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Fantasy as a Popular Genre in the Works of J. R. R. Tolkien

and J. K. Rowling

Masters’s Diploma Thesis

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I declare that I have worked on this dissertation independently, using only the sources listed in the bibliography.
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1 Introduction

To classify under what genre a literary work fits means to state exactly the formal and thematic features of the work and to choose a relevant genre label. It seems to be easy. Probably, it is so because the definition supposes there is a certain set of rules given for each genre as well as a set of distinct features easily observed in every literary work.

However, in practice, there are no clear-cut boundaries in literary genres or art in general. Categories and definitions are fluid and merge together. No work of art originates from a perfectly clean mind because nobody is a pure *tabula rasa*. The same system of interconnections works between author’s experience and existing art works and given structures and patterns of the genres. It is natural to react to those elements in some way. And the effect of the interaction is a new work of art.

The results of this genre confusion can be seen in the bookshops – the useless effort to bring order into the shelves. Apart from the practical selling and marketing categories, such as *new books* or *bestsellers*, the books are organized according to their content (e.g. horror stories, science fiction), or the target audience (e.g. books for children, women).

This thesis deals with the vague sphere of genre classification as well. Its significant part is formed by a genre analysis. The genres discussed are romance, fantasy and novel, and their connection to two works of popular literature – J. K. Rowling’s Harry Potter series and J. R. R. Tolkien’s trilogy *The Lord of the Rings*.

The theoretical part of the thesis focus on the definition of a term ‘genre’; then it covers brief summaries of definitions, typical features, and history of the relevant genres – formulaic literature, romance, fantasy, and novel. It also mentions the theoretical background of fairy stories given by Tolkien’s essay ‘On Fairy-Stories’ which is of great importance here.
The analysis itself concerns both formal and thematic features of Harry Potter books and *The Lord of the Rings*, and their relationship to the theoretical genres mentioned above.

Due to the recent popularity of the fantasy genre, the literary qualities of both works are often discussed in terms both of form and content. Judging according to the structural features of the works, they are among novels. However, in the novelistic tradition they stand for a low brow branch because of the schematic plot, flat characters and unoriginal motifs. In light of high-brow and low-brow literature, the literary fiction vs. genre fiction distinction is also relevant here.

Some of the research questions discussed in this thesis are: Is there any widely accepted definition of the fantasy genre? Is fantasy genre only a form of a low-brow popular literature, or a part of literature for children design to entertain the audience, stressing the moral message and leaving no enduring imprint in reader’s emotional development? Do the characteristic features of fantasy place the genre in the novelistic or pre-novelistic literary tradition? Does fantasy literature have something to say for the future as well or is it already a worn-out genre?

The comparative method is used for dealing with the topic - particular features of the fantasy genre will be compared with formulaic types of literary works and features of the novel.

The thesis deals with Tolkien’s and Rowling’s works predominantly in terms of formal analysis. However, the works are considered to be a part of popular culture which is to a great extent shaped by its audience; therefore the possible impact of this aspect and their position within a cult fiction will be briefly taken into account.
2 Genre

Genre is a term of literary theory which tends to be defined again and again in every work of literary theory. Etymologically, the word genre comes from French *genre* (kind, sort) having its roots in Old French *gender* and Latin *genus*. In English, the term *genre* was not widely used in the literary theory and criticism until the beginning of 20th century. Literary kind was expressed by the term *species*.

In the most general view, a genre is a type of text classified by the given formal elements. However, these elements are not exactly stated, and the boundaries between the genres are blurred. Thus it is almost impossible to provide a text which is a pure embodiment of a particular genre.

The authors of a publication summarizing the basic terms of the literary theory necessary for advanced reading skills, see a genre as an expression of conventional agreement and a simplifying label. They also pose the question whether it is only the formal elements themselves which classify the text in terms of the genre. Their answer to this question can be the genre classification working on basis of formal arrangement (e.g. sonnets), as well as theme (e.g. pastoral), mode of address (e.g. letter, ode), and attitude or anticipated response (e.g. elegy, war poetry).

After mentioning the list of the classificatory approaches, the publication provides the definition of the genre of a literary work is also influenced by the text’s intelligibility because genre label creates readers’ and critics’ expectations as well as the interpretative assumptions.

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1 *Ways of Reading. Advanced Reading Skills for Students of English Literature* 169
2 Unless it is a highly stylized text or an exploitation of a genre in form of pastiche or collage
3 *Ways of Reading. Advanced Reading Skills for Students of English Literature*
René Wellek speaks about the genre in his work *Theory of Literature*. In his view, a genre is not only the label for distinguishing one from another; the conventional agreement stated in the rules of the genre followed by the author also role in its final shape. The evaluating feature of the genre classification is of considerable importance when dealing with the individual works of art:

We use literary classes as a means of defining and evaluating the unique qualities of individual works. [...] we tend to think of genres not simply as generalized descriptions of a number of individual works but as a set of artistic limitations and potentials. With such a conception in mind, we can evaluate individual works in at least two different ways: (a) by the way in which they fulfill or fail to fulfill the ideal potentials inherent in the genre and thereby achieve or fail to achieve the full artistic effect of that particular type of construction; (b) by the way in which the individual work deviates from the flat standard of the genre, to accomplish some unique individual expression or effect.  

From this point of view, a genre is a framework which is to be fulfilled or failed. However, similar to other traditional notions of literary theory (such as the literary canon), the legitimacy of the genre distinction has recently been challenged.

Classical texts of the theory of genres are works of Aristotle (*Poetics*) and Horace (*Ars Poetica. Ad Pisones*). Aristotle’s Poetics deals predominantly with drama, seeing tragedy as superior to comedy. He also mentions epics, mostly in connection to Homer. Horace’s work is among the pragmatic theories of literature, for it lists the features of a good poem and provides the reader with three goals that every literary work should aim

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4 Cawelti 7
for. The purposes of a text according to him are *docere* (to educate), *movere* (to affect) and *delectare* (to please).

The basic distinction of the genres derived from the classical texts is between prose, poetry and drama. René Wellek in his chapter on literary genres traces their development and concludes with a definition: literary genre should be seen as a grouping of literary works theoretically based on both outer form (metrum or structure) and inner form (subject and audience).\(^5\) According to Wellek, the modern theory of genres is descriptive for it does not states the rules of concrete genres and assumes that by blending new genres can be created.\(^6\)

Another approach to the genre classification is based on the radical presentation of the literary work. It is used by Northrop Frye, whose generic criticism is based on rhetorical qualities: drama is acted, lyric is sung or chanted, and epic is spoken or read aloud. Because Frye’s genre classification arises from the classical period, there is no term for prose. Frye puts it in relation to the epics which passed from the direct contact between the author and the audience to an unseen author communicating with unseen addressees. Not surprisingly, while Frye’s basis for genre distinction is rhetorical presentation, their organizing principle is rhythm – rhythm of recurrence (in epos), rhythm of continuity (in prose), rhythm of decorum (in drama) and rhythm of association (in lyric). After that, Frye lists the specific forms of each rhythm. The term fiction is for him the genre of the written word with predominant rhythm of prose, with a novel being a traditional genre of fiction.\(^7\)

Apparently, definition and classification of the genre of the literary work are not straightforward matters. There is variety of theories of genres and each of them can treat the issue from a different point of view. Even though there are such obvious obstacles in

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\(^5\) Wellek 330  
\(^6\) Ibid 335  
\(^7\) Frye: ‘Rhetorical Criticism’ 263
the area of literary genres, a genre analysis is one of the frequent principles of literary
criticism. It attempts to summarize the roots of the genre as well as its development. It
should include sources which were of a particular importance to the concrete genre
throughout the history and it should be able to trace the elements and features typical for
the genre structure.
3 Formulaic Literature

Do some works of literature become popular primarily because they contain a good story artistically told or because they embody values and attitudes that their audience wishes to see affirmed?\(^8\)

This part contains a general description of the formulaic types of literature, their definition, brief historical development and typical features which will be later discussed in connection to Harry Potter series and The Lord of the Rings.

3.1 Definition

Etymologically, formula comes from Latin *formula* meaning form, rule, or method; in literature it means small form,\(^9\) i.e. a larger plot type or pattern. John G. Cawelti in his work *Adventure, Mystery and Romance. Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* states that this plot pattern is not limited to a certain period or culture and can be popular at different times in different cultures for it embodies an archetypal story form adapted to specific cultural materials, such as images, symbols, themes and myths. Cawelti makes a distinction between two modes of literature – mimetic (describing the world of human experience) and formulaic (dealing with an idealized world). Formula is according to him a pattern characteristic of the widest possible range of literature and other media. Formula stories “have highly predictable structures that guarantee the fulfillment of conventional expectations.”\(^10\) Cawelti distinguishes five primary types of formulas: adventure, romance, mystery, melodrama and stories involving alien beings or states. His distinction corresponds with the general notion of formulaic genres.

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\(^8\) Cawelti 3
\(^9\) www.etymonline.com
\(^10\) Cawelti 1
For adventure stories, the hero and his overcoming of obstacles and dangers as well as his suffering by the machination of a villain are central. Romance is a feminine equivalent of the adventure story where the organizing action is development of a (love) relationship. Mystery formulas deal predominantly with investigations and discoveries of hidden secrets. Melodrama in Cawelti’s view demonstrates the rightness of moral order via suffering and violence. Those stories with alien beings or states are the strongest and largest type of formulaic stories and, unsurprisingly, are also of great popularity.

The twentieth century, being a cradle of popular culture also brought the standardization of the formulaic literature. Terms literary fiction and genre fiction appeared to distinguish between art and the products of popular culture. There is a widening gap between high-brow and low-brow culture or literature, and immense popularity of the formula stories bringing escape and entertainment. From Horace’s triad of the text’s goals docere, movere, delectare, only the aim to please the reader survives in formulaic literature. The author’s main intention is to provide the audience with a believable kind of excitement. Therefore, Cawelti mentions three devices used for catching attention in the formula stories – suspense, identification, and creation of imaginary worlds.

Formulaic genres are rather schematized and stylized. The crucial feature here is not originality, but familiarity. The primary goal resides in the intensification of a familiar experience. But at the same time, every story has to come with something new within the limits of the genre:

To be a work of any quality or interest, the individual version of a formula must have some unique or special characteristics of its own, yet these characteristics must ultimately work toward the fulfillment of the conventional form.11

11 Cawelti 10
In the realm of literature, literary fiction and genre fiction stand on opposite sides. While the first one is considered to be fine art, stressing originality, the latter is seen as mere repetition of schemes within the strict boundaries of the formula. This view proves that the romantic cult of the author/genius and his work is still alive in mind of a contemporary reader. Nonetheless, Cawelti attempts to show the value of popular culture schemes, in particular the literary formulas:

When I began my study of popular genres, I assumed that popular culture was simply an inferior form of high art; that is, I viewed it as art for lowbrows or middlebrows, [...] as an immature form of art. As my thinking on this subject has developed, I have come increasingly to feel that it is important to stress that there are different kinds of artistry rather than a single standard in terms of which all fictional creations should be judged. Our age places a particularly high value on innovation and originality, to the extent that we tend to judge our most strikingly inventive writers and artists as the most significant creators of the age. But an examination of formulaic art also suggests that there is an artistry based on conventions and standardization whose significance is not simply a reflection of the inferior training and lower imaginative capacity of a mass audience. Each conventional formula has a wide range of artistic potential, and it has come to seem mistaken to automatically relegate a work to an inferior artistic status on the ground that it is a detective story or a western.12

To sum up, formulaic narrative is a genre fiction containing highly stylized textual patterns. It deals with the idealized world, retells the archetypal stories and employs universal cultural images and themes. The formulaic genres are usually considered to be among the low-brow literature because of their embodiment of needs of escape and entertainment.

12 Cawelti 299
4 Romance

French poets, in the 11th century, discovered or invented, or were first to express, that romantic species of passion which English poets were still writing about in the nineteenth. They effected a change which has left no corner of our ethics, our imagination, or our daily life untouched, and they erected impassable barriers between us and the classical past.\textsuperscript{13}

One of the formulaic genres or genre fiction is romance. A major hindrance in dealing with the genre is in the term \textit{romance} itself. It is not as vague as the abstract theoretical terms, (such as genre) mentioned earlier. However, the difficulties with its definition survive because of the wide range of historical contents of it. There is a considerable difference between the medieval chivalric romance and modern romantic fiction. The main changes of the historical development as well as the typical qualities of the genre are to be discussed in this section.

The word \textit{romance} comes from Old French and means ‘a book written in vernacular.’ Closely connected term \textit{roman} meant in Old French either courtly romance in verse or popular book; the term was used to distinguish the popular texts from the scholarly and official literature written in Latin.

4.1 Definition

The dictionary definitions of the term cover usually more than one meaning, providing thus the summary of the development of the genre in the course of time. Romance is defined as a medieval tale based on legend, chivalric love and adventure, or the supernatural; in contemporary literature it is a popular romantic novel in which some original values of medieval form survive. In more general view, romance is a prose

\textsuperscript{13} Lewis 4
narrative treating imaginary characters involved in events remote in time or space and usually heroic, adventurous or mysterious. The most universal notion of romance is also included in the dictionary definition – romance as a love story of any kind.\textsuperscript{14}

While Cawelti deals to some extent with all of the types of formulaic literature, Gillian Beer in her study \textit{The Romance} focuses only on one of them, which is also the subject-matter of this thesis. She covers the history of romance in England from the twelfth century until the modern inheritors of the genre, such as science fiction and surrealism in the twentieth century. Beer points out the characteristic of the literary work given by its name: “The ‘popular’ and the ‘aristocratic’ strains in the romance are already suggested in the term; though the subject-matter of the romances was courtly, its language could be understood by all.”\textsuperscript{15} In her view, romance is a genre invoking the past or the socially remote, and using or re-using well-known stories. She also stresses the difference in the modern term romance which is mostly perceived as a term for some kind of sub literature or low brow literature of wish-fulfillment, and the medieval term romance as described above.

Northrop Frye’s study \textit{The Secular Scripture. A Study of the Structure of Romance} provides us with another definition – romance is the literary type in which the existence between ‘once upon a time’ and ‘they live happily ever after’ is filled with adventures and collisions. Frye divides romance into two groups – naïve and sentimental romance. Among naïve romances are folktales and ballads. Sentimental romances are extended and more developed formulas of naïve romances. Frye follows the history of the genre from its beginnings in the Classical period, through rich medieval tradition to the novel and twentieth century science fiction. In the centre of his attention is ‘secular scripture’, that is the counterpart to sacred stories in the realm of verbal culture. Frye sees the difference

\textsuperscript{14} Merriam – Webster’s Encyclopedia of Literature
\textsuperscript{15} Beer 4
between these two in authority behind the text and its social function, not in structure. Examples of sacred stories are myths whose primary function is to convey knowledge. While secular stories, such as romances or folk tales fulfill the imaginative needs of the society.

As one of the formulaic genres, romance is primarily designed to entertain its audience:

It absorbs the reader into experience which is otherwise unattainable. It frees us from our inhibitions and preoccupations by drawing us entirely into its own world – a world which is never fully equivalent to our own although it must remind us of it if we are to understand it at all.16

In the general context, the term romance is applied to love stories. For instance, under the title Romance Revisited, a series of essays dealing mainly with popular women fiction from the feminist point of view was published.17 Also the definition of romance in this respect was narrowed – it is now seen as a narrative offering the potential of a heterosexual love union whose fulfillment is threatened by a series of barriers or problems.18

The term romance appears also in other fields of popular culture, such as films or TV programs; therefore it can carry some inconvenient connotations. However, Beer’s definition of romance is wide enough for the needs of this thesis and the area it specifies is apt for the works discussed here. At the same time, Cawelti’s distinction of formulas is of concern here, because in the centre of attention will be a combination of adventure and romance formulaic pattern.

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16 Beer 3
17 Ed. Jackie Stacey, Lynne Pearce
18 Romance Revisited 15
Altogether, romance as an example of a genre fiction relies heavily upon the well-known stories and traditional schemes; it presents the characters and events remoted in time or space and contains a strong wish-fulfillment quality in the plot.

4.2 History

As the etymological definition of the romance shows, the roots of the genre stretch to the medieval literary tradition. With romance, vernacular European languages appeared next to Latin – the official language of manuscripts and scriptures. At its beginning it could be seen as the synthesis of elements of epic love songs (chanson de geste), classical epic of the Greco-Roman period and biblical history. The new-born genre stood separated form epic and allegory though it shared some elements with both of them. From epic narratives romance borrowed the prominent role of a plot while with allegory it was connected through a language code of ritualized behaviour and symbolism.

W. P. Ker in his Epic and Romance distinguishes three schools of medieval romance: Teutonic epic, French epic, and the Icelandic histories. His further characterization of the three romance branches goes as follows:

The French epics have many points of likeness with the Teutonic poetry of Beowulf or Finnesburh, or of the Norse heroic songs. They are epic in substance, having historical traditions at the back of them, and owing the materials of their picture to no deliberate study of authorities. They differ from Beowulf in this respect, among others, that they are the poems of feudal society, not of the simpler and earlier communities. [...] As far as heroic poetry is concerned, the difference lies chiefly in the larger frame of the story. [...] There is also, frequently, a much fuller sense of the national greatness and the importance of the defence of the land against its enemies,
a consciousness of the dignity of the general history, unlike the carelessness with which the Teutonic poets fling themselves into the story of individual lives, and disregard the historical background.\(^9\)

Medieval romances brought love as the major topic into literature:

> It seems to us natural that love should be the commonest theme of serious imaginative literature: but a glance at classical antiquity or at the Dark Ages at once shows us that what we took for ‘nature’ is really a special state of affairs, which will probably have an end, and which certainly had a beginning in eleventh-century Provence.\(^{20}\)

The roots of romance are to be looked for in the Troubadour poetry and the Provencal love songs of the late Middle Ages. The code of courtship presented in lyrical songs transformed into highly conventionalized genre of a courtly love between a knight and his lady, or hero’s adventures.

Romance dealt with traditional themes, especially three thematic cycles of tales – tales centered on the life and deeds of Alexander the Great; French tales (mainly about Roland), and tales set in Britain concerning King Arthur, the Knights of the Round Table and the Quest for Holy Grail. At the time when medieval chivalric romance tradition reached its peak, a related literary tradition developed in Northern Europe. From Scandinavia comes a form of epic, such as Beowulf or Nibelungenlied often containing mythological elements. Many of these epics had an inspirational impact on later making of romances.

In English, the romance genre evolution follows the line from the medieval chivalric romances (14\(^{\text{th}}\) and 15\(^{\text{th}}\) century), Elizabethan romances (16\(^{\text{th}}\) century), Gothic

\(^9\) Ker 52
\(^{20}\) Lewis 3
romances (18th century) to the romances of the nineteenth century. The romance genre written in verse reached its peak after Edmund Spenser’s publication of Faerie Queene in 1590 and 1596; later, with the rise of the novel prose was used as mode of expression in romances.

Beer mentions two major types of romance since its beginnings in the medieval period – aristocratic and popular. Aristocratic romance is closely related to the epic because of its complexity and numerous narrative lines; the popular romance on the other hand, tends to simplify and can be expressed in the form of a ballad. Aristocratic romance is a genuine example of the genre, since the ideals presented and valued originated in the chivalric and courtly tradition and survived as the key elements of romance:

The social affinities of the romance, with its grave idealising of heroism and purity, are with the aristocracy. It revived in the period we call Romantic as a part of the Romantic tendency to archaic feudalism and a cult of the hero, or idealized libido.21

4.3 Characteristics and features

As was stated before, each genre has a set of the defining elements and principles. Among the major features of romance in its most general sense and all its historical forms is subjectivity. The author expresses only the text itself and leave the reader absolutely dependent on his/her will. The author is the creator of an imaginary world and he/she states the rules. There is an apparent authoritative quality in romance which can be compared to the fairy tale narration – the storyteller is the dominant power over the story. Beer also

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21 Frye: ‘Rhetorical Criticism’ 306
mentions the reader’s yielding to the author: “The romance requires of us the wholehearted involvement which a child feels in a story told; in that sense there is something ‘childlike’ in the pleasure of romance.”\textsuperscript{22}

The primary pleasure of the plot and the lack of reader’s contribution to the story are also among the frequent objections to the genre. Beer points out the fact, that in a similar way in which romances and their authors work with black and white elements, the audience is also divided strictly in two: “Perhaps its principal artistic problem is, quite simply, that it tends to bore the reader who does not succumb totally to it.”\textsuperscript{23}

As for the other properties typical for the genre of romance given by Beer, they are the themes of love and adventure; withdrawal from their own societies on the part of both reader and the hero of the story; a profusion of sensuous details; simplified characters; a mingling of the everyday and the extraordinary; a prolonged series of incidents; happy ending, or strictly given morals and modes of behaviour to which all the characters must comply.\textsuperscript{24}

The blending of love and adventure elements corresponds with Cawelti’s notion of two most frequent kinds of formulaic literature – romance and adventure story, resembling each other in many aspects apart from the hero who is female in romance and male in adventure stories.

The need of a happy ending is essential to the escapist literature. What is more, romance can be seen as a wish-fulfillment story which in a way requires an optimistic solution.

As in other types of fiction, characters are one of the key elements in romance. Through the characters the reader senses the story. However, in romance the heroes are

\textsuperscript{22} Beer 8
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid 14
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid 10
inferior to the plot and its development (i.e. flat characters). They usually do not go through any significant changes and are given entirely at fate’s stake: “a central character that never develops or ages goes through one adventure after another until the author himself collapses.”

The characters are mainly described in the terms of absolute good or evil, leaving little or no space for self-doubts or inner crisis. The hero is in the story to act and not to think. In the romance characterization, the human archetypes close to the fairy tale patterns are often employed – the brave hero, the beautiful and innocent heroine, the wise old man, the evil wizard and so on. The stylization of the characters is of a great importance in the realm of romance genre:

The romancer does not attempt to create ‘real people’ so much as stylized figures which expand into psychological archetypes. It is in the romance that we find Jung’s libido, anima, and shadow reflected in the hero, heroine, and villain respectively. This is why the romance so often radiates a glow of subjective intensity that the novel lacks, and why a suggestion of allegory is constantly creeping in around its fingers.

In addition to the characters, the plot is also highly conventionalized and influenced by the archetypal principles. Unlike novels or other types of realistic fiction, romance is a sensational narrative – it requests mixture of love (presenting lust) and adventure (bloodlust). Its plot does not evolve on the principle of causality but it is built on the coincidence. Characters and their acting are inferior to the story and they cannot influence it. The story develops externally on the and then principle and its logic is not to be

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25 Frye: “Archetypal Criticism” 186
26 Frye: “Rhetorical Criticism” 304
27 Frye: The Secular Scripture 47
28 Ibid 47
questioned for the author has the final word. With romance’s usage of the basic storylines and simplifying moral truths, it stands on the scale of literary genres close to the fairy tales and myths which are also presented as the final and unchangeable versions of stories:

The profoundest kind of literary experience, the kind that we return to after we have, so to speak, seen everything, may be very close to the experience of a child listening to a story, too spellbound to question the narrative logic.\(^{29}\)

The seemingly endless line of incidents in romance is a typical pre-novelistic literary device called interlacement. It is the embodiment of the noncausal \emph{and then} narrative, for it is in fact piling of single adventures in a row. In such a series the hero is obviously of no power to influence the progress of the story. This lack of causal links is typical for oral literature or literature based on literary tradition, which romance definitely is. Beer uses the term \emph{polyphonic form} for this type of narration:

Polyphonic form means that the intensity is based on the senses (bright colours, sounds, swift changes of scene, beautiful women, elaborate descriptions of architecture and ornament). It is rarely an intensity of plot-climax.\(^{30}\)

Yet another crucial element of romance is conservatism. Beer does not list it in her genre properties directly but she mentions it many times throughout her study. The notion of tradition is connected with the romance setting which is distant from both time and place and deals with the idealized world. Not only Beer, but Frye also speaks about conservatism as one of the key features of the genre: “conventions of prose romance show

\(^{29}\) Frye: \emph{The Secular Scripture} 51
\(^{30}\) Beer 20
little change over the course of the centuries, and conservatism of this kind is the mark of a stable genre.”

While both of them see this trait of the genre as a positive aspect it is often considered to be the major flaw of romance and other formulaic genres.

Mikhail Bakhtin in his study ‘Epic and Novel’ lists three crucial features of the epic, which it has in common with other high genres of the medieval literature, including romance. These three principles correspond to what was said about the principle characteristics of the genre of romance. The first says that the theme of the story is an epic past which is, in Bakhtin’s view, absolutely unchangeable. The second principle covers the fact, that the narration is often based on the oral tradition and is not a product of the author’s personal experience or imagination. Finally, the third principle lies in the notion of the time span dividing the contemporary world and the world of the narration. Events presented in this way cannot be discussed; they are definite and are to be accepted or denied.

As the definition of the term romance suggested, it has a wide range of meanings. Frye uses it in his theory of mythos as a name for one of his four narrative categories. According to him, the meaning of a text and its structure establish a static pattern. These patterns can be used in a broader sense than traditional literary genres; they embody the pregeneric narrative elements of literature. Frye calls these categories romantic, tragic, comic, and ironic; putting the generic plots (mythoi) into two opposite pairs: romance/irony and tragedy/comedy. Frye associates these patterns with the season of the year and then provide the reader with a thorough characterization of each of them.

Romance is called the mythos of summer. Frye stresses romance’s dealing with the idealized world and the persistent nostalgia represented in the constant looking for an ideal

31 Frye: The Secular Scripture 4
32 Bachtin 15
33 Frye: ‘Archetypal Criticism’
world or a golden age. His dealing with the pattern focus on the archetypal elements, such as the form of the quest, the character of the hero in opposition to the villain, the dialectic structure of narration, or its symbolism.

The major adventure of any romance is the quest. It is an organizing principle of the story because the minor incidents are part of it too. There are three main phases of the quest – conflict (represented by a perilous journey and the minor adventures), death struggle (a battle where hero or villain or both die), and the exaltation of the hero who is now worth being called a hero.

In the quest, two characters are indispensable – the hero and the villain. While the hero stands for the divine qualities of the upper world, e.g. vigour, youth, spring, dawn; the villain personifies the demonic, such as confusion, old age, winter and darkness.

The figures of the hero and his enemy are part of the dialectical structure used in romance. Not only the main characters are in the direct opposition, but also the others are divided into those who are for or against the quest. These characters are depicted in a simplified manner on basis of this distinction.

Frye finds the archetypal symbolism of great importance in the romance pattern. Apart from the symbols tied to the personality of the hero and the villain, the colour symbolism often appears (e.g. red colour for love, white for innocence).

To sum it up, romance as a literary genre has a rich history and is hard to define exactly. In terms of both structure and content, romance has many features which are to be discussed later in more details in connection to concrete examples of *The Lord of the Rings* and Harry Potter series. However, romance, and formulaic literature in general, are not the only textual inspirational sources for the two works which are subject-matter of this thesis. Thus we also need to include basic facts about the fantasy genre, which is no less interesting than romance is.
5 Fantasy

‘Fantasy lacking in the full character of reality can have compensatory strengths.’

The Latin word *phantasticus* means ‘to make visible’; the broadest definitions speak of fantasy as an image-making faculty or a mental image. In terms of literature, fantasy is described as “imaginative fiction dependent for effect on strangeness of setting (such as other worlds or times) and characters (such as supernatural beings).”

There are many attempts to define fantasy, not only as a genre, but also as a subgenre or a literary mode. In view of its representation, fantasy is called “the literature of unreality” or “literature which does not give priority to realistic representation”. Thanks to its strong escapist and wish-fulfillment qualities, it is seen as “a literature of desire, which seeks that which is experienced as absence and loss”.

There are relational definitions which place fantasy in context of other genres on the basis of its features too:

Fantasy is a genre of art that uses magic and other supernatural forms as primary element of plot, theme or setting. The genre is generally distinguished from science fiction and horror by overall look, feel and theme of the individual work, though there is a great deal of overlap between the three (collectively known as speculative fiction).

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34 Manlove: *Modern Fantasy* 26
35 *Merriam-Webster’s Encyclopedia of Literature*
36 Jackson 9
37 Ibid 13
38 Ibid 3
39 www.wikipedia.com
Other definitions treat fantasy from the thematic point of view; fantasy is a genre exhibiting

“insistence on and celebration of the separate identities of created things. [...] the concern of fantasy is not with the minutely faithful record for the sake of fidelity to fact, but with the sense of individuality that comes from making things strange and luminous with independent life in a fantastic setting.”40

And there are also definitions, admitting the impossibility of simple and direct limiting of the genre. These see the term fantasy as a mere label with vague meaning which has to be carefully stated when the term is used for the first time in a study; such definition is for instance: “A fiction evoking wonder and containing a substantial and irreducible element of the supernatural with which the mortal characters in the story or the readers become on at least partly familiar terms.”41

5.1 Characteristics and features

As with the definition, the division of fantasy into subgenres is not easy; a wide range of classification criteria can be used. C. N. Manlove distinguishes two broad classes of fantasy based on the difference between the use of fancy and imagination. His categories are comic fantasy and imaginative fantasy. The comic carry the primary goal in reader’s pleasure and the sense of enclosure on the author’s side. The imaginative fantasist, on the other hand, attempt to avoid escapism and nostalgic failings: “Their object is to

40 Manlove: Impulse of Fantasy Literature ix
41 Manlove: Modern Fantasy 1
enlist their experience and invention into giving a total vision of reality transformed; that is, to make their fantastic worlds as real as our own.”

A detailed description of the fantasy subgenres is provided by William J. Burling. He distinguishes two main kinds of fantasy due to the historical development of the genre – pre-radical and radical fantasy. Pre-radical fantasy with its many generic forms (such as chivalric romance, gothic fantasy, horror fantasy, fairy fantasy or urban fantasy) precedes the radical fantasy, which is more contemporary and deals predominantly with the excesses of the capitalist society, industrialization and technological progress.

Fantasy literature seems to have less to do with the past than with alternative realities or projected futures. However, it is heavily influenced by folklore motifs and traditional literary genres. C. W. Sullivan focuses on the connection between folklore and fantasy in his article:

The writer of fantastic literature, the creator of impossible worlds, has need of and uses folklore to make those imagined worlds accessible to the reader. … In short, fantasy and sci-fi authors use traditional materials, from individual motifs to entire folk narratives, to allow their readers to recognize, in elemental and perhaps unconscious ways, the reality and cultural depth of the impossible worlds these authors have created.

Recently, since the film adaptations of some of the key works of the genre became well-known, fantasy subgenres can be classified also according to their popularity. Two main subgenres in such distinction would be sword and sorcery and high fantasy. The latter is of great importance for this thesis, for it shares a common ground with the oral tradition as well as with the formulaic literature.

42 Manlove, Modern Fantasy 12
43 www.faculty.smsu.edu
44 Sullivan: ‘Folklore and fantastic literature’
“High fantasy is a subgenre of fantasy fiction that is set in invented or parallel worlds.”\textsuperscript{45} The genre reached its peak in 1950s when its major works by C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien were published. Stories of this subgenre are “generally serious in tone and often epic in scope, dealing with themes of grand struggle against supernatural, evil forces. It is one of the most popular subgenres of fantasy fiction. Some typical characteristics of high fantasy include fantastical elements such as elves and dwarves, magic, wizards, invented languages, quests, coming-of-age theme, and multi-volume narratives.”\textsuperscript{46} The suggested label ‘high fantasy’ also informs about the amount of the supernatural forces in the story: “low fantasy is distinguished by the relative amount of supernatural forces in the world – low – or by its setting in the real world with fantastical elements intruding.”\textsuperscript{47} Jackson puts high fantasy among the works of fantasy of the nineteenth century; in her view, worlds of high fantasy works are too rich and too complex to be contained by the convention of Victorian naturalism.\textsuperscript{48}

Thanks to the recent popularity of the fantasy genre, quite a lot of articles and studies dealing with it have appeared. In 2002 also encyclopedia of fantasy was published.\textsuperscript{49} Apart from literary fantasy, it focuses on film and TV fantasy as well as fantasy games and magazines concerning the genre. The introductory part of the encyclopedia contains the most general definition of fantasy – it is a literature born from the desire of the heart.\textsuperscript{50} This definition stresses the wish-fulfillment quality of the genre above all other features because it is the element which can the great variety of subgenres have in common. Throughout the text, fantasy is treated as ‘stories of impossible,’ science fiction and horror stories seen as related but independent genres. An opinion that fantasy

\textsuperscript{45} www.wikipedia.com
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid
\textsuperscript{48} Jackson 148
\textsuperscript{49} Fantasy. Encyklopedie fantastických světů
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid 8
can be divided into a random number of subclasses or periods is provided; the encyclopedia itself distinguishes nine categories of fantasy: fairy tales, stories of animals, the Arthurian cycle, stories of thousand and one night, stories with Chinese motifs, stories of lost nations and races, humorous fantasy, sword and sorcery, and heroic fantasy.

Within this classification, the last two categories are of interest to this thesis. Since the second half of 20th century they also shape the fantasy mainstream and are the most typical representatives of the genre for the ordinary readers.

The term sword and sorcery was coined in 1960s but the literature appeared since the 1930s. It gained wide popularity in 1980s thanks to film adaptations of Robert E. Howard’s stories of Barbar Conan. The simplest summary of the genre would contain a hero on a journey fighting evil wizards, monsters and other enemies. In these aspects, sword and sorcery shows affinity with heroic fantasy. However, in this subgenre less extended stories usually published in pulp magazines aimed at male audience are preferred. In the 1990s, sword and sorcery was absorbed by the most popular of the fantasy subgenres – the heroic fantasy.

Heroic fantasy in this sense is a term interchangeable with epic or high fantasy. Its main topic is a hero/heroine’s journey through an imaginary world meeting supernatural beings and fighting for better world. The word heroic in the label of the subgenre does not refer to the crucial character of the hero/heroine, but to the overall heroic tone and atmosphere of the stories. Heroic fantasy has an essential feature which distinguishes it quite clearly from the other fantasy texts. The narration itself is usually accompanied by an information bank necessary for understanding and orientation in the story. Such information bank can contain dictionaries or grammar rules of made-up languages, maps, family histories and so on.
Yet another distinction is made by Rosemary Jackson in her study of fantasy. After mentioning other definitions and distinctions, she stresses the relational behaviour of the fantasy mode – it has to be defined only in relation to the real/to realism in literature. In her opinion, the two main classes of fantasy are religious and secular fantasy, distinguishing in the representation of the supernatural. In religious fantasy, there are angels and devils, heaven and hell, while secular fantasies take place in fairy lands peopled by dwarves or elves.

Jackson defines fantasy as a mode placed between marvelous and mimetic modes, fantasy combining elements of both of them. The marvelous mode is often used in romances, works with magic and supernaturalism, and can be found in works of fairy tale authors/collectors, such as Andrew Lang, the Grimm Brothers, Hans Christian Andersen; into the category of marvelous the works of Tolkien go according to Jackson too. The mimetic mode, on the contrary, can be viewed as imitation of external reality and is typical for the novels of 19th century.

Besides the mode classification, Jackson excludes Tolkien’s works from the area of fantasy also in another division, putting into opposition fantasies of dualism (concerning discovering bestial elements in humans) and modern faery literature (dealing with examples of human characterization given to animals or non-human beings). She concludes her study of fantasy with explaining of her title – fantasy is the genre of subversion; fantastic texts highlight estrangement; they resist closure and definiteness, and point out the relativity. The marvelous mode (or modern faery literature) has in her view more in common with romance. Thus in further dealing with the fantasy features we will consider this mode as well.
5.2 History

Fantasy as an independent genre is a recent invention. It was long considered to be an inferior part of science-fiction literature. Jackson traces the history of fantasy back to the oral tradition: “As a perennial literary mode, fantasy can be traced back to ancient myths, legends, folklore, carnival art.”\(^{51}\) Then she lists fantasy features in the Romantic literature, such as the gothic tales and novels; fantastic realism (e.g. Brontë novels), and Victorian fantasies in works of Lewis Caroll, George MacDonald or Charles Kingsley.

Tracing of the fantasy elements in other literary genres throughout the history is also one of the items of Lin Carter’s study *Tolkien: A Look Behind "The Lord of the Rings"*.\(^{52}\) Carter goes back to classic epic, which stands at the beginning of the influential literary tradition of the stories set in wholly imaginary setting.\(^{53}\) After classical period, Carter focuses on the heroic epic of young nations of post-Roman Europe, such as Beowulf.

In the late Middle Ages, a new literary form of epic fantasy appeared by combining elements of classical and heroic epic; from the classical, the motif of the hero’s journey and fighting in the world of monsters and unknown peoples was taken. Heroic epic provided this new genre with the supernatural (e.g. elves, fairies, dwarves, ghosts) and powerful weapons (swords with names and their own histories).\(^{54}\)

The tradition of epic fantasy continues with the chivalric novel. However, the true beginnings of the fantasy genre are seen by Carter in the nineteenth century where it appeared as a reaction to industrialization of society. Fantasy of the nineteenth century kept the characteristics of classical and heroic fantasy, and chivalric novels, and brought them

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51 Jackson 95  
52 Ballantine 1969  
53 Carter 96  
54 Ibid 107
into a prosaic novel form. Carter uses term *fantasy novel* for works of William Morris, E. R. Eddison or Mervyn Peake, which are in his view the best representatives of the genre in this period.

The history of fantasy in the twentieth century can be quite difficult to trace because of the multiplicity of genres and their mutual interconnections (fantasy mingling with science fiction, utopian texts, and horror stories). In the first half of the century, fantasy and other formulaic stories were seen as low-brow and inferior branch of literature and appeared mainly in pulp magazines. Their primary goal was to entertain and please the reader. Fantasy arrived to its turning point in 1950s. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* and its consequent popularity secured the future for the genre. Typically, fantasy of the twentieth century is divided into two phases: before and after Tolkien.

In the late 1990s, fantasy reached its peak in popularity and claimed a prominent place also in children’s literature thanks to J. K. Rowling’s Harry Potter stories. Under the label fantasy is nowadays stored multiplicity of subgenres and works of different quality levels. The question remains on behalf of the quality/quantity relation of recent works of fantasy, not only in literature but also in film and TV programs.
6 The Novel

‘The novel is a formidable mass; it is most distinctly one of the moister areas of literature – irrigated by a hundred rills and occasionally degenerating into a swamp.’

As was observed, modern fantasy literature includes elements of other genres, such as myths, folktales, and romances. All of these are in fantasy reflected mainly in terms of content. As for the structural and formal point of view, novel, as a dominant genre of prose fiction is a crucial influence in fantasy.

The novel in its current shape appeared in the 18th century as a medium of realist fiction. The etymology of the term itself stresses the novelty and originality of the genre. It comes from Italian novella (short story) which originally meant a ‘new story’ and originates in Latin novella – new things. Generally, the novel is defined as “a fictional prose narrative of considerable length and a certain complexity that deals imaginatively with human experience through a connected sequence of events involving a group of persons in a specific setting.”

Ian Watt in his general introduction of the study The Rise of the Novel defines novel as a literary form which reflects individualism and independence from the past thought. He also points out the etymological meaning of the term and the attention which is paid to originality in literature, and art in general, since the Romantic period: “The novel is thus the logical literary vehicle of a culture which, in the last few centuries, has set an unprecedented value on originality, on the novel; and it is therefore well named.” Even though there is no connection link between those two matters it seems that the label novel refers to the general tendencies in the reading habits.

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55 Forster 24
56 www.etymonline.com
57 Merriam-Webster Encyclopedia of Literature
58 Watt 13-4
6.1 Features

The general tendency of the novel is towards subjectivity, particularity and originality. The collective traditionalism of idealized romances is replaced by the individual experience and realistic depiction of low life. In terms of structure, the trend in favour of originality embodied in the novel is expressed in the lack of the genre in relation to the realistic narrative mode: “The poverty of the novel’s formal convention would seem to be the price it must pay for its realism.”\textsuperscript{59} Thanks to this lack of strict formal rules, a lot of genres tend to acquire the novel form (e.g. fantasy novel).

The idiosyncratic quality of the novel can be seen also in the characters representation. In contrast to romance and other types of formulaic literature, novels employ rounded characters capable of further development and are ready for extended life beyond books. E. M. Forster uses a label \textit{Homo Fictus} for the literary characters and defines it as a being who is born, dies, wants little food and sleep, and is tirelessly interested in relationship.\textsuperscript{60}

Apart from characters (People), Forster lists other aspects of the novel: Story, Plot, Fantasy, Prophecy, Pattern and Rhythm. In his view, Story is a series of loosely connected episodes fueled by \textit{and then?} principle. On the other hand, Plot is based on the causal relationship. A complex novel successfully combines both these aspects.

Mikhail Bakhtin, who dealt with the theory of novel even more thoroughly, stresses in his study “Epic and Novel” the fact that in the period of the novel’s dominance, the other genres are to a great extent ‘novelized’ and influenced by the prosaic language of the novel.

\textsuperscript{59} Watt 14
\textsuperscript{60} Forster 63
The novel can be considered a work of imagination that is grounded in reality. In terms of topics, it is also influenced by romance - the popular literary form that describes the adventures, both natural and supernatural. Thus, the modern novel is rooted in two traditions, the mimetic and the fantastic, or the realistic and the romantic.  

From the historical point of view, the appearance of novel, as an emerging genre, contrasted with the traditional literary forms, such as romances; and its further development and consequent dominance in the literary realm had a considerable impact on many literary genres, including fantasy.

Speaking especially of high (heroic) fantasy, it keeps the features of epic (listed by Bakhtin), such as the setting in a distant heroic past, impersonal and objective third person narrator; story based more on the oral literary tradition than on personal experience. High fantasy combines all these aspects with the prosaic mode of the novel – the text is not rhymed, the text flow is usually divided into chapters or other sections.

The flexibility of novel is demonstrated also in the labels used for various subgenres, differing both in their form or thematic content. The genre encompassed a wide range of types and styles, such as a picaresque novel, epistolary novel, gothic novel, romantic novel, realistic novel, historical novel, novel of formation, novel of manners, or fantasy novel. In this case, the term fantasy represents the story of the novel and the term novel stands for its structural definition.

61 ‘Novel’ www.encyclopedia.com
6.2 Novel vs. Romance

Richard Chase in his study *The American Novel and Its Tradition* deals predominantly with the tradition of the American romance-novels as presented in works of Nathaniel Hawthorne or Henry James. In the introductory part of the study, Chase defines the differences between the novel and the romance:

Doubtless the main difference between the novel and the romance is in the way in which they view reality. The novel renders reality closely and in comprehensive detail. It takes a group of people and sets them going about the business of life. We come to see these people in their real complexity of temperament and motive. […] Character is more important than action and plot. […] By contrast the romance, following distantly the medieval example, feels free to render reality in less volume and detail. It tends to prefer action to character, and action will be freer in a romance than in a novel, encountering, as it were, less resistance from reality. […] The characters, probably rather two-dimensional types, will not be complexly related to each other or to society or to the past.62

Apart from the general features of the two intermingled genres, Chase also includes in his introduction Henry James’s theory of the novel, in which he states that the final goal of a novel is to achieve or represent the ‘circuit of life’ – the circuit among opposites, the circuit passing through the real as well as through the ideal, through doing and feeling. In James’s view, these opposites are represented by the modes of realism and romance.63

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62 Chase 12-3
63 Ibid 27
After brief summary of the narrative and formal features of the formulaic literature, fantasy and novel, that is, the qualities appearing in *The Lord of the Rings* and Harry Potter books, the analysis itself follows.

7 ‘On Fairy-Stories’

“The realm of fairy-story is wide and deep and high and filled with many things: all manner of beasts and birds are found there; shoreless seas and stars uncounted; beauty that is an enchantment, and an ever-present peril; both joy and sorrow as sharp as swords. In that realm a man may, perhaps, count himself fortunate to have wandered, but its very richness and strangeness tie the tongue of a traveler who would report them.”

After the definition and the label struggle, Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* (*LOTR*) and Rowling’s *Harry Potter* stories were cast within the genre of fantasy. Now, both of them will be analyzed in view of Tolkien’s theoretical essay ‘On Fairy-Stories’ where his definition and description of a typical work of fantasy is depicted.

In 1938 and 1939, while working on the first part of *LOTR*, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Tolkien wrote also a theoretical essay about fairy stories. It could be seen as his attempt to define the genre of ‘fairy story’ because he wanted his own works to fall into this category and be judged according to its rules he stated. In this respect, the term *fairy story* is interchangeable with the term *fantasy*. In this essay, he provides the reader with his definition of fairy stories, their origin and essential elements. In Tolkien’s view, among fairy stories were not only fairy tales for children, but works of fantasy as well. Tolkien charts some crucial features, which can be traced in any good work of literary fantasy. Even though he never mentions his own works (*The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings*), it is

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64 Tolkien: ‘On Fairy-Stories’
obvious, that his rules and principles of fairy stories are based on his own experience with writing them, and the stories follow the line of the theoretical ideas discussed in the essay.

In the beginning of the essay, Tolkien poses three main questions which shape the structure of the essay: What are fairy stories, what is their origin and purpose?

7.1 What are fairy stories?

In his definition, Tolkien denies the idea, that fairy stories must include fairies. He provides some examples of traditional fairy tales without fairies; and comes to conclusion, that for fairy stories the fantastical elements are crucial: “a fairy-story is one which touches on or uses Faerie, whatever its own main purpose may be: satire, adventure, morality, fantasy. Faerie itself may perhaps most nearly be translated by Magic – but it is magic of a peculiar mood and power, at the furthest pole from the vulgar devices of the laborious, scientific magician.”65 Counting on the fact, that Faerie is in Tolkien’s view a created world, ‘the Perilous Realm,’ a secondary world where fairy stories/fantasies are set, both LOTR and Harry Potter stories fulfill the requirement. The story of LOTR takes place in Middle Earth, and the magical world of Potter, is set in kind of parallel world of wizards, though being quite close to the Primary world, it is strictly divided from it.

W. H. Auden in his study Secondary Worlds deals with the created realities of literary works, especially words of sagas. He uses the terms of Tolkien’s essay ‘On Fairy-Stories’. In his opinion, there are two principle desires in a human being – the desire to know ‘the real’ of the objective world he/she lives in, and to create secondary worlds on his/her own and sharing them with others. Auden states, that creation of the secondary worlds can be found in works of literature, and represents poet’s subjectivity. These

65 Tolkien: ‘On Fairy-Stories’
created worlds often represent an idealistic simplification of the everyday reality with appearance of absolute vices and virtues.

In Tolkien’s view, the main goal of a storyteller, or the Sub-creator, is to provide the reader with the literary belief, in case of fantasy stories, he calls it Secondary Belief in connection to his notion of creation of Secondary Worlds:

That state of mind has been called ‘willing suspension of disbelief.’ But this does not seem to me a good description of what happens. What really happens is that the story-maker proves a successful ‘sub-creator’. He makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is ‘true’: it accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside. The moment disbelief arises, the spell is broken; the magic, or rather art, has failed.66

Art is an imaginative process establishing ‘Secondary Belief’. If the reader is to believe a story, it must be internally consistent. Only a story with such a consistency lets the reader enter the Secondary World. Within the story of LOTR, there is a complexity of the narration elements – nothing in useless or without purpose in it. No detail is made either too prominent or too marginal; and the Secondary Belief established is supported by the historical depth which is created by Tolkien in the same way as in old epic works- it appears in the songs, tales and legends of Middle Earth told by the characters themselves.

66 Tolkien: ‘On Fairy-Stories’
7.2 What is the origin of fairy stories?

Apart from the creating of Secondary Worlds and maintaining Secondary Belief, Tolkien deals with the origin of fantasy stories. In this respect, he stresses the combining principle and the mixture of existing elements. He mentions two possible ways of borrowing the features used in fairy stories: diffusion, which is borrowing in space, and inheritance, borrowing in time. Apart from these, also original invention is of great importance too, because Tolkien does not see re-using of known element as sufficient for a good story. He uses a food metaphor: the process of making a story is compared to a preparation of a meal; the telling of a story is compared to a ‘Cauldron of Stories’ where various proved ingredients are mixed together with a pinch of originality.

Recycling of known traditional folklore and literature elements occurs in both LOTR and Potter. The most obvious borrowing of motifs appears in the area of supernatural creatures and mythical animals: LOTR contains dwarves, elves, or orcs; in Potter, centaurs, unicorns, goblins, vampires, werewolves, a basilisk, a sphinx, or merpeople appear. The ‘pinch of originality’ must not be missing: in LOTR, Tolkien creates a new race which is crucial for his story – the Hobbits. Rowling does not come up with such a novelty, but employs some of the traditional creatures in an unexpected way, such as dwarves treated as garden vermin.
7.3 What are the main functions of fairy stories?

Speaking of the main functions of fantasy stories, Tolkien mentions Fantasy, Recovery, Escape and Consolation.

Tolkien perceives Fantasy as a term embracing “both the Sub-creative Art in itself and a quality of strangeness and wonder in the Expression, derived from the Image: a quality essential to fairy-story.”*67 The fact that fantasy deals with non-existing things is for Tolkien a positive aspect; he stresses, that it brings images of things that are not only ‘not actually present’ but which are indeed not to be found in our primary world at all, or are generally believed not to be found there. But while admitting that, I do not assent to the deprecative tone. That the images are of things not in the primary world (if that indeed is possible) is a virtue, not a vice. Fantasy (in this sense) is, I think, not a lower but a higher form of Art, indeed the most nearly pure form, and so (when achieved) the most potent.*68

The fantastic elements of the story help to achieve one of the key features of Tolkien’s theory – Recovery. The main purpose of this aspect is ‘regaining of a clear view’ of the primary world:

Fantasy is made out of the Primary World, but a good craftsman loves his material, and has a knowledge and feeling for clay, stone and wood which only the art of making can give. By the forging of Gram cold iron was revealed; by the making of Pegasus horses were ennobled.*69

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*67 Tolkien. ‘On Fairy-Stories’
*68 Ibid
*69 Ibid
He points out that fantasy stories are usually concerned with the ordinary objects (e.g. tree, iron, wine, or bread) which are put in new relationships and environments and thus regain their shine and meaning. In the similar way, abstract notions, such as friendship, love, honour, or loyalty are treated in the fantasy stories without being seen as clichés of the primary world.

Tolkien’s notion of Escape is closely tied to the escapist quality of fairy stories. He sees it as a main function of fantasy literature and connects the escapism with another typical element of fantasy literature – conservatism, both of them being often considered to be the flaws of the genre. In contrast, Tolkien points out that the desire to escape is among the oldest and most profound desires of mankind which can be fulfilled by fantasy. Telling fairy stories, or working with fantasy is for Tolkien at the same time the ability and the need of human beings to escape imaginatively from the world of facts.

In particular, he deals with ‘the Great Escape’: the escape from Death embodied mainly in immortality of some of the fantasy characters.

The last aspect of fairy stories is Consolation, also called Consolation of the Happy Ending. Tolkien uses a term ‘Eucatastrophe’ for such an ending. “The eucatastrophic tale is the true form of fairy-tale, and its highest function.”70 Its typical embodiment is the happy ending.

‘On Fairy-Stories’, providing the theory of the fantasy stories written by the author of such stories, is among the essential texts for understanding Tolkien’s notion of fantasy genre and his placing on the map of literary realms. Unsurprisingly, LOTR meets the requirements of the genre posed by Tolkien; and so are Rowling’s Harry Potter stories.

70 Tolkien: ‘On Fairy-Stories’
8 The Lord of the Rings

In this section, Tolkien’s trilogy *The Lord of the Rings* will be dealt with in terms of the general features of fantasy and formulaic literature, especially romance. After that, its qualities as a pioneering work of ‘high’ fantasy will be examined.

The work represents the middle part of Tolkien’s trilogy *The Hobbit*, *LOTR* and *The Silmarillion*. It is also a continuation of the story from *The Hobbit* where Bilbo Baggins finds a magical ring on his ‘there and back again’ journey with dwarfs and a wizard. *LOTR* consists of three volumes – *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954), *The Two Towers* (1954) and *The Return of the King* (1955), each volume consisting of two books. At the end, appendices providing additional historical, linguistic and geographical information are listed.

To sum up the story briefly, *LOTR* begins sixty years after the events described in *The Hobbit* where Bilbo the Hobbit finds the magical ring. The power of a Dark Lord Sauron grows again and Bilbo’s ring turns out to be the Ring of Power which Sauron seeks to gain control over the whole of Middle Earth. Therefore, the Ring must be destroyed in the Mount Orodruin in the dark land of Mordor where it was originally forged. This task is appointed to Bilbo’s nephew Frodo who is on his way to Mordor accompanied by three other Hobbits (Merry, Pippin and Sam), a wizard (Gandalf), a Dwarf (Gimli), an Elf

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Tolkien: *LOTR*
(Legolas) and two mortal Men (Aragorn and Boromir). The group is called the Fellowship of the Ring. At Part Galen near Mordor, Frodo and Sam are divided from the rest of their companions and make their way through Mordor guided by a treacherous former-Hobbit Gollum who is a slave to the Ring. The rest of the Fellowship eventually allies with the Ents (living trees) and the men of Rohan. They conquer an evil wizard Saruman, help in the defeat of one of Sauron’s army at the Pelennor Fields, and then march with the last Alliance of the West to fight the battle at the Black Gate of Mordor. Meanwhile, Frodo and Sam overcome many obstacles and succeed in destroying the Ring. With this, Sauron’s power fades, his armies collapse; Aragorn is restored the King of Gondor and the Hobbits return to their homeland – the Shire. A few years later, Frodo, who has been badly wounded in his quest, leaves the Shire and Middle Earth with Gandalf and the last of the Elves for Undying Lands of the Far West.

Tolkien’s trilogy is not easy to categorize. The author himself calls it simply ‘a tale’ in tune with his definition of a fairy story in his theoretical essay mentioned earlier. Shippey calls *LOTR* ‘a massive antiquarian romance’. Evans puts it under an ‘exterior fantasy’ because of its setting in a created reality. Sometimes it is categorized as a novel; however, this classification brings about more drawbacks than positive features. For example, Charles Moseley criticizes the fact, that “The Lord of the Rings ignores the whole development of the novel as the most resourceful, and central, verbal fictional form.” This ignorance he sees mainly in the usage of colorless characterization, uncertain narrative voice, the story seen from a wholly male perspective, and the imagined world portrayed immense in space but with certain limitations as for the depth (these limitations

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72 Tolkien: *LOTR* xv
73 Shippey 287
74 The opposite term ‘interior fantasy’ then covers works such as Hermann Hesse’s *The Steppenwolf*, which needs no such thing as the Secondary world to take place in.
75 Moseley 33
are heavily dependent on the flaws mentioned before – characters, narrative perspective etc.) According to Moseley, *LOTR* uses only the prosaic mode of the novel; in other aspects, *LOTR* goes clearly under the pre-novelistic tradition influenced to a great extent by romances and other forms of literary formulas which is to be discussed in detail in the following section.

**8.1 Romance features**

If one agrees with the fact that Tolkien uses in his work characteristics of the formulaic literature, it is possible to work with the rules of this literary area. Cawelti provides three devices typical for the formulaic genres: suspense, identification, and creating of imaginary worlds.\(^{76}\) Does *LOTR* contain all of these features?

**8.1.1. Plot**

Suspense stands for the temporal fear and uncertainty about the characters the reader cares about. As for *LOTR*, this requirement is fulfilled abundantly – the plot is full of sensuous and dangerous moments and twists. The heroes are set on a perilous journey, they have to undergo a series of battles in which they can be killed, and the final task threatens to claim their lives.

According to Frye’s classification of the motifs present in the generic plots of romances\(^ {77}\), the plot of *LOTR* can be divided into two main branches – themes of descent and themes of ascent\(^ {78}\):

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\(^{76}\) Cawelti 20  
\(^{77}\) Frye: *The Secular Scripture*  
\(^{78}\) Glenn
The whole plot structure of *LOTR* resembles the journey into ‘The Night World’ preceded by descent and followed by ascent of the heroes. ‘The Night World’ is Mordor here, beyond any doubt. The dark waste land, hostile to everything alive, also called the Land of Shadow:

It was dreary and wearisome. Cold clammy winter still held sway in this forsaken country. The only green was the scum of livid weed on the dark greasy surfaces of the sullen waters. 79

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79 Tolkien: *LOTR* 612
As for the natural conditions, the journey into Mordor is depicted as a lessening of the sunlight; sunshine and light in general being perceived as a symbol of goodness, order and reason.\textsuperscript{80}

Typically, ‘The Night World’ is inhabited by monsters and their treasure hoards.

In terms of the motifs of descent, in \textit{LOTR} appear many of them. The theme of amnesia can be found in the character of Frodo. As his journey into Mordor continues, he is exhausted by carrying the Ring:

‘Do you remember that bit of rabbit, Mr. Frodo?’ he said. […]

‘No, I am afraid not, Sam,’ said Frodo. ‘At least, I know that such things happened, but I cannot see them. No taste of food, no feel of water, no sound of wind, no memory of tree or grass or flower, no image of moon or star are left to me. I am naked in the dark, Sam, and there is no veil between me and the wheel of fire. I begin to see it even with my waking eyes, and all else fades.’\textsuperscript{81}

Frodo’s growing weaker, and his dependence on the Ring bring into play another point of descent – dreams or dream-like states. They are mostly caused by the Ring which is too powerful to be handled by a Hobbit. Frodo feels beside himself when he puts the Ring on his finger; and he can also feel the Eye of the Dark Lord.

Other motifs of descent are also involved: the confusion of identity is embodied in the character of Gollum (former Hobbit who is cleaved in his desire for the Ring into a submissive Smeagól and aggressive Gollum); and the notion of hunt (however, without the ‘Increased Erotic Intensity’) appears in fact, that the Hobbits are followed and hunted by the Dark Riders who are servants of Sauron.

\textsuperscript{80} Similarly, for example in Nietzsche’s Apollonian principle

\textsuperscript{81} Tolkien: \textit{LOTR} 916
On the other hand, the themes of ascent need to be involved too, to balance the narrative. Opposite to the mode of amnesia is ‘Remembrance.’ During Frodo’s demanding journey, his flashes of memory of the Shire and happier days are the only thing, apart from Sam, which makes him go on:

[…] and now as once more the night of Mordor closed over them, through all his thoughts there came the memory of water; and every brook or stream or fount that he had ever seen, under green willow-shades or twinkling in the sun, danced and rippled for his torment behind the blindness of his eyes.82

The notion of escape is quite common in formulaic literature; it is closely tied to the happy ending which is required in the genre, and will be dealt with later.

The most obvious magic object in the narration is the Ring. Therefore, the ‘Breaking of Enchantment’ theme is related to it. The Ring’s pernicious influence on Frodo (and others) is broken at the moment of its destruction in Mordor.

Typical for romances is the question of identity, especially for noble characters. In LOTR, it can be primarily traced in the character of Aragorn. In The Fellowship of the Ring, he visits the hills of Emyn Muil, a place where his ancestors lived, and suddenly a noble spirit rises in him:

‘Fear not!’ said a strange voice behind him. Frodo turned and saw Strider, and yet not Strider; for the weatherworn Ranger was no longer there. In the stern sat Aragorn son of Arathorn, proud and erect, guiding the boat with skilful strokes; his hood was cast back, and his dark hair was blowing in the wind, a light was in his eyes: a king returning from exile to his own land.83

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82 Tolkien: LOTR 917
83 Ibid 384
The problem of the true identity, both discovered by others and claimed by the character itself will be discussed in more detail in the following section dealing with characters.

Looking back at the medieval romances which are also among the inspirational sources of *LOTR*, Tolkien skillfully combines the elements of the Teutonic and French romances – the story covers the widest frame possible because the whole of Middle-Earth and its peoples participate in the war of the Ring; however at the same time, he focuses on the lives and fates of the individual heroes.

To sum it up, romance plot themes are employed in *LOTR* abundantly. They follow the structure of heroic quest which is also among the key plot organizing patterns (apart from the eternal conflict between good and evil); and they are defined in the level general enough to be used in various formulaic genres.

### 8.1.2. Characters

*The success of epic poetry depends on the author’s power of imagining and representing characters.*

The notion of identification is tied to readers’ desire to be part of the story. The characters and their depiction are crucial for this feature. In *LOTR*, two basic types of characters appear – the first one is typical romance-like heroic characters which are superior to the reader in their deeds and triumphs. Among these characters are the wizards,
the kings, or the Elves. There is distance between them and the reader; their deeds are to be admired.

On the other hand, there is a group of characters which are on the same level as reader is. They are the same outsiders in the Secondary world as the reader is, and it is through them, that the reader is explained the events, and is guided along the storyline.

In terms of romance, the character which performs some kind of remarkable deed is called a hero. Tolkien in *LOTR* introduces a whole set of heroes: the title of the novel implies that it is about Sauron who is in fact a mighty power behind the scene. Then Tolkien shapes the Fellowship of the Ring – a group of nine characters; each of them can be considered a hero because their paths are divided into three different storylines and their fates are followed closely – Frodo and Sam go to Mount Doom; Merry and Pippin are kidnapped by the Orcs, manage to escape and participate in the war on side of the realms of Rohan and Gondor; the rest of the Fellowship follows the Orcs to rescue Merry and Pippin. Apart from the Fellowship, other heroic characters appear: knight-like figures of Boromir’s brother Faramir, and Eomer, a nephew of king Théoden.

Similarly as in other works of heroic fantasy (and its inspirational sources, such as the mythology of the Ancient Greece), female heroic figures are involved in the narrative. In *LOTR*, both two main types of heroines appear – the passive one, which can be compared to a tragic medieval lover Iseult is Arwen, the princess of the Elves; the second type is the embodiment of the ancient Valkyria, here represented by Eomer’s sister Eowyn.

The passivity of Arwen can be seen not only in the character itself, but also in the way she is depicted - she appears only in the ‘domestic’ settings (e.g. in house of her father Elrond), or accompanying her father or her husband. For most of the story, she remains in the static role of the beautiful distant love of Aragorn, and only in Appendix A she is given space, her story is told, and the reader learns more about her tragic fate – Arwen as one of
the Elves is immortal; however, she surrenders this gift for her love for Aragorn. On his death bed, her husband speaks to her:

‘I speak no comfort to you, for there is no comfort for such pain within the circles of the world. The uttermost choice is before you: to repent and go to the Havens and bear away into the West the memory of our days together that shall there be evergreen but never more than memory; or else to abide the Doom of Men.’

‘Nay, dear lord,’ she said, ‘that choice is long over. There is now no ship that would bear me hence, and I must indeed abide the Doom of Men, whether I will or I nill: the loss and silence.\(^{85}\)

After the death of her husband, Arwen wanders through the ruins of the Elven realm alone and dies alone and forgotten.

On the other hand, the active feminine element is captured in the character of Eowyn, the niece of king Théoden. She resembles the ancient Amazones, or the figures from the Nordic sagas, such as Brynhild from the story of Sigurd.\(^{86}\) The difference between the two women is instantly obvious in their descriptions – both of them are seen for the first time by Aragorn; when he meets Arwen he is twenty years old which may cause the sentimental mood:

And suddenly even as he sang he saw a maiden walking on a greensward among the white stems of the birches; and he halted amazed, thinking that he had strayed into a dream, or else that he had received the gift of the Elf-minstrels, who can make the things of which they sing appear before the eyes of those that listen.

For Aragorn had been singing a part of the Lay of Lúthien which tells of the meeting of Lúthien and Beren in the forest of Neldoreth. And behold! there

\(^{85}\) Tolkien: *LOTR* 1037

\(^{86}\) Ker
Lúthien walked before his eyes in Rivendell, clad in a mantle of silver and blue, fair as the twilight in Elven-home; her dark hair strayed in a sudden wind, and her brows were bound with gems like stars.\(^87\)

It is definitely Arwen’s beauty which strikes Aragorn at first sight. While he encounters Eowyn in the Golden Hall of Meduseld, his impression of her beauty is mingled with feelings about her personality:

As she passed the doors she turned and looked back. Grave and thoughtful was her glance, as she looked on the king with cool pity in her eyes. Very fair was her face, and her long hair was like a river of gold. Slender and tall she was in her white robe girt with silver; but strong she seemed and stern as steel, a daughter of kings. Thus Aragorn for the first time in the full light of day beheld Eowyn, Lady of Rohan, and thought her fair, fair and cold, like a morning of pale spring that is not yet come to womanhood.\(^88\)

Eowyn’s activity and her willingness to participate in the battles are explained partly by her youth (she is not yet a woman), and partly by her unhappy love for Aragorn, as confessed by her brother Eomer to Aragorn: ‘I knew not that Eowyn, my sister, was touched by any frost, until she first looked on you.’\(^89\)

She no longer sees any reason for living, so she rides with the soldiers of Rohan to war in disguise as a boy Dernhelm. While she hopes for finding the death, she manages to kill the witch king who ‘cannot be killed by any living man’, and during her recovery, she falls in love with Faramir. This seems to be the crucial impulse which should change any woman from a fighter into a comforter:

\(^{87}\) Tolkien: *LOTR* 1033  
\(^{88}\) Ibid 504  
\(^{89}\) Ibid 849
The heart of Eowyn changed, or else at last she understood it. And suddenly her winter passed, and the sun shone on her.

‘[…] I will be a shieldmaiden no longer, nor vie with the great Riders, nor take joy only in the songs of slaying. I will be a healer, and love all things that grow and are not barren.’

Both Arwen and Eowyn are important in the story; they are among the number of heroes with their own individual destinies portrayed on the background of the turning point of the history of Middle-earth.

All the characters undergo their own quest. However, not surprisingly, on the basis of romance structure, Aragorn is viewed as a leading typical hero of the story.

According to Robley Evans, Aragorn resembles ‘lost princes’ from fairy tales, because he is of the true birth and is the heir to the throne but is somehow prevented from being a king. His long path from the wild to the throne of Gondor is apparent from names he carries or is given by other characters – at the beginning of the story, when the hobbits meet him for the first time in Bree, he is called Strider, and introduces himself as one of the Rangers who look after the borders in the wild. In Gandalf’s message Frodo learns his real name and a short poem which characterize him aptly but which he cannot make out at that time:

All that is gold does not glitter,
Not all those who wander are lost;
The old that is strong does no wither,
Deep roots are not reached by the frost.

From the ashes a fire shall be woken,
A light from the shadows shall spring;

90 Tolkien: *LOTR* 943
91 Evans 139
Renewed shall be blade that was broken,
The crownless again shall be king.  

Later on in the house of Elrond, Aragorn’s identity is revealed to those who were in doubt (Boromir) or ignorant of it (the Hobbits):

‘And who are you, and what have you to do with Minas Tirith?’ asked Boromir, looking in wonder at the lean face of the Ranger and his weather-stained cloak.
‘He is Aragorn, son of Arathorn,’ said Elrond; ‘and he is descended through many fathers from Isildur Elendil’s son of Minas Ithil. He is the Chief of the Dúnedain in the North, and few are now left of that folk.’

The characters as well as the reader learn that Aragorn is the heir of the Gondorian kingdom, and the lawful leader of the army of the free peoples of Middle Earth against Sauron. However, as compared to the character of another ruler – king Théoden of Rohan who is also respectable and courageous, Aragorn is closer to the readers because his journey to kingship is long and they make it with him. Apart from this, Aragorn is depicted not only as a fighter and responsible ruler but also as a healer and comforter: “The hands of the king are the hands of a healer, and so shall the rightful king be known.”

Tolkien relies upon the traditional conventions of heroic descriptions – Aragorn’s identity is shaped through his predecessors (he is entitled Aragorn, son of Arathorn or Isildur’s heir); his task is presented in a form of prophetic fulfillment of the legends (the king will return with the Sword that was broken). Apart from these romance conventions of heroism, Tolkien provided Aragorn with the notion of the Christian mercy and pity

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92 Tolkien: LOTR 167
93 Ibid 240
94 Ibid 844

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reflected for example in scene when he prevents others from killing a man who is without a weapon.95

Aragorn’s connection with medieval romances is also in the motif of the love between two noble characters – Aragorn, a descendant of many kings and the heir of the throne of Gondor, falls in love with the princess of the Elves, Arwen. Although their love has to face many obstacles caused by both their origins and the war of the Ring it has a happy ending. This love motif also brings a fairy tale notion of the love of a mortal and a supernatural creature. The supernatural and immortal woman gives up her eternal life for her love for the man (e.g. as in the fairy tale of ‘The Little Mermaid’ by Hans Christian Andersen). In case of Aragorn and Arwen, the love is partly happy because they share a long time together, and they even have children before their deaths.

While Aragorn represents the heroic characters which are superior to the readers because of their knowledge of the history and other characters’ life stories, the Hobbits stand for the outsiders of the story. They are among the peoples of the Middle Earth; however, they live in a deliberate isolation from the outside world. Frodo and Sam are great examples of heroes, who are underrated by their surrounding but carry hidden inner strength. At the same time, they represent the storyline of an ordinary character dealing with extraordinary events.96 The model of an improbable hero eventually overcoming all the obstacles and gaining victory is quite frequent in the formulaic literature.

There are two complementary quests in the plot – Aragorn’s assertion of his true self and his return to the throne, and Frodo’s effort to destroy the Ring. Hobbits as heroes are designed to surprise the reader. Their heroism is unexpected and inevitable as was proved in The Hobbit already. Evans said that the Hobbit is like the typical hero of

95 Tolkien: LOTR 509
96 It is said, that there are basically two types of storylines – an ordinary hero has to deal with the extraordinary; and the extraordinary character dealing with the ordinary world.
romance – it is his unexpected call to perform heroically that brings out his best.\textsuperscript{97} Manlove mentions a possible contradiction in Tolkien’s choosing such a hero in genre of epic fantasy:

At the centre of his epic, Tolkien has set out to place an ethic of heroic endeavour: the Ring-bearer against the whole might of Sauron. Yet he has chosen no conventional hero, no Beowulf nor Aeneas nor Roland of almost unthinking honour or courage, but a little man, a four-foot Halfling of a race happiest just to eat and sleep. The idea is to give us in Frodo a protagonist who grows into being a hero as his journey proceeds.\textsuperscript{98}

For Tolkien, Hobbits represent the humanity and inexperience of the readers. Therefore, he tells the story from the point of view of a hobbit. It is a third-person narrative; however, the narrator is not omniscient. He knows only as much as Hobbits do. The events are depicted to the readers in exciting and fascinating way as they would seem to the Hobbits. That makes the story easier to follow, and the Hobbits very likeable creatures. They also serve as a comic element disrupting the highly heroic mood in some moments of the narrative, e.g. after the defeat of the Dark Lord Sauron:

Frodo ran to meet him, and Sam followed close behind. ‘Well, if this isn’t the crown of all!’ he said. ‘Strider, or I’m still asleep!’

‘Yes, Sam, Strider,’ said Aragorn. ‘It is a long way, is it not, from Bree, where you did not like the look of me? A long way for us all, but yours has been the darkest road.’

And then to Sam’s surprise and utter confusion he bowed his knee before them.\textsuperscript{99}

\textsuperscript{97} Evans 111
\textsuperscript{98} Manlove: \textit{Modern Fantasy} 174 -5
\textsuperscript{99} Tolkien: \textit{LOTR}, 932-3
On one hand, Tolkien employs a great variety of heroes, both traditional and untraditional which can make the story more interesting. But on the other hand, most of his characters are, in an absolute concordance with the conventions of the fantasy genre: flat, and black and white:

What has happened in *The Lord of the Rings* is that Tolkien has turned from the scheme of inner conflict – which both his conception of a protagonist unequal to the task and the whole idea of the Ring of Power demand – to a ready-made heroic psychology where struggle is with external forces – the Ring and Sauron’s powers. [...] Tolkien’s fantasy celebrates the objective, not the subjective world – or, as he says, he is ‘primarily interested in Faërie, not tortured mortals.’ This last point is part of a belief that the nature of fantasy is opposed to the sort of character-delineation and ‘internal’ narrative that has its place in the novel or drama. Equally, of course, so does the nature of heroic epic as Tolkien knows it: there the hero rarely doubts his purpose or is seen to struggle with himself, and conflict is with something external to him.¹⁰⁰

The portrayal of the characters in the strictly black and white terms is a typical device of formulaic literature, which tends to prefer the plot (and characterization via action) to the characters and their inner conflicts. This treating of heroes is rooted in their archetypal classification common in the formulaic genres. To ease to understanding of the story and the entering into the imaginary world, the author uses traditional labels the readers are familiar with, such as a wise wizard, a noble king, a treacherous sidekick, a beautiful princess. The reader does not want to be shocked or surprised, that is why the characters stay basically the same and undergo only minimal inner changes. Neither the

¹⁰⁰ Manlove: *Modern Fantasy* 180
unexpected development of the story required in the fantasy genre, so that the plot follows the given pattern too.

As for the generalization and strict boundaries between the good and evil, colour specification is often used both in fairy tales and fantasy – light colours, most typically white is used as a co-characteristic feature of the goodies (Gandalf the White). In contrast, dark colours match with the evil characters (the Dark Lord, Black Speech of his realm, and Black Riders as his servants). This simplified and effective picture of the moral spectrum is common also in other formulaic genres, e. g. science-fiction (Star Wars have the light and the dark side of the Force).

8.1.3. Setting

The third of Cawelti’s essential devices of formulaic literature is the creation of imaginary worlds. In high fantasy, such as LOTR, the setting in a secondary world (Middle Earth) is crucial for the story. The creation of the imaginary world itself is thus one of the key elements of the genre. Ann Swinfen stresses the importance of the creation of a plausible secondary world for the successful work of fantasy:

To create an imaginative and imaginary world it is necessary to observe faithfully the rules of logic and inner consistency which, although they may differ from those operating in our own world, must nevertheless be as true to themselves as their parallel operations are in normal world. The writing of successful fantasy, then, is amongst the most demanding forms of literary creation.101

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101 Swinfen 3-4
Once the imaginary world is created, realism is mostly chosen as the mode of narration; and the author has to follow the rules of the world he/she stated. Swinfen works with terms ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ realism in connection to the primary or secondary world they describe. She also calls the imaginary reality by Tolkien’s term *sub-creation*:

> Our normal experience of the primary world thus leads us to give primary belief to primary realism, while successful sub-creation induces secondary belief in the secondary realism of a secondary world.\(^{102}\)

According to Swinfen, inner consistency is vital for any secondary world. Not only the created setting and the events, but also the moral and emotional aspects of the secondary world must be plausible. The author must not lose readers’ belief and their interest, represented by a comprehension and sympathy for the characters.

Similarly, W. H. Auden summarizes the creating of imaginary worlds in terms of Tolkien’s terminology of sub-creation. In his view, there are two main desires in every human being – to know the truth about the real objective world we live in, and to create secondary worlds on their own, and sharing them with others.\(^{103}\) The first impulse for creating of a secondary world comes from the dissatisfaction with the primary world. Auden lists the principal grievances of an imaginary realities: no limits of society, freedom of action leading to omnipotence; no limits of knowledge and understanding leading to omniscience; sacred experienced preferred to the profane and ordinary ones; evil and suffering seen not as the insoluble problem, possibility of good always triumphant over evil.\(^{104}\)

\(^{102}\) Swinfen 5  
\(^{103}\) Auden 49  
\(^{104}\) Ibid 50-1
The typical elements of the other worlds are strangeness and wonder. These are typically embodied in supernatural or magic level of the story. However, Tolkien relies on truly supernatural power (e.g. the wizards) only to a limited extent; his Middle Earth reminds one more of a feudal world of sagas seeing the wonders and mysteries in natural powers:

There is little that is absolutely magical or numinous within his trilogy: it is only in relation to our world that Middle-earth is ‘supernatural’ as we have defined the term. The ultimate powers of Good and Evil that we are told are behind the wizards and the Dark Lord Sauron never appear; the magical Rings, the One, the Three and the Nine, were originally forged by elvish craft (the emphasis is much more on superlative natural skill than on the purely supernatural) in Eregion; and the Nazgûl, the wraith-like Black Riders, were once human kings who were enslaved by Sauron and the power of the Nine Rings.\(^\text{105}\)

Tolkien’s treating with objects and phenomena of the natural world, and their putting into the fantastic context of the imaginary world agrees with his notion of Recovery. As a result, they get rid of the familiarity and appear more fully as themselves.

Middle Earth is a result of Tolkien’s sub-creation; however, it keeps the fundamental physical laws, such as the mortality of the creatures, changing of seasons, associations of light and dark, or hot and cold. It also contains most of the animals, and plants of the primary world. It is a functioning world of its own with a great variety of environments, stretching both in space and time:

Tolkien’s intention in his book was to create a species of heroic epic. The trilogy has epic scale; we journey over what W. H. Auden tells us is 1,300

\(^\text{105}\) Manlove: Modern Fantasy 166-7
miles form the Shire to Mordor, taking in a variety of races and regions on the way – the land of hobbits, the Elf-kingdom at Rivendell, the mines of Moria, Lothlórien, Rohan, Ithilien, Mordor; men, ghosts, orcs, Elves, wizards, Ents, dwarves and hobbits. The sense of extension in space is completed by one in time: we are made continually aware of thousands of years of the past lying behind the story of the Ring, indeed that the history of its evil maker stretches back into the First Age of Middle-earth.106

As was said, imaginary worlds usually carry a considerable amount of magical and unexpected elements. But in modern high fantasy, these are accompanied also by precise geography and other scientific data of the imaginary lands. Tolkien’s Middle Earth is the best example, as will be seen in the following section.

8.2 The Scientific Background of Middle Earth

The inner consistency, which is required in the sub-created worlds and realities, is to some extent dependent on the background information provided by the author. This information provides a frame of reference for a story. In the appendices following the plot of LOTR, Tolkien gives account of the history of Middle Earth, a dictionary of the Elvish language and its linguistics, family trees of the most prominent families of all races, as well as detailed maps of the regions of Middle Earth. “The historico-fantastic’ character of the trilogy is for Tolkien the basis of its meaning.”107

These secondary materials, not necessary for the understanding of the story, put LOTR in historical relationship with other elements of Tolkien’s work (The Silmarillion

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106 Manlove: Modern Fantasy 171
107 Ibid 168
and *The Hobbit* presenting the past) as well as with our own parallel history (ending of *LOTR* being the beginning of the Dominion of Men, i.e. our Age).

Apart from establishing the historical linearity, the additional information also helps in Tolkien’s attempt to present his story as a part of a chronicle:

> The aim is to present fiction as if it were fact, to make the material seem independent of the author. The less ‘invented’ the world of a fantasy seems, the more true and free of control it will also appear. For Tolkien, the aim of the fantasist is the realization, independent of the conceiving mind, of imagined wonder.¹⁰⁸

Along with the creation of a secondary world and its presenting as a part of history, goes the process of creating, i.e. naming of its parts and inhabitants. The names can be seen as labels assuring the existence of a thing, which is very useful in the sphere of imaginary worlds because it also implies the background and history behind the name. The inner consistency, unity of the narration, and the context of events described depend to same extent on the accurate creation of the secondary world, which means the precise naming and mapping of the newly created reality.

The most obvious equation of fantasy and reality in presentation of the secondary world is in the maps which accompany both *LOTR* and other Tolkien’s works (*The Hobbit* and *The Silmarillion*). High fantasy tends to work with detailed spatial settings of imaginary lands; creating new maps is an essential part of the fantasy genre because it is necessary when dealing with the imaginary worlds. Thus the story of *LOTR* can be followed step by step on a map of Middle Earth. Apart from that, the maps of the whole of Middle-Earth with places and names that were not covered with history and legends in any

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¹⁰⁸ Manlove: *Modern Fantasy* 169
of Tolkien’s works provide the reader with an opportunity to enlarge the mythology and add a personal dimension to the story.

The impression of historical depth in *LOTR* is achieved not only through the database of information attached to the end of the book, but also throughout the story, where myths and legend of Middle Earth are retold or mentioned by the characters.

The legends are present in the form of songs and poems either to evoke the notion of historical depth as in the song of Beren and Lúthien\textsuperscript{109} or Eärendil the Mariner\textsuperscript{110} created by the Elves, or to express emotions, e.g. the grief upon Gandalf’s death:

When evening in the Shire was grey
his footsteps on the Hill were heard;
before the dawn he went away
on a journey long without a word.

From Wilderland to Western shore,
from northern waste to southern hill,
through dragon-lair and hidden door
and darkling woods he walked at will.

[…]

He stood upon the bridge alone
and Fire and Shadow both defied;
his staff was broken on the stone,
in Khazad-dûm his wisdom died.\textsuperscript{111}

The love of oral and written poetic art is for Tolkien one of the ways of distinguish good races from the evil ones – Orcs have neither legends nor songs for passing the

\textsuperscript{109} Tolkien: *LOTR* 187  
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid 227  
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid 350-1
experience to next generations, or gather the wisdom. As a result of the lack of the notion of history of their race and its relation to the surrounding environment, they seem not to have the freedom of choice, and do only what they are told.

In contrast, the Elves gather their wisdom in songs and stories. Not surprisingly, Tolkien as the author who based his narrative on creation of Elvish languages emphasizes the power of words throughout the story. As Evans points out, he shows

the close connections between words and basic human desires in stories of magic and magical incantations where, if the right words are spoken in the right way, reality will be revealed according to the speaker’s wish. … Words are put in contact with the elemental forces.¹¹²

In _LOTR_ the role of language is an outstanding one. Apart from the act of naming new creatures and new places as a part of writer’s sub-creation, Tolkien develops brand new languages. The Lingua franca of Middle Earth is Common Speech represented by English. Tolkien pays a lot of attention to languages of specific races, such as Elves, Dwarfs, Ents or Orcs. He creates whole language systems of Elvish languages with their sets of alphabets: the Fëanorian letters, the Certhas Daeron, and the Angerthas¹¹³ and in his later work _The Silmarillion_ he provides a brief dictionary of terms of the Eldar languages used in _LOTR_.

Throughout the story, the Elvish languages appear mostly in songs and tales, and the reader is not given any translation to them:

¹¹² Evans 31
¹¹³ Tolkien: _LOTR_, appendix E
A Elbereth Gilthoniel, 
silivren penna miriel 
o menel aglar elenath! 
Na-chaered palan-diriel 
o galadremmin ennorath, 
Fanuilos, le linnathon 
nef aear, si nef aeron!114

However, the legends and tales of the songs are repeated in various forms so that it is not impossible for the reader to recognize the names of the protagonists. What is stressed here is the sound quality of the Elvish language.

At the same time, the songs are integral part of the narration – at the beginning of their journey, Sam and Frodo overhear an Elvish song which is translated by Frodo to Sam:

[...]
O Elbereth! Gilthoniel!
We still remember, we who dwell
In this far land beneath the trees,
Thy starlight on the Western Seas.115

Then, in the house of Elrond, they encounter the same story sung by Aragorn in Elvish. Finally, when Frodo is taken into captivity by Orcs and Sam is fighting the giant spider Shelob with a phial of silver light, he recalls the song and uses it to arouse courage in himself:

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114 Tolkien: LOTR 231
115 Ibid 78
‘Galadriel!’ he said faintly, and then he heard voices far off but clear: the crying of the Elves as they walked under the stars in the beloved shadows of the Shire, and the music of the Elves as it came through his sleep in the Hall of Fire in the house of Elrond.

_Gilthoniel A Elbereth!

And then his tongue was loosed and his voice cried in a language which he did not know:

_A Elbereth Gilthoniel_

_o menel palan-diriel,_

_le nallon si di’nguruthos!_

_A tiro nin, Fanuilos_116

Besides the Elvish songs retelling the legends of ancient times, _LOTR_ contain songs of traditional functions, such as a drinking song117 or songs for honouring the dead – Lament for Boromir,118 for Gandalf,119 and for Théoden.120

The languages of various land and races have specific qualities and can or cannot be used by others. Tolkien summarizes those features in _LOTR_ appendices. About Ent he says:

The language that they had made was unlike all others: slow, sonorous, agglomerated, repetitive, indeed long-winded; formed of a multiplicity of vowel-shades and distinctions of tone and quality which even the masters of the Eldar had not attempted to represent in writing. They used it only among

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116 Tolkien: _LOTR_ 712
117 Ibid 88
118 Ibid 407-8
119 Ibid 350-1
120 Ibid 786
themselves; but they had no need to keep it secret, for no others could learn it.\textsuperscript{121}

He also describes the language of Orcs which is called a Black Speech:

It is said that they had no language of their own, but took what they could of other tongues and perverted it to their own liking; yet they made only brutal jargons, scarcely sufficient even for their own needs, unless it were for curses and abuse. And these creatures, being filled with malice, hating even their own kind, quickly developed as many barbarous dialects as there were groups or settlements of their race, so that their Orkish speech was of little use to them in intercourse between different tribes.\textsuperscript{122}

For Tolkien, language is one of the means of characterization. As a biased fantasy writer, he is on the side of the good; this attitude is shown in the evil creatures’ incapacity to create their own language, or the inability to communicate via it.

\textbf{8.3 The Plot Pattern}

Another element of the romance genre that echoes in Tolkien’s works is the structural patterning of the story. It takes the shape of an interlacement, which is a pres- novelistic device used commonly in the medieval romances and is closely tied to the motif of a quest. As was stated before, the structure tends to be episodic rather than causative:

\textsuperscript{121} Tolkien: \textit{LOTR}, appendix F 1104
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid 1105
Structurally, the medieval romance often follows the loose pattern of the quest, tending thus to be merely episodic—to have a plot structured by *and-then* rather than *hence*. A romance like *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, of course, goes beyond this typical structure by imposing an artificial structure on the inherited structure, combining the plots to explain (insofar as explanation is possible); note, however, that the "dupe structure" of *SGGK* explains not in terms of causation ("this was caused by that," "hence"), but in terms of juxtaposition and analogy ("this is like that").

Tolkien himself studied the romance *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and a difference can be observed between the structure of his two works – *The Hobbit* and *LOTR*. While the narrative in *The Hobbit* is purely episodic, in *LOTR* he enriches the individual episodes with context and meaning within the history of Middle Earth, thus making them relational to each other and more complex.

Both *The Hobbit* and *LOTR* employ the pattern of a cyclic ‘there and back again’ narrative which is typical also for fairy tales. The interlacement is simply piling up of the events which cannot be influenced by the hero themselves neither by their decisions nor by their actions. The characters just seem to be on a journey and overcoming obstacles that happen to appear.

The basic pattern of the centre of *LOTR* is separations and encounters and wanderings, but these are controlled first by a map (something no Arthurian narrative possesses), and second by an extremely right chronology of days and dates. Along with this goes a deliberate chronological ‘leapfrogging’.

The cyclic structure of *LOTR* is similar to the quest – a heroic journey from the known world into the unknown and back. The only difference is that the goal of the

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123 Glenn
124 Shippey 145
Fellowship’s quest is not gaining of the magical object (e.g. holy grail) but its destruction. Structurally, quest is series of exciting events which evoke the sense of epic scope of narration. Thematically, quest enables development of the sense of self in the heroes. The cyclic notion of the story is represented also by the Ring of Power – a symbol of never ending fight between good and evil; and endlessness of telling stories.

In *LOTR* Tolkien elaborates on some of the plot elements he used in *The Hobbit*; for instance, in *The Hobbit* he employs the character Beorn who is half man and half bear, and takes care of horses. In *LOTR* the Rohirrim, a nation of horse-masters appear. Similarly, in both works spiders are depicted as the creatures serving the dark powers:

There is a noticeable similarity of motifs and structure between the two works. In every case *LOTR* develops, contextualizes in time and space, and motivates. We do not know or really care who Beorn is, or why he is as he is: what happens to Bilbo and the dwarves carries us forward. But the Rohirrim have a history, a culture, an identity. Shelob has a relationship to Sauron, a believable evil vigour, which the ghost-train spiders of Mirkwood do not touch. Strikingly, both books follow the same pattern of ‘There and Back Again’, the basic motif of the quest narrative in Romance. But whereas in, for example, medieval Arthurian romance the return is to a court that has not significantly changed while the hero has been absent, here the Shire has changed – less balefully in *The Hobbit* than in *LOTR*, but changed none the less.125

Apart from the completion of the plot elements, there is also a difference in viewing the Ring – in *The Hobbit* it is merely a magical object with its powers to be discovered. On the other hand, in *LOTR* it is the central symbol of the corruption of power.

125 Moseley 41
From the point of view of a tale told, *The Hobbit* ends with Bilbo’s return home and re-settling Bag End. It is a simple story surrounded by a frame, which is not necessary to be told. On the contrary, in *LOTR* Tolkien attached the stories of most of the characters stressing thus the continuity of narrative beyond that frame.

### 8.4 Other Romance Features in The Lord of the Rings

Among the other elements of the Romance genre appearing in *LOTR* are the subjectivity and authority of the author, the mixture of love and adventure in the plot, the necessity of a happy ending, and the overall conservatism of the work.

As was said before, *LOTR* should remind the reader of a text of a chronicle, it carries the style of a historical entry dealing with the events taking place on particular dates, in particular places. Therefore, the author is distanced from the story; however, one can feel his bias towards the ‘goodies’.

As for the authority behind the text, the historical and spatial distance of the events described and the reader is similar as in legends or sagas. The story has to be accepted as it is and cannot be further questioned or discussed. In the prologue and the appendices, Tolkien himself speaks of *LOTR* as a translation from a Red Book of Westmarch which seems to be a chronicle of the deeds of Hobbits:

This account of the end of the Third Age is drawn mainly from the Red Book of Westmarch. That most important source for the history of the War of the Ring was so called because it was long preserved at Undertowers, the home of the Fairbairns, Wardens of the Westmarch. It was in origin Bilbo’s
private diary, which he took with him to Rivendell. Frodo brought it back to the Shire, together with many loose leaves of notes, and during S.R. 1420-1 he nearly filled its pages with his account of the War. But annexed to it and preserved with it, probably in a single red case, were the three large volumes, bound in red leather, that Bilbo gave to him as a parting gift. To these four volumes there was added in Westmarch a fifth containing commentaries, genealogies, and various other matter concerning the hobbit members of the Fellowship.  

Thus, Tolkien puts himself in the position of the mere translator or re-teller of the tale which needs not/has not any author.

The ‘obligatory’ mix of love and adventure, as two major attractive elements of any narration, is contained in *LOTR* as well. However, the theme of love relationships in their traditional form is somewhat put aside - within the story, the reader actually witnesses only courting of Faramir and Eowyn, and Sam and Rose; the most romance-like couple Aragorn and Arwen are given space in the appendices only. This can be viewed as a typical romance-like feature:

The basic material of medieval romance is knightly activity and adventure; we might best define medieval romance as a story of adventure--fictitious, frequently marvelous or supernatural--in verse or prose. [...] Perhaps surprisingly, any "love interest" is likely to be incidental to the story of a medieval romance.  

On the other hand, the love to the homeland, to the nature, and the simple friendship values are stressed. These abstract characteristics are treated according to Tolkien’s notion of Recovery – they are simple and therefore often seen as clichés. Tolkien

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126 Tolkien: *LOTR* 14  
127 Glenn
treats them in heroic-like manner and poses them on the highest places in his heroes’ motivations.

The fantasy genre having its roots also in the folklore and fairy tale tradition employs the happy endings. Tolkien uses biased fortune and lucky accidents to help his heroes in the course of the story. In his essay ‘On fairy stories’ he defines the lucky twist in the plot and happy ending as *Eucatastrophe* – a word from Latin (*eu* – good, *catastrophe* – twist, change) -seen as a necessary element of fairy tale/fantasy story structure:

But the “consolation” of fairy-tales has another aspect than the imaginative satisfaction of ancient desires. Far more important is the Consolation of the Happy Ending. Almost I would venture to assert that all complete fairy-stories must have it. At least I would say that Tragedy is the true form of Drama, its highest function; but the opposite is true of Fairy-story. Since we do not appear to possess a word that expresses this opposite—I will call it Eucatastrophe. The eucatastrophic tale is the true form of fairy-tale, and its highest function.

The consolation of fairy-stories, the joy of the happy ending: or more correctly of the good catastrophe, the sudden joyous “turn” (for there is no true end to any fairy-tale): this joy, which is one of the things which fairy-stories can produce supremely well, is not essentially “escapist,” nor “fugitive.” In its fairy-tale—or otherworld—setting, it is a sudden and miraculous grace: never to be counted on to recur. It does not deny the existence of dyscatastrophe, of sorrow and failure: the possibility of these is necessary to the joy of deliverance; it denies (in the face of much evidence, if you will) universal final defeat and in so far is evangelium, giving a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief.128

128 Tolkien: ‘On fairy stories’
In *LOTR*, Eucatastrophe is widely used, for instance when Gandalf the Grey gives up his life for his friends in Moria and later returns as more powerful Gandalf the White; or when Sam who thinks that Frodo after being stung by a giant spider is dead finds out that he is alive and rescues him from the tower full of Orcs.

The last of the features appearing both in the romance and fantasy genre is conservatism. The effort of conserving things as they are is closely connected with the circularity within the story. While other genres involve dynamic development of the hero (growing wiser, gaining experience) in fantasy it may look like the starting point being the same as the ending one:

Unlike the traditional fairy tale, in which hero often betters himself in the world and may move place, most modern fantasy involves the notion of a return to a starting point so that one ends where he began. This motif of circularity is an image of the preservation of things as they are, and thus one expression of fantasy’s delight in being. It may take the form simply of coming home at the end of one’s adventures…. Tolkien’s Bilbo and Frodo come back to the Shire from their distant adventures at the end of *The Hobbit; or, There and back again* and *The Lord of the Rings* respectively.129

Nevertheless, there is a change involved. It may not be the change of the outside world because home is in fantasy literature viewed as a sacred place, a sanctuary; but it can be an inner change of the hero himself. The change may be slight and can be seen only as a peculiar feature by the people as in case of Bilbo Baggins:

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129 Manlove: *The Impulse of Fantasy Literature* 70
Bilbo was very rich and very peculiar, and had been the wonder of the Shire for sixty years, ever since his remarkable disappearance and unexpected return. The riches he had brought back from his travels had now become a local legend, and it was popularly believed, whatever the old folk might say, that the Hill at Bag End was full of tunnels stuffed with treasure.\textsuperscript{130}

Furthermore, the adventure can have more serious results as in case of Frodo who was wounded and weakened both in body and mind on his travels. Frodo’s change is more obvious in comparison to other three hobbits who accompanied him on his journey – Merry, Pippin and Sam return to the Hobbiton more or less untouched and continue their lives. Frodo, on the other hand, survives on the verge of the community and lacks his former hospitality and cheerfulness. He himself feels that he is changed forever:

I tried to save the Shire, and it has been saved but not for me. I must often be so, Sam, when things are in danger: some one has to give them up, lose them, so that others may keep them.\textsuperscript{131}

Conservatism is one of the aspects of fantasy literature which is the most criticized one. Manlove points out conservatism as one of the key impulses of fantasy, and describes it as a persistent resistance to changes, and keeping of the status quo:

Most fantasies seek to conserve those things in which they take delight: indeed it is one of their weaknesses that they are tempted not to admit loss. Their frequent looking to the past is conservative in itself: and the order to which they look ad seek to re-create is usually a medieval and hierarchic one, founded on the continuance of the status quo. Many of them portray the preservation of an existing state of things as their central subject. […]

\textsuperscript{130} Tolkien: \textit{LOTR} 21
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid 1006
Tolkien’s The Lord of the Rings, while admitting historical change, is concerned with the survival of being and individualism in Middle-earth, imaged in the destruction of the annihilating power of Sauron and the restoration of the rightful king to the throne of Gondor.\textsuperscript{132}

Among the features of conservatism contained in the fantasy works is also the nostalgia for the past. In this respect, fantasy is a panegyric genre focused on the idealized, feudal society reminding one of the classical pastoral genres with their stress on nature and simplicity of style:

Modern fantasy often belongs to the pastoral genre; indeed is now probably one of the main vessels of its continuance. […] Tolkien’s ‘rural’ \textit{The Lord of the Rings} is a myth of history – in Tolkien’s case, of prehistory as it ought to have been. Within the walls of the form, however, there need to be no escapism, no evasion of the hard facts generated from the pastoral world itself; and in this sense the pastoral is no less ‘realistic’ than any other literary form.\textsuperscript{133}

Tolkien’s work is both deeply rooted in the literary tradition of the past, and a pioneering work of high fantasy of twentieth century. His influence is notable on the generations of fantasy writers since 1960s when \textit{LOTR} gained wide popularity and made the genre of fantasy ‘respectable’.\textsuperscript{134} At the same time, conservatism, traditional values, and sentimentalism are interwoven into his notion of fantasy as represented in \textit{LOTR}:

Unlike writers of science fiction, Tolkien relies upon the literary traditions of the past as well as upon his imagination as sources for his fantasy. He does not wish to break with Western culture or with the Romantic tradition that knowledge gives us power to change the world for the better. The

\textsuperscript{132} Manlove: \textit{The Impulse of Fantasy Literature} 31
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid 98-9
\textsuperscript{134} Swinfen 1
imagination has enriched us in the past; it can continue to do so, not by throwing out our heritance but by building upon it, an especially upon its familiar and eternally meaningful myths, symbols and dreams. Furthermore, imagination is a power for good and for action in the real world, not just a tool for escaping reality. In Tolkien’s understanding, the fantasist is a storyteller and historian who makes our past valuable by manifesting its power in the present.\footnote{Evans 20}

In the same manner as \textit{LOTR} looks back to the traditional sources and uses them to form an idiosyncratic tale, many literary works considered as fantasy follow to same extent Tolkien’s trilogy – they stand for or against it; they use some of the elements which are consequently considered a indivisible part of the genre (such as mapping of the Secondary worlds). One of the recent pieces going under the popular label of fantasy novel is the series of Harry Potter stories by J. K. Rowling.

\section*{9 The Harry Potter Stories}

\textit{Draco Dormiens Nunquam Titillandus}\footnote{‘Never tickle a sleeping dragon’; Rowling}

companion books, *Quidditch through the Ages* and *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*.

To begin with, a summary of the story: Harry Potter is an orphan who is brought up by the Dursleys, his relatives who hate him. On his eleventh birthday he is told by a stranger that he is a wizard, and is transported to a mysterious castle where the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry is located. There he gains new friends (Ron and Hermione) and starts to learn of his true heritage and potential. He is also told by the headmaster of the Hogwarts School, Albus Dumbledore, who takes him under his wing, about the death of his parents, and the evil wizard Lord Voldemort who murdered them and after an unsuccessful attempt to kill Harry died. However, Harry meets Voldemort in various forms (for he is recovering from his death) during next years of his studies, and has to face various dangerous situations where he proves his worthiness and bravery.

### 9.1 Formal Features

Formally, Rowling’s work reminds one of a cycle, a favourite form used in the popular culture. The cycles appear not only in the sphere of literature (e.g. Ursula Le Guin: *The Earthsea Trilogy*\(^{137}\)) but also in films where they are even more common (e.g. the Star Wars). The individual parts of the cycle share a main protagonist (hence the titles of the books), a narrative structure – each part covers one year in the Hogwarts school - and they seem to be written in a sequence dependent on the financial profit of the previous parts. However, when one looks closer, there are some typical features of development within the series, showing that the author had the complete story in her mind from the very beginning.

\(^{137}\) *A Wizard of Earthsea, The Tombs of Atuan, The Farthest Shore*
Both the hero and the series’ plot and style grow with the course of time. Also the readers’ age and their demands are growing simultaneously with the publications of further parts.

Apart from the most general term ‘novel cycle’, Harry Potter stories can be viewed as part of the ‘boarding school novels’ tradition, a typical English novel sub-genre. Rowling employs variety of the elements of the ‘boarding school novels’, such as the father figure of a fair headmaster of the school who stands beyond the rules (Dumbledore), his younger and just assistant (Professor McGonagall), the group of pupil-heroes (usually a trio – Harry, Ron, and Hermione), the bullies (the Slytherin students), or the hated teacher (Professor Snape). Also the setting in an isolated public school is typical for the ‘boarding school novels’. However, while the ‘school novels’ were depicted in the realistic mode, Rowling adds a fantastic element to the setting – the heroes are wizards and witches, and witchcraft and wizardry is taught in the school.

The gradual process of the hero’s growing up and gaining experience is essential in the Bildungsroman too. Taking into account the titles of the works (and leaving out the marketing and trademark strategies), all of the books focus on Harry and his life. And because he is in his ‘apprentice’ years, and his personality is in making, the readers learn about typical problems of growing-up of an orphan, such as dealing with the loss of the parents, the complicated (and often antagonistic) relationship with the foster parents, looking for one’s identity and fighting for one’s place to live in the social environment. All these topics can be covered by the label Bildungsroman, or the novel of formation.

So much for the formal features, positioning Harry Potter stories clearly into the sphere of novel.
9.2 Thematic Features

While the form, similarly as with *LOTR*, refers to the realm of novel, the content of Harry Potter stories belongs clearly to the fantasy genre, using the formulaic, romance, and folktale motifs.

Sticking to Cawelti’s trio of formulaic aspects, suspense, identification, and creation of imaginary worlds, let us examine their role in the plot.

9.2.1 Plot

Suspense is employed in the stories on more than one level. Each of the parts has an independent plot which is resolved within the sphere of one book – in the first part, Harry, Ron and Hermione have to face a possessed professor and save the philosophers’s stone which is about to be stolen; in the second, the main problem seems to be a basilisk who is threatening the students of Hogwarts School; in the third, the danger is embodied in mysterious prisoner of the Azkaban prison who managed to escape and had to be caught; the fourth book is set during the Triwizard tournament’s fights for a trophy; the fifth part deals with Harry’s cooperation with a group of wizards called The Order of Phoenix formed to fight evil wizards; and the sixth book in the series presents the mystery of the half-blood Prince.

At the very beginning of the cycle, Rowling introduces to the reader the villain, the Dark Lord who always brings troubles and exciting twists into the plot of the whole series. Voldemort, being Harry’s fatal enemy who survives each time, reminds the reader of a constant menace of the final duel which is inevitable. Voldemort is first mentioned in the dialogue of Professor McGonagall and Professor Dumbledore:
'As I say, even if You-Know-Who has gone—'

‘My dear Professor, surely a sensible person like yourself can call him by his name? All this You-Know-Who nonsense – for eleven years I have been trying to persuade people to call him by his proper name: Voldemort.’ […] I have never seen any reason to be frightened of saying Voldemort’s name.’

‘I know you haven’t,’ said Professor McGonagall, sounding half exasperated, half admiring. ‘But you are different. Everyone knows you are the only one You-Know – oh, all right, Voldemort was frightened of.’

To Harry, Voldemort is introduced by Hagrid, on his way to Hogwarts in his first year:

‘Voldemort.’ Hagrid shuddered. ‘Don make me say it again. Anyway, this – this wizard, about twenty years ago now, started lookin fer followers, and got ‘em too – some were afraid, some just wanted a bit o’ his power. […] Dark days, Harry. Didn’t know who ter trust, didn’t dare to get friendly with strange wizards or witches... terrible things happened. He was takin’ over. ‘Course, some stood up to him – an’ he killed ‘em. Horribly. One o’ the only safe places left was Hogwarts. Reckon Dumbledore’s the only one You-Know-Who was afraid of."

Throughout the individual stories, Rowling scatters riddles and clues which are helpful to the characters as well as the readers in unveiling the mystery. In the third book, she is speaking about Ron’s rat Scabbers which finally turns out to be Harry’s enemy Peter Pettigrew:

But Harry, remembering what the woman at the Magical Menagerie had said about rats living only three years, couldn’t help feeling that unless Scabbers he had never revealed, he was reaching the end of his life.

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138 Rowling: *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*
139 Ibid
140 Rowling: *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*
Often, Rowling uses overhearing of a conversation, or following of a person as means of reaching information:

‘What was that about?’ whispered Ron, reeling in the Extendable Ears.
‘Dunno,’ said Harry, thinking hard. ‘He wants something mended… and he wants to reserve something in there… could you see what he pointed at when he said “that one”?’
‘No, he was behind that cabinet.’

At the end, agreeably with the rules of the mystery/detective formula, the valid version of the events has to be revealed, and the villain explains the evil plan:

‘[…] so tell me, while we wait for your friends… how did you smuggle them in here? It seems to have taken you a long time to work out how to do it?’
Malfoy looked as though he was fighting down the urge to shout, or vomit. […] Then, as though he could not help himself, he said, ‘I had to mend the broken Vanishing Cabinet that no one’s used for years. The one Montague got lost in last year.’
‘Aaaah.’
Dumbledore’s sigh was half a groan. He closed his eyes for a moment.
‘That was clever….’

Also a summary of the story is provided, usually when one character is retelling what happened and connects all the revealed events. This happens usually when Harry is summarizing the adventure for his friends:

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141 Rowling: *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* 122
142 Ibid 548
It was one of the rare occasions when the true story is even more strange and exciting than the wild rumours. Harry told them everything: Quirell; the mirror; the stone; and Voldemort. Ron and Hermione were a very good audience; they gasped in all the right places, and when Harry told them what was under Quirell’s turban, Hermione screamed out loud.\textsuperscript{143}

Another situation when the story of Harry’s facing the enemy is recounted is when he is telling it to Dumbledore:

He took a deep breath and began to tell them. As he spoke, visions of everything that had passed that night seemed to rise before his eyes; he saw the sparkling surface of the potion that had revived Voldemort; he saw the Death Eaters Apparating between the graves around them; he saw Cedric’s body lying on the ground beside the cup.\textsuperscript{144}

However, when the reader witnesses the events with the main hero, this summary can be omitted:

‘You didn’t get it?’ said Ron, looking crestfallen. ‘It wasn’t there?’
‘No,’ said Harry. ‘Someone had already taken it and left a fake in its place.’
‘Already taken?’
Wordlessly, Harry pulled the fake locket from his pocket, opened it and passed it to Ron. The full story could wait… it did not matter tonight… nothing mattered except the end, the end of their pointless adventure, the end of Dumbledore’s life…’
‘R. A. B.,’ whispered Ron, ‘but who was that?’

\textsuperscript{143} Rowling: \textit{Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone}
\textsuperscript{144} Rowling: \textit{Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire}
‘Dunno,’ said Harry, lying back on his bed fully clothed and staring blankly upwards. He felt no curiosity at all about R. A. B.: he doubted that he would ever feel curious again.\textsuperscript{145}

Apart from the plot elements interconnected into the main battle between good and evil in the world of wizards, some minor problems cross the paths of the protagonists – relationships, school matters, or searching of one’s identity.

In structuring the plot, Rowling uses a traditional rhetorical device called \textit{hysteron proteron} (‘latter before’), which has been applied in fiction since the Classical period (e.g. in Vergil’s \textit{Aeneis}). She provides the reader with the information which is explained only later – in the first chapter of \textit{Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone}, a situation after the ‘death’ of Voldemort is depicted at the point of the narration when the reader does not know who Voldemort is:

It was a few seconds before Mr. Dursley realized that the man was wearing a violet cloak. He didn’t seem at all upset at being almost knocked to the ground. On the contrary, his face split into a wide smile and he said in a squeaky voice that made passerby stare: ‘Don’t be sorry, my dear sir, for nothing could upset me today. Rejoice, for You-Know-Who has gone at last! Even Muggles like yourself should be celebrating, this happy, happy day!’\textsuperscript{146}

But it is in the fourth chapter, ‘The Keeper of the Keys’, when the events are described in more detailed way to Harry and the reader as well. Hagrid is sent for Harry and tells him about his parents’ death and Harry’s lucky survival:

\textsuperscript{145} Rowling: \textit{Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince} 589
\textsuperscript{146} Rowling: \textit{Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone}
‘You-Know-Who killed ‘em. An’ then – an’ this is the real myst’ry of the thing – he tried to kill you too. Wanted ter make a clean job of it. I suppose, or maybe he just liked killin’ by then. But he couldn’t do it. Never wondered how you got that mark on yer forehead?’\textsuperscript{147}

Tolkien in \textit{LOTR} employs \textit{hysteron proteron} structuring too. In the first chapter of the trilogy, ‘A Long-expected Party’, Bilbo the Hobbit celebrates his one hundred and eleventh birthday and passes his favorite golden ring to his nephew Frodo. In the second chapter, ‘The Shadow of the Past’, Frodo is visited by Gandalf who is afraid about the strange nature of his ring. They cast the ring into fire and by deciphering the fiery letters they learn that it is the One Ring. Gandalf consequently tells Frodo its history which is closely connected to the Dark Lord Sauron:

‘This is the Master-ring, the One Ring to rule them all. This is the One Ring that he lost many ages ago, to the great weakening of his power. He greatly desires it – but he must \textit{not} get it.’

Frodo sat silent and motionless. Fear seemed to stretch out a vast hand, like a dark cloud rising in the East and looming up to engulf him. ‘This ring!’ he stammered. ‘How, how on earth did it come to me?’\textsuperscript{148}

Then the history of Middle Earth is briefly summarized by Gandalf so as Frodo and the reader can follow the story. The other ‘whys’ posed at the beginning of the story are answered in the chapter ‘The Council of Elrond’ where all the main characters participate.

In terms of revealing the truth about the past in Harry Potter stories, Rowling proceeds slowly. There is not one character who knows the whole story of Harry’s family

\textsuperscript{147} Rowling: \textit{Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone}
\textsuperscript{148} Tolkien: \textit{LOTR} 49-50
so that he must put together pieces of information he gains in the course of the time from various people both by accident or on purpose. Some of them are hard to get:

‘But why would he want to kill me in the first place?’
Dumbledore sighed very deeply this time.
‘Alas, the first thing you ask me, I cannot tell you. Not today. Not now. You will know one day … put it from your mind for now, Harry.’

And some of them can be easily overheard in the pub, such as:

‘So Black was the Potters’ Secret Keeper?’ gasped Madame Rosmerta.
‘Naturally,’ said Professor McGonagall. ‘James Potter told Dumbledore that Black would die rather than tell where they were, that Black was planning to go into hiding himself … and yet, Dumbledore remained worried.’

This sense of mystery, and gradually uncovering of facts and aspects of the story is one of the typical features of formulaic literature based on action and unexpected twists in the plot. Tension, suspension, and sensuous moments are richly represented on the expense of the deeper and more complex characterization of the protagonist, which is one of the procedures of the formulaic genres.

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149 Rowling: *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*
150 Rowling: *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*
9.2.2 Characters

Rowling treats her characters in the similar way as Tolkien did. She keeps strict boundaries between good and evil, white and black (on one hand there is Dumbledore’s first name Albus, in Latin meaning white; on the other hand, the Dark Lord Voldemort).

The use of stereotypes and archetypes can be also seen in Harry Potter stories- Harry is an orphan with a tragic fate who stays with his relatives as an unwanted member of family, and who is to learn about his past and identity gradually.

Dumbledore stands for the wise man, and functions in the plot similarly as Gandalf does in LOTR – they can be viewed as guardians and protectors to the inexperienced hero (Harry, Frodo). Both of them are killed in the course of the story, and in the presence of their protégés. Harry sees Dumbledore’s passing from under his invisibility cloak:

A jet of green light shot from the end of Snape’s wand and hit Dumbledore squarely in the chest. Harry’s scream of horror never left him; silent and unmoving, he was forced to watch as Dumbledore was blasted into the air: for a split second he seemed to hang suspended beneath the shining skull, and then he fell slowly backwards, like a great rag doll, over the battlements and out of sight.151

In a similar fashion, Frodo witnesses Gandalf’s death with the rest of the Fellowship in the fight with a monster called Balrog:

151 Rowling: Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince 556
[...] the thongs lashed and curled about the wizard’s knees, dragging him to the brink. He staggered and fell, grasped vainly at the stone, and slid into the abyss. ‘Fly, you fools!’ he cried, and was gone.
The fires went out, and blank darkness fell. The Company stood rooted with horror staring into the pit.152

Being both powerful wizards, Gandalf and Dumbledore ‘survived’ their deaths and returned – Gandalf the Grey extended his powers and became Gandalf the White; and Dumbledore appeared as a living portrait among the rest of the portraits of the former headmasters and headmistresses of the Hogwarts School.

Closely tied to the characters is also a question whether the author should be subjective or objective in treating his/her heroes and waving their fates into a storyline. While a novelist writing in a realist mode should stay faithful to the reality and keep his/her distance, in fantasy, it is usually obvious which side the author is on. Mostly, it is the side of the good, for a happy ending and victory of the goodies are among the essential elements of the fantasy.

9.2.3 Setting

Tolkien creates for his tale the whole universe with history, mythology, variety of peoples and languages; his Middle Earth is clearly the Secondary world. On the other hand, Rowling splits the setting of her stories in two places, one being the primary world, and the second a parallel version of it. Her fantasies are set neither in the primary world where marvelous occurs exceptionally nor in a complex imaginary reality. The cross-reference between the two worlds shows that they are involved in a parallelism of some kind. In the

152 Tolkien: LOTR 322-3
case of Harry Potter stories, the author employs many phenomena from the primary world in a slightly changed manner, e.g. social and racial stratification of the society. (Rowling’s view is anything but a social critique or allegory. Writing for predominantly a young readership, she merely tends to show, that even the world of wizards has similar problems as the primary world readers live in.)

The facts, that Rowling re-uses traditional motifs, and does not create an immense Secondary world, are among the reproofs of her work:

Auden and Tolkien wrote about the skills of inventing "secondary worlds." Ms. Rowling's world is a secondary secondary world, made up of intelligently patchworked derivative motifs from all sorts of children's literature — from the jolly hockey-sticks school story to Roald Dahl, from "Star Wars" to Diana Wynne Jones and Susan Cooper. Toni Morrison pointed out that clichés endure because they represent truths. Derivative narrative clichés work with children because they are comfortingly recognizable and immediately available to the child's own power of fantasizing.

The important thing about this particular secondary world is that it is symbiotic with the real modern world. Magic, in myth and fairy tales, is about contacts with the inhuman — trees and creatures, unseen forces. Most fairy story writers hate and fear machines. Ms. Rowling's wizards shun them and use magic instead, but their world is a caricature of the real world and has trains, hospitals, newspapers and competitive sport. Much of the real evil in the later books is caused by newspaper gossip columnists who make Harry into a dubious celebrity, which is the modern word for the chosen hero. Most of the rest of the evil (apart from Voldemort) is caused by bureaucratic interference in educational affairs.\(^\text{153}\)

\(^{153}\) Byatt
Because Rowling does not create a world of her own, but merely a parallel reality, it seems that the two differ only in minute aspects. The most obvious of them is the magic.

9.2.4. Magic

Magic in its various forms is one of the properties of the fantasy genre. In some cases, the existence and usage of magical objects can be essential part of the narration; in others it is not necessary. The magic items represent the old human desire for something they cannot achieve, for instance invisibility, immortality, fast traveling, limitless power over other creatures, or understanding animals. There is a great variety of magical things; most of them cause troubles as well as help the hero.

*LOTR* being a work of fantasy contains some enchanted elements; nonetheless, the fact that they are magical is not necessary for the plot – the Ring is not in the centre of the story because it is magical but because it must be destroyed. Tolkien shapes the character of his magic as a helper or servant of living creatures. He also stresses the fact that all the magical things were made once – in contrast with fairy tale where the reader never gets to know how they come to be.

In fact, ‘magic’ is not the right word for expressing the powers of Middle Earth:

Although it may seem that there is magic in Middle-earth, there are degrees of virtue and power vested in characters and beings that allow them to achieve certain goals that are not within the natural order of things. Magic may be a convenient word, but it is, in my view, too loose, and carries incorrect and unfortunate connotations. \(^{154}\)

\(^{154}\) Harvey
While in *LOTR* magic is subordinate to living creatures and their skills, in Harry Potter stories it is an essential part of the narration. The story is set in the world of wizards and witches where magic functions as everyday reality. The magic and the ordinary are mixed throughout the narration – while for the readers they stay extraordinary, the characters experience them with an air of everyday; for example the magic taught in the Hogwarts School:

They had to study the night skies through their telescopes every Wednesday at midnight and learn the names of different stars and the movements of the planets. Three times a week they went out to the greenhouses behind the castle to study Herbs and Plants, with a dumpy little witch called Professor Sprout, where they learn how to take care of all the strange plants and fungi, and found out what they were used for.

Easily the most boring class was History of Magic, which was the only one taught by a ghost.155

Rowling distinguish two types of people – wizards and muggles. Her, as well as reader’s sympathy is ultimately on the side of wizards. Muggles (those who cannot practice sorcery) are depicted mostly as ignorant, intolerant, and dull primitives who are not enough heedful to notice that there is also another world apart from the one they live in, for example in the episode with the Knight Bus:

‘How come the Muggles don’t hear the bus?’ said Harry.
‘Them!’ said Stan contemptuously. ‘Don’ listen properly, do they? Don’ look properly either. Never notice nuffink, they don’.”156

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155 Rowling: *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*
156 Rowling: *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*
Even though Rowling stands positively on the side of the wizardry world, her mocking of muggles stays mainly within the barriers of their lack of fantasy:

The wizard-witch world that Ms. Rowling has created is, as I see it, principally a way of saying that there is a world within the world of customary England, which the narrow, unimaginative, acquisitive Englishman doesn't know about. The "magic" world really stands for this world felt with greater wonder; it stands for a greater honoring of the agogness of things.¹⁵⁷

This notion of looking at things without the lust of possessing them accounts among Tolkien’s features of fairy stories under the label ‘Recovery’.

The wizards are portrayed in far more favorable way, even though Rowling tells the reader that there are also the evil wizards who are under influence of the Dark Art; hence the subjectivity of the author.

Magic and magical objects play a significant role in the world of Harry Potter. However, they appear to be exciting and extraordinary only to a stranger, such as Harry. For the rest of the characters they are part of reality – e.g. the platform nine and three-quarters from which the train to Hogwarts leaves, the chocolate frogs which come alive if you do not eat them quickly enough, or the wizard chess in which the figures are actually fighting with each other.

The narrative perspective chosen reminds one of LOTR where the story is also seen from the point of view of Hobbits who are outsiders in the story and wonder about the Elvish craft.

¹⁵⁷ Reiss
The striking contrast between the two worlds can be illustrated not only by their inhabitants but also by the lack of magic and supernatural creatures in one of them:

A further mode in which fantasy often returns to its starting point is in the departure of the supernatural. The magic realms, creatures, objects, actions or persons appear, disrupt ‘normal’ life and then depart once more at the end of the story. … Such removal need not always be final. … Nor does it suppose a return to happy ignorance and indifference. Thanks to the supernatural the world is by the end seen differently, and characters may have been altered spiritually through their experience of it. … There is not only a circular mode of ‘There and back again’ but a spiral one, whereby the return is at a higher level of insight.158

A concrete example of this statement is in Harry Potter stories – Harry is a wizard but in the world of muggles he is not allowed to perform any magic. So he lives in two realities – one of them is full of spells and supernatural creatures, and the other is absolutely deprived of any of these:

Harry Potter was a wizard – a wizard fresh from his first year at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. And if the Dursleys were unhappy to have him back for the holidays, it was nothing to how Harry felt. He missed Hogwarts so much it was like having a constant stomachache. He missed the castle, with its secret passageways and ghosts, his classes, the mail arriving by owl, eating banquets in the Great Hall, […] and, especially, Quidditch, the most popular sport in the wizarding world.159

158 Manlove: *The Impulse of Fantasy Literature* 71

159 Rowling: *Harry Potter and the Secret Chamber*
The existence of the two essentially different realities and the hero caught between them create a tension in him, and an opportunity for the author to make parallels between the two worlds. Therefore, in the wizardry world, there are bureaucratic problems at the Ministry of Magic (mostly with Cornelius Fudge); tabloids and journalists seeking for celebrities’ scandals (Rita Skeeter); and popular sports (Quidditch).

The mixture of strange and ordinary is among the attractive aspects of Rowling’s stories.

### 9.3 Fairy Tale Features in Harry Potter Stories

Both *LOTR* (even though less than *The Hobbit*) and Harry Potter Stories were (and are) considered to be stories written for children. Therefore, they seem to have close relationship to fairy tales – the traditional genre of literature for children. While *LOTR* managed moreover successfully to get rid of the label, Rowling’s works are still discussed predominantly from the perspective of a children’s readership.

The basic definition of a fairy tale says that it is ‘a story, usually for children, about elves, hobgoblins, dragons, fairies or other magical creatures.’\(^{160}\) The fairy tale was always a popular genre, and an essential part of folklore tradition. It carries a moral message and functions also as a means of passing the knowledge. Rowling’s narration fulfills all these characteristics. Her stories are full of supernatural creatures and monsters, and she employs a simple moral message, presented for example in the clear division of good and evil.

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\(^{160}\) *Webster’s Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of English Language*
At the same time, Rowling’s wizardry world shares a characteristic of the world of romances. Claire Delacroix speaks about the medieval romance setting used as illustrations in the fairy tale books, and their interconnections:

There were sorcerers and witches, and fire-breathing dragons, there were quests and pledges and duels to the death - each and every time for A Noble Cause. There were lofty summits and mysterious grottos and enchanted forests.\(^{161}\)

According to Delacroix, the usual mixture of fairy tale and romance features is suitable for a popular fantasy narration because of the distance of the medieval period. She points out, that it seems to be more fantasy-like than real:

[...] in the medieval period, there seems to linger the possibility of magic, the danger of things unseen, the prospect of daring adventure.\(^{162}\)

Apart from the ‘exotic’ setting of the distant historic period, Delacroix also makes link between the values held in both genres – both in fairy tales and romance the noble ideas and heroic values are stressed. The characteristic features of a hero must be absolute – positive or negative, for there is no space between black and white:

Maybe it's the inherent sense of justice in fairy tales that appeals to us all. Here, the bad get their punishment, the good are amply rewarded. And beauty must be more than skin deep. The possession of spiritual qualities - like generosity or willingness to help or a good heart - is always rewarded with earthly riches. Love lasts forever in fairy tales and withstands any

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\(^{161}\) Delacroix  
\(^{162}\) Ibid
number of tests. There are adventures to be had and obstacles to be conquered, prizes to be won and character to be proven. And in the end, the main characters always live happily ever after.

It's not surprising that we don't want to let these powerful stories go, even once we're deemed "too old" to be reading them! Medieval romance is a natural outgrowth from fairy tales.\textsuperscript{163}

Nevertheless, Delacroix mentions also some differences between the two genres:

The themes and expectations of fairy tales have shaped romance as nothing else - and it could be argued that the most satisfying romances echo a familiar fairy tale in some way. Romance lets fairy tales "grow up" by giving more insight into relationships than is found in those children's tales. There's more development to the characters, they're made more dimensional and "real". Often the challenges they face are more complicated, the repercussions more dire, certainly they capture our hearts even more effectively than those fairy tale heroes.\textsuperscript{164}

These differences seem to be brought about by the fact, that traditional fairy tales are less artificial and in their representation of world also less sophisticated. In contrast, romances work with the folk tales and oral tradition, and combine more elements together. As for the combining of the elements, Rowling’s works have closer to romance.

As far as the characters are concerned, fairy tales are peopled by simplified types used according to a repeated pattern. According to Propp, a typical hero of fairy tale is a person who lacks something or suffers by deeds of an evil-doer and is about to do
something about it. The fairy tale hero often carries a magical object which helps him in
different situations.\textsuperscript{165}

Among common fairy tale heroes are princes, princesses, kings or knights, but also
Simpleton Jack, orphans or step-children - all these go under traditional stereotypes. The
hero has to pass various tests and prove good intentions and bravery. However, all his
deeds and acts seem to be matter of fate or accident. After hero’s gaining experience and
wealth a happy ending follows.

Rowling’s heroes are introduced and treated as types too; mostly they can be
described by a single adjective summarizing their character – Harry is courageous,
Hermione is smart, Ron is funny, Dumbledore is wise, Voldemort is evil etc. On the other
hand, as Delacroix pointed out, they are more dimensional – the author provides the reader
with their past, and their thoughts that might explain their behaviour. She also breaks some
of the stereotypical rules - for example, Dumbledore is not another unmistakable
embodiment of wisdom:

‘Harry, I owe you an explanation,’ said Dumbledore. ‘An explanation of an
old man’s mistakes. For I see now that what I have done, and not done, with
regard to you, bears all the hallmarks of the failings of age. Youth cannot
know how age thinks and feels. But old men are guilty if they forget what it
was to be young… and I seem to have forgotten lately…’\textsuperscript{166}

However, admitting of making a mistake is one of the strengths of a wise man and
paradoxically, it makes him a more believable and likeable figure.

The other stereotype Rowling uses is a princess figure. In \textit{Harry Potter and the
Goblet of Fire}, the readers meet Fleur Delacour – a French student-witch who later gets

\textsuperscript{165} Propp 27
\textsuperscript{166} Rowling: \textit{Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix} 728
engaged with Ron’s brother Bill. Fleur is throughout the story described as unbelievably beautiful but at the same time proud and snobbish. In *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, when Bill is attacked by a werewolf and his face is badly wounded, it is expected, that Fleur leaves him for she likes only handsome men. However, she stays with him and supports his family, overcoming thus her superficial judgments of people. The stereotype of a princess bettered by her love and overcoming her pride is here enriched by an aspect of activity – while princesses tend to remain passive, Fleur participates in the Triwizard Tournament.

Another point which is in Harry Potter stories seen in a slightly different perspective is repercussions. While in fairy tales good characters dying unjustly do not appear very frequently, and can be revived to life by some magical objects, Rowling started to eliminate the good characters from the very beginning: Harry’s parents die in the first chapter of the first part of the series; in the fourth part, Harry’s schoolmate Cedric is murdered by Voldemort; and in the last two parts two very important characters died – Dumbledore and Harry’s godfather Sirius Black:

‘There’s nothing you can do, Harry - ’
‘Get him, save him, he’s only just gone through!’
‘ – it’s too late, Harry.’
‘We can still reach him - ’ Harry struggled hard and viciously, but Lupin would not let go …’
‘There’s nothing you can do, Harry … nothing … he’s gone.’

The murder of a character related to the hero stands for a feature common in romance – it brings about revenge.

167 Rowling: *Harry Potter and the Order of Phoenix* 711
All in all, Harry Potter books, being primarily considered to be children literature, do contain fairy tale elements, such as the supernatural creatures, or stereotyped characters. Nonetheless, these elements are developed and combined by the author with elements of other genres.

### 9.4 Other Features in Harry Potter Stories

The other aspects of romance appearing in Harry Potter stories are the happy endings and conservatism. Both of them have quite close to fairy tales discussed in the previous section; the genre which is also among the ingredients of Rowling’s mixture.

As for the happy endings, Rowling closed her first three books in the series with the clear happy ending – the evil is conquered (temporarily) and the school year ends:

> And together they walked back through the gateway to the Muggle world.\(^{168}\)

Or:

> And, grinning broadly at the look of horror on Uncle Vernon’s face, Harry set off toward the station exit, Hedwig rattling along in front of him, for what looked like a much better summer than the last.\(^{169}\)

But since the fourth part she tends to leave the endings without definite resolutions; however, hope is definitely present there. In *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, Voldemort arises at the end, and Dumbledore is about to make plans how to fight him again:

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\(^{168}\) Rowling: *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*
\(^{169}\) Rowling: *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*
There was no point worrying yet, he told himself, as he got into the back of the Dursley’s car.
As Hagrid had said, what would come would come… and he would have to meet it when it did.\textsuperscript{170}

In \textit{Harry Potter and the Order of Phoenix}, Harry’s recently found godfather Sirius Black is killed, and at the same time the public learns about Voldemort’s return.

In \textit{Harry Potter and the Half-Blooded Prince}, Dumbledore, the mightiest figure on the side of the good is killed, and Harry leaves school to accomplish his task of destroying the Dark Lord:

‘Then I’ve got to track down the rest of the Horcruxes, haven’t I?’ said Harry, his eyes upon Dumbledore’s white tomb, reflected in the water on the other side of the lake. ‘That’s what he wanted me to do, that’s why he told me all about them. […] I’ve got to find them and destroy them and then I’ve got to go after the seventh bit of Voldemort’s soul, the bit that’s still in his body, and I’m the one who’s going to kill him. […] His hand closed automatically around the fake Horcrux, but in spite of everything, in spite of the dark and twisting path he saw stretching ahead for himself, in spite of the final meeting with Voldemort he knew must come, whether in a month, in a year, or in ten, he felt his heart lift at the thought that there was still one last golden day of peace left to enjoy with Ron and Hermione.\textsuperscript{171}

\textsuperscript{170} Rowling: \textit{Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire}
\textsuperscript{171} Rowling: \textit{Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince} 606-7
In addition to the happy endings, which go under the label ‘Consolation’ from Tolkien’s features of fairy stories, Rowling employs Eucatastrophe as well. The sudden twist in plot turning the narration into a better direction appears for example in the third part, when Harry learns that Sirius Black is not his enemy but a friend of his parents:

‘Harry,’ said Lupin hurriedly, ‘don’t you see? All the time we’ve thought Sirius betrayed your parents, and Peter tracked him down – but it was the other way around, don’t you see? Peter betrayed your mother and father – Sirius tracked Peter down.’ 172

Another instance of Eucatastrophe used frequently in fantasy literature is the unexpected victory of the good when facing numerous army of the enemy, or when they are obviously less powerful than the evil ones. The first Eucatastrophe of this kind is described in the very first chapter of the first part when baby Harry survives the attack of the powerful wizard Voldemort.

The miraculous escape of the infant forms the basis of Harry’s popularity which is later discussed among wizards. Another passage where Rowling describes Harry’s victory over Voldemort due to mere luck appears in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*:

‘Harry’s wand and Voldemort’s wand share cores. Each of them contains a feather of the tail of the same phoenix.’ […]

‘So what happens when a wand meets its brother?’ said Sirius.
‘They will not work properly against each other,’ said Dumbledore. 173

In such a case, the impossible odds intervene. However, the inner qualities and strengths of the hero are of importance too, for they must be proved. Often, a memory of

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172 Rowling: *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*
173 Rowling: *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*
somebody or something recalled at the crucial moment helps to restore the courage and beat the rival. For Harry it is usually the memory of his parents.

In a similar fashion as Harry Potter, Samwise Gamgee faces in the last chapter of *The Two Towers* the danger he is not accustomed to. Fighting against a giant spider Shelob which stands in his way on rescuing Frodo, he recalls an Elvish song, and with his scarce weapons he kills the creature:

As if his indomitable spirit had set its potency in motion, the glass blazed suddenly like a white torch in his hand. It flamed like a star that leaping from the firmament sears the dark air with intolerable light. No such terror out of heaven had ever burned in Shelob’s face before.¹⁷⁴

The notion of a small group of brave heroes standing against numerous enemies is known from both fictional and historical narratives. It is one of the basic features of high fantasy, as well as heroic romances and fairy tales. Tolkien uses it in tune with his Eucatastrophe mode – his heroes all outnumbered all the time but luckily most of them survive:

Frodo looked behind. Beyond the fire he saw swarming black figures: there seemed to be hundreds of orcs. They brandished spears and scimitars which shone red as blood in the firelight. *Doom, doom* rolled the drum-beats, growing louder and louder, *doom, doom.* [...] The ranks of the orcs had opened, and they crowded away, as if they themselves were afraid. Something was coming up behind them. [...] ‘A Balrog,’ muttered Gandalf. ‘Now I understand.’ He faltered and leaned heavily on his staff. ‘What an evil fortune!’¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ Tolkien: *LOTR* 713
¹⁷⁵ Ibid 321
A strange kind of Eucatastrophe, when it looks more like a change to the worse; however, in the end only Gandalf is fighting the creature, manages to kills it and then appears reborn in a mightier form.

The unexpected twist towards the better development of a situation can be seen in *The Two Towers* in the battle of Helm’s Deep:

Upon the east too sheer and stony was the valley’s side; upon the left, from the west, their final doom approached. There suddenly upon a ridge appeared a rider, clad in white, shining in the rising sun. Over the low hills the horns were sounding. Behind him, hastening down the long slopes, were a thousand men on foot; their swords were in their hands. Amid them strode a man tall and strong. His shield was red. As he came to the valley’s brink, he set to his lips a great black horn and blew a ringing blast. […]

‘Behold the White Rider!’ cried Aragorn. ‘Gandalf is come again!’

At the moment, when there is no hope Gandalf and the Rohirrim arrive and save the day.

Another typical example of a seemingly hopeless fight which in the end turns out successfully is the battle before the Black Gate of Mordor:

‘We cannot achieve victory by arms, but by arms we can give the Ring-bearer his only chance, frail though it be. As Aragorn has begun, so we must go on. We must push Sauron to his last throw. We must call out his hidden strength, so that he shall empty his land. We must march out to meet him at once. We must make ourselves the bait, though his jaws should close on us. He will take that bait, in hope and in greed, for he will think that in such rashness he sees the pride of the new

Tolkien: *LOTR* 529
Ringlord; [...] We must walk open-eyed into that trap, with courage, but small hope for ourselves. For, my lords, it may well prove that we ourselves shall perish utterly in a black battle far from the living lands;”177

Gandalf’s speech lists the reasons why to fight the battle, and the fact that the heroes are aware of the slim chances of victory is stressed; the hopeless attempt proves to be the right one and Sauron is defeated.

Because the majority of Rowling’s characters are children (or teenagers in later books) it is easy for them to be outnumbered by more skillful and experienced enemies. The final battle in *Harry Potter and the Order of Phoenix* takes place at the Ministry of Magic where six Hogwarts students are attacked by Voldemort and his followers called Death Eaters. Luckily, Dumbledore and the members of the Order of the Phoenix arrive in time to help them and save them.

Rowling points out the question of luck in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, where Harry comes to possession of Felix Felicis potion which guarantees a one-day-luck to the person who drinks it. He gives it to his friends before the final battle which is then described by them:

‘But the others… there were other bodies on the ground?’

‘Neville’s in the hospital wing, but Madam Pomfrey thinks he’ll make a full recovery, and Professor Flitwick was knocked out, but he’s all right, just a bit shaky. […] Harry, if we hadn’t had your Felix potion, I think we’d all have been killed, but everything seemed to just miss us’ […]

‘Luckily,’ said Lupin hoarsely, ‘Ron, Ginny and Neville ran into us almost immediately and told us what happened. […]

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177 Tolkien: *LOTR* 862
'None of us could break through,' said Ron, ‘and that massive Death Eater was still firing off jinxes all over the place, they were bouncing off the walls and barely missing us…'\footnote{Rowling: \textit{Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince} 576-7} \footnote{Adams}

The role of luck and unpredictable salvation from an unexpected direction is a common feature of the formulaic literature. Even though this element is used quite abundantly, the readers seem not to grow tired of it. Happy endings and Eucatastrophe are required as a necessary part of the story.

The sense of conservatism is embedded in the series in many levels – Rowling’s use of traditional characters, plot structures, happy endings, as well as praising of values of the conservative society:

Despite all of the books' gestures to multiculturalism and gender equality, Harry Potter is a conservative. A paternalistic, One-Nation Tory, perhaps, but a Tory nonetheless.\footnote{Adams}

Fantasy is the genre working predominantly with conservative elements, which is thus the usual point of critique, in \textit{LOTR} as well as in Harry Potter series. Conservatism used in the area of the characters and the plot of the stories can be seen as a weakness or inability to create/discover new unexpected ways of expressing oneself through fiction. It leaves behind the experimental forms and topics, and relies on the proved schemes and patterns. But why should one see this as a weakness? Stereotypical characters and story-patterns are not necessarily simplified and not worth the attention. They can carry a deep meaning about the basic truths and values of human life, such as love, death, bravery, loyalty, hope, goodness, or evil. Both Tolkien’s and Rowling’s narratives are not original;
they spring from a long literary tradition, as was shown in the analysis, and can be accused of not being innovative at all. On the other hand, they carry a simple story of the profound abstract values which are never easy to capture without open moralizing.

The stories are predictable; nevertheless, they speak about the absolute and they are able to attract their readers’ attention and win their hearts.
10 Conclusion

As the genre analysis of Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* and Rowling’s Harry Potter stories showed, they combine a great variety of elements from various genres. Tolkien calls his trilogy simply ‘a tale’ for he stresses the quality of telling and re-telling the stories. According to him, one can be original even though he/she works with known elements, because every narration of a story is an act of ‘sub-creation’ done by the narrator. In his opinion, there is not much difference between the ‘higher mythology’ of the myths and ‘lower mythology’ of folk tales; or should not be.\(^{180}\)

As was demonstrated by the analysis, it is not easy to define the genre label under which one can put *Lord of the Rings* and Harry Potter stories. The most general term applicable to both of the works would be ‘fantasy novel’ – with ‘fantasy’ referring to the thematic and structural elements, and ‘novel’ concerning the realistic mode and the length of the works referring to the scale of epic stories.

However, it seems that there is no such thing as a united set of rules of the fantasy genre; it is interconnected with the history and elements of other genres, such as romance, fairy tale, or novel.

Fantasy, being the mixture of borrowed and diffused elements of other genres stays conservative beyond any doubt. As a part of formulaic literature, it provides its readers with easily fulfilled expectations. But at the same time, fantasy gives its readers space for sharing and continuing in the narration of the story. The imaginary lands the genre offers became homelands for a large audience. Fantasy (and the works discussed in this analysis in particular) is considered to be a matter of cult and fans. Fantasy definitely is a kind of ‘escapist’ literature - Tolkien himself describes ‘Escape’ as one of the main functions of

\(^{180}\) Tolkien: ‘On Fairy-Stories’
fairy stories. As far as he is concerned, the escapist quality of a narrative is no longer used as much as it could be, because it is often a criticized quality within a literary text. Tolkien compares the author/reader to a prisoner: ‘Why should a man be scorned if, finding himself in prison, he tries to get out and go home? Or if, when he cannot do so, he thinks and talks about other topics than jailers and prison-walls?’

For Tolkien, escapism is not a mark of a low-brow literature; it is a necessary feature of any good tale.

Sara Upstone in her essay stresses the universality of Tolkien’s work:

[… ] the historicity of Tolkien’s texts has indeed become universally accessible. The […] sense of fiction as history is clearly present, both through the use of appendices and maps, the creation of a vast imaginary geographical landscape that can be transposed upon our own;

In her view, *LOTR* is able to achieve universality because it employs general truths; it is ‘dealing with themes whose applicability will not diminish with time.’

This notion can be seen as an answer to the question whether fantasy literature does have a future – both *LOTR* and Harry Potter stories bring the narratives with a broad scope of topics, reaching from the fundamental ones (such as the fight of good and evil) to those which can speak to the individual reader and his imagination (e.g. the idea of the power of the individual to change history, or filling the blank spaces in the maps and histories of the imaginary worlds).

The inability to state exactly the genre label for Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* and Rowling’s Harry Potter series does not mean anything. It is not a sign that they belong

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181 Tolkien: ‘On Fairy-Stories’
182 Upstone
183 These are spiritual, communal, mythological, and individual truth.
184 Upstone
to a low-brow branch of fiction stealing the best from the others, and mixing it violently. Neither is it a mark of a sophisticated intertextual and intergeneric mess.

For some, these texts create a new mythology for England; others see them as a mere part of a cult fiction which is popular only because it is spread within a community of fans without a second thought. Who can decide this? Is it simply a matter of choice between praise and contempt? An attempt at an objective analysis was made in this thesis; the extent to which it succeeded is left upon somebody else to decide.
11 Shrnutí


Označení žánru „fantasy“ je v literární teorii poměrně nové a podobně jako ostatní žánry nemá pevně vytyčené hranice. Neexistuje žádný seznam typických znaků nebo používaných pravidel, který by tento žánr platil beze zbytku. Díla spadající pod označení „fantasy“ jsou proto pevně spjata a provázána s dalšími žánry jako např. romancí, pohádkou, románem, nebo žánrovou literaturou. Tato práce přináší stručný výčet základních prvků a postupů, které si fantasy literatura půjčuje, a které se konkrétně objevují v díle Tolkiena a Rowlingové.

Při rozboru a snaze o žánrové zařazení Pána prstenů a Harryho Pottera je přihlédnuto k Tolkienovu teoretickému eseji „O pohádkách“, ve kterém on sám stanovuje pravidla pohádkových příběhů. Podle něho totiž Pán prstenů (i Tolkienova další díla) spadá do této kategorie/žánru.

Práce se oběma díly zabývá zejména z hlediska formální analýzy. Pouze letmo se dotýká současné popularity žánru fantasy (typicky představované díly Tolkiena a Rowlingové a jejich filmovými adaptacemi) – popularita a nejasné vytyčení žánru bývá často příčinou kritiky a předpokladu, že jak Pán prstenů, tak série o Harry Potterovi nejsou dostatečně literárně na výši. Toto stanovisko se snaží tato práce vyvrátit – „recyklace“ tradičních prvků, konzervativní přístup ani sentimentalita nemusí být známkou pokleslosti žánru. Příběh postavený na trvalých pravidlách jako jsou odvěký boj dobra a zla, přátelství, lásku, nebo strach ze smrti má cenu vyprávět v každé době.
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