass culture because it lies on the shadow of its sequence (*TLOTR*). The narrative developed by Tolkien is not a representation of reality; as a fantasy story, it takes place in a fictional universe of its own, created and developed according to its own terms. However, even the most imaginative universe has its connection with the real world, the world of the reader, and in “Middle Earth” is not different.

Literature has many times, usually in past decades, been seen as a realm that functions

according to its own rules and has no relation to the empirical world and, therefore as a self-sufficient language object, as Todorov (2009) points out and criticizes. However, literature is not produced nor received outside a sociocultural context, so it is important to make a connection between the novel we are reading (and teaching) with the outside world. Teaching literary theory and focusing on the text might help students to comprehend the content of the narrative, but there is the necessity – once we live in society and should try to understand it – of relating this literary work with our reality, in order to provide substantial meaning that goes beyond the limits of the text and can alter somehow the life of our students (the readers).

Because the literary studies in school usually follows the tendency of refusing a connection between literature and world, the relations between the fantasy world created by Tolkien and the empirical world must be pointed out once this novel is in the bookshelf of most of libraries and bookstores and it has been consumed by several youngsters who we are going to encounter at our classes.

“Middle Earth”, according to Tolkien, is our world in another imaginative level. In this universe, several mythical creatures live amongst each other, relating to one another by kinship and needs. There are dwarves, elves, hobbits, wizards, orcs and humans, each with specific knowledge and abilities, exchanging services and living in relative harmony.

The book has been widely reported and known by the great public thanks to the recently produced movies, and is considered a children’s book, i.e., has no restriction on age of its public target. Lescaut (apud. Compagnon, 2012, p. 38) argues that beyond the pleasure of a nice reading, there are several moments that will instruct in morality, lecturing while amusing, and for this reason, it is important to analyze the narrative problematizing its representability and its role as a literary work in society.

Although *The Hobbit* was rediscovered by the mass culture, there is often prejudice against it, ignoring its potential as a literary work worthy of studying and reflection, being received by the critics as a mere shallow entertainment piece. However, the nonprofessional reader finds in the text a sense of comprehension of men and world, discovers a beauty that enriches her existence and, therefore, enables her to comprehend herself (TODOROV, 2009, p. 32).

Throughout the centuries, different aspects were expected from literature: beauty, truth, moral lesson, social relevance; but there is always a relation to the world outside (even if it is to exclude it). Todorov (2009, p. 45-46) presents the basics of the classic theory of poetry to illustrate aspects that are repeated in different periods of History.

(...) according to Aristotle, poetry is an imitation of nature, and, according to Horatio, its function is to please and to instruct. The relation with the world is, thus, both the side of the author, that must know the realities of the world in order to 'imitate' them, and the side of the readers and listeners, that can, of course, find pleasure in these realities, but that retrieve from them applicable lessons to the rest of their existence.

Fantasy novels and other non-canonical genres in literature should be an object of study in schools throughout our country, with appropriate approaches and adaptations, in order to approximate student and literature. Nowadays, we have in Brazil a low reading rate, and bringing books largely enjoyed by an eclectic public, the texts our students are reading, is essential to change this reality.

Although *The Hobbit* is a fantasy book, we can find several similarities between the universe created by Tolkien and the real world, and being able to study and analyze these similarities can be truly rewarding as thousands of readers have testified. In this work, some aspects of the fantasy genre will be highlighted in order to a better comprehension of the genre. The main focus will be given towards male virility (of all 'species'), i.e. how these identities are constructed and represented in the narrative, how they coexist, as well as some characteristics they embody that can relate to our world. There will also be a brief analysis on how women are portrayed in the novel (or not portrayed), and the different types of male figure in different species of the "Middle Earth".

1. FANTASY AS A GENRE

Fantasy is a relatively new genre, but it has been a part of society even before literature. The old tales and stories passed orally through generations have several elements of fantasy, which shows that fantasy is present in people's imagination since History can recall. They are mainly a re-construction of myths and legends, and always concerned with past events – convention that is followed by the literary genre nowadays.

Tolkien, on his 'On Fairy Stories', provides Christian religions as an example of the need of fantasy in human kind (p. 15): "The Birth of Christ is the eucatastrophe of Man's history. The Resurrection is the eucatastrophe of the story of the Incarnation. This story begins and ends in joy." Tolkien defends the eucatastrophe as the true form of Fairystory, such as "Tragedy is the true form of Drama" (p. 13), therefore all good Fantasy has the element of eucatastrophe. On Tolkien's literary work it is a present element, not only the 'happy ending', but several points of relief, of salvation throughout the novel (such as Beorn in the final battle in *The Hobbit*, or the Eagles in both *The Hobbit* and *TLOTR*).

Magnus Vike, on his thesis “The Familiar and the Fantastic” (2009), highlights Tolkien’s importance to Fantasy genre as we know nowadays.

Tolkien went on to create his own mythology, and is today considered to be the greatest contributor to and foundation of modern fantasy literature, mainly because of *The Lord of the Rings*, which was first published in 1954-55. Much of the commercial success that is attributed to fantasy fiction is therefore closely connected to Tolkien’s success; although his works are the object for much scholarly and critical examination, his narrative and mythological structures provided a foundation of commercial reproduction. (p. 9-10)

This ‘reputation’ is due to his major piece, *TLOTR*, but *The Hobbit* was the first glimpse of Tolkien’s creation. It is important to remark that “Middle Earth” is a vast diegetic universe that can only be entirely apprehended through the reading of all Tolkien’s work – especially *The Silmarillion*, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. These novels take place in another world, i.e. a created fantasy world that it is not directly connected to ours at any point – they are, therefore, high fantasy novels; although it is possible to make certain associations in terms of some of the characteristics presented by the dwellers of Tolkien’s world.

Fantasy novels are usually concise within the fantasy universe it takes place. John Clute (1997), in “The Encyclopedia of Fantasy”, defines fantasy texts in general.

A fantasy text is a self-coherent narrative. When set in this world, it tells a story which is impossible in the world as we perceive it [...]; when set in an otherworld, that otherworld will be impossible, though stories set there may be possible in its terms. (apud VIKE, 2009, p. 10)

There are subgenres within the Fantasy genre. Fantasy narratives set in this world or somehow connected with this world – such as the *Harry Potter* sequence, or even the *Oz* books – are considered low fantasy. That is not related, of course, with their quality, but with their direct relation with ‘reality’. *Harry Potter* takes place both in “muggle” world, i.e. the non-magical world – the real world – and the magical fantasy world; Dorothy goes from Kansas (reality) to Oz (fantasy) in a hurricane. Because there are some sort of connection amongst the worlds, they are called low fantasy.

When this fantasy narrative is set in an otherworld, a world that could not be – such as the recent *A Song of Ice and Fire*, by George R. R. Martin, and *The Hobbit* and other Tolkien’s novels – are considered high fantasy. While in low fantasy the characters have access to both worlds, in high fantasy novels this otherworld is not accessible by any means because they are not at the same ‘place’ or time of the ‘real’ world.

High fantasy novels are usually concerned with past events, in a sort of epic view of

the myth, with a quest to be completed and a hero to complete it. *The Hobbit*, published for the first time in 1934, is one of the first examples of the High Fantasy [sub] genre and presents not only ‘modern’ heroes, the ones with flaws that the reader is used to see in novels, but also presents characters with features of the epic, classic heroes and a main heroic quest to be accomplished by the troupe.

2. PATRIARCHAL SOCIETIES AND MALE DOMINATION

The Hobbit has no female characters, presenting women only as links between male characters in the story, and even then, they do not appear often. The male characters, on the other hand, are presented to the reader as strong, courageous and intelligent people – independent of their species in the narrative. Having no appeal to sex and gender relations, the female submission has no legitimacy in the narrative itself, being an information that is taken for granted as a regular aspect of society.

Pierre Bourdieu (2012, p. 20) defends the idea that the biological differences between men and women, specifically of the anatomical differences of their genital organs, can be seen as a legitimation to the social difference amongst the genders and the male supremacy over women. Because women get pregnant and give birth, they are assigned to the home environment, taking care of the house and family, while men are dealing with fights, hard labor or assembling with other men. There are differences between men and women’s place in society, where women belong to the domestic sphere, in private, while men are in a public space with other men.

The only woman that has a name in *The Hobbit* – Belladonna Took – is not even a character, but she is the bearer of the most important feature of Bilbo Baggins, the protagonist.

[...] the mother of this hobbit - of Bilbo Baggins, that is - was the famous Belladonna Took, one of the three remarkable daughters of the Old Took, head of the hobbits who lived across The Water, the small river that ran at the foot of The Hill. [...] once in a while members of the Took-clan would go and have adventures. They discreetly disappeared, and the family hushed it up; but the fact remained that the Tooks were not as respectable as the Bagginses, though they were undoubtedly richer.

Not that Belladonna Took ever had any adventures after she became Mrs. Bungo Baggins. Bungo, that was Bilbo’s father, built the most luxurious hobbit-hole for her (and partly with her money) that was to be found either under The Hill or over The Hill or across The Water, and there they remained to the end of their days. (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1, p. 13).

The Took are known amongst the hobbits for being adventurous people, therefore Belladonna had many adventures until she married Bilbo's father, who settled her down. This is the only reference to Bilbo's mother, and the narrative provides no other information about her – she is used only as a link between Bilbo and Gandalf.

The taste for adventures are in the Took's blood – “Then something Tookish woke up inside him, and he wished to go and see the great mountains, and hear the pine-trees and the waterfalls, and explore the caves, and wear a sword instead of a walking-stick.” (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1, p.) –, but it is only developed in Bilbo's character, presenting Belladonna only as an introduction to the Halfling. Belladonna Took, one of Old Took's daughters, was adventurous and fierce, characteristics inherit by her son, Bilbo Baggins, but she is forgotten in the story, being only briefly mentioned by the narrator.

When a group is placed as the *other* in a society that legitimates this position for a long time, when you are born in a society where you are already seen as *other* and are raised listening to this submissive discourse, you will not acknowledge your place if you have no room for that acknowledgement. The narrative does not bring female characters into the reader's view; the women are present in *The Hobbit* through the narrator when they are important for the construction of male characters, standing aside.

We acknowledge the female presence in four brief moments – presenting Bilbo's mother, to provide a background of the character; Gollum's grandmother in his thoughts – “But suddenly Gollum remembered thieving from nests long ago, and sitting under the river bank teaching his grandmother, teaching his grandmother to suck – ‘Eggses!’ he hissed.” (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1, p. 100) –, again providing a background to the character; and twice in Dale, the city of men, to contextualize male characters – and female are voiceless. In Dale, we have women contextualizing a character, and as a sign of weakness – “Their plans were soon made. With the women and the children, the old and the unfit, the Master remained behind” (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 2, p. 84) – once the coward Master of the city stayed with the unfit to fight to his own protection.

The families, in “Middle Earth”, are traditional and patriarchal. The characters are identified by their male family members, so their names are never only theirs, but family names – e.g. Bilbo Baggins (half Baggins half Took, an important feature of the character), Thorin, son of Thráin, son of Thrór. The dwarves in the narrative are ancient people who rule Under the Mountain; each of the highest dwarves are identified by their lineage, projecting the image of their male ancestral.

There are no female wizards in the narrative, and as the previous aspects mentioned

before, the only explanation is the institution of patriarchy ruling Tolkien's fantasy universe. The physical characteristics of the wizards in the narrative are manly: they have long hair, beard and eyebrows and a thick and thunderous voice. They are wise men who sojourn and help when they can. The elves are elegant and gracious, they are wise because they are practically immortal, and their features are delicate, but they are honored and high classed fighters, being no appearance of a female elf amongst them.

Another aspect pointed out by Bourdieu (2012) is the *affair of honor*, which is still recurrent in our society through sexual virility (the defloration of the bride, being sexual potent and so on). In the novel, this *affair of honor* is presented as the courage and the 'fierce to fight' of some characters, the territorial domains of the kinship as an extension of the male character himself. As with the elvish society, the dwarves have songs about the great deeds of their people, but women are hidden from the story. Dwarves are fierce fighters, and they exalt their armory, skills and victories in their battle songs: "The sword is sharp, the spear is long, /The arrow swift, the Gate is strong; /The heart is bold that looks on gold;/ The dwarves no more shall suffer wrong" (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 2, p. 93-94).

The manifestations of virility are situated in the logics of performance, exploitation, of what brings honor (BOURDIEU, 2012, p. 29), and in being a hobbit, this honor comes with serenity, settling down, having a place to warm the feet and relax. Hobbits are not fond of adventures, so adventurous people are not welcome in the society – they are either expelled or tamed, as happened with Bilbo's mother.

Bourdieu (2012, p. 65) observes that as honor – or shame (experienced before others) – virility has to be validated by other men, in its truth of real or potential violence, and attested by the acknowledgement of being a part of the "real men". There are several social segments, such as the dwarves and men, which are based on the idea of manly posture, but the hobbits are the opposite. Hobbits are homely folks; therefore, The Shire rejected Bilbo because of his fondness for adventures.

The dwarves are folks from Under the Mountain, and Thorin Oakenshield, son of Thráin, son of Thrór is their king claiming the Mountain back from Smaug, the dragon. The physical characteristics of the dwarves are the image of manhood: they are strong, bearded men, wearing armors and carrying axes and swords; and, as previously mentioned, they are introduced by the names of the men on their lineage.

3. THE CHARACTERS

The “Middle Earth” – the diegetic universe where the narrative takes place – is a world where many species exist and coexist. As a fantastic universe, there are many creatures from tales and legends, such as dwarves and elves, but they are recreated with specific features and qualities that will be analyzed in some characters, regarding themselves and their relation with other characters of other species. According to Umberto Eco (2009, p. 81), the reader must know that what is narrated is an imaginary story, but this does not mean the author is telling lies. In the fantasy world created by Tolkien, these beings are possible, and they are living and cohabiting, and it is our role as readers to make sense of the existence presented to us in the way it is presented, no matter how fantastic it is.

The events that take place throughout the narrative are fantastic and, therefore, distant from our comprehension of the world; however, the actants involved in the events are portrayed featuring humanlike characteristics. Despite of their physical constitution or looks, most of Tolkien’s fictional characters present basic aspects which are, in a way, universal, and, therefore, trigger an immediate response on the part of readers.

The characters analyzed are examples of their kin, and they were chosen according to their relation with the protagonist and with the flow of events in the narrative. As the narrative follows the hobbit’s perspective, all characters here presented are in contact with Bilbo at some point of the story, and they have an important part in the main quest. There will be no focus on characters of opposite forces, such as Gollum or Smaug, because although they serve a purpose in the narrative – Gollum provides Bilbo with the ring, Smaug is the major enemy, the goblins join the former foes together against a common enemy – they are not developed enough to be analyzed, some of them, such as the spiders, being almost a caricature.

The focus of the analysis is on six characters – Bilbo Baggins, the protagonist of the novel; Thorin Oakenshield, the king of the dwarves; Gandalf, the Grey, the wizard that accompanies the group; Beorn, the Skin-changer, last of his kin; and the two lord elves, Elrond of Rivendell and the Elvenking of Mirkwood. The characters chosen for the analysis represent each their kinship, and they are the embodiment of the main features of each species in the “Middle Earth” presented in *The Hobbit*.

3.1. BILBO BAGGINS

Bilbo Baggins, a hobbit from the Shire, is the protagonist of this novel, but we are not introduced directly to the character. The narrator starts the narrative introducing his hobbit-hole, and with it, the hobbits’ habits and values.

In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit. Not a nasty, dirty, wet hole, filled with the ends of worms and an oozy smell, nor yet a dry, bare, sandy hole with nothing in it to sit down on or to eat: it was a hobbit-hole, and that means comfort. (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1, p. 11)

With the beginning similar to that of a children's story, in the first passage of the novel we are presented with the hobbits' "code of honor". Before we acknowledge who is the protagonist of the narrative, the specific hobbit in which the narrator will focus, we see what and how a usual hobbit is. They are quiet folks, with "little or no magic about them, except the ordinary everyday sort which helps them to disappear quietly and quickly" (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1, p. 12), about half our height (smaller than a dwarf is) and with no use for adventures – as Mr. Baggins highlights later on the narrative.

As previously said, we also are presented to Belladonna Took, Bilbo's mother, before the protagonist is introduced. The Tookish features – first introduced in Belladonna's brief history – of the Halfling are developed throughout the narrative, with him facing adventures and danger. However, when the narrative starts, he is a hobbit such as his father – fond of comfort and second breakfasts. It is only when requested and almost forced to it that he departs on an adventure.

Mr. Baggins, on his first acquaintance with Gandalf, highlights his feelings about getting out of his comfort zone.

'We are plain quiet folk and have no use for adventures. Nasty disturbing uncomfortable things! Make you late for dinner! I can't think what anybody sees in them,' said our Mr. Baggins, and stuck one thumb behind his braces, and blew out another even bigger smoke-ring. Then he took out his morning letters, and begin to read, pretending to take no more notice of the old man. He had decided that he was not quite his sort, and wanted him to go away. (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1, p. 15)

Bilbo, although respecting the old man, was disturbed and uncomfortable with his presence and his request. At first, he is a perfect sample of a hobbit. Polite, sympathetic, accustomed to certain habits, benefits and comfort, he inherit a sum of money of his parents, so his life is peaceful as expected of a hobbit's life.

Bilbo Baggins, however, was half Took – a family of adventurous folk –, so he was not any other hobbit. Although his mother's family was not respected because of their fondness for adventures, Belladonna settled down when she married Bungo Baggins, leading the reader to think that Bilbo was created following his father's view of life, preferring calmness and peace instead of adventures, ignoring his Tookish side. It is only when he

encounters the dwarves, who sang their songs about war and glory by the fireplace, that he acknowledges his own feelings towards these distant and unknown things.

As they sang the hobbit felt the love of beautiful things made by hands and by cunning and by magic moving through him, a fierce and jealous love, the desire of the hearts of dwarves. Then something Tookish woke up inside him, and he wished to go and see the great mountains, and hear the pine-trees and the waterfalls, and explore the caves, and wear a sword instead of a walking-stick. (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1, p. 28)

Although it was not only this moment of contemplation that made Bilbo decide to go on the adventure, this is the moment of clarity to the protagonist, it is when he acknowledges that he wants more than settling down on his hobbit-hole in the Shire. After Gandalf's encouragement – who saw on Bilbo more than others and himself guess –, self-confrontation and doubt about his value to the quest, Bilbo decides to follow his desire to see more of the world.

Bilbo's eagerness to see more, to do more, to explore more are features easily understood by readers; those aspects are inherent part of our human characteristics as well. He also presents features that can be seen as negative that he surmounts in order to succeed in the quest. Bilbo has some trouble adjusting himself to the camp condition, he misses the constant feeding and the comfort, but he is constantly trying his best to enjoy the ride and be the best he can be. These aspects are essential to establish a relation between character and reader, who has access to and, therefore, is able identify him/herself with both positive and negative features of the protagonist.

The first challenge he faces as a hero are the trolls. At this point, Bilbo is not trusted by the dwarves, who think he is too small and too incompetent for an adventure, and decides to prove his value as a burglar.

After hearing all this Bilbo ought to have done something at once. Either he should have gone back quietly and warned his friends that there were three fair-sized trolls at hand in a nasty mood [...]; or else he should have done a bit of good quick burgling. *A really first-class and legendary burglar would at this point have picked the trolls' pockets [...]*, pinched the very mutton off the spite, purloined the beer, and walked off without their noticing him. (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1, p. 52)

We see in his passage that Bilbo has an image in his head of a first-class burglar and he tries to reach this achievement (burgling the trolls) to prove himself as courageous and trustworthy. Now, he is starting to share the dwarves' [and warriors in general] *affair of honor*, proving his capability through a dangerous deed. He fails and is captured, and Gandalf

saves them all (an element of eucatastrophe), but it is in this first challenge that Bilbo gains Sting, his elvish sword, a weapon symbol of the warrior. In this moment, Bilbo becomes part of the group.

On their moment of rest, in Rivendell, Bilbo often thought about his home, but he was so wondered by his surroundings outside the Shire that he kept on the quest, although longing for his hobbit-hole.

‘Is that The Mountain?’ asked Bilbo in a solemn voice [...] ‘Of course not!’ said Balin. ‘That is only the beginning of the Misty Mountains, [...]’ ‘O!’ said Bilbo, and just at that moment he felt more tired than he ever remembered feeling before. He was thinking once again of his comfortable chair before the fire in his favourite sitting-room in his hobbit-hole, and of the kettle singing. Not for the last time! (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1, p. 64)

Several times in the narrative Bilbo felt nostalgic in relation to the calmness of the Shire, nearly giving up at some points, but although he “gave himself up to complete miserableness, for a long while” (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1, p. 91) sometimes, he always finds strength and courage to act, especially if the group is in danger. He is often afraid of his surroundings, once he probably never got out of the Shire before, but he has a survival instinct that prevails in harsh situations.

Again, these features of the character can be easily identified by the reader, as such emotions exist in the real world. As a fantasy novel originally written for the children, it is important that the protagonist have features that children can relate to. Usually his deeds, such as the burgling incident, are to prove himself worthy of his fellows’ trust, part of the group, once he is often discredited especially by Thorin. However, when he is facing something to be fought by him for his own sake, he shows a sense of moral, justice and empathy surprising in view of the situation.

Bilbo almost stopped breathing, and went stiff himself. He was desperate. He must get away, out of this horrible darkness, while he had any strength left. He must fight. He must stab the foul thing, put its eyes out, kill it. It meant to kill him. No, not a fair fight. He was invisible now. Gollum had no sword. Gollum had not actually threatened to kill him, or tried to yet. And he was miserable, alone, lost. A sudden understanding, a pity mixed with horror, welled up in Bilbo’s heart: a glimpse of endless unmarked days without light or hope of betterment, hard stone, cold fish, sneaking and whispering. All these thoughts passed in a flash of a second. He trembled. And then quite suddenly in another flash, as if lifted by a new strength and resolve, he leaped. (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1, p. 112)

In this passage, Bilbo’s escapes from the goblins tunnels and from Gollum, Mr. Baggins only had to save himself, and not only he does it, but he does without violence. Bilbo

has the chance of killing Gollum at this point, but he empathizes with Gollum and his situation, choosing to be reasonable and fair.

Bilbo is also loyal to his fellows, and brave when it comes to their safety. The group faces many dangerous situations, and although Bilbo is the weak spot of the company, he comes back to save the others even when he is safe and sound.

He wondered whether he ought not, now he had the magic ring, to go back into the horrible, horrible, tunnels and look for his friends. He had just made up his mind that it was his duty, that he must turn back-and very miserable he felt about it-when he heard voices. (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1, p. 117-118)

The Halfling lacks of combat skills, but he is courageous. Since he got his sword, he moved a step closer to become a warrior, and in the goblins' tunnels, at his encounter with Gollum, he found a magic ring that turns invisible the one who uses it. With this prop, Bilbo is now able to be in places and do things he would not do if he is noticeable. The dwarves escaped from the goblins' tunnels, but Bilbo's eager to help and save them from danger increases throughout the narrative, as Bilbo gains confidence on his capacities (mostly because he has a power ring).

Bilbo saves the group several times throughout the narrative, but the one that really transforms the hobbit is the encounter with the spiders of Mirkwood. At the enchanted (or rather cursed) forest, they face several challenges, such as food rationing, sleep privation, and the influence of the magic of Mirkwood; however, the most challenging subjects of Mirkwood are the spiders, which attacked the group quietly and efficiently. Bilbo, as a hobbit, could not get a real rest in the deeps of the forest, with no comfort sleeping on the floor, so he could see and hear the spiders coming, using the ring to get away while the dwarves were caught by them. It was at that moment that Bilbo saw the need of action.

The spider lay dead beside him, and his sword-blade was stained black. Somehow the killing of the giant spider, all alone by himself in the dark without the help of the wizard or the dwarves or of anyone else, made a great difference to Mr. Baggins. He felt a different person, and much fiercer and bolder in spite of an empty stomach, as he wiped his sword on the grass and put it back into its sheath. (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1, p. 193)

As we can see in this passage, Bilbo killed a spider with Sting, his sword, encountering death directly for the first time. Until this moment, Mr. Baggins had never killed a living creature before, pitying Gollum and sparing him from a violent and unjust death; the spiders, however, presented a real chance of death to him and his fellows, leaving him with no

other choice. This killing changes Bilbo - he is not the weak, coward and homesick hobbit any more, he is now a brave being who saved thirteen dwarves from giant spiders.

Since this event, not only Bilbo's confidence on his abilities was established, but the dwarves started seeing him as someone whose opinions and actions were highly considered and respected. "In fact they praised him so much that Bilbo began to feel there really was something of a bold adventurer about himself after all, though he would have felt a lot bolder still, if there had been anything to eat" (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1, p. 205).

That does not mean that Bilbo is completely comfortable and happy with the adventurous life, he constantly praises his home from a nostalgic perspective, wishing to be by the fire in his hobbit-hole – because he is a hobbit and the comfortable and settled down life is the hobbit's ideal life. Bilbo, however, keeps in mind the idea that the adventure will be over sometime, holding on to the hope of giving his best to be useful on the quest and loyal to his friends. He was not constantly confident – "Bilbo, however, did not feel nearly so hopeful as they did. He did not like being depended on by everyone, and he wished he had the wizard at hand" (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1, p. 216) –, mostly because of the pressure he felt since the dwarves rely on him as their savior, but he managed his fears and anxieties with action, finding the best solution he can for the problem ahead.

Minor adventures aside, when they arrive at the Lonely Mountain, Bilbo's specialties are required. As a burglar, his role on the quest is mainly to go into the Mountain and retrieve the Arkenstone without waking up Smaug, the dragon; all the former adversities the protagonist went through were preparing him to this almost impossible job. Considering that it is a fantasy novel, Bilbo has some advantages on this quest, once he has the assistance of the magic ring that makes him invisible and hobbits are very light-footed. The magic ring serves as other element of eucatastrophe, providing ways to fight, hide or escape whenever necessary.

When Smaug awakens, Bilbo uses his cunning to mislead the dragon and escape. He manages to go inside and out of the mountain making plans of his own, being followed by the dwarves in his decisions – the dwarves really respect him after he rescued them from so many dangers and did not questioned him when the matter is going unnoticed –; Bilbo is the first and only to encounter Smaug and discovered his weak spot.

'I come from under the hill, and under hills and over the hills my paths led. And through the air, I am he that walks unseen. [...] I am the clue-finder, the web-cutter, the stinging fly. I was chosen for the lucky number [...] I am he that buries his friends alive and drowns them and draws them alive again from the water. I came from the end of a bag, but no bag went over me. [...] I am the friend of bears and the

guest of eagles. I am Ringwinner and Luckwearer; and I am Barrel-rider,' went on Bilbo beginning to be pleased with his riddling. (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 2, p. 48)

Facing the dragon led the protagonist to introduce himself, and since would not give his name, he gave himself titles according to his deeds until that moment. In this passage, Bilbo's speech summarize all his brave actions throughout the narrative and he demonstrates pride of them. He kept on winding up Smaug until he found what he came for: the Arkenstone. Bilbo, however, did something not expected of him: acknowledging Thorin's greed towards the jewel and the treasure in general, and foreseeing a war, he kept Arkenstone for himself as his share of the treasure in case it will be needed.

Once again, Bilbo prove his intelligence giving up Arkenstone as a bargain item when war was at its course. Bilbo realized the King under the Mountain was blinded by his greed and no longer valued the wellbeing of his people, betraying Thorin's resolution for his sake and the dwarves', giving the Arkenstone to the 'foes' who were there for what it was promised to them. Mr. Baggins "disapproved of the whole turn of affairs. He had by now had more than enough of the Mountain, and being besieged inside it was not at all to his taste" (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 2, p. 98), so he tried what he could to avoid the war.

He could not do such a thing, however, and was quite useless during the war itself. Bilbo was invisible the entire battle staying beside Gandalf and the Elvenking; suddenly, he got hit by a rock and blacked out until the battle was over and won, just in time to say goodbye to Thorin on deathbed.

Then Bilbo turned away, and he went by himself, and sat alone wrapped in a blanket, and, whether you believe it or not, he wept until his eyes were red and his voice was hoarse. He was a kindly little soul. Indeed it was long before he had the heart to make a joke again. 'A mercy it is,' he said at last to himself, 'that I woke up when I did. I wish Thorin were living, but I am glad that we parted in kindness. You are a fool, Bilbo Baggins, and you made a great mess of that business with the stone; and there was a battle, in spite of all your efforts to buy peace and quiet, but I suppose you can hardly be blamed for that.' (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 2, p. 125)

Bilbo departed from the Mountain several days later, with provisions for the journey and two small chests of silver and gold as payment for his work, denying most of his share of profits (he was promised a fourteenth share of the dwarves' untold fortune) because it was of no use to him. He proves himself a real kindly soul, who truly was fond of his partners of adventure and made friends on the journey. He also proves himself as grateful and considered when gifting Elvenking with a necklace in payment of his small thefts while the dwarves were imprisoned, because "even a burglar has his feelings. I have drunk much of your wine and

eaten much of your bread” (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 2, p. 130)

He then returned to Bag End at the Shire, to his regular peaceful life. Although he probably would not leave the Shire for another adventure – “his Tookish part was getting very tired, and the Baggins was daily getting stronger” (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 2, p. 132) –, he was changed for life by the experiences he had with his friends. Bilbo is not the same hobbit who left. As previously said, the hobbits are not fond of adventures, often discriminating those who did not follow the easy-going lifestyle.

Indeed Bilbo found he had lost [...] his reputation. It is true that for ever after he remained an elf-friend, and had the honour of dwarves, wizards, and all such folk as ever passed that way; but he was no longer quite respectable. He was in fact held by all the hobbits of the neighbourhood to be ‘queer’ – except by his nephews and nieces on the Took side [...]. I am sorry to say he did not mind. He was quite content; [...] His sword he hung over the mantelpiece. His coat of mail was arranged on a stand in the hall (until he lent it to a Museum). His gold and silver was largely spent in presents, both useful and extravagant [...]. His magic ring he kept a great secret, for he chiefly used it when unpleasant callers came. He took to writing poetry and visiting the elves; and though many shook their heads and touched their foreheads and said ‘Poor old Baggins!’ and though few believed any of his tales, he remained very happy to the end of his days, and those were extraordinarily long. (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 2, p. 141)

Bilbo Baggins was no longer respectable according to the *affair of honor* imposed by the Shire’s inhabitants, but he was able to ignore the judgment of his pairs and live happy with his life, his memories and his loyal friends. He evolved throughout the narrative as a modern hero – who usually has flaws and fears and go through changes in character –, returning at the starting point different that when he left, maintaining souvenirs and remembrances of his adventure, telling them as fairy stories.

Bilbo has many facets that are to be discovered by the reader as they are elaborated throughout the narrative; he is a quiet being that goes on an adventure to experiment something he never did – corrupting his society’s *affair of honor* despite the consequences –, he is honest, loyal and kind. The reader has access also to his flaws, he has several fears to overcome and is often homesick, but although he acknowledges these weakness, he acts despite them.

Because *The Hobbit* is a novel whose target audience is children and teenagers, the process of evolution shown in Bilbo Baggins’ character as he leaves the comfort of his home to face an adventure is an excellent feature to portray in the protagonist. The young readers are facing several discoveries and changes on their own, regarding themselves and the society, and seeing a flawed character who overcomes his fears and goes beyond expected might be

inspiring to them.

3.2. THORIN OAKENSHIELD

Thorin Oakenshield, the dwarves' King under the Mountain, carries with him all the weight of being the king. He is the perfect example of a dwarf: strong (dwarves have a strength disproportional to their height) with long beard, a great warrior with iron weapons (such as swords and axes), brave and rather violent. Thorin follows the code of honor that rules amongst dwarves, he is noble, fierce and respectable, leading as a true king – “Durin, Durin!” said Thorin. ‘He was the father of the fathers of the eldest race of Dwarves, the Longbeards, and my first ancestor: I am his heir’” (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1, p. 73) – and the rightful heir to the throne and to the Arkenstone (the King's jewel, of major value to the character).

Constantly proclaiming himself heir of Durin's throne – “Durin, Durin!” said Thorin. ‘He was the father of the fathers of the eldest race of Dwarves, the Longbeards, and my first ancestor: I am his heir.’” (TOLKIEN, 2012, v.1, p. 73) –, he feels personally responsible to reclaim the mountain and return to the old kingdom, his kin's home. At the beginning of the novel, we know Thorin Oakenshield as a quite terrifying fellow, serious and quiet, and because the narrator follows Bilbo's perspective, the reader sees Thorin as an odd stranger (usually, hobbits do not have contact with other folks, such as dwarves).

Thorin Oakenshield is looking for the 14th member of the Company, a burglar. The dwarves are good fighters, and they “can make a fire almost anywhere out of almost anything, wind or no wind” (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1, p. 48-49) showing that they are good at camping – an excellent ability for a warrior – however, they are not very quiet and are easily perceived. Because Thorin's main goal was to retrieve the Arkenstone, that would make him the true King, he needed someone quiet and unknown to the dragon (in case he was still alive).

At their reunion at Bag-end, Thorin explained his lineage and his connection to the Lonely Mountain. He is quite similar with the classical epic heroes, coming from an ancestral family with the objective of defeating the major enemy no matter what it costs. There is, in the novel, (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1, p. 37-40), a passage where Thorin tells the Company his story. In this passage, not only Thorin tells the tale of Erebor's ruin, but also of his people's faith and previous lifestyle and social networks.

The dwarves were immensely rich and famous, and highly respected by the people of Dale for their skills and their wealth. Thorin was present when the dragon destroyed his kin

and his home – and his realm –, and endured the nomad life that was imposed to them. He suffered with his kin and is determined to fight for their place. Thorin gives his background history and his motivation, showing the reader internal features of the character – hence, Thorin is what Forster (apud BRAIT, 1985) names a round character; i.e. he, as Bilbo, has more developed characteristics and complex psychological features.

The narrator often emphasizes that Thorin Oakenshield was an important dwarf, and this is an essential feature of the character. He is an important dwarf because he is Thorin, son of Thrain, son of Thrór, the heir of Erebor’s throne, the rightful King Under the Mountain. He embodied this greatness and lived and acted as a respectable being, a noble dwarf. This feature is presented at his first appearance, when he falls with four other dwarves at Bilbo’s doorstep – “Thorin indeed was very haughty, and said nothing about service; but poor Mr. Baggins said he was sorry so many times, that at last he grunted ‘pray don’t mention it,’ and stopped frowning.” (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1, p. 22). He was rather uncomfortable with the situation that somehow diminished him, but he endured it controlling his anger and maintaining the politeness required in the situation – as a true noble King would.

Then they went back, and found Thorin with his feet on the fender smoking a pipe. He was blowing the most enormous smoke-rings, and wherever he told one to go, it went-up the chimney, or behind the clock on the mantelpiece, or under the table, or round and round the ceiling. (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1, p. 25)

Thorin also acts as a leader when it comes to smoke-rings and songs by the fireplace. As a fantasy novel, there are many small details that relate to the characters’ background and/or knowledge; the pipe smoke is one of them. One, in “Middle Earth”, can make anything out of smoke if you have enough practice, and this is an ability that everyone trains to acquire, so Thorin’s enormous smoke-rings that followed his will is another sample of Thorin’s skills (and why he is superior to other dwarves).

He is a true leader to the Company, being the first to fight danger to their safety – such as attacking trolls with a branch on fire – however, he opts for violence (not necessarily physical) – ““You should not be so fat. As you are, you must be with the last and lightest boatload. Don’t start grumbling against orders, or something bad will happen to you.”” (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1, p. 179) – every time is possible and is a warrior above all. He is a king with no kingdom who is leading his man to battle, so maintaining his image of fighter and leader – and hero – is important to the character. He knows the dangers and consequences of the journey, and does not hide from his companions, but he does not show weakness before

them, leading them whenever they need.

When captured by the Elvenking in Mirkwood, Thorin presented himself by his royal lineage, but refused to tell his goal and remained prisoner with his companions. He did not betray the dwarves with him neither the dwarves' ideals – they did not like elves, therefore they would not cooperate anyhow – proving himself determined, loyal and worthy. After being rescued by Bilbo, the dwarf's opinion on the Halfling changed and he started treating him as equal, praising the hobbit and trusting his opinions (as he did not do before).

When they arrived at Lake City, Thorin claimed help from the Master of the city as King, using his position of power to get things his way. He identifies himself to the people of the city – “I am Thorin son of Thrain son of Thror King under the Mountain! I return!” cried Thorin in a loud voice from the door, before the captain could say anything. All leaped to their feet.” (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 2, p. 17) – and promises great rewards in case they lived. But the city folk only responded to the request for fear of the consequences. Dwarves are skilled fighters, so the people of the Lake would not stand between the dwarves and what was rightfully theirs.

There it is: dwarves are not heroes, but calculating folk with a great idea of the value of money; some are tricky and treacherous and pretty bad lots; some are not, but are decent enough people like Thorin and Company, if you don't expect too much. (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 2, p. 36-37)

Thorin's goal is to reclaim the Lonely Mountain, his kin's rightful place, but he ambitions the great treasure of his people, often praising their wealth and promising rewards for those who aid them. It is only when inside the Mountain he changes his heart. The object that crowns his greed is the Arkenstone, and he puts everyone in the search for the king's jewel. Although the dwarves were becoming bold and fierce at sight of their treasure, Thorin was out of control. He was going completely insane by greed and mistrust, refusing to pay their debts with the Lake City (who have suffered deeply with the rage of Smaug before he was killed by Bard) and risking a war to keep all the gold and jewels to himself.

This uncontrollable greed, however, is not explained as a feature of the character. Thorin is often freed from guilt both by the narrator and some characters, who blame Thorin's madness in the gold supposedly 'poisoned' by the dragon. Dragon gold has a disease in it that drives the posterior owner to madness, so Thorin himself was not to blame even though he was putting his people at risk, he is pictured as a hero at all times. Because of his greed, Thorin shut himself and the Company inside the Mountain with the treasure, sending ravens

to call for help to his cousin Dain and waiting for a battle.

‘I will not parley, as I have said, with armed men at my gate. Nor at all with the people of the Elvenking, whom I remember with small kindness. In this debate they have no place. Begone now ere our arrows fly! And if you would speak with me again, first dismiss the elvish host to the woods where it belongs, and then return, laying down your arms before you approach the threshold.’ (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 2, p. 97)

Although the entire Company were at danger – they were only fourteen against an army of Men and Elves – Thorin did not back down on his thoughts, refusing to negotiate with the men who helped them and remaining under siege until his cousin arrived with his army. His rage at his rivals grew largely when they appeared with the Arkenstone for negotiation; they were not only foes, they were thieves. As previously mentioned, the Arkenstone was the item of the treasure that Thorin desired most, so when Bilbo stole it to stop the war from happening, he even threatened the burglar’s life, forgetting their former friendship and only letting him go because of Gandalf’s interference.

This negative change in Thorin’s character, however, does not last long. Because of the appearance of goblins and wild Wargs (common foes of both dwarves and elves), Thorin decided to get out of the Mountain and fight with his kin, proving himself a King and a hero once again. He repented his greed and madness, and fell at the battlefield as an honored warrior.

‘Farewell, good thief,’ he said. ‘I go now to the halls of waiting to sit beside my fathers, until the world is renewed. Since I leave now all gold and silver, and go where it is of little worth, I wish to part in friendship from you, and I would take back my words and deeds at the Gate.’ (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 2, p. 124)

Thorin departs as a hero, being praised after his death and buried deep beneath the Mountain, with the Arkenstone laid upon his breast and his elvish sword upon his grave protecting the kingdom (elvish blades glow blue when goblins and orcs are around). Thorin Oakenshield is the king of dwarves in a fantasy novel, but he carries several human characteristics that can relate to our experiences. Because he is an epic hero, he is a character who is appealing to the reader; not only because he is brave, bold and a trustful leader, but also because he has some flaws – such as his greed – and misjudgments that shows the reader he is a complex being, prone to change, to regret, such it might occur with many of us in the real world. Once again, the book establishes a bridge with the reader.

3.3. GANDALF, THE GREY

Gandalf is a grey wizard, the only wizard from “Middle Earth” presented in *The Hobbit*, and he aids the troop to get back to the Mountain, with his magical powers and social connections. Gandalf is a joyous fellow, who entertains people with his fireworks and dazzles people with his rhetoric abilities. His extraordinary powers and other uncommon talents immediately intrigue the reading public who becomes interested in following the narrative incidents where the wizard appears. In his first appearance in the novel, we have a glimpse of the character’s personality.

‘Good morning!’ said Bilbo, and he meant it. The sun was shining, and the grass was very green. But Gandalf looked at him from under long bushy eyebrows that stuck out further than the brim of his shady hat.
 ‘What do you mean?’ he said. ‘Do you wish me a good morning, or mean that it is a good morning whether I want it or not; or that you feel good this morning; or that it is morning to be good on?’ (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1, p. 14-15)

We can see in this passage that Gandalf does not follow usual social cordialities, such as answering ‘good morning’ back to Bilbo, preferring to ‘play’ with him using language. Although Bilbo had heard tales about Gandalf, we know his potential through the narrator first – the narrator is indeed very fond of Gandalf, the Grey, but the reasons, at first, are a mystery.

Gandalf! If you had heard only a quarter of what I have heard about him, and I have only heard very little of all there is to hear, you would be prepared for any sort of remarkable tale. Tales and adventures sprouted up all over the place wherever he went, in the most extraordinary fashion. (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1, p. 14)

This fragment is the narrator’s speech with the focus on the narrator itself, it transmits the narrator’s feelings towards the character, and it is told directly to the reader, which guides the reader’s view towards Gandalf. The narrative does not provide any information on Gandalf before the events on *The Hobbit*, so we only know what other characters give through their speeches.

‘Gandalf, Gandalf! Good gracious me! Not the wandering wizard that gave Old Took a pair of magic diamond studs that fastened themselves and never came undone till ordered? Not the fellow who used to tell such wonderful tales at parties, about dragons and goblins and giants and the rescue of princesses and the unexpected luck of widows’ sons? Not the man that used to make such particularly excellent fireworks! I remember those! Old Took used to have them on Midsummer’s Eve. Splendid!’ (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1, p. 16)

Through Bilbo's speech, we acknowledge that Gandalf is a wandering wizard, but what he does while he is wandering remains unknown. The vision of other characters (Bilbo, in this case) about Gandalf is that of an amazing wizard with fireworks and stories, reinforcing the opinion of the narrator itself, who admires Gandalf for the tales heard. The reader does not have an inside view of Gandalf, and he is the same graceful, fun and powerful wizard throughout the whole narrative.

Gandalf is a character that has the adjuvant function in the narrative – i.e. he helps the characters in need – giving no glimpses of development; however, he is a mystery in general for the reader, so the narrator shows us the character's features and personality throughout the novel. In several occasions, Gandalf saved the troop from deadly situations, and they all trust him with their lives – “Altogether it was a very slow business following the track, even guided by Gandalf, who seemed to know his way about pretty well.” (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1, p. 65) –, partly because of the stories and tales, partly because he never fails those in need.

He has the appearance of a Merlin – “(...) an old man with a staff. He had a tall pointed blue hat, a long grey cloak, a silver scarf over which his long white beard hung down below his waist, and immense black boots.” (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1, p. 13) –, an appearance that triggers respect and wonder. As mentioned before, he is the only wizard mentioned in the novel – male or female – so the reader has no clue on how wizards are supposed to be in this diegetic universe, and Gandalf shows himself as a wandering wizard helping those in need (usually on adventures). He is a character that has the respect and the admiration of both characters and narrator.

Gandalf, therefore, is usually a savior or a mediator in conflicts. He saves the troop from the trolls with his wit, messing with their communication without violence or direct interference, and saves himself from the goblin trap through his magic.

[...] and they were all grabbed and carried through the crack, before you could say tinder and flint. But not Gandalf. Bilbo's yell had done that much good. It had wakened him up wide in a splintered second, and when goblins came to grab him, there was a terrible flash like lightning in the cave, a smell like gunpowder, and several of them fell dead. (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1. p. 80-81)

The narrator reveals information about Gandalf's powers and abilities throughout the narrative, when his [Gandalf's] interference is necessary to the safety and welfare of those under his 'protection'. When Thorin threatens Bilbo, he claims his burglar for a safe return – “If you don't like my Burglar, please don't damage him. Put him down, and listen first to

what he has to say!” (TOLKIEN, 2012, v.2, p. 109) –, acting once again as Bilbo’s savior and as a mediator of the war about to begin.

Gandalf, however, is involved in mystery. The narrator shows himself aware of Gandalf’s doings, but it keeps his whereabouts a mystery when he is not with the troop or acting somehow for them.

“It might have been some comfort to Mr. Baggins shivering on the barrels, if he had known that news of this had reached Gandalf far away and given him great anxiety, and that he was in fact finishing his other business (which does not come into this tale) and getting ready to come in search of Thorin’s company. But Bilbo did not know it.” (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 2, p. 11)

Gandalf is a magical being whose background story is not developed. The narrator only reveals what is relevant to the plot, providing glimpses of information about him when they are relevant to the action – “It appeared that Gandalf had been to a great council of the white wizards, masters of lore and good magic; and that they had at last driven the Necromancer from his dark hold in the south of Mirkwood.” (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 2, p. 135) –, not interrupting the flow of the narrative with flashbacks when there are many things happening.

Once the narrator follows Bilbo, the information we have, as readers, about Gandalf are limited by the knowledge of the hobbit and what the other characters provide to him. The exchange of information amongst characters happens in ‘peaceful’ scenes, where they have time and place to talk, so it is only at these moments we have information about Gandalf and we have an almost tridimensional development of the character. What we know about him for sure is that he is widely respected at “Middle Earth”, he holds honor amongst his pairs, and is respected for his wisdom, loyalty and power, holding friends amongst all species that inhabits the diegetic universe. Gandalf is a character that stirs the reader’s imagination exactly because of the mystery that surrounds him, and his character makes the narrative delightful and surprising.

3.4. ELROND AND ELVENKING

The two elf lords that appear in *The Hobbit* are Elrond, an elf-friend lord of Rivendell, and Elvenking, the lord of the Wood-elves of Mirkwood. The reason they were both picked for this analysis is their role in the narrative – Elrond has a part as adjuvant and Elvenking as an opponent – and their relation with the group, which defines how they are pictured by the

narrator in the novel. They are both flat characters who serve a specific purpose in the narrative, although Elvenking goes through some changes throughout the novel.

Elrond, master of the Last Homely House, received the group of dwarves as his guests in Rivendell, even having a quarrel between dwarves and elves. The code of honor amongst elves, however, is different from the dwarves': they are very wise – once they are almost immortal – and peaceful, only battling when absolutely necessary, and are very kind to their friends and their friends' friends. He received the group as guests because of his friendship with Gandalf, putting aside possible issues with the dwarves.

The master of the house was an elf-friend – [...] He was as noble and as fair in face as an elf-lord, as strong as a warrior, as wise as a wizard, as venerable as a king of dwarves, and as kind as summer. [...] His house was perfect, whether you liked food, or sleep, or work, or story-telling, or singing, or just sitting and thinking best, or a pleasant mixture of them all. Evil things did not come into that valley. (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1, p. 70-71)

As we can see in the passage, Elrond is not an elf-lord, he is an elf-friend. In the narrative, there is no explanation for this distinction, and his past and the character himself is elaborated in other narratives (such as *TLOTR*). In this novel, however, he is a flat type character, presenting an ideal being with knowledge beyond count, several highly developed skills, wisdom and kindness.

Actually, the main reason – besides the brief comfort and a cozy bed – Gandalf took the group to Rivendell was to consult Elrond on matters of the quest, because not only “elves know a lot and are wondrous folk for news, and know what is going on among the peoples of the land, as quick as water flows, or quicker” (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1, p. 69), but “Elrond knew all about runes of every kind” (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1, p. 71), a knowledge necessary to understand Thrain's map. Elrond is thus the one that makes the whole journey possible.

Elrond appears again at the end of the narrative again as the bearer of kindness, comfort and safety, when Bilbo and Gandalf are returning from the journey. When they arrived at Rivendell, “the elves of the valley came out and greeted them and led them across the water to the house of Elrond. There a warm welcome was made them, and there were many eager ears that evening to hear the tale of their adventures” (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 2, p. 135). At the Last Homely House they shared information and rested and enjoyed the peaceful place, appreciating Elrond's hospitality.

The Wood-elves, however, imprison the dwarves at their first meeting, holding them in cells as prisoners of the Elvenking. The Wood-elves are set in Mirkwood, an enchanted

forest full of magical beings (not all of them are friendly), and once Mirkwood does not have many wonderers, the elves are highly suspicious of the group of dwarves trying to interrupt their feast.

The feasting people were Wood-elves, of course. These are not wicked folk. If they have a fault it is distrust of strangers. Though their magic was strong, even in those days they were wary. They differed from the High Elves of the West, and were more dangerous and less wise. (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1, p. 206)

We can see in this passage that the narrator distinguishes the High Elves of the West (Elrond's kin) and the Wood-elves, who cherish more their battle skills than their intellectual development. That does not mean, of course, that Wood-elves are stupid; au contraire, they are really good strategists and maintain several social connections with other social segments (such as the city of Dale) in order to sustain a certain life-pattern to the people. They have great feasts at the woods and the Elvenking himself is a dream-like figure – “the feast that they now saw was greater and more magnificent than before; and at the head of a long line of feasters sat a woodland king with a crown of leaves upon his golden hair” (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1, p. 191) –, which proves that the classy delicate manners are common to all elves.

The king's cave was his palace, and the strong place of his treasure, and the fortress of his people against their enemies.
It was also the dungeon of his prisoners. So to the cave they dragged Thorin - not too gently, for they did not love dwarves, and thought he was an enemy. In ancient days they had had wars with some of the dwarves, whom they accused of stealing their treasure. [...] If the elf-king had a weakness it was for treasure, especially for silver and white gems; and though his hoard was rich, he was ever eager for more, since he had not yet as great a treasure as other elf-lords of old. (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1, p. 207-208)

In this passage, we acknowledge that even the Elvenking has flaws, a feature that the narrator does not present about Elrond. Elvenking's greed is, in this passage, a mere element of the character, but this characteristic is crucial to the turn of events after Smaug's death. While holding the dwarves as prisoners, Elvenking interrogates Thorin Oakenshield and, obtaining no answer, has no problem with keeping them in the dungeons for hundreds of years.

After Bilbo rescued the dwarves, we see the Elvenking again after the death of Smaug, in the gathering of clouds (the armies getting ready to war). “The Elvenking had received news from his own messengers and from the birds that loved his folk, and already knew much of what had happened” (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 2, p. 83), so he went towards the Lonely

Mountain to get a share of Thrór's wealth that held unguarded (they all presume the dwarves were dead).

The Elvenking's greed towards the treasure led him to march into war, joining the men of the Lake City against the dwarves. Although he attempted an agreement and a truce, he did so because Bard (representing the men of the Lake) was trying to avoid the battle. When the armies were all there and the goblins appeared, his goals change. "This is the plan that he [Bilbo] made in council with the Elvenking and with Bard; and with Dain, for the dwarf-lord now joined them: the Goblins were the foes of all, and at their coming all other quarrels were forgotten" (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 2, p. 115). The goblins have the role to join their forces to a better good.

There is an evolution of his character that is visible after the battle. This change, however, is not so much of the character himself, but of the Elvenking's relation with others.

"Upon his tomb the Elvenking then laid Orcrist, the elvish sword that had been taken from Thorin in captivity. It is said in songs that it gleamed ever in the dark if foes approached, and the fortress of the dwarves could not be taken by surprise." (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 2, p. 127)

He was once enemy of the dwarves, treating them initially as foes and questioning the origins of their elf-made weapons; however, this treatment has changed once they fought together against common enemies, and the Elvenking honors Thorin's grave and somehow secures the Mountain with Orcrist, sealing their friendship. He also praised Bilbo at their farewell – "And I name you elf-friend and blessed. May your shadow never grow less (or stealing would be too easy)! Farewell!" (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 2, p. 131) – with graces.

The Elvenking, as long as we as readers can tell, takes his friends into high consideration, such as Elrond, but we are not presented with his hospitality skills; since we are not presented with other features of the characters (such as how Elrond treats his prisoners or the Elvenking receives his guests), we can only infer from small glimpses provided by the narrator, which makes them flat characters, but although flat, they are of great importance in the narrative.

Although they are flat characters, they also have humanlike characteristics, although they are the characters that are more fantastic and, therefore, distant regarding the outside world. Elves are above humans in this fantasy diegetic universe, they are immortal and, therefore, superior in everything they do. They are skilled fighters and artists, and they hold more knowledge than the rest of the beings in "Middle Earth", but each represents mainly

only one feature of real world: Elrond represents scholars and Elvenking represents those in power, so these are characters that are not there to make the reader connect to them, but to play a part in this diegetic universe.

3.5. BEORN, THE SKIN-CHANGER

Beorn is a character who is first introduced as “Somebody” by Gandalf, who is known for his connections. He is a flat character with indications of development, once we see that there was a movement in the character's behavior, but the narrator does not provide any inside view of the character. He was chosen for analysis because he is the fighter who ends the battle of the five armies by himself, being an example of virility and courage. He is highly respected by the other characters, showing elements of an honored character.

Until Beorn is needed, we have no notice of him in the story, and when Gandalf first introduces him, he does with respect and fear.

He can be appalling when he is angry, though he is kind enough if humoured. Still I warn you he gets angry easily. [...] If you must know more, his name is Beorn. He is very strong, and he is a skin-changer. [...] He changes his skin; sometimes he is a huge black bear, sometimes he is a great strong black-haired man with huge arms and a great beard. I cannot tell you much more, though that ought to be enough. [...] He is not the sort of person to ask questions of. (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1, p. 146-147)

His physical appearance is similar to a bear, and he is an example of virility. Because he is a skin-changer, therefore also a bear, Beorn is in touch with nature, having a beautiful garden with flowers and herbs, and communicating with animals and treating them with respect. He is probably the last of his kin, so he also a hermit, excluding himself from society as often as he could (he lived near a village of humans, but was self-sufficient).

Although he lived in isolation, never inviting more than a couple of his few friends to his house at a time, still he helped, fed and shielded the company of thirteen dwarves, a hobbit and a wizard in need, showing that he is honored and trustworthy. With sense of justice, Beorn took the dwarves battle as his own once he heard about the Goblins (common enemy) looking for the company, gave them shelter and a good night sleep. In the next morning, “A Goblin’s head was stuck outside the gate and a warg-skin was nailed to a tree just beyond. Beorn was a fierce enemy.” (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1, p. 165)

With this information provided by the narrator, we are presented to Beorn's deeds, and his motivations are not presented through his point of view, leading the reader to presume that

Beorn did it because of his good nature, fighting the villains. He has the appearance of a fighter, the posture of a leader, the loyalty of a soldier and profound respect to living things, becoming an example of a good man. After providing shelter, lending ponies and giving provisions for the journey, Beorn once again is noticed (by Gandalf) in his caring nature.

Beorn is not as far off as you seem to think, and you had better keep your promises anyway, for he is a bad enemy. Mr. Baggins' eyes are sharper than yours, if you have not seen each night after dark a great bear going along with us or sitting far off in the moon watching our camps. Not only to guard you and guide you, but to keep an eye on the ponies too. Beorn may be your friend, but he loves his animals as his children. You do not guess what kindness he has shown you in letting dwarves ride them so far and so fast, nor what would happen to you, if you tried to take them into the forest. (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 1, p. 170)

Beorn's last appearance in the first part of the journey ends the image of a caring, nurturing (though fierce and grave) host, his image as a man. The next time he appears is as a bear to win the war. In this part, we see Beorn as warrior, we follow him as he strikes an army, and we see him as a giant beast.

In that last hour Beorn himself had appeared – no one knew how or from where. He came alone, and in bear's shape; and he seemed to have grown almost to giant-size in his wrath. The roar of his voice was like drums and guns; and he tossed wolves and goblins from his path like straws and feathers. He fell upon their rear, and broke like a clap of thunder through the ring. [...] Then Beorn stooped and lifted Thorin, who had fallen pierced with spears, and bore him out of the fray. Swiftly he returned and his wrath was redoubled, so that nothing could withstand him, and no weapon seemed to bite upon him. He scattered the bodyguard, and pulled down Bolg himself and crushed him. Then dismay fell on the Goblins and they fled in all directions. (TOLKIEN, 2012, v. 2, p. 126)

Beorn appears in a moment of need with exactly what is needed. He respects the group, and is loyal to them, helping them again. According to Bourdieu, “o homem "verdadeiramente homem" é aquele que se sente obrigado a estar à altura da possibilidade que lhe é oferecida de fazer crescer sua honra buscando a glória e a distinção na esfera pública” (BOURDIEU, 2012, p. 64) and, although he lived in exclusion, he turned himself into public life, becoming a chief. His actions, although not explicitly told by him nor the narrator, are all based on his honor and aiming honor, an important part of men's relations.

Beorn, although a skin-changer, has human characteristics as all other characters, since even in a fantasy novel there is no way of distancing those features from those of our reality. He is a former hermit who was isolated for his own safety, but he treats well and with hospitality those he trusts, maintaining friendship with few but loyal folks. Physically he is

manly and imposes respect and rather fear, but he is calm and thoughtful despite his appearance, and he changes his social status throughout the narrative becoming a leader for the collectivities' sake.

CONCLUSION

The Hobbit is a novel that presents several aspects that can relate with the empirical world, and present characters that hold characteristics that are easily identified as human. As teachers, once our students are probably reading or are familiarized with the novel, we have to think how to approach these subjects, looking at what the narrative presents critically (not excluding, but questioning them) and fomenting critical thoughts in the students about the text itself and, by extension, about herself and the world we live in, allowing the student to make connections, associations to broaden up her worldview.

Even though the story takes place in a fantasy universe, the absence of female characters, for instance, might seem strange to the readers, being an element of exploration. As Todorov (2009) points out, literary studies must not be only on the text itself, but about relating the text with the empirical world in order to a better comprehension of the various ideas and problematizations it conveys, including that about the self. *The Hobbit* displays several different societies, of several different species, all of them seeming to be sexist and patriarchal, and the knowledge regarding the context of the publication is essential for the reader to understand such aspects. Moreover, the book also invites one to think about patriarchy and sexism in the time we live in.

The female representation in the novel is limited to the extent of how useful they are for contextualization, appearing briefly 5 times throughout the entire narrative. In the movies, however, there were additions of female characters – especially because they need to fill up three movies, and the narrative itself was not enough – but the majority of these additions are questionable. There are some filling characters, such as Legolas and Galadriel, which establish a connection between *The Hobbit* movie trilogy with *The Lord of the Rings* movie trilogy, previously launched. She appears at the first movie, in Rivendell, in a council with Elrond and Gandalf about a Necromancer, showing that she is important in this social space and a powerful elf; she is, indeed, the one that bans the Necromancer, proving herself as a strong female character. There are minor female characters that are brave and stand for themselves in their context – such as a nameless woman of Lake City – but the other major female character, Tauriel, is unnecessary to the plot and misrepresenting women in general.

She is a Wood-elf that, in her first dialogue with a male character (the dwarf Kili) it already sparkles a romance. She was created specifically for the movies and her major role is to be part of a love triangle, and her motivations are, in general, favorable to the dwarves because of her feelings for Kili; her other characteristics are put aside and she is at mercy of the male characters around her (the Elvenking at first, then Kili and Legolas).

In the novel, women are just points of reference. Meanwhile, it presents more than thirty individual male characters, and the six characters chosen for this analysis exemplify the diversity amongst them. The characters, in general, not only differ by their species, but they are very different amongst themselves (there are thirteen dwarves, for instance, and they are completely different from each other).

The presentation of diverse characters also provides to the reader features with which he will identify himself. Bilbo, as a protagonist, shows flaws and defects, but he overcomes these flaws. This feature (to surpass his fears) improves the relation between reader and novel, once the reader relates easily to the character, and as *The Hobbit* is a novel that aims at children and youths the courage of the protagonist is praised by the youngsters who are facing challenges on their own. Thorin, as an epic hero, provides a different worldview to the readers, not only familiarizing them with some elements that might be unknown to them but also presenting a character that is the opposite of the protagonist (not necessarily bad) but also has flaws and fears to overcome. The immense diversity of the male characters amongst species shows harmony and conflicts easily related with the empirical world, and features that can be identified and discussed in (and out of) the classroom.

Therefore, the complete lack of female representation amongst the diversity of male characters presented proves that “Middle Earth”, as long as it is presented in this narrative, is based on patriarchal organization. Although in 1937, at its first publication, this may still seem normal, it is important to point out this excluding characteristic from this novel that is now a part of popular culture and it has been read by thousands of boys and girls throughout the world.

What our students are reading should be taken into consideration regarding the choice of curriculum, and we should, as teachers, stimulate healthy, positive reading of any sort. When we exclude non-canonical literature, we are telling the students that what they read is not appropriate, not considering the learning they can acquire from these books. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that we expand our limits in classroom, broadening up the reading process and considering not only the critics’ opinions, but the pleasure provided by different texts.

Finally, it should be highlighted that, as a fantasy novel, *The Hobbit* brings several aspects that are completely different from the empirical world (such as magic and speaking animals) and several similarities that emphasize aspects we acknowledge at a daily basis, so it is possible to make a connection in the classroom. Not only has the narrative stimulated the reader's imagination; but it can also improve the students' quality of learning it is our belief. The analysis presented also shows characters that have humanlike features and characteristics that are different amongst each other, bringing into subject the need for tolerance and respect for diversity. With novels such as this one, presenting such important features to the growth of students as human beings, why should schools be interested only in high literature?

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