

Student name 1, student name 2, student name 3

Mgr. Jiří Šalamoun

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The Diversity of Friendship in Tolkien's Trilogy *The Lord of the Rings*

Although there are certainly many important themes in Tolkien's trilogy *The Lord of the Rings*, one of the most interesting ones is the friendship between the characters of the books. Tolkien without doubt valued friendship very much and thus it is in fact friendship and characters' love for one another that move the plot of *The Lord of the Rings* forward. Each of the friendships in the trilogy is diverse and unique in nature and this essay will examine them, particularly the friendship between Frodo and Sam and between Gimli and Legolas. Firstly, we will focus on Frodo's and Sam's master-servant relationship and analyze whether they are only a regular master and servant or whether they are truly friends. Then, we will analyze the indications of homosexuality in the relationship between Frodo and Sam and lastly, we will discuss the friendship between Gimli and Legolas, which develops thanks to their shared quest.

Frodo's and Sam's friendship is truly an extraordinary one. Although on the first look it may seem that they are only an unselfish servant and a kind master, their relationship becomes something more than that throughout the books. One of the main reasons, why that is possible, is Frodo's absolute disregard for social class. Frodo treats Sam in an extremely kind way and sees him as an equal, which can be seen in how he thinks of Sam as "my dear hobbit, indeed Sam, my dearest hobbit, friend of friends" (Tolkien 624). Sam, on the other hand, considers himself inferior and sees himself foremost as a gardener. This is illustrated in the way in which Sam addresses his master as Mr. Frodo. Only after Frodo's apparent death does Sam dare to address Frodo in a more familiar way and that is only because he believes that

after Frodo's death he is released from his duties as a servant. Despite all this, Sam treats Frodo well and serves him loyally and it also cannot be denied that he really loves him. Scott Kleinman writes that Tolkien "constructs a scenario in which the reader is forced to confront the breakdown of social hierarchies by imagining a form of subordination without exploitation" (Kleinman 145). That is exactly what allows Frodo and Sam to become friends and without the bridging of the gap between social classes, their friendship would probably not be possible. One may even say that Frodo's and Sam's treatment of one another is an ideal paradigm how a master and a servant should treat each other. In conclusion, the relationship between Frodo and Sam may have started as an ordinary master-servant relationship, but throughout the books it developed into a true friendship allowed primarily by Frodo's unconcern for social class.

The apparent lack of physical intimacy between the sexes in *The Lord of the Rings* led some critics to the assumption that there might be an indication of homosexual relationships in the trilogy. Their attention lays primarily on Frodo and Sam, who due to their intimate relationship repeatedly stroke, embrace and kiss each other. Although Brenda Partridge believes that intimate and close relationship between males does not necessarily have to be a homosexual one and C. S. Lewis states that "kisses, tears and embraces are not in themselves evidence of homosexuality" (Lewis 75), there are undoubtedly many passages in the books that can be seen as homoerotic. One of the examples may be the sleeping arrangements at the stairs of Cirith Ungol: "In his lap lay Frodo's head, drowned deep in sleep; upon his white forehead lay one of Sam's brown hands, and the other lay softly upon his master's breast" (Tolkien 699). Another argument is that other characters, for example Gimli and Legolas do not behave in the way Frodo and Sam do, even though they are friends. However, the intimacy between the hobbits may also be caused by the overall surroundings and the ongoing war. Partridge writes: "War provides a context in which men can be acceptably intimate

because they are at the same time being seen to live up to socially desirable stereotype image of the aggressive male” (Partridge 184). This explanation seems to be well-founded because after the war, the intimacy between Frodo and Sam disappears. One should also not forget the fact that Tolkien was a devout Catholic, which makes it most unlikely that he would depict homosexuality in his books and between one of the main characters at that. Thus we believe that there is no evidence of homosexual behavior in Frodo’s and Sam’s relationship.

Some of the friendships in Tolkien’s trilogy are possible because of the common quest the characters share. One of the most evident examples of that is the friendship between Gimli and Legolas, who become great friends even though they started as foes. Their initial view of each other is without doubt influenced by the long and great hostility between the races of Dwarves and Elves. This conflict is really serious, which becomes apparent in what Gandalf says at the Council of Elrond: “If all the grievances that stand between Elves and Dwarves are to be brought up here, we may as well abandon this Council” (Tolkien 249). The relationship between Gimli and Legolas starts to change during and after the Fellowship’s visit to Lothlórien. The parting gift of three golden hairs that Gimli receives from the elf Galadriel and the hospitality of the Elves seem to diminish Gimli’s distrust and hostility towards the whole race of Elves. Galadriel’s gift might also be seen as a symbol for a new hope of friendship between Elves and Dwarves. Consequently, the visit to Lothlórien allows the friendship between Gimli and Legolas to develop. The growth of their friendship is also largely based on their admiration for each other as warriors and they slowly get to know each other by fighting alongside on their quest to save the Middle-Earth. The bond between Gimli and Legolas becomes that strong that they stay friends even after the war, which is a source of amazement for others. When Treebeard sees Gimli and Legolas together, he says: “A dwarf and an axe-bearer! Hoom! I have good will to Elves; but you ask too much. This is a strange friendship!” Legolas responds that “strange it may seem, ..., but while Gimli lives I shall not

come to Fangorn alone” (Tolkien 831), which shows that Legolas considers Gimli a really great friend. The friendship between Gimli and Legolas is quite remarkable, particularly because of the fact that they manage to overcome all prejudices and old conventions and because they become friends fighting side by side.

The essay examined different kinds of friendly relations in Tolkien’s trilogy *The Lord of the Rings*. Firstly, it focused on the master-servant relationship between Frodo and Sam and we concluded that they are indeed true friends. The next part of the essay discussed the indications of homosexual relationship between Frodo and Sam, which we find unjustified. Last of all, the essay dealt with the friendship between Gimli and Legolas, which was possible mainly thanks to their shared quest.

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