



Universidad de Granada

DEPARTAMENTO DE FILOLOGÍAS INGLESA Y ALEMANA

Programa de Doctorado: Estudios Superiores de Filología Inglesa

**Re-reading *The Lord of the Rings*:
Masculinities in J.R.R. Tolkien's Novel
and Peter Jackson's Film Adaptation**

PhD Dissertation

Beatriz Domínguez Ruiz

Supervisor: Dr. Margarita Carretero González

Granada, 2015

Editor: Universidad de Granada. Tesis Doctorales
Autora: Beatriz Domínguez Ruiz
ISBN: 978-84-9125-680-9
URI: <http://hdl.handle.net/10481/43319>

To my mother

A mi madre

“Stepping into the road of Tolkien scholarship can be an adventure in its own right, with all sorts of dangers and delights, but with an open mind and meticulous work it can be a worthwhile adventure” (Dimitra Fimi).

“All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us” (Gandalf the Grey)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My first thanks go, first and foremost, to my thesis supervisor, Margarita Carretero González. This project would not have seen the light without her invaluable expertise, help and guidance. When I first read *The Lord of the Rings*, I would never have imagined that it would become the subject of a future PhD project. My lectures with Dr Carretero were thus an eye opener in which I found both a new world to discover and a kindred spirit.

Borrowing a little from Tolkien's work, I see this PhD thesis as a quest that has taken me a long journey to finish, and as all good quests, it has not lacked obstacles. Thanks to the fact that I lived in Oxford from 2005 to 2007, I was very lucky to be able to do my research at the Bodleian Library. That time, together with some other non-consecutive months when I stayed in the city where Tolkien lived and taught, allowed me to spend endless days reading and writing in such a magnificent and indeed uplifting environment.

Margarita has been my Phial of Galadriel and my Gandalf all these years, guiding me throughout the way, shedding light whenever it was necessary, and encouraging me to continue. I am ever so grateful to her for her advice during the whole process and above all her total commitment during the revision months. Our meetings were memorable moments I will always cherish, for they did not only help me fight some monsters I encountered along the way, like frustration or disorientation, but they were always lovely moments spent with a true friend who, at the same time, I really admire.

I am also forever indebted to my family and friends, both in Spain and the United Kingdom, who have always been patient and have truly and warmly encouraged me. Of all these, I cannot forget to thank individually two people that have always believed in me more than myself: my excellent friend Vanessa Silva Fernández and my mother. They have been experts in cheering me up and have never let me fall. Words falter to thank you for your patience, your kindness, your love and your precious time and advice.

Like Frodo, I have not remained unchanged in this process as it has made me reconsider not only Tolkien's novel but also aspects of life in general. In this sense, I can say I have grown personally at the same time as this thesis has developed. It has meant a sacrifice mostly in terms of time and energy, for working full time as an English teacher and writing a PhD thesis is not an easy task, but it has undoubtedly been a wonderful and enriching experience, so I can therefore confirm that it has all been worthwhile in the end.

ABBREVIATIONS

In an effort to clarify the difference between the analysis of the novel and the films, I have used the following abbreviations in this study:

FR Tolkien's *The Fellowship of the Ring*

TT Tolkien's *The Two Towers*

RK Tolkien's *The Return of the King*

Fellowship Jackson's *The Fellowship of the Ring*, special extended edition

Towers Jackson's *The Two Towers*, special extended edition

Return Jackson's *The Return of the King*, special extended edition

In order to have a complete view of Jackson's interpretation of Tolkien's novel, I have not used the theatrical releases, only the special extended editions.

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INTRODUCTION

Though it is a great compliment,
I am really rather sorry to find myself the subject of a thesis.
I do not feel inclined to go into biographical detail.
I doubt its relevance to criticism.
(Tolkien's Letter to Caroline Everett
in 1957 (Carpenter 1995: 257))

A work of art, therefore, is a complete and closed
form in its uniqueness as a balanced organic whole,
while at the same time constituting an open product
on account of its susceptibility to countless different
interpretations which do not impinge on its
unadulterable specificity. Hence every reception of a
work of art is both an interpretation and a
performance of it, because in every reception the
work takes on a fresh perspective for itself.
(Eco 1979: 49)

Criticism on J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* has had a lifespan of sixty years and it is still going strong. Scholars have analysed the author and his work from all sorts of perspectives, and, contrary to what Tolkien stated in the above letter to Caroline Everett, some of these have not failed to see the relevance of Tolkien's biographical details for the analysis of some aspects of his works. The release of the book adaptation into films in 2001, 2002 and 2003 also increased interest in the written text and encouraged some critics to focus, for example, on the comparison between the films and the book.

The present dissertation is therefore a new stepping stone in the body of criticism on *The Lord of the Rings* from the perspective of gender studies, the focus being, in my case, the representation of masculinities in the book and the films. Within the field of gender studies, there has been an increasing interest in the field of masculinities in the last two decades. Since gender was made visible as a political category by women, men

could not remain invisible anymore, thus masculinity became an area of interest among academics interested in these studies.

As gender fluctuates across cultures and time, masculinity and femininity are not “universal essences,” so gender is perceived as “an everchanging fluid assemblage of meanings and behaviors” (Kimmel 2008: 3), which are affected by variables such as class, age, race, sexuality and culture, among others. As some traditional views on gender are challenged, in the last few years, scholars such as Jack/Judith Halberstam have tried to disassociate the “eternal” connection men/masculinity in favour of a more general concept of gender as a social construct which can therefore affect both men and women. Dissociating the traditional binary dichotomy men/masculine and women/feminine is one of the main goals of the most recent research in this field, hence making it more sensible to speak about masculinities and femininities.

The studies of masculinities are necessarily interdisciplinary, with relevant contributions coming mainly from the fields of sociology, anthropology, psychoanalysis, sociolinguistics, literary theory and criticism. Literature studies are now also focusing on how masculinities are performed in different works in an attempt to offer re-readings of texts from the point of view of gender, taking male characters as their object of study in the same way as feminist studies have been doing with the female ones.

Since the publication of *The Lord of the Rings* in the fifties, and coinciding with the boom of Women’s Studies in the seventies and eighties, the first readings of Tolkien’s novel from a gender perspective focused on its female characters. Some of these studies criticised the dearth of women, the lack of relevant roles that they were given in the book, the stereotypical image that Tolkien offered of them, and some even labelled the author as misogynist (Partridge, Stimpson, Pretorius, Fredrick and McBride). Stimpson’s and Partridge’s are among the first (and most scathing) pieces of criticism regarding the portrayal of men and women in *The Lord of the Rings*. Earlier, however, in an article published in *The Observer* in 1995 Edwin Muir had already censured the male characters as “boys masquerading as adult heroes” (Carpenter 2002: 297).

Nevertheless, even within the world of feminist studies, some voices have been raised to justify the conception and evolution of Tolkien's female characters. Although the world in which Tolkien's characters move is undoubtedly male-dominated and androcentric, "there are enough women in Middle-earth who possess both courage and political leadership ability to suggest that Tolkien did not believe that lack of these qualities was an essential aspect of femaleness" (Crowe 1995: 274). Crowe believes that the lack of female characters is, in part, due to the epic nature of the text, in which the main roles are performed by men. Lisa Hopkins also sees in the genre of the book one of the main reasons for the functions assigned to the female characters, granting that, despite their scarcity, the roles they play are "remarkably disproportionate to their numbers," and it is precisely that scarcity that "seems to invest them with an air of uniqueness and of almost talismanic status, and in some cases their very femininity [...] is in Tolkien the very source of their strength" (1995: 365). It is the quality of these characters rather than their quantity that some readers or scholars seem to consider worth looking into.

Apart from this general focus on female characters, in the last two decades, some scholars (Crocker 2005, Rost 2011), have turned their attention to the male characters and the performances of masculinities in Middle-earth, in studies that have not focused exclusively on *The Lord of the Rings*, as they also deal with characters from *The Silmarillion* or *The Hobbit*. This dissertation follows on some of these initial steps and concentrates on analysing the most relevant patterns of masculinities found in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, and comparing it with the treatment they have received in Peter Jackson's film adaptation.

In order to approach Tolkien's construction of masculinities, paying attention to some details of his biography is undoubtedly useful, as well as looking into the literary sources which influenced his work, even if, as Tom Shippey insists in the introduction to *Tolkien and the Study of his Sources*, Tolkien rejected "biographical studies of authorship" (2011: 8). Tolkien himself made it clear in a letter written in 1971:

One of my strongest opinions is that investigation of an author's biography (or such other glimpses of his 'personality' as can be gleaned by the curious) is an entirely vain and false approach to his works – and especially to a *work of narrative art*, of which the object aimed at by the author was to be *enjoyed* as such:

to be read with literary *pleasure*. So that any reader whom the author has (to his great satisfaction) succeeded [sic] in ‘pleasing’ (exciting, engrossing, moving etc.), should, if he wishes others to be similarly pleased, endeavour in his own words, with only the book itself as his source, to induce them to read it for literary pleasure. (Carpenter 1995: 414)

Laura Michel somehow agrees with the fact that there are some dangers in analysing authors’ books using their biographies as a tool, for “an author’s work should stand on its own and his personal life remain private” (2006: 63). However, as Shippey states, Tolkien’s many contexts, “personal, professional and cultural, now need a good deal of explanation for most contemporary readers” (2011: 9), and the analyses of these contexts will help the reader contextualise Tolkien’s secondary world.

In fact, Tolkien went to admit in the Foreword to the second edition of *The Lord of the Rings* that “an author cannot of course remain wholly unaffected by his experience, but the ways in which a story-germ uses the soil of experience are extremely complex, and attempts to define the process are at best guesses from evidence that is inadequate or ambiguous” (1991: xvii). We cannot therefore ignore the most relevant events of his life which may have affected his views regarding gender performance, understanding that “biographical criticism seeks through the details of authors’ lives to elucidate influences on them and thus to gain a better understanding of their works” (Risden 2011: 20).

With Tolkien, we start from the premise that, his upbringing may have exerted a decisive influence in his conferring his characters the traditional essentialist views which advocated for a strong division of the social roles assigned to men and women. Although the hegemonic discourse that surrounds his life seems to have endowed him with certain conservative views, certainly “the more we learn of his work the less essentialist he appears” (Crowe 1995: 276).

Although the books were published in the fifties, they are the product of a writer who was brought up at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century; in the case of the film adaptations, they are the product of a team of writers born almost seventy years after Tolkien. Peter Jackson, Philippa Boyens and Fran Walsh, offered the audience three films that were in part their personal interpretations of the story. Consequently, and understanding both pieces of work as different types of narrative,

albeit interconnected, it was appealing to compare both Tolkien's construction and Jackson's reconstruction of different patterns of masculinity, which were directed to different audiences. In order to re-read Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and Jackson's adaptation, from the point of view of masculinity, the centrality of the characters as object of analysis is undeniable. By looking into the way they are directly characterised by the narrator, their actions and interactions with other characters, and their evolution as the plot progresses, we will have all the required information which will provide us with the starting point to look into the way they perform their masculinities, affected by all types of variables. In this analysis, we will establish the fluctuating nature of masculinity in Tolkien's and Jackson's characters, for if we understand the dynamic quality of masculinity, Jackson's reconstruction is likely to offer differences if compared with the book's characters.

This thesis has been divided in two main parts: the first one provides the theoretical framework and the aspects of the author's biography that are relevant for our purposes here, and the second one analyses the different patterns of masculinities found in Tolkien's and Jackson's texts.

Chapter 1 explores the history of the studies of masculinities and their evolution through the three waves that have been so far identified in the academia. Some attention is thus paid to some concepts which are relevant to understand the existence of different types of masculinities. Among these, some pre-eminence will be given to key elements such as patriarchy, hegemonic masculinity, and the theory of performativity. Given the fact that gender is a social and cultural construct, hence the inexistence of one unique pattern of masculinity, there is one type, hegemonic masculinity, which presents itself as some sort of dominant model over others, since it effectively dominates other men and women. In this regard, the theories developed by Judith Butler and R.W. Connell will be crucial for this dissertation.

Some scholars (Whitehead 2002, Armengol 2006), have also attested to the importance of feminist theories within the studies of masculinities, highlighting the interdependence of both types of studies within the field of gender studies. Some of these scholars have thus been "labelled" as pro-feminist, for example, Whitehead, Clatterbaugh, and Connell. There will therefore be a final section in this chapter aimed

at explaining some pro-feminist approaches within the field of masculinities, which will add some interesting information that will surely make it easier to understand how masculinities change. After this, the chapter will conclude with remarking the usefulness of re-reading a text, in this case *The Lord of the Rings*, whose popularity does nothing but increase with the passing of time.

Chapter 2 will look at the aspects of Tolkien's biography which may have contributed to his conception and construction of masculinities, and the shape they took on the written page. Among these, special attention will be paid to his upbringing by his mother after the death of his father, his education in an all-male school, the loss of his mother at a very young age, with the subsequent mentorship by a Catholic priest, or the homosocial relationships that marked his adolescence and adulthood. A better understanding of Tolkien's homosocial life experiences and the literary sources which can be traced in his work will be an indispensable step previous to the analysis of some of the most important characters in *The Lord of the Rings*.

Having set the theoretical framework for the analysis of Tolkien's characters and their masculinities, chapters 3, 4, 5 and 7 in Part II will offer a gender analysis of the characters of the novel first, which will later be compared with their counterparts in the films in a consecutive section within each chapter. Within the multiple masculinities of Middle-earth, it is essential to understand, not only *who* the characters are, as will be explained in the introduction to Part II, but also what they *do* and *how* they do it. As Butler states, it is what you *do* that matters (1999: 178-179).

Chapter 3 is devoted to the old heroic patterns of masculinity that can be found in *The Lord of the Rings*, undoubtedly based on a traditional dominant hegemonic masculinity, represented in Tolkien's world by Théoden, Éomer, Boromir and Denethor, whose performance can be defined as hypermasculine. The hypermasculine pattern comprises characters that belong to two very different types of societies within Middle-earth: whereas the society of Rohan can be seen as a reconstruction, according to Shippey 2001), of the literary Anglo-Saxon world found in texts such as *Beowulf*, *The Wanderer*, or *The Battle of Maldon*, the society of Gondor is more sophisticated and has often been compared to a declined Byzantium (Librán-Moreno 2011). Jackson's interpretation of these four characters shares some similarities with their counterparts in

Tolkien's book, but there are also some clear and interesting variations that will be analysed. Some of these allow for a better understanding of Tolkien's characters from the point of view of a 21st-century spectator, others have also been deemed necessary by the director to make the characters more appealing in order to achieve a better result on screen.

Chapter 4 will explore a significantly different pattern of masculinity, one which is based on a more peaceful approach to life. As chapters 4, 5 and 7 do not present heteronormative patterns of masculinities, they could be regarded as new models in Middle-earth. Characters like Aragorn, Gandalf and Faramir are primarily characterized by their powerful will to preserve life and embrace war only when necessary. Tolkien's experience in the Great War proves fundamental in the understanding of the construction of this pattern, for although Tolkien did fight in the war, he came to experience its terrible consequences and, as can be inferred from his letters and his comments on some characters, defended the Just War theory. In this chapter we look at characters coming from very different backgrounds, but the fact that they have so many things in common, thus sharing the same pattern of masculinity, enhances the idea that masculinity is not static but fluid and influenced by an individual's circumstances and upbringing.

They are, therefore, very charismatic leaders for the rest of the characters of Middle-earth, while being capable of making mistakes or having doubts, which is the aspect that Jackson has mostly lingered on concerning these characters: their humanity and fallibility. As Bronwyn Beatty explains,

the heroic fantasy genre attempts to reassert and redefine masculinity, offering to men a revised image with which to identify; this new hero is equally capable in the public sphere as the private, being emotionally inarticulate as well as action-oriented, and as comfortable and successful in peace-time as he is in war. (2006: 244)

This seems to be Jackson's reconstruction of some of the masculinities found in Tolkien's characters. Although Jackson tries to respect Tolkien's general conception of each character, there are some moments in which he greatly departs from the original text, showing the audience a completely new aspect or interpretation of a character. We will therefore analyse how Jackson's final result seems to be influenced by

contemporary patterns of masculinities that may have affected the director's final adaptation of these characters.

Hobbits also represent a type of masculinity which is very different from a hegemonic type. They are the unexpected heroes of this quest, and this may be one of the reasons why so many readers feel identified with them, because of their proximity to "us." For the four hobbits, Sam, Frodo, Merry and Pippin, this heroic quest represents their journey into maturity. They leave their precious Shire without knowing what perils lie ahead, and they will have to go through various tests before Middle-earth is saved from Sauron. Chapter 5 explores the differences existing behind their apparent similarities, for although they leave Hobbiton sharing a similar pattern of masculinity that is not fully developed yet, when they return they do so changed by the quest, each of them affected by the different experiences undergone. As with the characters analysed in chapter 4, the four hobbits also share some similarities with many of the young soldiers who enlisted to fight on the Great War, as will be pointed out in this section.

Jackson's recreation of the hobbits heightens the key traits that Tolkien endowed them with: their carefree nature, their love of laughter, their display of emotions (with some nuances) and their earthiness. Furthermore, they undergo similar changes in the journey that will lead them to Rohan, Gondor or Mount Doom. The audiovisual nature of the screen makes these changes more evident, therefore they are probably easier to assimilate by the audience.

Both the book and the film lay a strong emphasis on the bonds that are established among the characters in their quest. Chapter 6, which is concerned with these relationships, therefore establishes some differences between homosociality and homoeroticism. That the friendships among the characters are homosocial is a fact that hardly needs point out; yet, some queer readings effected in the last two decades have also offered a new interpretation of how these friendships may be regarded, understanding that some gestures of male intimacy – particularly among the hobbits – could be considered as instances of homoeroticism, or latent homosexuality. This chapter will offer some of these queer readings and will try to see their fruitfulness within the genre of slash fiction.

Chapter 7 will finally focus on female masculinity, a term coined by Halberstam in her book *Female Masculinity* (1998). Although Halberstam's analysis is mainly concerned with female lesbian masculinity, the analysis that will be carried out in this chapter will focus on how a heterosexual female character such as Éowyn performs a certain type of masculinity in the novel. The Lady of Rohan is a shieldmaiden who feels compelled to disguise herself as a male warrior and adopt a different identity in order to be able to take part in battle. Cross-dressing will be therefore part of this section, as this will give us a perfect opportunity to analyse how a woman that belongs to an eminently warrior society tries to transgress the traditional boundaries that are so clearly limiting and gendered. Jackson introduces some changes in Éowyn, but at the same time, he introduces other major changes in the films which affect directly the character of Arwen, whose filmic adaptation will be consequently analysed.

Throughout this dissertation I will analyse the fluid nature of masculinity within Tolkien's secondary world of Middle-earth. By exploring the variables that usually affect an individual's gender performance, such as their upbringing, their interactions with other characters, their behaviour, and the situations they encounter at the end of the Third Age, I will look into the representation of various patterns of masculinities. The concept of gender as a social, cultural, and historical construct will also be key to recognize these different models in characters that even belong to the same race. We will thus demonstrate the flexibility of masculinity in both text and films, which will be regarded as products of different historical periods, hence the variations in their creators' interpretation of the characters' masculinities. By analysing the text first, I will be able to establish some differences and similarities with Jackson's reconstruction of the patterns of masculinities found in the text, bearing in mind that the films are the perception of three people, not just the director. Moreover, as stated in Eco's above quotation, the films will be regarded as an interpretation and a fresh perspective of the masculinities performed by Tolkien's characters.

Having outlined the main contents of this thesis, it is now time to start exploring the theoretical framework which will allow us, first, to delve into the patterns of masculinities performed by Tolkien's characters and, secondly, Jackson's adaptation to the screen.

PART I

Theoretical Framework:

An Insight into Gender, Masculinities

and J.R.R. Tolkien's Life

1. Insight into Masculinity

This part presents the theoretical framework that informs my analysis of Tolkien's work. The first chapter focuses on the history of masculinity, its definition and the applicability of the studies of masculinities to literary analysis. The development of the studies of men and masculinities, together with the most recent research, has contributed to the current understanding of masculinities and its interdisciplinary nature. It will be precisely on the ideas of some scholars that could be framed in the third wave of this field, like Michael Kimmel, Stephen Whitehead, Jackson Katz, and Raewyn Connell, that the current analysis will find its base.

At the end of this section, I will establish the importance of re-reading a text from the point of view of masculinity, so in order to have a better understanding of this text and its characters, it will be essential to analyse some vital moments in the life of an author. The second chapter of this part will thus look into the role of a writer's biography in the process of creation of his work(s). Some of the most important events in J.R.R. Tolkien's life will be considered in order to proceed to analyse *The Lord of the Rings* from the point of view of masculinity.

1.1. Object of study and definition of field

Two main concepts lie at the basis of this thesis. The first one is that although its focus is on masculinities, this does not mean that it takes only male characters as its object of analysis, as has sometimes been the tendency in this field. This leads to the second concept, which is that masculinity, like gender, fluctuates throughout time; it is a social construct that is therefore influenced by other issues, such as age, appearance, bodily facility, care, economic class, ethnicity, fatherhood and relations to biological reproduction, leisure, martial and kinship status, mind, occupation, place, religion, sexuality, size, and violence (Hearn and Collinson 1994: 108). Masculinity is thus dynamic and changeable depending on the surrounding circumstances in what Gregory M. Herek has referred to as "human plasticity" (1987: 72), a constructionist view that makes it more reasonable to use Connell's preference for the term *masculinities*, which,

according to Herek, are not only constructed but “can be reconstructed, albeit with considerable effort” (ibid.).

When reading different types of handbooks related to gender in general and masculinity in particular, there is some lack of consistency in the use of a term to define this field of research, above all in the first that were published – men’s studies, masculinity studies, studies of masculinities, etc., and they are sometimes used randomly as if they were synonyms. This is mainly due to the fact that there has been an evolution in the field of what is known as sociology of masculinity, according to Whitehead, who also mentions that “the depth and the breadth of this sociology is staggering” (2002: 2). The most influential titles for this thesis are an example of this: *The Masculinity Studies Reader*, edited by Rachel Adams and David Savran, *The Masculinities Reader*, edited by Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett, *Men and Masculinities* by Stephen M. Whitehead, *Men’s Lives: Readings in the Sociology of Men and Masculinity*, edited by Michael Kimmel and Michael Messner, or *Between Men: English Literature and Homosocial Desire* by Eve K. Sedgwick, to name but a few. Josep M. Armengol points out that it is “ambiguous” to use the term men’s studies, as it is not clear “if it refers to studies *by* men or studies *about* them” (2006: 5, footnote 4), therefore his preference for “studies of masculinities,” as Kimmel suggests (2008: 17), which is also the preferred term that will be used in this thesis.

In general terms, the use of “men’s studies” was also quite understandable at the beginning since most handbooks focused mainly on masculinities portrayed by *men*, as it was necessary in order to bring the study of men and masculinities into the spotlight. However, although nowadays there are also reference books that still associate masculinities and men, there are some scholars like Judith/Jack Halberstam, who have tried to dissociate these terms by challenging the eternal dichotomy, and have begun to study masculinities as portrayed by women.

The field of gender studies focused indeed exclusively on women’s studies for a long time, but with the introduction of the studies of men and masculinities, Harry Brod already stated at the end of the 1980s that it was therefore unacceptable to understand gender studies as a “replacement for the concept of ‘women’s studies’” (1987: 185). In the evolution of the academic research that focused on this term and its application in various types of artistic discourses, the term gender was solely applied to feminist

studies at the beginning, as it was precisely feminist scholars who were pioneers in them, who concentrated almost exclusively on highlighting that gender is a social and cultural construct that had affected women's inferior position in society. The oppression of women was good enough a reason to focus solely on women in university programmes.

Brod insisted in the 1990s on the importance of not to separate both studies, as he believed that "researchers are studying the social construction of gender and sexualities in a manner that makes it no longer possible to neatly parse out the construction of gender into men's versus women's studies, or lesbian and gay versus straight studies, for that matter" (1994: 88). However, there are some scholars like Kimmel who believe that it is useful to have some sort of separation between women's studies, LGBT studies, studies of masculinities, etc., because they have been invisible before (2008: 28), and it is true that the term gender studies has traditionally been associated mostly to women.

It seems thus only fair that the beginning of the studies of masculinities would concentrate on men, an essentialist viewpoint which Àngels Carabí thinks necessary "since men, unlike women, have not been studied from a gender perspective. Before deconstructing a concept it is necessary to see how it is constructed" (Armengol and Carabí 2008: 71). Moreover, it seems in general that the popularity of the studies of masculinities has increased, so much so that Carolyn Dinshaw even admits that "if you're studying men, it's going to be popular; if you're studying women, it's not going to be popular" (ibid.). As the term gender was mostly associated with women, men were invisible in this field, but nowadays there is a rising interest on men and masculinities, which has therefore led to a rising popularity of these studies, so men seem to be an object of study for many scholars around the world. Since masculinities began to be analysed some decades ago, it is important to bear in mind the historical evolution of these studies.

1.2. Evolution of the studies of masculinities

1.2.1. First and second wave

Armengol offers a very interesting approach to the history of masculinity in his doctoral thesis, *Gendering Men: Theorizing Masculinities in American Culture and Literature*, published in 2006. Focused on the United States, he locates the interest in this field in the 60s and 70s, with the feminist and gay liberation movements, which led to important social changes as women challenged patriarchal assumptions, the gay movement questioned normative heterosexuality, and there was a general disillusionment over the Vietnam War. In this social turmoil, attention began to be placed on men and masculinities, mainly on white heterosexual masculinity, as Armengol points out.

Right until then, before gender became an object of study for the academia, essentialist approaches to gender were based on the assumption that we behave according to our sex: masculinity seemed to be an innate characteristic of men, and femininity of women, and it was all based on a binary foundation, a characteristic of a society that considers this dichotomy a kind of tautology. In this sense, men were (and in some contexts still are) expected to behave “like men,” women likewise. This was the result of an innate association that was socially taken for granted as men were generally thought to be the breadwinners, physically strong and therefore endowed with masculine attitudes, hence afraid of being called effeminate, whereas women were widely expected to be nurturing good mothers and loving wives, always the “angel in the house.” Therefore, according to David S. Gutterman, aspects such as activity, culture, and reason are usually associated with men, thus “held in higher esteem” than those associated with women: passivity, nature, and emotion (2001: 58). Even nowadays our everyday language remains affected by essentialist views, as it is

permeated with explicit or implicit gender(ed) interpretations. For example, words such as passive, active, sensitive, aggressive, emotional, caring, controlling, warrior, nurse, captain, leader, manager, director, cleaner, virile, frigid, impotent can be read in gendered ways, and interpreted within dualistic but dominant understandings of what it means to be a man or a woman. (Whitehead and Barrett 2001: 11)

Before the studies of masculinities became as important as they are nowadays for researchers, there was already a solid work on gender done in the field of feminism, so

both studies have experienced three different waves in their evolution. Whereas first wave feminism had focused mainly on women's rights, the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and its fight for equality led to the beginning of the second-wave feminism, which marked the beginning of the women's and gay liberation movements and which "began to challenge the 'cultural arrangements', male power and maleist assumptions increasingly recognized as sustaining gender injustice" (Whitehead 2002: 31).

From the late sixties, this second-wave feminism found a comfortable niche in the field of literary criticism, so that, until very recently, "women's studies" was synonymous with "gender studies," as has already been stated. In the case of the studies of masculinities, it was not until the 1970s, and after the aforementioned disillusionment over the Vietnam War, that masculinity was first "visible" (Armengol 2006: 46). In *The Masculinity Studies Reader* the editors Adams and Savran also explain that second-wave feminism boosted the field of women's studies, whereas in the case of the studies of masculinities, the evolution was quite different.

While the first wave in the studies of masculinities "was avowedly pro-feminist and dedicated to personal and institutional change" (Adams and Savran 2002: 5), and was concerned "with the problematics of male role performance and the cost to men of attempting to strictly adhere to dominant expectations of masculine ideology" (Whitehead and Barrett 2001: 15), the second wave, which arose in the 80s, "sought to highlight, not so much the cost to men of patriarchy, but the centrality of male power to dominant ways of being a man" (ibid.). It was in this atmosphere of challenge against the second wave feminism that the mythopoetic men's movement was born and activists like Robert Bly believed that men had been "emasculated by feminism and an effeminizing culture" (Adams and Savran 2002: 5). This movement aimed to "rescue" what was left of the image of true men, an image which they believed had been negatively influenced by feminism, thus one of their goals was to help men "recuperate their own innate, masculine power" (ibid.).

From this perspective, men are regarded as victims of society indeed: they have lost power, society asks them to reconsider some of their supposedly innate and patriarchal roles as bosses, husbands and fathers, and even their behaviour. Some men within the mythopoetic movement believe their manhood should be considered as timeless, permanent and superior. Concerning this idea, David Gilmore has seen certain

similarities in the performance of masculinities in different cultures in which “the masculinity code, the cult of manhood, usually includes an element of domination which establishes that the man should be superior to the female and that he should be in charge,” so there is a “ubiquitous” concept of masculinity which is not “universal” (2008: 31). In part, this idea of superiority and the longing to give men back what they have lost are two of the reasons why authors such as Bly encourage what Scott Coltrane calls “tribal male bonding” (1994: 42). Coltrane also adds that books like Bly’s *Iron John* “posit timeless natural differences between men and women, and although these authors often portray themselves as part of a progressive men’s movement, their writing often resembles the antiwoman rhetoric of reactionary men’s rights activists” (ibid.).

The second wave in the history of the studies of masculinities was partly characterized by, on the one hand, the emergence of a movement that was eminently essentialist and reductionist, and on the other hand, it was also witness to Connell’s introduction of the term “hegemonic masculinity,” which will be dealt with in the following chapter.

1.2.1.1. Patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity

The first social differences between men and women seem to have been established the moment in which man stopped basing his existence on the “hunter-gatherer pattern” and moved on to an “agricultural and herding” society. In this division of labour men did not only have the possibility of dominating other women but also other men. As a conclusion, John Archer and Barbara Lloyd mention other scholars’ theories about patriarchy, such as Wood and Eagly’s, acknowledgement that patriarchal societies are “the consequence not the cause of male domination,” and also refer to Barbara Smuts’s concept that male domination might be explained as a legacy, in this case of human evolution, as it is the man who wants to exert his power over the woman to satisfy his sexual interests (Archer and Lloyd 2002: 56). De Beauvoir also makes reference to this circumstance in *The Second Sex*, where she comments that the triumph of patriarchy

was neither a matter of chance nor the result of violent revolution. From humanity’s beginnings, their biological advantage has enabled the males to affirm their status as sole and sovereign subjects; they have never abdicated this position;

they once relinquished a part of their independent existence to Nature and to Woman; but afterwards they won it back. (1997: 109)

So what is patriarchy exactly? According to Armengol, it is a kind of ideological social structure which is based on three principles: “women’s confinement to home-related jobs; women’s inferiority *vis-à-vis* men; and men’s monopoly of technology and machinery” (2006: 114-115). Sylvia Walby had also stated that there were in fact different degrees of patriarchy and different forms, mainly private and public, so whereas “private patriarchy is based upon household production, with a patriarch [sic] [usually a husband or a father] controlling women individually and directly in the relatively private sphere of the home,” public patriarchy is based on other structures that are not the household (1990: 178). Therefore, patriarchy is anything that gives men some power and privilege over women (and also other men) in the public and private spheres, subordinating them culturally, physically, ideologically, socially, in personal and professional terms, owing to the fact that all sorts of empowering fields (education, media, politics, discourse) are mainly controlled by men:

Key structural entities such as the state, education, the media, religion, political institutions and business, being historically numerically dominated by men, all serve the project of male dominance through their capacity to promote and validate the ideologies underpinning hegemonic masculinity. (Whitehead 2002: 91)

Moreover, as Whitehead also explains, “there is ample evidence to show that women do successfully resist and overcome male dominance across both the public and private spheres and are increasingly doing so across numerous, diverse societies” (2002: 88). Patriarchy seems to be still powerful, though, and is often linked to what is known as “hegemonic masculinity,” which Connell defines as “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (1995: 77).

Hegemonic masculinity is essentially white and heterosexual, an exertion of male power based on a masculinist “innate desire to dominate and oppress” (Whitehead 2002: 92), which guarantees those that dominate a privileged position based on the subordination of others. Hegemonic masculinity’s main representative is “a man *in* power, a man *with* power, and a man *of* power” (Kimmel 1994: 125). Nevertheless, it is not a power that they are totally aware of, for

[p]rivilege, particularly white or male privilege, is hard to see for those of us who were born with access to power and resources. It is very visible for those to whom privilege was not granted. Furthermore, the subject is extremely difficult to talk about because many white people don't feel powerful or as if they have privileges that others don't. (Kendall 2013: 22)

This type of masculinity appears to be constructed on three main aspects: a strong belief in traditional masculine values, a heteronormativity which indicates what set of rules must be followed, and men's fear to lose a certain status or be "less" men if they finally become "visible." Tim Carrigan, Bob Connell and John Lee's explanation for the survival of this type of masculinity is that "most men benefit from the subordination of women, and hegemonic masculinity is centrally connected with the institutionalization of men's dominance over women" (2002: 113). However, hegemonic masculinity not only affects women but also other men who are believed to perform subordinate masculinities, so in this struggle to dominate there is an oppression of men and women exerted by other men.

Traditional masculinity values are based on this dominant position in society, in both the public and the private spheres – Whitehead also underlines that these "traditional notions of masculinity do come with a price for men, particularly in respect of their ability to develop empathy, understanding and emotional intimacies" (2002: 56). The consequences of trying to impose this type of dominant masculinity and behave accordingly are ubiquitous, for it sets the "role model" other men should look up to – any man wanting to "be a man" should therefore escape from any kind of trait traditionally associated with women and thus should try to behave as unemotionally as possible, be successful, powerful, and heterosexual. This emotional repression is but a socio-historical imposition and construction (Armengol 2006: 68), an attempt to get away from anything which could make them look weak or inferior; it is like a "burden" "which not only prevents them from exploring their emotional inner selves but also keeps separating them from women, children, and each other" (226). It affects men directly as it imposes, or at least tries to impose, on them certain attitudes only because they were born male and their society has decided what and how they should be like, what they should aspire to, and what they must try to avoid.

1.2.1.2. Power and masculinity

The most direct impact of dominant hegemonic masculinity on men's lives implies that those that do not conform to this type are framed in the group of subordinate masculinities. These are therefore believed to be unable to hold the power that those that prove to be "strong, successful, capable, reliable, in control" do have (Kimmel 2001: 272). In this sense, hegemonic masculinity demands a certain type of behaviour that corresponds to a definition of masculinity which, according to Kimmel, comprises several aspects:

Our culture's definition of masculinity is thus several stories at once. It is about the individual man's quest to accumulate those cultural symbols that denote manhood, signs that he has in fact achieved it. It is about those standards being used against women to prevent their inclusion in public life and their consignment to a devalued private sphere. It is about the differential access that different types of men have to those cultural resources that confer manhood and about how each of these groups then develop their own modifications to preserve and claim their manhood. It is about the power of these definitions themselves to serve to maintain the real-life power that men have over women and that some men have over other men. (ibid.)

One of the first scholars to associate masculinity with power was Michel Foucault in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* (1976), which became the foundation of the most important definition of gender as a social construct. In *The Will to Knowledge* Foucault remarks that power was closely related to people's sexuality in the Victorian period, and that the institutions that exerted certain power, for example, medical establishments, decided what type of sexual relations were appropriate and which were not. Therefore, in order to preserve people's soul and reputation, they established certain rules, thus *constructing* people's sexuality and gender identity, also "according to the political aims of the society's dominant class," as Teresa De Lauretis states (1987: 12).

These institutions used to mark and analyse women's, men's and children's sexualities, decided when people should procreate, so they controlled socially even a private institution like the family. Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous put special emphasis on this phallogocentric tradition that biased women's role in society and which is clearly shown in Foucault's study. As stated by Irigaray,

women are marked phallicly by their fathers, husbands, procurers. And this branding determines their value in sexual commerce. Woman is never anything but

the locus of a more or less competitive exchange between two men, including the competition for the possession of mother earth. (1991: 355)

According to Adams and Savran, Foucault “challenged the universalizing claims of psychoanalysis and biology, arguing that the distinction between normative and dissident sexualities was culturally constructed and historically contingent” (2002: 6). Gender should be thus understood in terms of power, politics and discourse, it is “culture-bound” and “context-specific” (Armengol 2006: 6), and it is precisely the supposed loss of this power that the mythopoetic men’s movement claimed in the second wave of the studies of masculinities in an attempt to fight the constraints of society.

Foucault was (and his ideas still are) highly influential within the field of gender, as some of his concepts led to a new direction in the studies of masculinities in the 1990s. A new “social constructionist perspective” appeared, which understands masculinity as changeable not only if compared among different cultures but also within the same one; and in this sense, “it can be defined as both historical and comparative” (Armengol 2006: 53). One of the most relevant scholars that were influenced by Foucault’s theories was Judith Butler, who introduced in the 1990s the definition of gender as performance, and who has been since then, the basis for many other researchers, as the following section will try to illustrate.

1.2.2. Third wave

Once it has been understood that masculinity is “socially constructed, highly contextualized, hence fluid and variable” (Johnson 1997: 19), it is necessary to go beyond this premise and analyse different types of masculinity performances in context, which is the recurrent topic of most handbooks on masculinities nowadays, mainly focused on Black, Chicano, or Aboriginal masculinities, and also on cultural and literary representations (Armengol and Carabí 2008). The topics in these handbooks are also quite varied, ranging from fathering to domestic abuse, linguistics to politics, sexuality to sports, etc.

The studies of masculinities have therefore become an interdisciplinary field with relevant contributions from anthropology, sociology, history, humanities, and

developmental psychology, among others. Moreover, in this wave, the studies of masculinities are extremely diverse and have also merged with literary, cultural and media studies that aim to analyse how different masculinities are performed in different types of texts. Influenced by the theory of performativity, this third wave also focuses on recurrent topics in the studies of masculinities, which are violence, emotional repression, and the potential existence of a crisis of masculinity nowadays.

1.2.2.1. Performative ideas of gender and the Gender Box

The third wave within the sociology of masculinity has been influenced, according to Whitehead and Barrett, by theories such as post-structuralism and post-modernity, and it focuses on different aspects such as performativity, the acceptance of gender as a social and cultural construct, the existence of different types of masculinities, and “how men’s sense of identity is validated through dominant discursive practices of self, and how this identity work connects with (gender) power and resistance” (2001: 15).

There are therefore certain theories which, despite having emerged during the second wave, ensured consistency and developed during the third. In this new direction in gender studies, the post-structuralist theorist Butler already adopted some Foucauldian ideas in the nineties in her feminist approach when she considered that

[g]ender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. As a result, it becomes impossible to separate out ‘gender’ from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained. (1999: 6)

Butler’s theory considers that, when talking about gender, it is not *who you are* but what you *do* that matters, so there is no true or false gender performance because the category has been continually fluctuating throughout history. Moreover, she thinks that living in a society which culturally establishes feminine and masculine genders and imposes them on male or female bodies, it is difficult for human beings to develop a gendered identity that is not culturally, socially or politically influenced. This influence, therefore, will have a definite effect on our performance, which consists of the repetition and experiencing of meanings that are socially established (Butler 1999:

179), and which is affected by the context we live in and our interpersonal relationships with people who have a socially constituted gender as well. Butler even goes beyond the idea that our performance is influenced and admits that as society marks our behaviour as “man” or “woman,” they are “for the most part compulsory performances, ones which none of us choose, but which each of us is forced to negotiate. I write ‘forced to negotiate’ because the compulsory character of these norms does not always make them efficacious” (1993: 237).

In this sense, everything that deviates from the socially established and accepted norm tends to be thoroughly scrutinized and, at times, disapproved of or condemned. According to this essentialist point of view, Butler argues that

there is no reason to resume that genders ought also to remain as two. The presumption of a binary gender system implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it. When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one. (1999: 9)

In her theory, Butler also believes that society imposes an “institutionalized heterosexuality” (34) that is also “idealized and compulsory” (172), concepts which have also influenced the use of the term “heteronormativity,” which Robert J. Corber and Stephen Valocchi have defined as “the set of norms that make heterosexuality seem natural or right and that organize homosexuality as its binary opposite” (2003: 4). Connell also understands that our twentieth- and twenty-first-centuries-Western civilization (mainly North American and European countries) has been built on the grounds of what was understood as compulsory heterosexuality (1995), as Adrienne Rich first referred to it in 1980, built into what Sedgwick calls a “male-dominated kinship system” (1985: 3), and endowing the phallus with an absolute power. The boy learns at a very early age from the three most important institutions in his life, his family, his school and the society he is living in, what he must *be*, what patterns of behaviour are acceptable and which are not, and what is expected from him. He learns that no matter the circumstances, he must always “be a man” and escape any threats to his masculinity (Flannigan-Saint-Aubin 1994: 244). However, the type of dominant discourse of masculinity he is supposed to perform according to the current hegemonic

model is not fixed, so he can escape from this “normal masculine heterosexual behaviour” (ibid.).

Connell’s preference for the term *masculinities* in plural and the acceptance of the existence of multiple masculinities that fluctuate and change, which he had already introduced in 1995, is another key aspect of this third wave. Men (and women) are discursive subjects who are influenced by multiple social and cultural discourses that will be essential in their performance of their masculinities, so much so that according to Whitehead and Barrett,

discourses have identity-enabling properties for they provide guides through the social web for the otherwise fluid and contingent subject (individual). But, more than this, discourses also suggest very strongly to us what can and cannot be spoken at a given time or in a given cultural setting. Discourses are, then, more than just ways of speaking, for they send highly powerful messages in terms of knowledges, what counts as (valid and invalid) knowledge, what is seen as ‘truth’, and in respect of how individuals should behave in given locales. (2001: 21)

Highly influential as these discourses are, would it be possible to get rid of gender labels? Can a child be brought up “ungendered” in this phallogentric society? There have been several attempts to do so, and although it is not a new tendency, for it already started in the 1970s with the project “Free to Be... You and Me” by Marlo Thomas,¹ it has gained special relevance in the last decade, as it has become a main goal for some parents to try to bring up children independent of any dominant discourse, thus not calling them “boy” or “girl” or using pronouns like “he” or “she” in an attempt to allow them to grow gender-neutral. Two fairly recent examples of this can be found in different newspapers: in 2011 the *Daily Mail* published an article about a Canadian couple who had decided to raise their child as “genderless” (unknown reporter), and one year later *The Telegraph* referred to a British couple who had decided to bring up their child without revealing whether “the infant” was a boy or a girl until he was five years old (Alleyne 2012). These two couples aimed at raising their child(ren) this way so they would not feel the constraints of stereotypes as they grew up, so that, it would be the children themselves who would choose whether they wanted to be called a boy or a girl. Not all the examples of gender-neutral child upbringing opt for the same type of “secrecy” concerning the sex of their children. Another British couple, for instance, are

¹ Published in 1972, it was a book and album with songs and stories that aimed at encouraging gender neutrality in parenting.

raising their son gender-neutral in the sense that he is allowed to wear whichever clothes he wants, whichever colours he wants, and he can play with all types of toys, but everyone around him knows he is a boy and refers to him as such (Adams and Dolan, 2014).

This type of parenting has caused controversy and criticism, and something which all these examples have in common is the general concern for possible future consequences of bringing up a child gender-neutral; that is something which only time will tell. The difficulties and obstacles that these parents are encountering are not scarce, and the fact that their children will be inevitably labelled at school, which is an institutionalized social structure, has led them to teach their children at home. The conclusion that can be extracted is that it is not easy to escape from the so-called “Gender Box” as parents usually follow the current social dressing code, for instance, thus making clear whether their children are a boy or a girl, in both their clothes and their hairstyle, sometimes even the colours they wear. Children are identified by their sex almost from the moment they are born, and since then, just by looking at their external appearance, they will be regarded as such, by their behaviour, the games they choose to play, or their reactions to certain events, to name but a few.

In their article “Navigating the Gender Box: Locating Masculinity in the Introduction to Women and Gender Studies Course” (2011), Karen Gaffney and Andrew J. Manno borrow this concept of “Gender Box” from Jackson T. Katz’s documentary *Tough Guise*, in which he uses the image of a box to refer to how gender is constructed nowadays, and more specifically, masculinity. Several men appear at the beginning of the documentary stating what being a “real man” means to them and how he could be defined: physical, strong, independent, powerful, intimidating, in control, respected, hard, athletic, muscular, tough..., all of these qualities which fit into this gender box that contains the traits that a man should have. Were they unable to perform any of these qualities that are labelled as “manly” by the dominant culture, they would be left out of the box, hence, considered un-masculine, and that is something they are encouraged to avoid. This gender box can also be applied to women, with similar consequences if they do not conform to certain social labels that they have learnt at school, with friends, their community, and the media. Moreover, in this imposed behaviour that men are supposed to exhibit, there are two clear ideas that stand out from

the rest and which have been thoroughly analysed by various scholars: the fact that men have been traditionally associated with violence as an innate characteristic, and the fear of being identified with the feminine or the Other.

1.2.2.2. Masculinity and violence

According to Katz (in Jhally 1999), the representation of men in the media has changed throughout the decades, but one trait that always seems to be associated with men is violence, above all in bid to reinforce their manhood, which is connected to their status in society and their power. Men want to look anything but vulnerable or emotional, and it is not just the media which has helped to perpetuate this idea of violent dominant masculinity but also literature. Thus, according to Armengol, this has been the case in general in American literature, above all in the American adventure story (2007: 81).

In an attempt to keep their powerful and superior role in both the public and private spheres, and believing that being aggressive or violent, depending on the situation, is but a normal part of being masculine, some men turn to violent or aggressive behaviour not just with those that they consider inferior, like women or children, but also other men. Contrary to what many people might believe, this behaviour is not a consequence of high levels of testosterone, since as Whitehead and Barrett claim, masculinity is rather uninfluenced by biology (2001: 16), so it is therefore “important to distinguish between masculinity and hormone-influenced behaviour,” as masculinity is not a product “of our hormonal state,” and although aggressive or violent behaviour is likely to be associated with men, it can be performed by women and it is not necessarily performed by *all* men (ibid.).

As Connell states, violence is just a way to assert masculinity and to socially exclude those that do not represent a perfect model of dominant masculinity (2001: 44), for even men who do not perform their masculinity accordingly, are considered inferior. There is also a repression of emotions which is encouraged, but in their attempt to hide their feelings, men are in fact repressing their own empathy for others (Armengol 2006: 223). Part of this violence can also be seen in the sports culture, in which a good performance of physical prowess and intimidation is rewarded with admiration and

believed to be a model to follow, as is the case, for example of wrestling, which, according to Katz, is but a celebration of dominance.

All sports have always been full of stereotypical discursive images, and even sports themselves have been gendered by society, because when they became a sort of social institution in the 19th and 20th centuries, sports contributed to the perpetuation of men's superiority over women and other men. As Richard Majors outlines,

popular belief held that working-class men and men of color could not possibly compete successfully with 'gentlemen.' Thus, as a homosocial environment within which white upper-and middle-class males sharpened their competitive skills, sport became an important institution in which the superiority of hegemonic masculinity was supported and reproduced. (2001: 209)

An example of aggressiveness and violence nowadays can be seen in some sports around the world, which in some cases served to perpetuate the image of dominant hegemonic masculinity in society, for the male players were regarded as paragons of masculinity by some spectators, hence the players' concern to prove their manhood. It is of course not present in all sports, so in this sense the types of masculinities enacted by players change depending on the sport and even the country. Two of the clearest examples can be found in the world of football or soccer and American football, where the use of the media has also influenced the image that has been spread of masculinity in general.

Sports still seem to be not just a field of male bonding but also what Kaufman calls a "triad of men's violence," which is violence against women, against other men and against their own bodies, the three types connected by homophobia or misogyny, and the lack of empathy (1987: 2). Although this negative association of masculinity with violence can also be found in sports where women play, for aggressiveness is found in both men and women, traditionally it has usually been linked to men. There is, however, a different image that has emerged in the last two decades in the world of football in Europe, with figures as worldwide known as David Beckham, who was/is regarded as metrosexual, a term coined by journalist Mark Simpson in 1994 and used by Ellis Cashmore and Andrew Parker in their article "One David Beckham? Celebrity, Masculinity, and the Soccerati" in 2003. The traditional image of the "hypermasculine" American quarterback belonging to a U.S. institution that still pervades society with a certain hegemonic masculinity seems to contrast with some European footballers'

different image in and outside the football pitch, above all lately. However, their masculinity has never been contested despite all this, though.

Beckham has created a new cultural image of the European footballer outside the football stadium, which does not associate his image with violence (at least now, for it was different when he was playing at the beginning of his career). The type of masculinity he performs now is thus based on both his physical strength and prowess in the field and his physical appearance and behaviour outside the football pitch. With a chiselled body carefully and symbolically inked, a *fashionista* and at-times model, an expert on the use of the media to promote himself, a devout father and supportive husband, he has become an example of a new type of masculinity that other footballers revere or seem to copy. Beckham, therefore, seems to be an example of the rupture in the traditional association of violence and sport, and of the fluctuating nature of masculinity.

This association of violence and sports is not the only stereotype found in this or other fields, for there are also sports and other activities that are still thought to be mainly for women, like figure skating, ballet or cheerleading, which seem to “effeminate” men, and sports which aim to highlight manliness, such as rugby, ice hockey or wrestling, and which therefore seem to “masculinise” women. The fear of being labelled “effeminate,” together with the fear of what has been regarded as the “Other,” a term that comprises both women and other men that do not conform to a dominant type of masculinity, will be analysed in the following section.

1.2.2.3. Masculinity and the fear of the Other

The military is another field which seems to construct and encourage perfect images of a certain type of masculinity. Gilmore believes that there is some sort of “strong connection between masculinity, the military, and warfare” (2008: 33), where the repression of emotions seems to be encouraged. More specifically, Barrett has analysed the construction of the dominant or hegemonic type of masculinity by examining men’s behaviour in the US Navy. These men are forced to perform a certain type of masculinity based on toughness, aggressiveness, heterosexuality and “unemotional logic,” which is also a way to discriminate against the weakest candidates

(2001: 81). In this sense, women are also encouraged to adopt this hypermasculine image of toughness, hardship enduring, and unemotional behaviour. An open display of emotions or affections would be therefore highly inadvisable as it would mean a direct association with weakness and what has been called as the “Other” in gender research, that is to say, anyone that does not conform to this type of masculinity, either women or other men who perform other masculinities.

Furthermore, emotional intimacy is also seen as a threat as it may lead to vulnerability, which makes some stereotypical masculine behaviours preferable (Kerfoot 2001: 237), so in an attempt to “fit in” and not be left out, some men and women engage in types of behaviour that appear to be “characteristic” of a certain gender identity that seems to be more “acceptable.” This only emphasizes the gendered difference that men are “emotionally incompetent” (Whitehead 2002: 175), for as it had been already stated in the eighties, men seemed to be “unlikely to talk about intimate matters such as feelings and relationships” (Walker 1989: 223), preferring to share certain activities, such as sports, a fact which might be seen as a proof that stereotypes are still available and at times, desirable to follow. The image of men was therefore linked to activities rather than feelings.

It is therefore understandable that there is a pervasive fear of emasculation or panic over effeminacy, as Lynne Segal calls it (2008: 138), which most boys try to escape from from the very first moment they are aware that they are *men* and if they do not wish to be left outside from their group of friends, this “masculine-oriented performativity” (Whitehead 2002: 209) must be portrayed. Therefore, by seizing this power which their culture and society offer them within the scope of hegemonic masculinity, they engage in any kind of activities which are considered acceptable for “real men” as an extension of their desire to fit in. Thus, by constructing this “‘preferred’ gender identity,” they are “rewarded with power” (Kiesling 2001: 129) – what they *do* with this power is more important than having it, as has been aforementioned.

Those who want to be part of this “white heterosexual privilege” must reaffirm their manhood and masculinity and escape from anything that might relate them to femininity or homosexuality; in short, from the Other, since

whatever the variations by race, class, age, ethnicity, or sexual orientation, being a man means 'not being like women.' This notion of antifemininity lies at the heart of contemporary and historical conceptions of manhood, so that masculinity is defined more by what one is not rather than who one is. (Kimmel 1994: 126)

Kimmel also believes that the achievement of this manhood is like a "lifelong quest" (1994: 127), and this fact may cause a sort of insecurity in some young boys, above all as they experience masculinity as

constant insecurity in face of the threat of feminine absorption; the ubiquitous fear that one's sense of maleness and masculinity are in danger, what theorists label 'symbiosis anxiety,' is a major factor in the creation and experience of masculinity. The individual male who successfully completes the perilous process that patriarchy programs for him reaps his rewards: phallic masculinity and, as suggested later, heterosexuality. (Flannigan-Saint-Aubin 1994: 245)

In a way, when men remain within this Gender Box that Katz referred to, conforming to this type of hegemonic masculinity, and acting consequently, they remain invisible or inconspicuous to society, they perform the type of masculinity expected of them and they will not draw anybody's attention. However, if they leave the box because they are emotional or they show some kind of weakness, for instance, they become "visible," and they may be challenged by others for not acting as is expected of them. This invisibility that several authors like Armengol, Whitehead and Barrett, among others, refer to is in the core of the construction (and prevalence) of this hegemonic (white, heterosexual, socially powerful) masculinity.

Men remained invisible as gendered beings from the very beginning of the introduction of gender studies in the academic world, and making masculinity visible was not and still is not an easy task, for a type of hegemonic masculinity seems to be still linked to some professions. According to Kimmel,

[t]he global hegemonic man is now evident in Europe, in the United States, all over the world. You know exactly who I mean – the guy who is sitting in the business class waiting room in any airport in the world. He has a cell phone, a laptop computer that he can plug into any electrical outlet anywhere in the world, he speaks English, he eats continental cuisine, he has liberal tastes, in consumption and in sexuality, he has conservative tastes in politics and economics, and he wears designer's clothes, preferably Italian. (2008: 23)

This image is by no means exclusive of men. However, nowadays there seems to be a debate whether hegemonic masculinity is in crisis or maybe just masculinity in

general. This is one of the aspects debated over in the current and third wave within the sociology of masculinity.

1.2.2.4. Pro-feminist approaches in the study of masculinities

One of the recent “worries” in the field of the studies of masculinities has been the existence of a supposed crisis of masculinity. John MacInnes already wondered in the 90s whether there was one indeed when he published his book *The End of Masculinity*, in which he stated that masculinity has been in fact in crisis since the very beginning. Some years later in his article “The Crisis of Masculinity and the Politics of Identity,” he used this concept again and explained that it is the change of certain ideals that has led to the belief that this is the case, since

[w]hat were once claimed to be manly virtues (heroism, independence, courage, strength, rationality, will, backbone, virility) have become masculine vices (abuse, destructive aggression, coldness, emotional inarticulacy, detachment, isolation, an inability to be flexible, to communicate, to empathize, to be soft, supportive or life affirming). (2001: 313-314)

Since then, sociology in general and sociology of gender in particular have focused on this topic, which has also been approached in the media. This alleged crisis is clear for some scholars, whereas others believe that it either does not exist or it has been a constant in different periods of history. Some critics also believe that this crisis of masculinity is the beginning of the change of how we perceive it should be performed. On the one hand, Arthur Brittan suggests that this alleged crisis of masculinity is perceived to be due to all the fast changes our society is living (2001: 53). On the other hand, Whitehead and Barrett, believe that men are going through a process of adaptation, rather than being in crisis, and therefore, “it is important not to fall into the trap of equating changes in men’s experiences and opportunities with a crisis in masculinity” (2001: 9). These changes affect everyone, as

[m]en can no longer presume to enjoy a secure life-long career; male-dominated industrialization has largely given way to more female-orientated service industries; women are increasingly exercising choice over relationships, divorce, child-bearing and their sexual expression; the very character and notion of the ‘family’ has shifted dramatically, and is no longer confined to or even dominated by the patriarchal nuclear version; the concept of the male breadwinner family is almost dead, with most dual households now having two income providers; notions

of class, having long sustained divisions in masculinity, are now subsumed under often obscure symbolic patterns of consumption and not confined to any specific ethnic or social grouping; and gay sexuality, long the 'Other' which served to define hegemonic masculinity, is no longer confined to the closet, but openly expressed if not celebrated in most Western cities. Add to this potent mixture the simple and self-evident fact that never in history have men been so subject to question, media scrutiny and critically informed scholarship and one gets a direct line to many of the issues and questions which lie at the heart of this book. (ibid.)

Accepting new discourses is essential in this process of adaptation, for according to MacInnes, "we are living through the final period, or at least the beginning of the final period, of belief in masculinity as a gender identity specific to men which accounts for their privileged command of power, resources and status" (2001: 313). What we are living for a while now is a challenge to hegemonic masculinity, and it is precisely this type of masculinity which is in crisis.

This third wave has also contributed to the studies of masculinities by dismantling certain traditional views, including terms like female masculinity, for example, while some pro-feminist scholars also postulate that there should be a new "category" in gender studies, that of a "third gender." According to Robert A. Nye, when someone is born with what doctors have chosen to name "gender dysphoria," doctors determine after medical examination what the sex of the person is to be in the future. Some societies, heirs to the sexual dichotomy from the past that only conceives two sexes, only know of men and women, however, "third sex and third gender models and even more complicated schemata have been developed recently to account for the great diversity of body types, gender identities, and sexual practices that have thrived in the West and throughout the world" (2004: 12).

On the contrary, there are some societies where the situation of this "third sex" is different. As an example, Mary Holmes talks about the "berdaches"² within the Native Americans in North America and the *hijras* in India. In the case of berdaches, she makes reference to Will Roscoe's article "How to become a Berdache: Toward a Unified Analysis of Gender Diversity," included in Gilbert Herdt's *Third Sex, Third Gender*. The berdaches prove the inexistence of this man/masculine and

² The term "berdache" will be used in this section as such as it is the term used by some of the first scholars involved in the anthropological study of these people, i.e. Roscoe and Holmes, but it should be highlighted that nowadays the term has fallen into disuse as it is regarded as derogatory among some Native Americans, in favour of the term "two-spirits" (Faiman-Silva 2011).

woman/feminine binary opposition within the Native Americans as “berdaches were biological males who in everyday life did many of the things usually associated with women. They might dress like women, undertake the crafts and other work usually done by women and usually engaged in sex with men once matured” (Holmes 2009: 23). There are also female berdaches and, in general, regardless of their anatomical sex, both perform “masculine” or “feminine” activities, so they could be thus considered to be a third and even a fourth gender.

Whereas berdaches were revered in their society, this was not the case of *hijras*. According to Holmes, it is difficult to put *hijras* in a certain sex category as they are men who are “sexually impotent with women” so they are “called upon to be castrated and to follow the goddess [Bahuchara Mata] by dressing and acting like women” (2009: 24), although not all decide to undergo castration. Other cultures may very well label them as castrated men who behave like women, but this view does not correspond with the way they are regarded within their own Indian culture, where they are seen as “essentially different and born to fulfil complementary roles” (ibid.). As can be seen, three different continents and cultures understand the existence of a different type of sex-dimorphism category, which therefore affects the person’s gender performance. Their sex does not affect their identity, and in the case of the *hijra*, for example, whether they are castrated or not, they are biologically a man, but their gender identity does not depend on it. Berdaches and *hijras* are but an example of this “third sex” category, which also comprises the Samoan *fa’afafine* or the Hawaiian *mahu*, all of which challenge “Western ways of insisting that sex and gender must entail males being masculine and females being feminine” (ibid.).

The clear distinction between sex and gender and the obsolete traditional division man/masculine and woman/feminine has not only been analysed in this third wave in the studies of masculinities, for this concept started to be discussed some decades ago. However, it is now that some scholars are directly focusing on a wider scope that understands that masculinity can also be performed by women. Even though Mary Wollstonecraft had already envisioned the distinction between sex and gender when she referred to “masculine women” (2002: 271) in her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* published in 1792, it was not until 1998 that Halberstam studied thoroughly the term “female masculinity” and its implications in an attempt to affirm that “masculinity

must not and should not reduce down to the male body and its effects” (2002: 355), although Halberstam also believes that “there is still no general acceptance or even recognition of masculine women and boyish girls” (362).

In her theory, Halberstam uses the idea of “the bathroom problem” to assert that, despite the insistence of gender as a social construct, we continue living in a binary society which only distinguishes between men and women, and this difference is emphasized in public toilets which are still divided into those for men and those for women. What happens with those people who do not feel part of any of these normative categories? Where should they enter? Moreover, this gender segregation of toilets also affects parents, since baby changing facilities are usually included within toilets for women, what should a father do if he wants to change his baby’s nappies? Although nowadays unisex toilets can be found in some airports, for example, where some baby changing facilities are therefore available for everybody, the great majority of toilets for men do not have yet any special place to change a baby. This topic has been publicly dealt with recently by American actor Ashton Kutcher (published in an article in *Telegraph*), in an attempt to raise awareness of the problem, which means that the issue is not ignored, but reality shows that society in general still assigns women traditional nurturing roles, from which men are excluded, as they are prevented from attending to their babies’ needs wherever necessary.

In this “bathroom problem,” there is what Halberstam calls a “thirdness” or third gender. After decades of feminism, what this critic tries to prove is that the utterly criticized gender binarism is very much still existent nowadays, which she tried to illustrate with this example. It is the case of what she calls gender-ambiguous people, either male or female, whose looks make others directly classify them as man or woman, which limits their freedom to enter one toilet or the other and which at times posits a problem for transsexuals or transvestites, who are subjected to scrutiny by other people in the bathroom. Although in this case the problem would be solved by having unisex toilets, in the rest of spaces the solution would be to understand a multiplicity of genders, for as Halberstam suggests, “there are many ways to depathologize gender variance and to account for the multiple genders that we already produce and sustain” (2002: 371), one of these multiple genders being female masculinity. She therefore

refers to several types of female masculinities and analyses the figures of the “stone butch,” the androgyne and the transsexual man in her book.

This is one of the assertions adopted by some male scholars influenced by feminism who now see themselves as pro-feminist (according to Whitehead, some of these could be Jeff Hearn, David Morgan, Andrew Tolson and Michael Messner (2002: 114)) and base their analyses on such issues as the “multiplicity of masculinities, the significance of social and cultural influences on masculinities, and the importance of recognising historical shifts in dominant and subordinated ways of being a man” (Whitehead 2001: 355). Kimmel, for example, also puts forward the concept that masculinity is open to both men and women, as he believes that “the qualities associated with masculinity and femininity are not qualities that inhere in a male or female body, but rather are collections of traits and attitudes and behaviors” (2008: 27), and they can therefore be found in everybody, regardless of their sex.

Adopting these ideas is not easy for some men as, in order to embrace something different to what they are used to in a patriarchal world, they must leave their privileges and dominant masculinity behind, challenge the type of hegemonic masculinity they have been brought up in and start a new path which is in some ways unknown. As Gutterman explains, pro-feminist men must “move beyond the acceptance of that which is constructed as feminine to engage and involve themselves in feminist principles and actions,” at the same time as they challenge traditional categories of masculinity and femininity (1994: 229). Connell gives three examples of “critiques of dominant forms of masculinity”: NOMAS (National Organization for Men Against Sexism), the magazine *Achilles Heel*, and the Canadian White Ribbon campaign (2001: 372). NOMAS is a pro-feminist group of men and women originated about forty years ago in the United States, and, as its website claims, it “advocates a perspective that is pro-feminist, gay affirmative, anti-racist, dedicated to enhancing men’s lives, and committed to justice on a broad range of social issues including class, age, religion, and physical abilities,” it has also been going on for about 40 years; *Achilles Heel* was an anti-sexist magazine that explored issues related to men and masculinity, mainly how they cope with social changes brought about by movements like feminism; and the Canadian White Ribbon campaign is a worldwide movement whose main aim is to end violence against women and girls at the same time as it promotes “gender equity, healthy relationships and a new

vision of masculinity,” so wearing a white ribbon becomes a symbol of this fight (*whiteribbon.ca*).

Having said this, in the current third-wave pro-feminist approach to the study of masculinities, why is it that there are some feminist female scholars who fear the approach of pro-feminist male scholars to women’s studies, when “feminism is a political option that can, therefore, be embraced by both women and men” (Armengol 2006: 273)? Coltrane already advocated in the 1990s a more open-minded approach to both men’s and women’s studies, and he suggests that “men should not be the only ones to study masculinity, because women’s standpoints are also necessary for a full understanding of gender relations” (1994: 56); the same happens in the studies of femininities. Notwithstanding, Segal points at some fiercer criticism in the 1990s concerning the rise of men’s studies, as some feminist scholars deemed this rise to mean a re-labelling of women’s studies as gender studies, hence the “end of a focus on women,” so female scholars feared that the result of this would mean that “the men would simply take over the jobs in this area, brushing women aside” (2008: 149).

As an example of this fear, Peter Ailunas explains in his article “The (In)visible People in the Room: Men in Women’s Studies” that everybody assumed he was gay when he started to show some interest in Women’s Studies, and when he asserted he was not, some even thought he was still “questioning” his sexuality just because of his “feminist academic interests” (2011: 218). He believes it might be due to the fact that most men he has met in women’s studies classes were indeed gay, but it could also be an instance of the perpetuation of shared ideas concerning the division of interests depending on gender.

As shown above, the existence of pro-feminist groups around the world is a sign of a common interest to leave behind traditional concepts that equate manliness with masculinity and masculinity with violence and dominant behaviour, for example. With respect to violence, in the documentary *Tough Guise* Katz suggests that men like Gandhi, Luther King or Mandela are courageous and respond with peace, not violence. He understands that they provide a good role model to follow by men, not because of how they perform their masculinity, but because of how they merge it with traditionally ascribed feminine traits, since they are not afraid to show their emotions and try to avoid violence. Thus, they seem to escape a hegemonic type of masculinity to embrace

more positive and modern masculinities. This is what pro-feminist movements and organizations like NOMAS and the White Ribbon try to encourage in men and boys; so, in order to try to dissociate the old-fashioned view of men and violence, they challenge language and behaviours that are obsolete, like men's domination, homophobia and violence against women, and suggest positive social changes towards a new vision and redefinition of masculinities in general which do not conform to a traditional view of masculinity.

1.3. Re-reading a text from the perspective of masculinities

Having concentrated on American literature, Armengol highlights the importance of re-reading texts from a men's studies perspective in order to see "how masculinity ideals affect, and often restrict and complicate, men's lives in American culture and literature" (2006: 263). It is therefore essential to understand that

like social concepts of masculinity, then, literary concepts of masculinity are culture-specific and context-bound. Moreover, cultural and historical changes in the meanings surrounding masculinity often result in – and reflect back – changes in literary representations of masculinity. (2006: 265)

Literary criticism from the point of view of masculinities has become more and more popular in the last two decades. According to Armengol, literary texts are not "simply mimetic or reflective: they are not limited to describing real or fictional worlds" (2006: 270) and the interpretation of these texts may vary considerably depending on the reader. Some critics also believe that the sex of the author is relevant in the literary analysis of their works; consequently, Armengol claims that it does influence a writer's works, although "it does not (always) *determine* them" (2002: 290). Hence the need to re-read a text, as it "entails not only questioning patriarchal masculinities in literary texts, but also challenging former traditional critical readings of these texts" (2002: 266). A writer's masculinity performance or the portrayals of masculinity he creates for his characters in the 21st century may not be the same then as those found in a writer of the 19th or 20th centuries, because "if, as it seems, a writer's concepts of masculinity may differ from those of his contemporaries, the difference tends to be even greater when we contrast representations of masculinity from disparate historical epochs" (2002: 264).

Therefore, the interpretations that might be extracted from *The Lord of the Rings*, written in the first half of the 20th century, revised over and over again by Tolkien since he started the history of Middle-earth during the First World War, are bound to vary not only whether the book was read in the 1960s or in 2000, but also the same reader's perception of the text might change with every new reading. Although Tolkien himself understood that it is not necessary to know a writer's biography to interpret the author's text as he famously stated in a letter in 1957: "I do not feel inclined to go into biographical detail. I doubt its relevance to criticism" (Carpenter 1995: 257), the second part of this thesis will show how some of his biographical details clearly influenced his understanding of the world and life, and the creation of his characters, so some significant events in his life are essential in his construction of masculinities in Middle-earth.

The following chapter therefore attempts to shed some light into some of the most important vital details of the author, how he was affected by his mother's death and devout Catholicism, how his upbringing within homosocial circles and his participation in the First World War had an impact on his personality, and how his literary interests were highly influential in his writings.

2. John Ronald Reuel Tolkien: the man, the professor, the author

If, as has been stated, masculinity is context-bound and culture-specific, how did J.R.R. Tolkien's gender, ethnicity, job, class, age, etc., contribute to his writings, and more specifically, *The Lord of the Rings*? In order to analyse and understand Tolkien's work from the point of view of gender, it is essential to bear in mind the circumstances in which the book originated and this calls for a look at some details of its author's biography. This section is divided into three main parts that will offer some insight into different periods of Tolkien's life and the author as a man, professor and writer.

2.1. 1892 – 1913: First years and journey into manhood

In the nineteenth century, England had become a powerful empire, spreading a certain feeling of ubiquitous male domination which undoubtedly influenced all the young soldiers that took part in every war. Mothers sent their sons to defend the colonies from the native inhabitants of the land, and young men wanted to carve out a future for themselves in exotic and unknown continents. It was in this atmosphere of masculine power that Arthur Tolkien decided to move in 1890 to Bloemfontein, at that time in the Orange Free State, now Free State Province in South Africa, to work for the Bank of Africa. Life in Bloemfontein was totally different from the one in Birmingham, but his young fiancée Mabel was ready to follow him, despite the hot and arid weather, the absence of friends and the lack of comforts she had lived with in England. After all, she was his wife-to-be and “for Arthur's sake she must learn to like it” (Carpenter 2002: 24).

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien was born two years after Mabel's arrival in Bloemfontein, in 1892. His brother, Hilary Reuel Tolkien, was born in 1894. The boy's health was affected by the hot climate so they travelled with Mabel back to England, where a fresher climate was expected to make them feel better. The move was supposed to be temporary, and Arthur was going to follow soon after, but it proved definite when he died before he could join his family.

Ronald, as he was commonly known in his family, and Hilary were raised in the Edwardian era, a historical period where some Victorian ideas survived, characterised by an ideal of masculinity in which “men were expected to be strong, authoritative, decisive, disciplined and resourceful” (Beynon 2002: 30), whereas women were expected to exhibit other traits, they were supposed to be tender, affectionate, and even submissive, the embodiment of Coventry Patmore’s poem *The Angel in the House* (1854).

Although at the time Tolkien was born Great Britain was no longer the imperialist leader it had been for so long, all the years of battles to control the Empire had left as inheritance a strong feeling of “masculinism” or male domination (Brittan 2001: 53) to the future generations. This was partly due to the fact that their women’s and men’s lives were settled in a patriarchal world, understanding patriarchy as “any system of organization (political, economic, industrial, financial, religious, or social) in which the overwhelming number of upper positions in hierarchies are occupied by males” (Goldberg 1977: 25), and where “the cult of masculinity rationalized imperial rule by equating an aggressive, muscular, chivalric model of manliness with racial, national, cultural, and moral superiority” (Krishnaswamy 2002: 292).

Men had been *the* soldiers, *the* fathers and *the* conquerors, whereas most women had only stayed at home or followed their husbands all over the world without saying a word, as it was expected of them. It is not strange, therefore, that following their fathers or grandfathers’ example, British boys loved all those stories about epic warriors seeking to affirm “their masculinity and honour” carrying out dangerous quests (Beynon 2002: 32). It was not only a matter of imitating a role model but a proof of “being English,” whilst displaying at the same time their physical and psychological strength and discipline (ibid.).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the ideal of woman was still constructed on a “gentle and virginal” image, whereas the ideal of man was “athletic, stoical and courageous” (Bourke 1996: 12). Undoubtedly, Tolkien’s ideas regarding gender differences were, to an important extent, as Michael N. Stanton holds, a product of “late Victorian culture” (2001: 4). According to Jeffrey Richards, “Victorian England, like Ancient Greece or Medieval West, was a male-dominated society,” so it was common to see how “for the upper middle classes, life revolved around all-male

institutions: the public school, the university, the armed forces, the church, parliament, the club, the City” (1987: 100), and Tolkien was part of this Victorian product that English public schools aimed to perpetuate. Boys were meant to reject anything related to the feminine and embrace values based on “physical strength, muscularity, physical trial” (Whitehead 2002: 14), all ideas influenced by Charles Kingsley’s and Thomas Hughes’s notion of the “muscular Christian.” This also helped maintain a certain sense of gender superiority based on this enactment of vigorous masculinity which emphasized men’s moral and physical health, when the ideal of the perfect gentleman was spread in the Victorian culture, as it boosted a certain dominant manly ideology in a society that was definitely male-dominated and where gender segregation was the norm.

Family dynamics undoubtedly influence all its members. As regards gender, Michael Kaufman believes that “the family reflects, reproduces, and recreates the hierarchical gender system of society as a whole” (1987: 10), thus passing on to the child the idea that there are “two categories of humans: males, who embody the full grandeur and power of humanity, and females, who in de Beauvoir’s words, are defined as ‘other’ in a phallogentric society” (ibid.). Tolkien grew up without a father, but with a strong mother who dedicated all her efforts to ensure that her children had the best education.

Tolkien’s father died when he was only four years old, right before Arthur could join his family in England. It was 1896 and Mabel Tolkien decided therefore to stay in her home country. If Paul R. Deslandes claims that fathers were a “paragon of masculinity” (2005: 147) at the beginning of the 20th century, as they were supposed to provide certain standards or sets of masculine behaviour which boys were expected to portray or, in some cases, rebel against, Kaufman’s statement highlights this idea that “masculinity is unconsciously rooted before the age of six, is reinforced as the child develops and then positively explodes at adolescence” (1987: 12). Apart from the emotional or psychological trauma of having lost his father at such a young age, Ronald also lost a father figure, his most immediate role model of masculinity, a fact which probably drew him closer to his mother. Moreover, bearing in mind Kaufman’s words, this father absence before the age of six may have affected the author’s self-construction of his own masculinity and his psychological development, even if a father-figure (that of Father Francis X. Morgan) would appear soon in the family landscape.

When Arthur died, Mabel decided to move to Sarehole, a traditional English countryside surrounded by open fields and farms, where Ronald recalled spending the happiest times of his childhood. Tolkien himself defined these first years of his life as those of a “pre-mechanical age” (Carpenter 1995: 288), very similar to the Shire that he would create some years later, which would come to represent the rural England he adored as a child, as the area of Sarehole was still untouched by the technological hand of man. This would encourage his love of nature and his dislike of modern life.

Ronald and Hilary had a very close relationship with their mother who even taught them for some years instead of sending them to school, as her income was not very high, their bond with her growing stronger every year. Ronald's love for languages, his knowledge of botany, his love for drawing and nature were in part due to his mother, for they shared these passions, which were later translated into his literary creations. She also passed onto them her Catholicism once she converted in 1900, which led to her being ostracised by both the Suffield and the Tolkien families. Without any financial help from them, she had to start almost anew. In that same year, Tolkien was accepted in King Edward's School and, unfortunately, they had to leave the countryside to move near Birmingham. Mabel was then diagnosed with diabetes and died in 1904. Ronald was just 14 when he became an orphan.

The sudden loss of his father and the traumatic loss of his mother might be two key aspects in the author's understanding of gender differences. First of all, Mabel was a strong maternal figure who had exerted a significant influence on her sons in many aspects, one of the most important ones being religion. He would see in his mother's clinging to her new faith a high sacrifice, therefore the sudden and terrible loss of Mabel when he was so young was probably the reason why he idealized her in a Christian way as he tried to face her death – he believed that her disease was “hastened by persecution of her faith” (Carpenter 1995: 54). Thus, it is not difficult to understand that he thought of her as a kind of martyr, for as he would write in a letter, his mother “killed herself with labour and trouble to ensure us keeping the faith” (Carpenter 2002: 50); she lived *for* her children and pursued her own beliefs, which made her not pay much attention to her own health, always doing what would be best for her sons. Whereas Edwardian society strengthened segregated gender roles by encouraging men to be the breadwinners and women to stay at home, Tolkien did not initially perceive this

difference in gender roles at home, where his mother was not only in charge of their education but she was also their only role model while she lived.

Father Morgan, a Catholic priest who was a friend of their mother's and helped them as a counsellor and even benefactor at times, became the tutor of the boys after Mabel's death and, although he did not represent the traditional Victorian man in search of a quest to affirm his masculinity, he exerted a great influence on Tolkien, who would later recall in a letter to his son Michael that he was like a "second father" (Carpenter 1995: 416). Morgan embodied another type of masculinity for the young brothers, for, as a priest of the Catholic Church, he represented some of the premises spread in Catholicism at the beginning of the twentieth century: men were (and still are) in a privileged position within the Church system since it is only them who can be ordained priests, hence the inexistence of sexual equality, and women were seen as potential temptresses.

Tolkien's formal education followed the four basic pillars forming the instruction of any young man in the previous century: "athleticism, stoicism, sexual purity and moral courage" (Beynon 2002: 27). His education in King Edward's, "bastion of robust sportsmanship, duty, honour, and vigour, all backed up by a rigorous grounding in Greek and Latin" (Garth 2004: 22), was an example of this. At the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th, public schools encouraged their pupils to be purely masculine figures who, according to Norman Vance, "may be patriotic, generous, broad-minded, decent, chivalrous and free-spirited by turns" (1985: 8). In order to achieve so, public schools encouraged games and male bonding, for as even Virginia Woolf stated in *Three Guineas*, men's education "was not merely in book-learning; games educated your body; friends taught you more than books or games" (1998: 155-156). This idea is reinforced by John Springhall's view that "the gradual introduction of compulsory games playing into the English public schools between 1860 and 1880, must be seen as a significant development which was to have important repercussions on the concept of manliness" (1987: 63). This emphasis on physical activity led to an understanding of manliness and sport as inseparable and compulsory, for "above all, team sports were identified as the most important experience of character building as a process, comprising an ethos of loyalty, team spirit, patriotism, pluck and manliness" (66).

As they were in part isolated from the world, boys established bonds that would influence them all their lives. In this male bonding there was no room for “temptation” as women were kept apart. According to Segal (1990: 132), “the point is that it is insufficient for the ‘men’ to be distinguished from the ‘boys’; the ‘men’ must be distinguished from the ‘women’.” Notwithstanding, this does not mean that they were totally “protected” from temptation, for homoerotic relationships were easier to be formed in public schools, as will be explained further down. Messner suggests that by encouraging this homosocial bonding and in an attempt to prevent homosexuality, institutions like organized sports in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries aimed at masculinising young men as they were based on a “Victorian antisexual ethic” (2001: 257).

In the case of Tolkien, he met “temptation” at the age of 16, when he met Edith Bratt, a girl three years older than Ronald who was living in the same boarding house where the Tolkien brothers had moved. They instantly became friends and fell in love, secretly spending a lot of time together until one day in 1909, when their relationship was discovered. When Father Francis found out about it, he forbade Tolkien to see Edith again. He thought that he was not working as hard as he should in his studies, which should have been his priority, and was thus very disappointed with him – he probably blamed Edith as well, and it was the perfect excuse to make the Tolkien brothers move to another place, far from Edith, far from “temptation.” Tolkien owed the priest a lot in his life, so he promised not to see her again. Moreover, Tolkien may very well have seen her as temptation too, for when he found out that she was moving to another house, he did feel some sort of relief, as he wrote in his diary “Thank God,” believing that it would be the best solution (Carpenter 2002: 65). Despite his love for her, he felt he had to obey Father Francis, partly because he owed him much, and partly because he understood the priest’s prohibition to allow him to be with a girl that was not Catholic.

With Edith “out” of his life, Tolkien concentrated more than ever on his studies. He had always shown an interest in linguistics and languages, above all Anglo-Saxon, and once he had learned this language, most of his readings concentrated on Anglo-Saxon literature. He was very interested in Classic and Nordic literature in general so he loved the Old English text *Beowulf* and the Norse *Kalevala* and *Edda*. His staple

reading diet, too, contributed to his immersion in an exclusively male world. Despite the two important female figures in his life, his mother and his wife-to-be, Tolkien would be surrounded mostly by men during his twenties, as he made some male friends in Birmingham.

Tolkien met his best friend Christopher Wiseman in King Edward's School, in 1905, and with him he shared his love for Latin and Greek literature and for rugby. Later on, he met Robert Quiltor Gilson, and the time spent sharing their interests led to the founding of the Tea Club in 1911. They used to meet and have tea at the library, but soon after, they transferred their meetings and tea-drinking to Barrow's Stores and they changed their name to Tea Club and Barrovian Society. Like many other young men at the time, they had the necessity of forming a society that would allow them to spend hours together discussing the topics of their interest.

When the T.C.B.S. was already formed, another member joined them: Geoffrey Bache Smith. They loved playing rugby and engaged in a sort of "homosocial comradeship" which excluded women, as they all tried to remain "far from what they perceived to be the damaging influences of 'the feminine'" (Beynon 2002: 31). Because of their academic interests and all the things they had in common in and outside school, which highly encouraged this sort of bonding among young men, Tolkien's generation seemed to be "prepared for close male friendships" (Richards 1987: 110). It seems therefore safe to infer that, so far, Tolkien's development as a young man had been influenced by these two institutions that guaranteed the prevalence of a hegemonic masculinity: the British public school and Catholicism.

This bonding has been thoroughly treated by some scholars, particularly the type of homoeroticism that was established in public schools. As early as 1922, Alec Waugh already wrote in his *Public School Life: Boys, Parents, Masters*, about the immorality of having a relationship with another man and the fact that this type of "encounters" occurred because of the lack of relationships with girls. Nevertheless, as long as this male bonding remained romantic and far from sexual or physical, there would be no problem, because, as Richards states,

spiritual love between males, comradeship, validated by Greek and Medieval models, centred on admiration for their manliness – courage, virtue, skill, beauty,

honour – was beamed at them from all sides. It channelled, directed and shaped the inherent and instinctive romanticism of the adolescent male. (1987: 110)

Same-sex friendships were actually encouraged and, according to Peter M. Nardi, at the end of the nineteenth century, they could even be “erotic but not sexual” (1989: 252). Sports indeed contributed to this bonding and were very important because they trained not just the boys’ bodies but their minds as well (Beynon 2002: 27), or, as Woolf put it, there was some sort of “mind-training and body-training” (1998: 279). Moreover, Beynon also claims the existence of a direct link “between all-male games and sport on the one hand and patriotism and Empire-building on the other” (2002: 33). Ian M. Harris also believes that male friendships are usually built around competition (1995: 89) and, although in the case of Tolkien his bond with his friends was built mainly on aspects such as comradeship, similar likes and a great respect for each other, there is not any direct source that points at any type of competitiveness among them.

The T.C.B.S. lived in a masculine and patriarchal England in which boys’ main role models were other men who were given certain privileges simply because of being men. Harris claims that males themselves had established this social order in an attempt to benefit themselves by relegating women to a subordinate role (1995: 18). This particularly benefited white men, since people from other ethnic groups had a lower social status. We can see this social gender difference in fiction, essays, history books, etc., as Woolf very well illustrated in *Three Guineas* in 1938. In it, Woolf complains that men were allowed in the best colleges in Oxford and Cambridge; they received the best academic education and had the best careers, whereas women were totally excluded from the academic education and economic independence; in fact they were not allowed to get a university degree until 1920. This would not be, however, her only criticism against this gender differences, as other of her texts show. In this hegemonic model of masculinity prevalent at the beginning of the 20th century, there was the assumption that women’s only fate was to get married and bear children even if their economic position allowed for a university education. There was a pervasive subordination of women of all sorts: “physical, mental, interpersonal, cultural” (Carrigan, Connell and Lee 2002: 111).

It would be precisely in one of the universities that Woolf mentions, Oxford, that Tolkien would continue his studies in tertiary education as he won the Open Classical Exhibition scholarship to Exeter College in 1910. University was seen as a respected,

high institution, where medieval ideas such as honour, tradition, comradeship and even courtly love were still very much present (Deslandes 2005: 27). University students were also differentiated from other men who did not attend university in the external aspects, since they had to wear academic caps and gowns, symbols of their privileged university status and a sign of masculinity. Woolf perceives the irony of having men wearing wigs, ribbons, laces and gowns as a means of being identified for their social status. Those that forbade women to enter the academic world were those who wore these “extremely ornate” outfits (Woolf 1998: 177), whereas women were supposed to wear simple and non-ridiculous clothes. More than a sign of their masculinity, Woolf says that this otherwise traditionally feminine attire of the cap and the wig was only a means to emphasize their superiority (179), not only with respect to women but also other men, as they were socially distinguished as educated men. They did not need to assert or prove their masculinity with their clothes, because it is what these clothes represented that mattered: they put them in a position above the rest, a position of power.

They were also regarded as the “elite British manhood” and, as undergraduates, they had to undergo certain “information initiations and rites of passage that signified a distinctive stage of life and delineated those masculine traits that distinguished younger from older men” (Deslandes 2005: 49). These rites were just another instance of those found in societies all over the world, enacted to differentiate clearly the boy from the man. The mere fact of going to university was the starting point of the entrance into manhood. Life was full of new things; young men were living the same experience and shared most of their time, their dreams and fears with their same-sex friends.

During his first years in Oxford Tolkien did not lose contact with his friends of King Edward's, so the T.C.B.S. did not break up. In 1913 his friend G.B. Smith also went to Oxford, to Corpus Christi College, while Wiseman and Gilson went to Cambridge, both universities gave the perfect image of a male community full of undergraduates. The atmosphere that they found at university was not very different from Birmingham's King Edward's, as Oxbridge also encouraged male friendship and clubs eminently attended by men. As Humphrey Carpenter points out, “the company had to be male [...], the majority of them were fresh from the male preserves of the public school and they gladly accepted the masculine tone of Oxford” (2002: 79).

At the beginning of the 20th century, very few women had the chance to go to university, so colleges were full of male students who lived there during the academic year with the only companionship of other men, and the only contact they had with women was when they went home on holidays and saw their mothers, sisters or girlfriends. They studied together, they played rugby together, and they went to pubs together, so the bonds they made in these first years of their entrance into adulthood were very strong. Linda Dowling actually refers to “Oxford homosociality” as “that reciprocal network or system of bonds facilitating the interchange of masculine affection, interest, advantage, and obligation” and compares the life in Oxford with

the ideal education of the Platonic or Socratic doctrine of eros. This model of love – by which an older man, moved to love by the visible beauty of a younger man, and desirous of winning immortality through that love, undertakes the younger man’s education in virtue and wisdom (*Symposium* 209-11) – could be recaptured within the existing structures of Oxford homosociality: the intense friendship, the tutorial, the essay society. (1994: 81)

Some of the Oxbridge students tried to follow their fathers’ steps in order to be the men that they were supposed to become. They usually attended the same college and took the same degree, so their freedom of choice was to a certain extent restricted. They enacted the image of the “professional and proactive masculinity that dominated the Oxbridge undergraduate’s life” (Deslandes 2005: 21). Even history proclaimed the masculinity of its most important historical figures, as

for Oxbridge men, understanding British history [...] also established an unbroken line of patrilinear descent, whereby the masculine virtues of prominent national figures were transmitted, as if by magic, from generation to generation in college halls and other hallowed spaces. (2005: 20)

Tolkien’s identity and friendship with other men were marked by the construction of masculinity carried out by the English public school system that based its values on Victorian ideas such as manliness and loyalty, and this construction would be reinforced during his years at university. A clear example of this can be found in Evelyn Waugh’s *Brideshead Revisited*, mostly in the first part of the book, as the main characters are students of the University of Oxford in the 1920s. In this homosocial world they shared within the college walls, Oxbridge male students “erected barriers to the outside world, effectively shielding the young elite man from dangerous forces that, if allowed to infiltrate, would inevitably produce chinks in his armor of masculinity” (Deslandes

2005: 23). In Waugh's novel, Charles Ryder and Sebastian Flyte meet in a college in Oxford and become very good friends – Ryder is totally absorbed by Flyte's outrageous personality and his own world, but there is no evidence in the book that they have a physical relationship. Whereas we can clearly discern Charles's emotional and platonic attachment to Sebastian, there is another character, Anthony Blanche, who is overtly homosexual and is even reported to have "formed an attachment with a policeman" in Munich (Waugh 2003: 102). In the case of Tolkien, it was probably inevitable for him to associate his homosocial relationships with almost everything that was "good in life" (Carpenter 2002: 68); after all, he had spent most of his best times in male company.

Waugh does not refer directly to homosexuality in his novel, and, according to Carpenter, Tolkien "claimed that at nineteen he did not even know the word" (2002: 68). There was another writer coetaneous of Tolkien, Robert Graves, who talked about the English public school system and exclusively male relationships in his autobiography *Goodbye to All That*. His education convinced him of the "natural supremacy of male over female," explaining that his family life was settled on the basis that:

My mother took the 'love, honour, and obey' contract literally; my sisters were brought up to wish themselves boys, to be shocked at the idea of woman's suffrage, and not to expect so expensive an education as their brothers. The final decision in any domestic matter always rested with my father. (Graves 2000: 30)

In this atmosphere of Victorian repression and fear of the feminine, Graves partially blames the public school system for creating what he calls "pseudo-homosexuals" (23), boys erotically attracted to other school mates because of the absence of girls at the time when their sexuality was awakening. He also went through this so-called "phase" when he attended Charterhouse, where he fell in love with another boy called Dick (45), the Headmaster at Charterhouse being aware of these "amorous" relationships (ibid.), or as Richard P. Graves calls them in his biography on his uncle, "romantic friendships" (1987: 63). He spent some years in love with Dick or having this "amorous" friendship, but when he first fell in love with a woman, "it proved to him that although, like many young men, he had gone through what he now described as a 'pseudo-homosexual' phase, his natural instincts were heterosexual" (Graves 1987: 178). In the 1st edition of *Goodbye to All That*, he actually wrote: "I only recovered by a shock at the age of twenty-one" (qtd. in Fussell 2000: 214).

When Tolkien eventually came of age at 21, he wrote Edith a letter professing his unremitting love and his wish to marry her. It was after they became engaged, however, that their differences started to arise: “they no longer knew each other very well, for they had spent the three years of their separation in two totally different societies: the one all-male, boisterous, and academic; the other mixed, genteel, and domestic. They had grown up, but they had grown apart” (Carpenter 2002: 95). It must have certainly struck Tolkien how different they had become, but he was determined to marry Edith, whom he had idealized during the three years they had spent apart. He had never talked to his friends about her so he feared that with his engagement, he would lose them (Garth 2004: 33) – he did not even know how to tell his friends about it. The other T.C.B.S. members feared the same and Gilson was very frank when he wrote: “Convention bids me congratulate you, and though my feelings are of course a little mixed, I do it with very sincere good wishes for your happiness” (ibid.). Tolkien and his friends were actually afraid of the effects for a T.C.B.S. member to be more than acquainted with a woman – it was a new and unknown situation that would make them face their fear of what they knew so little about, the feminine. It is not difficult to understand Tolkien’s anxiety before telling his friends about Edith. This situation was not new, as it had already happened to other writers, for example, Robert Graves and Siegfried Sassoon, whose friendship changed when “Siegfried could not easily accustom himself to the idea of Nancy, whom he had not met” (Graves 2000: 225). In the case of Tolkien, everybody congratulated him on his engagement in the end.

2.2. 1914-1916: The impact of the Great War

In 1914, two years before Ronald and Edith’s wedding, the Great War started. Until then, Europe had been living a golden age or *belle époque* since 1871, a pre-war world or “Edwardian afternoon,” as Samuel Hynes defined it (1990), in which the only worries were the colonial problems and imperial competition. During the 19th century, Great Britain had been a world power that had shown the country’s naval and trade superiority and had maintained its status as Empire for a long time; this situation helped encourage a ubiquitous attitude of white supremacy on its citizens, mainly on men, with the consequent pervasiveness of patriarchal power structures. The Great War divided two different worlds: Victorian/Edwardian England with all its ideas of “imperial self-

confidence,” social classes and “marked gender differentiation,” and the 20th century with new conceptions of technology and “radical ambiguity” (Cole 2003: 187).

At the beginning of the war, there was a general thought that it would be over by Christmas, although by then the number of casualties was shocking and the end was perceived to be far from near (Fussell 2000: 3). The conflict lasted four years and everyone was asked to enrol; as honour and a high sense of duty weighed more than the fear of not coming back home from the battlefield, young men immediately enlisted, following also an ideal of manliness. After all, it was what their fathers and grandfathers had done and what their peers were doing. Woolf actually thought that the three reasons why men went to war were that “war is a profession; a source of happiness and excitement; and it is also an outlet for manly qualities, without which men would deteriorate” (1998: 160). Despite the fact that her view seems to be slightly simplistic as it presents the situation as a positive or necessary activity for men, she also acknowledged that “these feelings and opinions are by no means universally held” by men (*ibid.*). It seems therefore safe to infer that most of those young men that volunteered had an idealized concept of war at that time. As an example of this, Ronald Leighton wrote to Vera Brittain that he thought that war was “a very fascinating thing – something, if often horrible, yet very ennobling and very beautiful” (Bishop and Bostridge 1999: 30); their lives were set in a “largely innocent world,” in which war was seen as the perfect context to seek chivalric and heroic ideals. Alan Bishop and Mark Bostridge, in their introduction to *Letters from a Lost Generation. First World War Letters of Vera Brittain and Four Friends*, clearly state why this generation of young men enlisted almost blindly:

The OTC [Officers' Training Corps] provided the institutional mechanism for public school militarism. But a more complex web of cultural ideas and assumptions, some taken from the classics, some from popular fiction, some even developed through competitive sports on the playing fields, was instilled by schoolmasters in their pupils, and contributed to the generation of 1914's overwhelming willingness to march off in search of glory. Traditions of chivalry, the values of self-sacrifice, fair play, selfless patriotism, honour, duty – ‘heroism in the abstract’ – all played their part in fostering illusions about the nature of warfare. For some there was additionally the matter of the school's honour. (1999: 4)

In a way, for a young man at the time, the fact of facing his destiny in war would place him in a similar position to that “of a hero of medieval romance if his imagination

has been steeped in actual literary romances or their equivalent” (Fussell 2000: 135), for as a “warrior,” he would become an icon of masculinity. Tolkien was very fond of epic poetry, as well as the Arthurian romances written by Tennyson and William Morris, and so was his friend C.S. Lewis; therefore, in their case, Fussell’s conviction that “for most who fought in the Great War, one highly popular equivalent was Victorian pseudo-medieval romance” (ibid.) seems to be quite accurate. Actually, this love for “Medieval Chivalry” that was so important for some youth organizations, could also be seen as the attempt to “preserve male superordination in gender relations” (Hantover 1989: 102). Moreover, it influenced young spirits as much as “Victorian muscular Christianity” with its goal of keeping young men in good shape. By “muscular Christianity,” Richards refers to a “combination of godliness and manliness,” and its main goal was to promote “physical strength, courage and health, the importance of family life and married love, the elements of duty and service to mankind” (1987: 103). The trenches served as an extension of what dominant hegemonic masculinity demanded from men, a stigma for those who could not enlist because traditionally the military experience was what separated men from women and it also bound men to men (Morgan 1994: 166).

Men just followed the stereotypes of the period, so, according to John M. Mackenzie, the transmission of masculine stereotypes, carried out through culture and some youth organizations, had a strong impact on men who undoubtedly enlisted in order to show, in part, the remains of their imperialist virility (1987: 178). Patriotism would then lead thousands of young men to leave everything behind and fight for their country, a patriotism which Woolf presented in the following terms in *Three Guineas*:

Let us the Lord Chief Justice of England interpret it for us: Englishmen are proud of England. For those who have been trained in English schools and universities, and who have done the work of their lives in England, there are few loves stronger than the love we have for our country. (1998: 161)

Precisely because of this love for their country, most colleges in Oxford and Cambridge were half empty when thousands of patriotic young men enlisted (Deslandes 2005: 24). One of the few students remaining within the Oxford college walls was Tolkien, who was determined to finish his studies despite the pressure to enrol in the army, which most of his classmates did. We can see this pressure young men must have felt in a letter written in 1914 by Edward Brittain to his sister Edith, remarking on Reverend McKenzie’s words: “Be a man – useful to your country; whoever cannot be

that is better dead” (Bishop and Bostridge 1999: 19), and in some of the propaganda aimed at encouraging young men to volunteer, an example of which is used by Garth: “‘Patriotism,’ thundered the *Birmingham Daily Post*, ‘insists that the unmarried shall offer themselves without thought or hesitation,’” so of course Tolkien “felt a duty to crown and country” (2004: 41). It is not difficult to imagine how those young fit healthy men like Tolkien that did not enlist straight away at the beginning of the war were looked down on and criticized by society. In 1902, A.E.W. Mason³ wrote the novel *The Four Feathers*, which narrates the story of a British officer during the Madhist War who is accused of deserting, hence cowardice, so he is sent a white feather by each of his fellow officers and his fiancée. This shameful practice that had been carried out since the eighteenth century was also adopted at the beginning of the Great War, as the “Organization of the White Feather”⁴ was initiated in an attempt to humiliate men that had not enlisted in order to compel them to fight. Women therefore gave a white feather to those men old enough to go to war but who decided not to do it.

Some soldiers, such as Ronald Leighton, even felt guilty for not taking part in the war from the very first second, and in 1915 he wrote that he was ashamed “for still being one of the ‘gentlemen in England now abed’” (Bishop and Bostridge 1999: 51). This thought would not last forever – only until he arrived in the trenches: “I used to talk about the Beauty of War; but it is only War in the abstract that is beautiful” (138).

In the meantime, women had been fighting a different type of war at home. They had been struggling for a long time to have equal rights. The suffragist movement – led by Emmeline Pankhurst in England – had begun before the war. Suffragettes could not stand not being allowed to vote, their perceived status as mere nurturers, and being denied their right to go to war “in the name of patriotism” (Hynes 1990: 88). Most of them could not take active part in it, so in many cases their task was reduced to waiting patiently at home for their beloved sons, husbands and friends who would probably come back mutilated, in a coffin, or ill, as was the case of Tolkien, who suffered from a severe case of trench fever. Others did not even come back.

However, not all women were willing to remain idle while men were allowed to fight – their vision of war was also “idealized” and it was also seen as “a great chivalric

³ Mason’s novel was adapted to the big screen with a film under the same title, and the same topic has appeared more recently in the British TV series *Downton Abbey*.

⁴ This information was found in the website: <http://www.firstworldwar.com/atoz/whitefeathers.htm>

adventure” (Kent 1993: 51). The tasks they were entitled to do were in many cases jobs related to the domestic sphere such as cleaning, knitting or working as nurses, and by 1915, “women flocked to munitions factories and auxiliary organizations, the predominant image of women as mothers gave way to that of women as warriors” (Kent 1993: 115). They began to take “men’s civilian jobs” (Garth 2004: 49), for instance, in munitions factories, where women were in charge of working filling shells with TNT, which is highly toxic, and which resulted in skin discolouration and lifelong health problems – they would be called “canaries” because their skin acquired a yellow tone. In this atmosphere of injustice, they found a way to help as much as they could: they also founded the Women’s Emergency Corps, the first women’s service, the VAD (Voluntary AID Detachment) and other quasi-military services. They were not allowed to fight but they proved they could help. They were “women in military uniforms” who were thought to disturb “wartime definitions of both femininity and masculinity” (Watson 2004: 57). By the end of the war, women had proved they were equally competent doing traditional men’s tasks; according to Woolf,

the daughters of educated men who had been educated thus rushed into hospitals, some still attended by their maids, drove lorries, worked in fields and munition factories, and used all their immense stores of charm, of sympathy, to persuade young men that to fight was heroic, and that the wounded in battle deserved all her care and all her praise (1998: 207),

although this intrusion in men’s jobs “could be seen as dangerous to family life” (Braybon 1981: 120). As women began to enter the domain of men during the war, they proved they could be more than the “angel in the house,” as they showed they were competent enough to do a “man’s job” successfully. They therefore overstepped the traditional boundaries that had been established until then, and so, at the end of the war “men perceived women to be emasculating them” (Kent 1993: 50) and it was feared that this blurring of gender roles would affect the dominion and superiority that men had enjoyed until then.

In 1915, Tolkien finished his studies, enrolled in the Lancashire Fusiliers and went to battle in 1916, after marrying Edith. His T.C.B.S. friends, Gilson, Smith and Wiseman had already enlisted so all the members of the group were now young soldiers whose world and life would change dramatically forever. During the war they tried to meet as often as they could. One of the meetings took place in London in what they

called the "Council of London." With the war and their possible fears of taking part in it as background, they spent several hours together in this "council."

When they were far from each other or in the battlefield, the T.C.B.S. members kept in touch through letter-writing, sometimes omitting the cruelty and ignominy of war, as a way of escaping the awful reality and in part due to the proverbial "English phlegm" (Fussell 2000: 181). The excitement with which they began their war "adventure" soon turned into "disillusionment" because of the horrors they saw, as Leighton had also experienced. They had their families to write to but their friendship was stronger than family ties; this society meant for them courage, fortitude and alliance (Garth 2004: 136). They were more like brothers than just close friends; their bonding, which according to Robert Strikwerda and Larry May, may be called "comradeship," and the fact that they shared terrifying experiences also with other men in the trenches, "provides the occasion for mutual self-disclosure among males" (1992: 97). All the T.C.B.S. members therefore longed to see each other. They thought that they could do great things and Tolkien was certain that they had a "world-shaking power" (Garth 2004: 137); they were indeed members of a "gifted generation" (*ibid.*), or as Fussell refers to them, "not merely literate but vigorously literary" (2000: 157).

Notwithstanding, their world was shaken in a different way when Rob Gilson was killed by a shell-burst on 1st July 1916. From the onset, they were aware that any or even all of them could die in this war but it was hard to face a friend's sudden loss. For Tolkien, the war was the collapse of his entire world (Garth 2004: 48), as well as for the thousands of families who were devastated in the conflict. According to Sandra M. Gilbert, although men had gone to war looking forward to becoming heroes, the war "ended up emasculating them, depriving them of autonomy, confining them as closely as any Victorian women had been confined" (1987: 223). Gilson would not be the only casualty in the T.C.B.S., for Smith died on 3rd December 1916. The loss of these two friends would be for Tolkien a "lifelong sadness," as he would later tell his children; for him, "personal loss was piled on top of the horror and exhaustion of battle" (Garth 2004: 170). Garth actually considers that Tolkien mourned most deeply for Smith,

the two had understood each other's social background and maternal upbringing; they had shared a school, a university, a regiment, and a bloody page of history; they had been akin in their reverence for poetry and the imagination, and had spurred each other into creative flight. (250)

The war was an experience which was necessarily influential in his personal and professional life. He said to a Catholic professor that “the outbreak of war had come as a profound blow to him” (Garth 2004: 48), and when he once talked about WWII, he referred to it as a moral and spiritual waste (Carpenter 1995: 75). Tolkien admitted to his son Christopher in 1944 that “this was the time when he made the acquaintance of ‘men and things’” (Garth 2004: 94), the time when he learnt how the war “chipped away at the class divide by throwing men from all walks of life into a desperate situation together” (ibid.). This experience taught him that “for a long time he had been sitting in a tower of not pearl, but of ivory” (ibid.), and the war made him open his eyes to the real world – it was then that he developed certain sympathy for the “tommy,” which would find its way later in his creation of the hobbit Samwise Gamgee. The sadness for losing two of his best friends would accompany Wiseman and Tolkien until their own deaths, very much as Sassoon put it: “my killed friends are with me where I go” (Cole 2003: 139).

Concerning these same-sex friendships that arose during the war, Fussell used the term “homoerotic” “to imply a sublimated (i.e. ‘chaste’) form of temporary homosexuality” (Fussell 2000: 272) associated to the war. When the war broke out, there were still some Victorian ideas and values in the society such as “the tradition in Victorian homosexuality and homoeroticism that soldiers are especially attractive” (278). The war turned out to be an extension of the public school, and the soldiers’ unique company in the trenches was exclusively male, a fact which led to the diffusion of rumours on homosexuality (Ready 1978: 23). Although the boundaries between homoerotic and homosexual were not always clear and were probably usually blurred or overstepped (either temporarily, as Fussell implies, or not), not in all cases should this male friendship predominant in the first part of the 20th century be understood as sexual. In the case of Tolkien and his friends, more specifically, it can be related to the Greek concept of *agape*, which is a selfless kind of love that expects nothing in return (Petty 2003: 203).

Fussell believes that this homoeroticism had as its main goal just pure “mutual affection, protection, and admiration. In war as at school, such passions were antidotes against loneliness and terror” – in many cases, they were just non-physical “crushes” (Fussell 2000: 272). Young officers idealised older officers, and the reverse was also

true (273) – soldiers in general were regarded as “attractive,” and “what makes them so is their youth, their athleticism, their relative cleanliness, their uniforms, and their heroic readiness, like Adonis or St. Sebastian, for ‘sacrifice’” (278). As a result, after the war, this homosocial closeness would not be considered from the same “chaste” point of view. According to Santanu Das in his article “‘Kiss Me, Hardy’: Intimacy, Gender, and Gesture in First World War Trench Literature” (2002), male intimacy moved in very different fields during the Great War, a fact which was represented by some of the major poets of the time such as Owen, Sassoon or Brooke. Despite the fact that men had enlisted trying to represent a paragon of masculinity based on unemotional intimacy, under such strenuous circumstances of “mutilation and mortality, loneliness and boredom, the strain of constant bombardment, the breakdown of language, and the sense of alienation from home,” in the trenches there was “a new level of intimacy and intensity” in these male-male relationships (Das 2002: 52). Some soldiers began to show a type of familiarity which they would never have shown in public at home, and a new type of “nongenital tactile tenderness” emerged during the war, for physical contact was necessary in a “nightmare world of mud, night, blood, and death” (Somerville and Grimshaw 2004: 589). The bonding was moral and physical and the nuances of this same-sex intimacy are numerous. Not in all the relationships did physical contact mean sexual intimacy, although it clearly did in some cases.

Building up such strong bonds at such difficult times undoubtedly marked Tolkien, who had a high regard for the idea of friendship. The time he spent in the trenches, together with the loss of two good friends may have certainly made him question aspects concerning the war and social classes, as has been stated so far. The secondary world, which he started to create in his mind during the war, undoubtedly examines, probably indirectly, some of his reflections concerning male friendship. These strong bonds were not exclusive of his adolescence and youth, as he continued to establish them all his life.

2.3. 1917 – 1973: Building up a life: the husband, the father, the don

By 1917, England had seen a whole generation of young men almost lost in full, which consequently increased the opposition to the war (Hynes 1990: 216). By the end

of it, many voices had been raised expressing censure and suppression. In his *Goodbye to All That*, Graves makes reference to part of a newspaper cutting, written by a soldier who stated: "I am a soldier, convinced that I am acting on behalf of soldiers. I believe that this war, upon which I entered as a war of defence and liberation, has now become a war of aggression and conquest" (Graves 2000: 213). It was the end of the war, but also, the end of some friendships, of Edwardian culture and some Victorian values, and the time to remember the dead and their heroic deeds. Services were attended everywhere, crosses erected to commemorate the loss of so many lives; in short, monuments were enacted to manhood all over the country, as it was male actions that were mainly celebrated. As Woolf states in *Three Guineas*, medals and badges were given to men, not women, and the statues built were usually to pay homage to men, not women.

Life obviously went on after the war and, in the case of Tolkien and Wiseman, in Oxford and Cambridge, respectively. However, instead of keeping the T.C.B.S. alive as Gilson and Smith would have wanted, they felt it would never be the same with two members of the club missing. Thus, the First World War also meant the end of the Tea Club and Barrovian Society. In the following years, Wiseman and Tolkien met from time to time but they felt they did not have much in common and they progressively drifted apart. Tolkien even named his son Christopher after Wiseman but their close friendship had ended forever. There was nothing left of the T.C.B.S.

Some soldiers came home safe and sound, at least physically, but according to Jung, for some people the fight continued "within the psyche" (qtd. in Fussell 2000: 113), a fact that left lots of "incapacitated men," which was "a shocking contrast to the heroic visions and masculinist fantasies that had preceded it in the British Victorian imagination" (Showalter 1987: 63). Among other ailments, they suffered from neurasthenia and shell shock, which is known today as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Apart from the many phobias that Graves developed during his war experience, he recalls that "shells used to come bursting on my bed at midnight, even though Nancy shared it with me; strangers in daytime would assume the faces of friends who had been killed" (2000: 235). Elaine Showalter also believes that the war awoke certain repressed feelings for other men so that some were scared of performing a different type of

behaviour back home; they had been supposed to behave “manly,” but the war affected some of them so much that they were afraid of “acting effeminate” (1987: 64).

The war had also left invisible scars on Tolkien. He devoted his entire life to his academic job and his family, and tried to overcome his memories with his imagination, will, and writing. If we think of Tolkien as a writer at the beginning of the 20th century who had taken active part in war, some other authors of the time may come to our mind: Edmund Blunden, Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen, Rupert Brookes, Robert Graves, etc. Although his writings do not belong to the same realistic genre as these other authors’ and he was accused of being an “escapist,” Tolkien did create some of his characters influenced by his own experience, as will be explored in Part II of this dissertation. In his case, he used another genre for this. Even before the war began, he had been thinking of creating a mythology for England, and, according to Colin Duriez, the loss of two of his friends motivated him to do so, in order “to make some sense of their aspirations” (2003: 16). By creating a mythology and a place where his invented languages could grow, Garth believes that “the younger Tolkien was responding to a particular sense of nationalism” (2004: 230), and it was then that *The Silmarillion* was born.

In 1918, he finally settled in Oxford, became a tutor of English at the university, and worked on the Oxford English Dictionary. After spending some years working in Leeds, in 1926 the Tolkien family was back in Oxford in Northmoor Road. Since the T.C.B.S., Tolkien had always enjoyed being a member of a male society, so he founded the Coalbiters, “an informal reading club” full of dons who joined together to discuss the Icelandic sagas (Carpenter 2002: 164). Clive Staples Lewis also attended the Coalbiters’ meetings in 1926 and, when this group ceased to meet, the Inklings society was born.

The constant members of the Inklings were C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, and Owen Barfield, and they were occasionally joined by Lewis’s brother Warren, a retired army officer, R.E. Havard, who was C.S. Lewis’s doctor, Hugo Dyson, C.L. Wrenn, Adam Fox, C.L. Wrenn, and Nevill Coghill, who were also scholars – once again, an exclusively men’s club. With Lewis at the centre of the group, the Inklings shared an interest in medieval literature and everything “Northern” and used to meet on Thursdays at Lewis’s rooms in Magdalen College. Despite all their

personal differences in thought and writings, such as Tolkien's devout Catholicism and Lewis's transition from atheism to Anglicanism, both men shared a mutual admiration, an "antipathy to the modern world" (Duriez 2003: 103), and enjoyed each other's company. Tolkien even described Lewis as "a man at once honest, brave, intellectual – a scholar, a poet, and a philosopher – and a lover, at least after a long pilgrimage, of Our Lord" (Carpenter 2002: 199). Their friendship was really strong until the appearance of Charles Williams, with whom Lewis had an excellent relationship, whereas Tolkien did not admire him in the same way. In fact, he disliked Williams's religious ideas and the kind of literature he wrote, he believed they had nothing to say to one another "at deeper or higher levels" (Carpenter 2002: 200). Tolkien actually believed that it was due to Williams's influence on Lewis that they grew apart, as he stated in a letter to Christopher Bretherton in 1964: "But in fact we saw less and less of one another after he came under the dominant influence of Charles Williams" (Carpenter 1995: 349), or as he would describe later on, under Williams's "spell" (Duriez 2003: 114).

Lewis's account of how true friendship begins when two acquaintances discover that they have some common insight or taste inevitably recalls his and Tolkien's discovery of their mutual delight in "Northernness" or Northern sagas (Carpenter 1979). These friends may disagree in important matters but what joins them is not the answer to a question but the question itself. While Lewis felt that all his friendships were equally important in their way, Tolkien was more selective with his affections. Lewis believed that friendship was the "least" natural of all loves, not biologically vital – in his book *The Four Loves* he expresses his belief that human beings can live without friendship – but essential for human beings because the moment two or more people become friends, they are separated from the group of humanity (1960: 56). From what we know about Tolkien's life and ideas, it is doubtful that he would have agreed with his friend on his views on plural friendship. Lewis believed that friendship was enriched with the addition of other friends to the relationship, whereas Tolkien tended to be possessive of his friends. The author of *The Chronicles of Narnia* also believed that friendship was the least jealous of all loves, but of course, the fact that he sort of shifted his "enthusiasm" from Tolkien to Williams when the latter appeared, undoubtedly conferred Tolkien some sort of "resentment" (Carpenter 2002: 202). Duriez believes, though, that "jealousy is too strong a word for Tolkien's feelings of loss; it was more

perhaps a gradual and barely articulated hurt” (2003: 78). Actually, when Williams died, Tolkien also suffered his loss. Nevertheless, it was not only due to Charles Williams that Tolkien grew apart from Lewis, they also had certain religious differences, but it was mainly Lewis’s marriage to Joy Davidman that finally distanced these two friends.

It is important to highlight again Tolkien’s extreme sense of religion. When Tolkien was about to marry Edith, it was always very clear to him that she should convert to Catholicism before getting married, it was a compulsory requisite for him. This “obsession” with attracting everyone around him to his Catholicism or his belief in God was in part due to his childhood trauma of seeing his mother die so young and regard her as a “martyr.” When he first met Lewis, the Northern Irish writer was an atheist Anglican (Church of Ireland), but Tolkien and other members of the Inklings exerted a certain influence on him until he converted to Christianity. However, their religious differences were nothing compared to Tolkien’s feelings of puzzlement and anger when he knew of Lewis’s marriage to an American divorcée. While Lewis was already living with Mrs Jane Moore when he met Tolkien, the author of *The Lord of the Rings* did not seem to have had any resentment against Mrs Moore.⁵ Tolkien’s apparent dislike of Mrs Davidman may be based on two facts: first of all, she was already an independent woman who had divorced her husband when she met Lewis, and secondly, Lewis found in this intelligent woman an interesting intellectual companion. Ronald was therefore jealous of her and did not approve of this match. Right until then, he had been very careful to keep his domestic and professional lives significantly apart, and Lewis’s marriage with another writer somehow threatened this.

Lewis’s marriage did not prevent the Inklings from continuing meeting, despite the disapproval of some of its members, as some of their attitudes might be understood by looking into the society they lived in was. They were an important part of the life in Oxford in the 30s. Carpenter gives us a detailed idea of what Oxford society was like in Tolkien’s years in his book *The Inklings: C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, and their friends* (1979). Strong male friendships were an inevitable characteristic of a university that had been chiefly celibate until the late nineteenth century. The masculine

⁵ Lewis met Mrs Moore’s son during the war, and after he was killed, he started living with her, referring to her as “mother,” which may have prevented any hint of sexual relationship between them, but which has nevertheless been questioned until recently.

society of Oxford had not changed much since Tolkien had been a student at Exeter College, and it was still customary for dons (even married ones) to spend a large part of their spare time in each other's company. Until the reforms of the 1870s, holders of college fellowships were in general not allowed to marry, and, although by Lewis's day marriage was common among dons, it had not been fully integrated into university life. In 1913, as Graves recalls, since he attended Oxford University as a student, "college regulations permitted exhibitioners to be married, scholars must remain single" (2000: 239). Dons worked in their colleges and took a large proportion of their meals there. Their college was almost invariably the centre of their social life. In the meantime, their wives were forced to remain at home in the suburbs, superintending the servants and bringing up the children. Added to this was the fact that some of the wives were far less well educated than their husbands, so that even when they were given a chance to talk to those male friends of their husbands who came to the house, they had very little to say or at least very little that the men thought worth listening to.

Lewis and his contemporaries shared this poor opinion of female conversation, which prevented such women from being given any chances of discussion. Lewis even believed that it was impossible for men to be friends with a woman – there could be affection, love, but not friendship – and Tolkien agreed with him, as he clearly stated in a letter that he wrote to his son Michael in 1941:

In this fallen world the 'friendship' that should be possible between all human beings, is virtually impossible between man and woman. The devil is endlessly ingenious, and sex is his favourite subject. He is as good every bit at catching you through generous romantic or tender motives, as through baser or more animal ones. This 'friendship' has often been tried: one side or the other nearly always fails. Later in life when sex cools down, it may be possible. (Carpenter 1995: 48)

In his attention to the concept of male friendship, Lewis believed that full intimacy with another man could only be achieved if women were completely excluded. He thought that men should not talk about their domestic problems either, following the stereotype that men "are unlikely to talk about intimate matters such as feelings and relationships"; they share activities, not feelings (Walker 1989: 223).

Lewis avoided talking about personal things, something which annoyed Tolkien because, although he was very reserved, he sometimes wanted to find a sympathetic ear for the tale of his domestic troubles: "When I see Jack he naturally takes refuge in

'literary' talk, for which no domestic grief and anxieties have yet dimmed his enthusiasm" (Carpenter 1995: 256). Insinuations of a somewhat closeted homosexuality may spring to mind when looking at the importance that male friendship had for Lewis. There is no suggestion, however, either in his letters or in any of the biographical accounts, that he ever felt any overt sexual attraction towards other men. Perhaps one can also see in his shabby "manly" manner of dress – baggy trousers, old mackintosh, and squashed hat – a wish to differentiate himself from the homosexual-dandy fashions of Oxford in the late twenties and early thirties (Carpenter 1979: 166). Both Tolkien and Lewis based their appearance on "tweed jackets, flannel trousers, nondescript ties, solid brown shoes that were built for country walks, dull-coloured raincoats and hats, and short hair" in order to keep it masculine enough, as

this preference for plain masculine clothing was in part perhaps a reaction to the excessive dandyism and implied homosexuality of the 'aesthetes', who had first made their mark on Oxford in the age of Wilde and whose successors lingered on in the nineteen-twenties and early thirties, affecting delicate shades of garment and ambiguous nuances of manner. (Carpenter 2002: 167)

Candice Fredrik and Sam McBride believe that this tendency to belong to a homosocial group "was partly the fulfilment of expectations culturally ingrained in childhood and reinforced within the British school system" (2001: 7). We must therefore look at the Inklings' friendship from the point of view of the Oxonian society of the 30s, at a time when although women had started to take degrees a decade earlier, "the male majority was overwhelming and sex division very strict" (Carretero González 2001: 92). For Carpenter, exclusively male company was not only "partly the spirit of the times" but, more importantly,

it was in part the result of the First World War, in which so many friends had been killed that the survivors felt the need to stay close together. Friendship of this kind was remarkable, and at the same time entirely natural and inevitable. It was not homosexual (Lewis dismisses that suggestion with deserved ridicule), yet it excluded women. (2002: 193)

Tolkien's acquaintance with women had almost been exclusively reduced to his mother during his childhood and Edith during his adolescence. In a way, the prohibition to see Edith, the fact that they had spent three years separated before they got engaged, made Tolkien somehow idealise her as the lady of a medieval knight. She represented to a certain extent the end of a quest, the final prize that he had so longed for, but the

differences they had perceived right after their engagement never disappeared. She felt lonely and sad and did not integrate in Tolkien's world of learned men. Whereas he lived an active academic and mainly homosocial life and was determined to keep his personal and professional lives separated, she had to stay at home away from her husband's friends. We may consider both of them as "victims" of the society they lived in and the Victorian conventions surrounding their education, which stated that "the ideal woman was willing to be dependent on men and submissive to them, and she would have a preference for a life restricted to the confines of home. She would be innocent, pure, gentle and self-sacrificing" (Gorham 1982: 4), like an "angel in the house." From the very first moment Edith got married, she belonged exclusively to a "private sphere of love, the emotions and domesticity," in contrast with the public sphere, which "was the male's exclusive domain" (Gorham 1982: 4). It was obvious that the constructed masculine and feminine ideals of the period defined the Tolkiens' household.

Tolkien never encouraged Edith to enrich her intellectual life or develop any sort of literary interests, for he believed that she did not need them in her domestic sphere as mother and wife, and in part because "just as he liked to be a man's man among his cronies, so at home he expected to live in what was primarily a woman's world" (Carpenter 2002: 205). Tolkien's acceptance of traditional gender roles, his attempt to separate his private and public spheres, his infamous letter to his son Christopher, and his belief that it was virtually impossible to be friends with women, are some of the reasons why this author has been labelled as misogynist by some critics. Some of the first bitterest criticism towards Tolkien and his works came from Catharine Stimpson (1969) and Brenda Partridge (1983). Stimpson, for example, starts by admitting how Tolkien inspired both detractors and lovers. She disliked both his narrative and his plot, which she refers to as simplistic, and about Tolkien as an author, she stated that

Tolkien is irritatingly, blandly, traditionally masculine. Not only does he apparently place more faith in battles than in persuasion, but he makes his women, no matter what their rank, the most hackneyed of stereotypes. They are either beautiful and distant, simply distant, or simply simple. [...] More often women are ignored. (1969: 18)

Partridge also concentrated on the lack of female figures in her article "No Sex Please – We're Hobbits: The Construction of Female Sexuality in *The Lord of the*

Rings" (1983). In a Freudian analysis of the book, she actually starts her article by analysing Tolkien's background, the influence exerted on him by having been educated in a male school and the continuous homosocial relationship later in his life with the Inklings. She concludes that his own personal and literary influences may be in part responsible for his treatment of women and men in the book. In this matter, we cannot forget the ubiquitous Christian thought which pervaded all his life – the influence of the Bible, the existence of the devil and Adam and Eve, together with Eve's fall into sin appear in his letter to his son Michael. In this letter written in 1941 he also stated that it is only when sex is not a constant temptation in a man's life that man and woman may be friends, but actually states that both man and woman are sinners, for it is in fact a "fallen world" they live in.

Those against this accusation of misogyny justify Tolkien's opinions by explaining how he was the product of the British public school system and a society where men prevailed over women. To illustrate this point of view, "In the Company of Orcs': Peter Jackson's Queer Tolkien," Jane Chance believes that whereas some may label Tolkien as misogynist, "others see his handling of male characters as justified by his own day or that of the Middle Ages from which he borrows" (2009: 87). Furthermore, Tolkien was not at all condescending to his many female students, and he helped several of them to achieve considerable academic distinction,⁶ and although he believed they could be intellectually inspired and encouraged, it was actually a man's task to do so. Although his views concerning women seem to a certain extent contradictory, he was actually "quite capable of sympathising with the plight of a clever woman who had been trapped by marriage into leading an intellectually empty life" (Carpenter 1979: 168).

Some scholars have also tried to justify all these accusations of misogyny by "blaming" the period of history in which he lived and the sources he used for the writing of his mythology. Contrary to what Roland Barthes put forward in his theory on *The Death of the Author* (1977) in which he criticizes any type of literary criticism that considers a writer's biography essential to the analyses of their texts, in the case of Tolkien, a detailed approach to his biography can lead to a better understanding of his

⁶ Simone d'Ardenne could be an example that illustrates this. She was a Belgian medieval philologist who was actually one of the female students that studied with Tolkien during the 1930s – she became Professor of Comparative Grammar at the University of Liège.

works, either if he was conscious or not of some of the themes that would later be explored about the world he created. Different experts on the author have focused on analysing how the most relevant moments in Tolkien's life, which have been aforementioned in the previous sections, have influenced his writings: Garth concentrates on his participation in the First World War and his friendship with the T.C.B.S. members, Curry and Veldman study Tolkien's pacifism and dislike of industrialisation, Duriez analyses his relationship with C.S. Lewis and other members of the Inklings, etc. The author's biography proves therefore quite helpful for a dissertation that looks into the construction of masculinities in Tolkien's secondary world.

Since Corber and Valocchi describe heteronormativity as "the set of norms that make heterosexuality seem natural or right and that organize homosexuality as its binary opposite" (2003: 4), Tolkien was indeed born in a heteronormative society that imposed heterosexual conducts in both the private and the public sphere, and the Oxford he lived in was also a perfect place for social male bonding. According to Daniel Grotta,

[s]ocial life at Oxford during that decade was primarily predicated upon class, temperament, or athletic prowess. The university officially recognized only exhibitioners, scholars, and commoners, but almost all students were subject to three unofficial classifications: scholars, commoners, or toshers; fops or swots; hearties or aesthetes. Scholars were those who were studious, commoners were middle and upper-class students, and toshers were the derogatory term used for students from working-class backgrounds. Fops were silly persons who put on intellectual airs, and swots were students who had little interest outside their studies. Hearties were those who were friendly, vigorous, and athletically-minded, while aesthetes were artistic and slightly effeminate. Tolkien was considered a scholar, a swot, and a heartie. (1992: 39-40)

Thus, the socio-historical context of "Christian, Western civilization and its lay ramifications" (Kristeva 1991: 451), together with all these different representatives of the Oxford academic life cannot but have found their way in the masculine patterns found in the mythology he eventually created.

In Tolkien's time, even more so than nowadays, there was a pervasive sense of privileged compulsory heterosexuality, based on the institutionalized assumption that men should be attracted to women and vice versa, and anything that was outside this social imposition, was wrong and deviant. These patriarchal assumptions regarding how men and women should behave have also permeated literature, whose influence has

reached children and adolescent readers, who inadvertently follow imposed stereotyped ideas on what heroes or heroines should be like.

The writer's literary influences are equally important, and hence, rivers of ink have flowed analysing the foundations of the creatures of his imagination. As Professor of Anglo-Saxon, he loved texts like Old English *Beowulf* or *The Wanderer*, Scandinavian legends contained in the *Poetic Edda* or *Völsunga Saga* and medieval masterpieces like *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Resonances of these and other texts can be found in Middle-earth, either in the development of some scenes or the behaviour of a character, for example, as will be seen in the following chapters.

Having set the theoretical framework on which this thesis is based, and after having discerned the importance of some of the most relevant aspects of Tolkien's life regarding gender issues and how they may affect the author's concept of masculinity, Part II will focus on analysing Tolkien's construction of the masculinities performed by key characters of *The Lord of the Rings* and how this construction has been understood and reinterpreted by Peter Jackson in his recent film adaptation of the book.

PART II

Masculinities in *The Lord of the Rings*

Whereas Part I was concerned with offering an introduction to the history of the studies of masculinities and it also dealt with some of the most important life events which may have influenced Tolkien from the point of view of gender, this second part of the dissertation focuses on the analysis of the literary construction and cinematic reconstruction of masculinities in *The Lord of the Rings*. In order to proceed to this analysis, there are certain aspects of the world that Tolkien created which will be explained in this chapter.

One of these aspects is that Middle-earth is a secondary world with different types of societies with different political systems, such as, for example, monarchy and stewardship. This imaginary world is also divided in different races and hierarchies, relevant in the establishment of various types of relationships among the most relevant characters. Aspects like class, hierarchy, and race, will be therefore analysed as part of the study of the different patterns of masculinities which can be identified in Middle-earth.

When Bilbo “unexpectedly” found the One Ring in *The Hobbit* (1937), nothing indicated – not even to Tolkien himself – that this apparently meaningless token would be the starting point of Frodo Baggins’s quest. Frodo, one of the adoptive heirs that populate *The Lord of the Rings*, was meant to inherit Bilbo’s estate, including his Ring. When the real nature of the Ring was revealed to him by Gandalf, a small fellowship of hobbits set up to Rivendell, to protect their homeland from the imminent danger posed by the mere presence of the jewel in the Shire, and to place it in the hands of Elrond. In arriving there, however, the fate of Bilbo’s Ring was settled, and with it, that of Frodo: the Ring must be destroyed and the hobbit felt that it was his task to do so. It was then decided that Frodo would not go alone on his quest and the Fellowship of the Ring was formed: not only would his fellow hobbits Sam, Merry and Pippin accompany him, but also the dwarf Gimli, the elf Legolas, the wizard Gandalf, and two Men, Aragorn and Boromir, from Gondor.

The differences among all the races of Middle-earth are sometimes obvious, and in this sense, Christina Scull refers to how “Tolkien shows many of his characters prejudiced against other races, or having preconceived ideas about them” (1995: 151). It is therefore important to understand some of the values and characteristics of these races

in order to discern how each character interacts with the rest. We will start with the Elves, the Firstborn, gifted with immortality, and the first race of Middle-earth as it is explained in *The Silmarillion*. They are a somewhat androgynous folk who have completely assimilated feminine and masculine traits and have a special bond with nature. They are the most beautiful creatures on Tolkien's secondary world, and several scholars like Noel (1977), Day (2003), Garth (2004), and Burns (2005), have also compared them with the Irish Tuathá de Danann, establishing connections with these gods' immortality, their foresight and relationship with nature, for example. Elves do not only share some characteristics with the Tuathá de Danann but also with other literary characters. In the Fellowship Elves are represented by Legolas, an elf that comes from Mirkwood and who shares with the rest of his race his enhanced senses, his great sight and ear are an example of this, and he is also swift, light and fast.

Legolas becomes a very good friend of Gimli, Glóin's son, whose lineage comes from Durin, one of the most renowned Dwarves. This race was created by Æule and is as ancient as the Elves. Short, strong, stout-hearted, proud and hardy, they are highly skilled; they are also described in the Appendix F of *The Lord of the Rings* as "lovers of stone, of gems, of things that take shape under the hands of the craftsmen rather than things that live by their own life" (1106). Physically skilled with metals and crafts, like stonemasons who have the ability to change and create new things, their physicality seems to be heightened as one of their main characteristics. Gimli proved that the old feud between Elves and Dwarves had definitely come to its end thanks to his friendship with Legolas and his courtly love for Galadriel. He was the first dwarf to enter Lothlórien, thanks to Aragorn's intercession, for whom he professed pure respect and admiration.

Aragorn is introduced in the plot as a Ranger of the North, but he is more than that – he is a king-to-be in disguise, Isildur's heir, and a Numenórean. Together with Boromir, they are the two Men of the Fellowship of the Ring, but in Middle-earth there are other Men, like the Rohirrim. Men represent a type of hegemonic masculinity which is predominant in this secondary world. In his article "Advertising and the Construction of Violent White Masculinity" (2011), Katz highlights that masculinity is the privileged gender, the same way that white is the privileged race. If we compare Katz's assertion with Tolkien's creation of Middle-earth and the consequences of the War of the Ring,

there seems to be a hint to the persistence and privilege of the race of Men, while some of the others will fade away. Nevertheless, even within Men the differences are so important that they seem to perform different patterns of masculinity, as the following chapters will try to illustrate.

In the Fellowship there is also a Wizard, Gandalf, who is an Istari, and who has sometimes been described as an angel. Wizards are a mixture of power, wisdom and natural forces, sent by the Valar to Middle-earth to help defeat Sauron. *The Lord of the Rings* talks about three wizards: Radagast, Saruman and Gandalf. They are created by Tolkien as physically old men, but very strong and powerful, and even within their order there is a certain rank, Saruman being in the highest position at the beginning of the story. They are also skilled in different areas: Radagast the Brown was an expert on herbs and animals, Saruman the White was learned in the knowledge of the Rings in Middle-earth and was specially proficient in dominating the minds of Men, and Gandalf the Grey was an expert on other “lesser” races like the hobbits and the trees (he was also an excellent friend of Bilbo, Frodo, and Treebeard, among others).

Had it not been for Gandalf’s love and care for the hobbits, the fate of the One Ring may have been different, and that of Middle-earth too. Hobbits represent earthiness, reality, and, to a certain extent, Tolkien found the inspiration for Merry, Pippin, Sam and Frodo in his comrades of the First World War. Because they are physically smaller than the rest, and even apparently less strong or stout than Dwarves or Men, they will always be regarded as children, as someone weaker who must be looked after, because “having a less-normative body can also become a primary identity that overshadows almost all other aspects of one’s identity” (Gerschick 2005: 372), and “the degree to which one’s body is devalued is also affected by other social characteristics including social class, sexual orientation, age, and race and ethnicity” (373).

Race, class, aristocracy, and hierarchy, are therefore terms that cannot be ignored in any analysis of the characters of Middle-earth. The different societies that are established in Middle-earth are also characterized by different political systems, and it must be highlighted that this world is tremendously aristocratic. The Fellowship of the Ring is, in fact, made up of relevant representatives (almost all aristocrats) of each race: Gandalf, one of the most powerful members of the Istari; Legolas, son of Thranduil, the

king of the Silvan Elves of Mirkwood; Aragorn, heir of Elendil and future king-to-be; Boromir, heir of the current Steward of Gondor; Gimli, son of Glóin, one of the Dwarves that accompanied Bilbo in his quest in *The Hobbit* and descendant of one of the most important families within this race; Merry, heir of the Master of Buckland; Pippin, heir of the Thain in Tookland; Frodo, who is Bilbo's heir (one of the most renowned hobbits in Hobbiton) and the Ring-bearer; and Sam, who is somehow the exception, as he is "only" Mr Frodo's gardener. Their bonds go, nevertheless, beyond a hierarchy and despite the social superiority of some of the characters, "yet Tolkien's hobbits are far more appealing than any of his kings, some of his most admirable characters are those who separate themselves from society, and the right choice in his stories may well be the one that deviates from the rules" (Burns 2005: 3). Among all these characters, some bear the traits of the heroes of Northrop Frye's "high mimetic mode," like Aragorn and Gandalf, whereas others are clearly those of the low mimetic mode, like the four hobbits, with whom the reader can easily identify, and which is the mode that characterizes the novel.

The Free Peoples of Middle-earth that are represented in the Fellowship also belong to different social classes even within the same ethnic group, such as in the case of the hobbits, class being a concept which Donna Langston understands as "composed of ideas, behavior, attitudes, values, and language; class is how you think, feel, act, look, dress, talk, move, walk" (1995: 102). Characters in Middle-earth are not influenced exclusively by their race but also by the hierarchical relationships that the author established between them. Walter Scheps already saw in 1975 that

there are indeed greater and lesser men in Middle-earth, masters and servants, kings and stewards; and their responsibilities and powers must be used according to the place of each in the natural hierarchy if that hierarchy, and indeed Middle-earth itself, are to survive. (1975: 49)

The text shows that each race is represented in the Fellowship by a member of a social elite, which clearly justifies Burns's reference to Tolkien's "double attitudes," because even though the narrative insists on the concept of fellowship, that of the Ring is a hierarchical one. This, in fact, is in consonance with Tolkien's most conservative views, with his avowed "dislike of democracy" and his strong attachment "to the concept of inherited rule – to a 'line of descent that can't be questioned'" (2005: 3).

The Fellowship of the Ring therefore becomes a representation of all the Free Peoples of Middle-earth, a world which Sandra B. Straubhaar defines as “polycultural, polylingual” (2004: 112), and which could also be described as “polymasculine,” as it is laden with multiple masculinities. It is precisely when all the races interact and intersect in the Fellowship of the Ring that we can see how their differences and similarities become more apparent. As Kimmel observes in the introduction of the *Gendered Society Reader*, what it means to be a man or a woman varies from one society to another and changes within the same culture over time (2008: 3), so there is a long list of influential variables that affect a person’s (or a character’s) performance of masculinity and/or femininity, such as class, race, ethnicity, age, sexuality, and even the region of the country (ibid.). Hearn and Collinson add to this: appearance, body, care, fatherhood, leisure, kinship status, mind, occupation, size, and violence (1994: 108).

All the aforementioned variables will therefore contribute to the way the different patterns of masculinities are constructed in Middle-earth, more specifically in the microcosm of the Free Peoples of Middle-earth that is set up in the Council of Elrond, where the Fellowship of the Ring is formed.

The perspectives which have been used to look into *The Lord of the Rings* range from religious analyses of the races of Middle-earth to the most recent approaches coming from the field of ecocriticism. Within the field of gender, one of the first analyses dates back to the 60s, as has been aforementioned, when Stimpson published a study of Tolkien’s novel, which, together with Partridge’s Freudian article, offer two of the first analyses of the book regarding the role of women. Stimpson accused the author of making his women “no matter what their rank, the most hackneyed of stereotypes” (1969: 18), while Partridge even accused him of “portraying woman as a threat, with implied sexual overtones” (1983: 187). Both scholars also offer a very personal interpretation of the fight with Shelob: Stimpson describes the scene as having “a narrative energy,” but it also “oozes a distasteful vengeful quality as the small, but brave, male figure really gets the enormous, stanching bitch-castrator” (1969: 19), and Partridge believes that this fight “represents a violent sexual struggle between man and woman” (1983: 190). Partridge even refers to Tolkien’s “inner fear or abhorrence of female sexuality” (191).

Stimpson's and Partridge's controversial studies contrast somehow with some of the most recent criticism from the point of view of gender. Craig (2001) and Smol (2004), for example, compare the bonding of the hobbits with the male bonding of soldiers during the First World War; Crowe (1995) and Hopkins (1995) praise the female characters in Middle-earth, and Carretero González observes how Éowyn's embrace of the code of a more sophisticated society actually allows her to leave behind "the patriarchal and hierarchical" society of Rohan, where she had grown up, as she also leaves violence behind (2008: 385).

Most scholars who have analysed *The Lord of the Rings* from the point of view of gender share the understanding of masculinity and femininity as social and cultural constructs. As aforementioned in the theoretical section of this thesis, Connell is in favour of the use of the term in plural – masculinities –, as there are different types of them as different as hegemonic or subordinated. In the essay "Work, Organizations, and Management" (2005), Collinson and Hearn bring about the fact that there are nowadays many debates concerning the real meaning of masculinity/masculinities, so much so that

some writers have been unwilling to provide a single definition of masculinity/es. Connell (1995), for example, is reluctant to offer such a definition because he wants to emphasize the shifting and contingent character of masculinity. Others, however, have tried to define the central meanings of 'masculinity' and/or 'hegemonic masculinities.' (299)

Having the perspective of masculinity as a social construct as a starting point when analyzing American literature, Armengol claims that it is extremely interesting to reread American texts written by authors like Hemingway, for instance, who have always been associated with a certain masculine ideal, or who have perpetuated or defined it in their writings. This re-reading, in his words,

entails not only questioning patriarchal masculinities in literary texts, but also challenging former traditional critical readings of these texts. Just as male characters' lives are often limited by ideals of masculinity, so does the acceptance of traditional patriarchal values influence and limit the ways criticism has analyzed the works of American writers clearly identified with traditional manly ideals. (Armengol 2006: 266)

In order to follow Armengol's recommendation, it is necessary to make the reader familiar with the setting and the types of societies where the plot of *The Lord of the Rings* unfolds, for Middle-earth is undoubtedly a male-dominated world. The fictional

world of Middle-earth is inhabited by the masculine patterns that Tolkien had lived and breathed in his life and the books he loved and, although they share many of the traits associated with traditional masculinities, it is worth paying attention to the differences.

Hearn and Collinson affirm that “various men and masculinities may be defined in relation to other men, other masculinities, women, femininities, or some further difference(s). It is not possible to produce a complete taxonomy” (1994: 108-109). Moreover, Connell classifies masculinities as hegemonic and subordinated (2005: 832), a hierarchy which, as we have seen, is clearly found in Middle-earth. Therefore, there is not only one unique type of masculinity in Middle-earth, but several. This part of my thesis attempts to offer a plausible classification according to the traits that the main characters are endowed with and their performance.

Chapter 3 provides an insight on what has been termed “the hypermasculine pattern.” The term was first used by Donald L. Mosher and Mark Sirkin to carry out a psychological survey and analyse a “macho personality” that was defined by three variables: “(a) calloused sex attitudes toward women, (b) violence as manly, and (c) danger as exciting” (1984: 151). Although the three variables are not always found in all the characters that belong to this pattern (the first one is definitely difficult to find due to the scarcity of scenes shared with female characters), some of their attitudes make us regard their performance near the type of hypermasculinity defined above by Mosher and Sirkin. This pattern considers also, on the one hand, some of the traits that Gilmore associates with traditional masculinity, which, together with the element of “sexual potency [and] – virility,” it also “usually includes an element of heroism, of bravery, which says that a man should not be frightened and that he should stand up and protect his dependents. As a protector, he cannot back from the struggle; he must be competitive and successful” (2008: 31).

This type of heroism which is supposed to be inherent in male characters should not be taken for granted. At the same time, when performed exaggeratedly, it is nearer the *ofermod* that appears in some epic texts like *Beowulf* or *The Battle of Maldon*. Hypermasculinity is represented by characters like Boromir, Denethor, Théoden and Éomer, who provide readers with instances of the positive and negative sides of this type of masculinity. On the one hand, Théoden and Éomer are reconstructions of character traits found in Anglo-Saxon texts and seem to represent an old and obsolete

heroic pattern, which is set in a society based around the code of the *comitatus*, aimed at establishing a close bond between the chieftain and his thanes, and accepting war as the means to prove the warrior's prowess and physical strength.

Gondor also has some characters that can be included in this pattern: Denethor and Boromir. The Steward of Gondor is a perfect representative of a masculinity that is based rather on the exertion of power and superiority over others, imbued with feelings of jealousy and suspicion, and with a clear intention of imposing a type of hegemonic masculinity. His dominating attitudes lead him to have an estranged relationship with his sons, above all with Faramir. He is probably the character that offers the most negative side of hypermasculinity. On the other hand, the Steward's heir, Boromir, despite belonging to the sophisticated society of Gondor, is in fact nearer the Rohirrim than his own comrades, as will be illustrated in the chapter devoted to him.

Once having examined a type of masculinity that Tolkien could very well have regarded as obsolete, chapter 4 focuses on a different masculine pattern which I see performed by the characters of Gandalf, Aragorn, and Faramir. This pattern is based on a set of "behaviours, attitudes, and conditions" (Clatterbaugh 1997: 3) that will define them distinctively as life-preservers or even protectors in some instances in the plot. The performance of this pattern is based on the premise that fighting should only be resorted to when strictly necessary, thus defending life above all things, and it is more in accordance with Tolkien's own values. These characters' own historical and personal backgrounds have marked their upbringing, thus their behaviour and attitudes, and these will be evaluated and regarded as highly influential in their performance of masculinity.

Chapter 5 attempts to offer some insight into a type of masculinity that is rather based on "patterns of behaviour consistent with [Tolkien's] own values" (Neville 2005: 103), and which is called "unexpected" precisely because it is some kind of homage to the unknown heroes of WWI, whose characteristics have been inherited by the hobbits. Flieger distinguishes these two types of heroes in *The Lord of the Rings*: "the extraordinary man to give the epic sweep of great events, and the common man who has the immediate, poignant appeal of someone with whom the reader can identify" (1981: 41), and which are represented by Aragorn and Frodo, respectively.

Hobbits embark on a quest in Middle-earth that is mainly a journey into maturity – they start this adventure as humble, down-to-earth, unnoticed, almost insignificant characters, who will have to show themselves capable of the most perilous deeds. In their personal evolution towards their heroism, they prove the importance of male bonding, and the endurance and inner strength of their race. Hobbits are undoubtedly the unexpected heroes in the War of the Ring that will learn valuable lessons from the rest of characters they encounter along the way.

Chapter 6 looks at the instances of strong male bonding experienced by the characters in the book, looking at it as a result of homosociality, while discussing possible instances of homoeroticism. These instances of strong male-bonding are familiar to students of epic poetry – as early as the *Iliad* – but changes in the way that masculinity has been constructed from the nineteenth century onwards have rendered particular tokens of affection alien to many readers. As a result, Tolkien's text has been thoroughly analysed within the field of queer studies, and some of its subplots extrapolated to, changed, and rewritten within the new genre of slash fiction, as will be shown.

Sauron's defeat, however, would not have been possible without the combined individual actions of the most relevant characters in *The Lord of the Rings*. All of them go through a personal process of evolution during the War of the Ring. This part of the current project concludes with the analysis of one of these characters, Éowyn, the main representative of the last pattern explained in chapter 7: female masculinity. The Lady of Rohan contests the most traditional and binary theories of gender as they are an example of how masculinity is indeed possible without men, and is performed by Éowyn in the Third Age in Middle-earth. She becomes a warrior at some stage in her life, just as Galadriel had done in *The Silmarillion*, a fact that will influence Éowyn forever, as will be analysed in this chapter.

In the third wave within the field of studies of masculinities, one of the main premises is to understand that femininity is not exclusively performed by women or masculinity by men. In this sense, it seems that Tolkien, despite the varied criticism and the allegations concerning his supposed misogyny, created characters which, although at a first perfunctory glance, seem to be a reflection of the patriarchy the author grew up

in, are the product of a more critical and deep reflection, as chapter 7 will try to illustrate.

The chapters in this section will therefore offer an analysis of the patterns of masculinity as performed by Tolkien's characters, together with a comparative analysis of Jackson's interpretation of these patterns in his films. How Jackson understood each character at the beginning of the 21st century, the additions and transformations for some characters, will also prove essential in order to understand the director's reconstruction of Tolkien's masculinities almost sixty years after the book was first published.

3. Old patterns of masculinity in *The Lord of the Rings*

The first pattern of masculinity that will be analysed in this section is concerned with the characters of Théoden, Éomer, Denethor and Boromir, who belong to societies as different as Rohan and Gondor. They all represent the main traits found in old heroic codes, so this chapter will try to analyse to what extent this influence is significant in each character, as the type of masculinity they perform is partly based on what is expected from them.

Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that, even within the race of Men, there are meaningful differences: on the one hand, the Gondorians descend from Higher Men like the Númenoreans, who resemble Elves in some aspects, except in the fact that the latter are immortal, and who are superior if compared to other Men like the Rohirrim, who are believed to be “lesser Men.” According to Dimitra Fimi, these subdivisions within the same race respond to Tolkien’s personal and academic background, his own literary and anthropological interests, resulting in Tolkien’s world being a combination of

stereotypical ideas straight out of Victorian anthropology, like the differences in mental and physical abilities between the Three Houses of Men in the First Age. There are also divisions based on spiritual concerns, like the subdivisions of the Elves into those who wished to see the ‘light’ and those who refused to go to ‘paradise’; and romantic interpretations of the ‘primitive’ and even the ‘barbarian’, shown in the portrayal of the peaceful, nature-loving Wild Men and in the vigour and strength of the Rohirrim. The blending of all these different strands makes Middle-earth complex and unpredictable, a fantasy world that reproduces some of the concepts and prejudices of the ‘primary’ world, while at the same time questioning, challenging and transforming others. (2009: 159)

Much has been said about the resemblance of Rohan to an Anglo-Saxon village or those found in Anglo-Saxon texts, and about the similarities between the city of Gondor and Byzantium. The different cultures of these kingdoms, the behaviour of their citizens, together with the influences that other characters have on the leaders of these lands in Middle-earth and their heirs will play an important role in their performances of

hypermasculinity. The following sections will look at instances of this pattern of masculinity in Middle-earth.

3.1. The Rohirrim: Horse-lords of Rohan

Situated almost in the centre of Middle-earth, Rohan is first introduced in the plot in *The Two Towers* as Legolas, Gimli and Aragorn are pursuing the Orcs that have kidnapped Merry and Pippin and this search takes them to the green plains of Rohan. Much of the existing criticism on Tolkien's sources has already analysed the strong influence that Anglo-Saxon texts like *Beowulf*, *The Wanderer* and *The Battle of Maldon* have on this literary realm (Shippey 2001, Straubhaar 2004, Honegger 2011). Although this is an important starting point for the analysis of the characters in Rohan, this project will not try to delve into the similarities between these texts and Tolkien's, but on the influence that these may have had in the portrayal of masculinity of the most relevant Men of Rohan.

With King Théoden as the ruler of the land, also known as the Riddermark, Rohan is facing a moment described in chapter 6 in *The Two Towers*, "The King of the Golden Hall," when the king first appears. Echoing the lines from the Old English poem *The Wanderer* and its *ubi sunt* theme, Tolkien makes a direct connection between the Anglo-Saxon poem, which makes reference to a lost heroic past, and Rohan. Recited by Aragorn, the lines become relevant as he is the "wandering" future king of Gondor in exile, while, at the same time, he looks back indirectly to the glorious past of Rohan, when Eorl the Young was king. For, although King Théoden is still alive, those were greater times, as the current king's will has been coerced by his advisor, Gríma Wormtongue, so that when he is first introduced to the readers, it seems that there is nothing that his riders, the Rohirrim, can do to save their lord from Gríma's control.

According to Shippey, the Rohirrim "resemble the Anglo-Saxons down to minute details" (2003: 117), although they are not an exact copy of the historical Anglo-Saxons that lived in England from the fifth to the eleventh centuries (Lee and Solopova 2005: 201). The Men of Rohan or "Horse-lords" (*FR* II 2: 255) are representative of the Old English sagas, having as "their real-life counterparts the Anglo-Saxons of early medieval England" (Stanton 2001: 54). Shippey emphasises the fact that Tolkien tried

to recreate the epic heroic world we can find in Old English heroic texts such as *Beowulf*, *The Wanderer* or *The Battle of Maldon*. His work is thus that of reconstructing, not calquing, which allows him to change the world of Rohan, its customs and some of its characters' ideas, thus creating a world that is very close to the literary representations of the Anglo-Saxons. For example, Tolkien introduces a new aspect when representing the Rohirrim as cavalry,⁷ and they are first described in *The Two Towers* as a perfect match to the horses they ride, as if horse and man were one:

Their horses were of great stature, strong and clean-limbed; their grey coats glistened, their long tails flowed in the wind, their manes were braided on their proud necks. The Men that rode them matched them well: tall and long-limbed; their hair, flaxen-pale, flowed under their light helms, and streamed in long braids behind them; their faces were stern and keen. In their hands were tall spears of ash, painted shields were slung at their backs, long swords were at their belts, their burnished shirts of mail hung down upon their knees. (*TT III 2*: 421)

This first physical impression of the Rohirrim is based on what Thomas Honegger calls a “warlike spirit,” and in it we can see how “horses and riders alike radiate power, an aggressive energy, and a certain authentic wildness” (2011: 117). Although they do not satisfy completely the three components used by Mosher and Sirkin in their Hypermasculinity Inventory to measure a macho personality constellation (1984: 151), they are indeed depicted with a physical image that highlights these Men as powerful and dominant in their interactions with other Men or creatures of Middle-earth, like Orcs, and the environment. Their first image is also accompanied by Aragorn's description of the Men of Rohan as “proud and wilful, but they are true-hearted, generous in thought and deed; bold but not cruel; wise but unlearned, writing no books but singing many songs, after the manner of the children of Men before the Dark Years” (*TT III 2*: 420). The Rohirrim therefore appear as the epic warriors we see in *Beowulf*, who wear “cunning gear of war” and “mail-shirts [...], their raiment of war” (Tolkien

⁷ The use of horses in warfare is a historical fact that dates back thousands of years, and although there was a decrease in the use of them in WWI, Tolkien's creation of the Men of Rohan as horse-lords may have been influenced by his own experience. As beasts of burden or cavalry horses, they were essential during the Great War, when some of the bonds the soldiers established with them were similar to the Rohirrim's. Very few returned home, some were slaughtered, others sold as meat, but they are still lamented and remembered every year. There is, for example, a memorial plaque in Hampstead Garden Suburb (London), a stone of remembrance in Morley (West Yorkshire), the monument Animals in War Memorial in Hyde Park (London), etc. Films like *War Horse* or the documentaries carried out by the BBC to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the end of this war may serve to illustrate the close bond that was established during WWI between some men and their horses.

2014: 450). Tolkien's task of reconstruction in fact goes beyond the mere eco of Meduseld in Heorot or the reproduction of some moments of the plot of *Beowulf*, like the "etiquette of arrival and reception" (Shippey 2001: 94). Indeed if the Rohirrim are taken a closer look at, they portray one of the historically "oldest" types of masculinity included in *The Lord of the Rings* – that which appears in the Old English heroic texts and other Scandinavian sagas.

Despite these similarities, there is a difference that has been mentioned above and which is worth dwelling upon before we continue with our analysis. It is the use of cavalry by the Rohirrim (Shippey 2001), as their horses seem to be an inherent part of them – they are defined in comparison with these animals, for instance, as they both have their long manes braided. Certainly, in *The Epic Hero* (Miller 2000) a warrior's long hair and beard are seen as a symbol of his virility and force. The Riders of Rohan have thus a kind of symbiosis with their horses, which could be seen as a sign of the hypermasculinity that they seem to be endowed with, as in this symbiosis, we can see a certain representation of power and "animal virility," even Éomer wears a helm "with a crest" of a "white horsetail" (*TT* III 2: 421) and grieves the loss of not only some of his Men but also some horses in the battle (*TT* III 2: 427). In spite of this association of riders and horses, Honegger draws attention to the fact that, despite their love for their horses, they are still their "masters," they are not completely a unity (2011: 117). As he argues, this distances them from other riders, like the Huns, whose union with their horses was seen as a fusion of man and beast, and like the mythological centaurs, who were at times seen like the "embodiment of aggressive, instinct-driven man." In the case of the Rohirrim, their mastery of horses may emphasise their control over them and not the opposite, for although the horse-lords might be impetuous, both the horses and the riders' braids are symbolic of a certain constraint (*ibid.*).

The Rohirrim are Men who were born to go to war, who do not fear death and whose warrior attitude makes them believe that they will not live for long, so they seek a heroic death in battle – the Anglo-Saxon code of behaviour saw death as something noble and better than a deserter's life of shame. This idea appears in Old English texts such as *The Battle of Maldon*, where Vikings are always "eager for war" (Anonymous 1993: 72) or in *Beowulf*, where Wiflaf states that "[d]eath is more sweet for every man of worth than life with scorn!" (Tolkien 2014: 3042). In *Medieval Knights*, Trevor

Cairns makes reference to the warriors' fearless approach to battle and death as it was better to die fighting than "to decay slowly into a weak, miserable old age" (1992: 4), this old age being therefore associated with the loss of (hyper)masculinity. They fight until the very end of their strength and never leave the battle, as is clearly illustrated in *The Battle of Maldon*, where the names of those who stood with their lord are recorded for posterity to remember: "There stood with Wulfstan fearless fighters, AElfhre and Maccus, bold men both who would not take flight from the lord, but defended themselves stoutly against the enemy as long as they might wield weapons" (Anonymous 1993: 72). The Rohirrim are loyal to their king to the very end, even knowing they might not come back, for "doom hung over them, but they faced it silently" (*RK V 3*: 785). They express joy in the battlefield, hence their singing when they fight, as in the Pelennor Fields, where "they sang as they slew, for they joy of battle was on them, and the sound of their singing that was fair and terrible came even to the City" (*RK V 5*: 820).

3.1.1. The *comitatus* of the Rohirrim

The Rohirrim's homocentric social organisation follows the structure of the Germanic *comitatus*. According to Dean A. Miller, "the *comitatus* was held together, according to Tacitus, by mutual oaths sworn to and by the war band leader, and one of these obligated the warriors not to survive their fallen chieftain: *iam vero infame in omnem vitam ac probrosum superstitem principi suo ex acie recessisse*" (2000: 339). Warriors therefore were compelled to gather together in order to protect their king's life with their own, and if their king was killed, they would do anything to avenge him. Janet L. Blumberg explains that

[t]he life experiences by these sea-going, war-faring peoples [Anglo-Saxons] [...] was generally limited to a harsh struggle against death and destruction, in which the one source of value and worth seems to have come from the bonds, celebrated everywhere in its literature, of love and loyalty between a battle-leader – *drygthen* – and the members of his retinue, his *thegns* or chief warrior followers. The Roman historian Tacitus described this Germanic social structure under the Latin term *comitatus*. A good translation might be "hearth-companions", or Tolkien's own translations in *The Lord of the Rings*: the 'company' or the 'fellowship'. (2002: 54)

Cairns also supports the view that what warriors really wanted was fame more than any treasure they could be given if they won a battle (1992: 4). Concerning the Rohirrim, Honnegger believes that “the Riders of Rohan may know the concept of posthumous fame, yet this is not their primary motivation for heroic deeds – at least not as presented in *The Lord of the Rings*” (2011: 127), their joy in battle and the protection of their King are their main motives.

The warriors’ respect for their king was such that they did not only protect him under any circumstance, but they were also bound to avenge his death if he died, and not only if this happened in the battlefield. If they are lucky enough, they will die for their lord, as in *The Battle of Maldon*: “Aelfnoth and Wulfmaer both were laid low; close by their lord they gave up their lives” (Anonymous 1993: 73), and if their lord dies before them, they will avenge his death, like Aelfwine does in this Old English poem.

The performance of masculinity of the Rohirrim is, as in heroic Germanic texts, inextricably linked with the idea of brave and stout-hearted male warriors whose lives were built around heroic deeds, the greater the danger the greater the deed, for they regarded danger as exciting. It could be thus acknowledged that the Rohirrim act according to the type of masculinity they are supposed to perform in consonance with their biological sex and a Germanic society’s masculine ideal, which, as Heilbrun already remarked in the seventies, “according to the conventional view, ‘masculine’ equals forceful, competent, competitive, controlling, vigorous, unsentimental, and occasionally violent” (1973: XIV). The Rohirrim’s masculinity is ultimately based on their military prowess, physical strength and loyalty to their lord, in short, on the respect of the Northern heroic code.

3.1.2. Northern heroic spirit in Rohan

In *The Battle of Maldon*, an Old English epic poem which makes reference to the historical battle of the same name that took place in 991, the Anglo-Saxons fight against a group of Viking invaders. Lines 89 and 90 are the most controversial in the poem: “*ða se eorl ongan for his ofermode alyfan landes to fela lāþere ðeode,*” which Tolkien translated as “then the earl in his overmastering pride actually yielded ground to the

enemy, as he should not have done” (Tolkien 1966: 19). This part of the poem refers to the leader of the Anglo-Saxons, Beorhtnoth, and his “*ofermode*,” translated by Tolkien as “overmastering pride,” which makes him allow the Vikings to cross the marshy area separating both armies in order to battle “at ease,” resulting in the death of a great number of the Anglo-Saxon warriors, their leader among them.

As a continuation of the Old English poem, Tolkien wrote an imaginary conversation between two of the characters that appeared in *The Battle of Maldon*, under the title *The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth Beorhthelm’s Son*, first published in 1953. Following the poem, he also published an essay called *Ofermod*, which contains Tolkien’s own interpretation of the *ofermod* found in *The Battle of Maldon*: whereas Beorhtnoth seems to have allowed the Vikings to cross the causeway in an attempt to allow for a fair fight, the character Tídwald in *The Homecoming* believes that the lord made a mistake that, in Tolkien’s words, was an “act of pride and misplaced chivalry.” Whereas Tídwald claims that the lord was mainly interested in giving troubadours the perfect chance to sing his heroic deeds, hence achieving praise and renown, it should not be forgotten that by trying to achieve glory in the battlefield, he was also fulfilling his obligation to provide his tribe with “reward for valor in battle” (Chance 1979: 117). Nevertheless, by putting his own personal pride and search for glory ahead of his men’s welfare, he forfeits their lives and this act seems to enhance his subordinates’ personal glory, since they simply proved the loyalty for their master that was expected of them, and due to this “defect of character” of their lord, they died unnecessarily as they tried to avenge their lord’s death (Tolkien 1966: 21).

Tolkien therefore compares the excess of pride of Beorhtnoth, who was sure to win the battle against the Vikings, with the pure heroism that is found in his men, as it is “the heroism of obedience and love not of pride or wilfulness that is the most heroic and the most moving” (1966: 22). However, even if Beorhtnoth made a mistake, it was a noble one, which is why his warriors still followed him and were loyal to him. With the author’s own social criticism against this instance of *ofermod*, Tolkien may have also hinted at the obsolescence of a system based on Germanic values in favour of Christian ones. Tolkien’s opinion of the use of *ofermod* in the Old English poem as being some sort of criticism against Beorhtnoth contrasts with the perception that other scholars had of this word, for example, E.V. Gordon, who was one of Tolkien’s colleagues and

collaborators and had even published a translation of the poem in 1938 (Shippey 2001: 294). Tolkien's *Homecoming* simply contained the author's own interpretation of the poem.

According to Shippey, Tolkien wanted to "retain the heroic quality of his Norse sources," for he admired their "theory of courage" (2004: 152). Thus he somehow confers "the northern heroic spirit" upon the Rohirrim, a heroic code "which Tolkien had identified as the motivating force behind the brave last stand of some retainers at the battle of Maldon" (Honegger 2011: 126). He also wrote about this "theory of courage" in his lecture "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics," referring to it as a "great contribution of early Northern literature" (1936: 262), and qualifying it as "noble" in a letter to his son Michael (Carpenter 1995: 56).

Tolkien's opinion on this Northern heroic code is somewhat contradictory, though. The theory of courage that appears in Old English and Norse texts and which Tolkien greatly admired is chiefly based on despair, "its spirit often heathen ferocity" (Shippey 2003: 157, Bowman 2010: 106). In *The Battle of Maldon*, despite their lord's "rash decision" (Shippey 2003: 157) which led to a bloodshed, it is precisely this heroic code which leads Beorhtnoth's warriors to fight for their leader in an attempt to avenge his death. Notwithstanding, this is directly in opposition to the author's religious beliefs. As chapter 2 emphasised, the author was a devout Christian, respectful towards the doctrine of the Catholic Church and its sacraments, and one of the theological virtues that it preaches is hope, exactly the opposite of despair. His Christian values were therefore incompatible with this theory of courage that spurs warriors to avenge their leader's death, and not to turn the other cheek and love and forgive "thy neighbour and/or enemy."

So what made the author admire this heroic code so much? Tolkien sees in the attempt to take revenge, despite their master's "overmastering pride," "the clearest statement of the doctrine of uttermost endurance in the service of indomitable will" (Tolkien 1966: 20). Above all, he praises this type of courage in the subordinates, whose own pride is "at its lowest" and their will is left behind in favour of their lord's honour – their love and loyalty are therefore "at their highest" (ibid.). Garth believes that part of Tolkien's admiration for this Northern spirit resides in the fact that it

answered eloquently to the needs of Tolkien's day. It contains the awareness that death may come, but it focuses doggedly on achieving the most with what strength remains: it had more to commend it, in terms of personal and strategic morale, than the self-sacrificial and quasi-mystical tone of Rupert Brooke's already-famous *The Soldier*, which implied that a soldier's worth to his nation was greater in death than life. (2004: 71)

Moreover, although there seems to be a priori an obvious incompatibility between Christian and heroic values, Carretero González postulates the presence of both in *The Lord of the Rings* (1996: 149), where she sees that the heroes seem to have been endowed with both values and are nearer the prototype of the merciful Christian believer than the vengeful epic hero. Moreover, the forces of Good versus Evil seem to be at work throughout the plot, encouraging the characters to have hope and not despair. Although Tolkien is very careful not to refer to any deity that could be interpreted as the God that he believed in, his own moral and religious beliefs are undoubtedly in his heroes, but they resemble the heroes of his own time, as chapter 5 will contend, rather than the heroes of the epic tradition (Carretero González 1996: 164).

In a way, Tolkien deconstructs *The Battle of Maldon* and, believing its heroic code to be obsolete, decides to reconstruct it in *The Lord of the Rings*. The heroes of Middle-earth are therefore a mixture of the best qualities of an epic and a Christian hero: although Tolkien did criticise the *ofermod* found in *The Battle of Maldon*, he also admired the courage of Beorhtnoth's subordinates, as has been aforementioned, so he tried to instil this valour in some of his characters. Concurrently, even though they do not fulfil completely the Christian doctrine of turning the other cheek (except in the case of Frodo at the end of the book when he remains inactive in "The Scouring of the Shire"), some characters try indeed to fight only when strictly necessary (Carretero González 1996: 180).

Shippey claims that, in a way, Northern mythology "asks more of men" because, in contrast with the Christian view that there is heaven after death, in the case of Northern men, they only fight to achieve honour and glory (2003: 156), and the Rohirrim are an example of this. Therefore, following Shippey's view, Beorhtnoth's actions seem to go in accordance with the Germanic code that he represents, and which therefore seemed to be not only acceptable but also expected from a warrior in 991. Tolkien's opinion would therefore seem somewhat biased by his own Christian beliefs –

the fact that several scholars disagree with his point of view attest to the author's predisposition to perceive Beorhtnoth's *ofermod* as negative. However, what is interesting here is that this judgment will take him to develop a different type of heroism in Middle-earth, whereas other characters will offer an example of this criticism. As has been stated before, in the case of the Old English poem, Tolkien believes that this search for honour and glory turns into excess when Beorhtnoth decides to lead his men to certain death, for his own pride, a fact which Tolkien criticised and tried to change in his characters, not without showing the reader the consequences of this Norse code and *ofermod* in some characters in Middle-earth, for example, in Théoden.

3.1.2.1. Théoden, aging, absent king

The aforementioned reconstruction of literary Anglo-Saxon culture in *The Lord of the Rings* also appears in the Anglo-Saxon etymology of the names associated with Rohan. In general, most names contain the root *eo*h which means "horse": Éomer (*eo*h, "horse", and *mere*, "grand, excellent, famous"), Éothain ("horse-soldier"), Éowyn ("joy or delight in horses") or *éored* ("a troop of Riders of Rohan") (Hammond and Scull 2005), thus intensifying the strong link that this society has with horses.

King Théoden's name comes from Old English *þēoden*, meaning "chief" or "lord," and indeed he is the lord of the Rohirrim, although his obligations to them and as ruler seem to have been poorly executed of late, as we can see in several moments in *The Two Towers*. The Rohirrim have inherited their *comitatus* ethics from their ancestors, and at the same time, as in *Beowulf*, they also need "a great hall of Men" (*TT* III 6: 496) where they can meet as a sign of their union, hence *The Wanderer's* elegiac tone in his lament "for want of a hall" as "he who has experienced it knows how cruel a companion sorrow is to the man who has no beloved protector" (Anonymous 1993: 69). These two epic poems, as two of the most renowned examples of Old English literature, highlight the importance of Anglo-Saxon feasting halls, where victories were celebrated, and through the action of drinking and eating together, they marked social bonds with other tribes, as the lady of the hall performed her duty as cup-bearer. One of the most important halls in Old English literature is found in *Beowulf* – both Meduseld

and Heorot are for the Rohirrim and the Danes a physical place to show their unity as king's men and the protection they receive in to their *comitatus*; it is also the place where they pledge their vows to their lords.

An Anglo-Saxon hall is therefore mainly a place of celebrations, but when Aragorn, Gimli, Legolas and Gandalf arrive at Meduseld, which means "house in which feasting takes place" (Hammond and Scull 2005: 372), it is described as the opposite of what its name implies:

Inside it seemed dark and warm after the clear air upon the hill. The hall was long and wide and filled with shadows and half lights; mighty pillars upheld its lofty roof. But here and there bright sunbeams fell in glimmering shafts from the eastern windows, high under the deep eaves. (*TT III 6: 500*)

The state in which the members of the Fellowship find Meduseld, the Golden Hall, seem to represent the recent decay of Rohan, a realm which is also metaphorically under shadows and half in darkness, all due to Saruman's actions. However, there is a prospect of change, since there seems to be some hope in those "bright sunbeams." The first time that Théoden is introduced to the reader, he appears as a powerless old man, who even needs a staff to walk, much in consonance with his hall,

a man so bent with age that he seemed almost a dwarf; but his white hair was long and thick and fell in great braids from beneath a thin golden circlet set upon his brow. In the centre upon his forehead shone a single white diamond. His beard was laid like snow upon his knees; but his eyes still burned with a bright light, glinting as he gazed at the strangers. (*TT III 6: 501*)

Théoden is therefore described as fitting to Meduseld, and as a symbol of the problems that his land is having, for if Rohan's leader is "unhealthy," so is his realm. Despite the darkness that surrounds the King and the poor state in which Legolas, Gandalf, Gimli and Aragorn find him if compared with how Théoden will be in consecutive chapters, this quotation shows that there is still some hope for the lord of the Rohirrim, as in his eyes there is still a certain light, as in Meduseld – there is still hope for the King to regain his former self and for the land to recover its former glory.

The King of Rohan has fallen under Saruman's "spell" through his servant Gríma Wormtongue, whose name means "mask," which is a metaphor, as he is just pretending to be Théoden's counsellor, for he disguises his true identity and intentions. Gríma

serves Saruman by uttering words to Théoden which have steadily undermined the King's strength, confidence, and will. The voice of Saruman is more perilous to the King of Rohan than any other witchcraft, and as a result, the wizard has managed to use the King's fear to grow old and useless to subdue him by making him believe exactly that he is weak, old, and powerless; he has also used the King's belief to be somewhat inferior from his ancestors ("a lesser son of great sires am I," *TT* III 10: 566) to "bewitch" and weaken him in order to control his land and his actions as a ruler.

As a consequence, the King has failed his people both as a lord and as a protector of the land, his actions (or even inactions), thus having "an impact not only on the people of Rohan but also on the land itself" (Dickerson and Evans 2006: 47); he has also failed as a foster father to Éomer and Éowyn, and as a man in general – he has become totally absent and numb, unable to take his own decisions. He seems to be therefore represented devoid of the hypermasculinity that is so characteristic in the Rohirrim and the code that they represent. Moreover, as Edward H. Thompson, Jr. states, "elders – in particularly, elderly men – are thought to suffer significant losses: Their occupational role, their livelihood and community of co-workers, their health and independence, and their masculinity are commonly thought to be displaced by aging" (1989: 77). Wormtongue has blinded him inasmuch as he cannot see what is happening either in his own house or in his own country. For example, he has been rendered unable to discern that Gríma was disempowering him, he has left his sister-daughter unprotected from the lusty approaches of Gríma, and has imprisoned Éomer following his malevolent counsellor's advice. It is only when Gandalf arrives and talks to him that he is released from Saruman's spell and wakes up from his numb state – he needed one wizard's awakening words to fill him with valour and fight against the anaesthetic speech of the other.

When the King's son and only heir Théodred dies in battle, Éomer becomes Théoden's main heir, given that Théoden had adopted his sister's children, Éomer and Éowyn, when their parents died. Fosterage or adoption appear in several instances in *The Lord of the Rings*, as several characters that have lost both their parents are accepted and mentored by other father figures in the book. Instances of foster-father figures are Bilbo, Gandalf, Elrond and Théoden.

Furthermore, the ill-fated death of most of the characters' mothers seems to have been either a traumatic loss because they were very young when they died (Faramir), or their death was tragic (Frodo's and Arwen's mothers). The scarcity of mothers in Middle-earth, with the exception of Rosie Cotton at the end of the book, and maybe Galadriel, inevitably remind us of Tolkien and his personal tragedy. Moreover, as stated before, Tolkien's father's death also influenced him, to the extent that Burns believes in his fiction there is an "emphasis on the male bloodline" (2005: 8), although this fact is somehow debatable, as it could be argued that this is characteristic of epic poetry in general. Nevertheless, the novel is laden with father figures or male guardians, as if this was an echo both of Tolkien's life (Father Francis) and medieval literature (Merlin in *King Arthur*, Hrothgar in *Beowulf*). Consequently, it is impossible not to relate this absence of fathers and mothers and the presence of guardians or mentors in Middle-earth to Tolkien's own life, despite his dislike of criticism based on an author's biography.

Once the King of Rohan is fully recovered and saved from Wormtongue's influence, Théoden regains his position and is determined to go to war "to fall in the front of the battle, if it must be [and t]hus... sleep better" (*TT* III 6: 507). Théoden is well aware of his age – when he expresses his sympathy over Boromir's death, "the young perish and the old linger, withering" (*TT* III 6: 505), there is also a hint of regret of what he has become – but this will not stop him from taking part in the war. He chooses to embrace the traditional epic warrior's fate: to die an honourable death in battle. When he takes his sword again, part of the masculinity that had been taken away by Gríma, his strength and warrior values are regained. It is easy to read this from a psychoanalytical perspective as a recovery of the phallus; Théoden becomes a "man" again, and now he is ready to go to battle.

As the War of the Ring progresses throughout the narrative, so does Théoden's attitude. He is determined to fight alongside his men, and his eagerness to experiencing the "joy of battle" (*TT* III 7: 526) is manifest while he waits in Helm's Deep. Théoden somehow feels that he needs to make up for his absenteeism; he wants to redeem himself. He seeks glory and honour in battle, which he lost when he fell in Gríma's web; he utterly represents the Northern heroic code, therefore embracing a pattern of masculinity that is based, indirectly, on the destruction of others.

At first glimpse, Théoden's image is that of a very old man, which is what may strike the reader, but despite the fact that age seemed at first to be the cause of his decay, once he is the King of the Riddermark again, Théoden indeed feels less fearful – age becomes a virtue in his case, so he is not afraid of talking to Saruman: “I am old, and fear no peril any more” (*TT* III 10: 563). He will not let his age stand in his way to be remembered for his valiant deeds, so when Éomer counsels him to go back to Edoras and wait for them there, he chooses to remain with his men: “Long years in the space of days it seems since I rode west; but never will I lean on a staff again. If the war is lost, what good will be my hiding in the hills? And if it is won, what grief will it be, even if I fall, spending my last strength?” (*RK* V 3: 775).

The disempowered Théoden of *The Two Towers* regains his full leadership and status in *The Return of the King*. We could say that *ofermod* can only be found in Théoden temporarily as he tries to redeem himself from the mistakes he had made as a puppet of Saruman, but even then, his pride does not exactly take his people blindly to certain death, for they are only trying to honour their alliance with Gondor. The King of Rohan always encourages his men to go to battle, fighting is in the Rohirrim's blood, and glory will only be achieved in the battlefield, where they will fight *with* their king and *for* their king, as Théoden's words show when he talks to the Rohirrim before arriving in Gondor: “Though you fight upon an alien field, the glory that you reap here shall be your own for ever. Oaths ye have taken: now fulfil them all, to lord and land and league of friendship!” (*RK* V 5: 818). We see Théoden in all his glory when he is about to take part in battle, “tall and proud he seemed again; and rising in his stirrups he cried in a loud voice, more clear than any there had ever heard a mortal man achieve before” (*RK* V 5: 819).

We also see Théoden as the head of the *comitatus* when Merry pledges allegiance and becomes esquire of Rohan in *The Return of the King*. According to Croft, “this father wants to protect the children he sees as weaker than himself, in spite of their desires and his own advanced age, but admits the right and duty of his grown sons to risk themselves honorably in battle” (2004: 69). Even though he tries to protect Merry by not allowing him to go to the battlefield, in the end Merry's (and Éowyn's) desire to fight will prove stronger.

Théoden and the Rohirrim are, in Honegger's words, "the embodiment of the 'northern heroic spirit'" (2011: 118); their actions are therefore based on values such as courage, strength, honour, and their desire to win glory in the battlefield. For them there is nothing beyond death, so it is how they die that matters. Both Théoden and Beorhtnoth's priority is not survival but glory. To illustrate this idea, we have Théoden's words right before his death:

Now is the hour come, Riders of the Mark, sons of Eorl! Foes and fire are before you, and your homes far behind. Yet, though you fight upon an alien field, the glory that you reap there shall be your own for ever. Oaths ye have taken: now fulfil them all, to lord and land and league of friendship! (*RK V 5: 818*)

The doom of warriors in epic texts is therefore to die in battle, and this was probably the same doom that "hung over" the Rohirrim (*RK III 5: 785*). In the case of Théoden, when he finally dies in the Pelennor Fields, he is glad that he can die with honour: "My body is broken. I go to my fathers. And even in their mighty company I shall not now be ashamed. I felled the black serpent. A grim morn, and a glad day, and a golden sunset!" (*RK V 6: 824*). Théoden manages to redeem himself right before his death, and his is a "'good' battle death" (Miller 2000: 120), for he achieves glory in it, or as Tolkien says in his essay on *Ofermod*, he has a glorious death.

3.1.2.2. Éomer's hypermasculinity

Théoden's death leaves Rohan with a new king, Éomer, and although Shippey believes that at first Théoden saw Éomer as a "doubtful replacement" (2001: 51), it is clear that he does not die until his sister-son is given the banner of the king, thus officially acknowledging Éomer's new role in front of his men. Even in his death, Théoden proves to be a just king.

When Éomer, the Third Marshal of Riddermark, appears for the first time in *The Two Towers*, at first the reader only sees a group of riders together, all moving powerfully and harmoniously as one; but when they approach Aragorn, Gimli and Legolas, one of them stands out from the others, Éomer, who is "taller than the rest; from his helm as a crest a white horsetail flowed" (*TT III 2: 421*). The Rohirrim are suspicious of anyone who may be in their land without leave from the King, even more

so when they see a man, a dwarf and an elf together. Their first reaction is to narrow them in a circle with their horses; Éomer advancing “until the point of his spear was within a foot of Aragorn’s breast” (ibid.), in what Shippey calls “a streak of nomad ferocity” (2003: 127).

Shippey describes Éomer as a “nice young man,” “compulsively truculent” (2003: 127-129), above all when his men are around, when it seems that his masculinity is heightened, possibly because of the wish to show his men that he is a brave stout-hearted leader. Éomer’s first impulsive reaction is based on suspicion, superstition and ignorance – he does not believe that the Ranger’s true name is Aragorn, he believes the rumours that say that the Lady of the Golden Wood is some kind of sorceress, thus becoming more suspicious of these strangers who seem to have escaped her net. This is his Rohirric nature, which contrasts with Aragorn in their first encounter. Whereas Éomer’s first reaction is inherently aggressive as he threatens Gimli to cut his head off when he defends Galadriel, and also Legolas when the elf protects the dwarf, Aragorn’s attitude is the opposite, as he shows his diplomatic approach and tries to prevent a fight.

In a way the Rohirrim represent some kind of ferocious masculinity within Rohan, even hegemonic, for they base it on the exertion of power over other men. Honegger believes that they are an “archaic warrior-society, based on ‘Germanic’ forms of societal organisation” and describes them as “energetic, outspoken, proud (though not haughty), keen on the preservation of their individual as well as ‘national’ independence, yet at the same time disciplined without succumbing into blind obedience or all-encompassing uniformity” (2011: 118).

Despite having been asked not to allow any stranger in their land, Éomer disobeys his king when he decides to follow his instinct, not only allowing them to go free but also giving them horses. Shippey believes that the “the nice thing about the Riders, one might say, is that though ‘a stern people, loyal to their lord’, they wear duty and loyalty lightly” (Shippey 2003: 125) – Éomer does what he thinks he must, even if he puts himself at risk letting Aragorn and his friends move on to Edoras, which causes “great wonder, and many dark and doubtful glances, among his men, when Éomer gave orders that the spare horses were to be lent to the strangers” (*TT* III 2: 428). Although his disobedience seems to go against his lord and their *comitatus*, for Éomer did not have the King’s leave to pursue the Uruk-hai either, he is a man who in fact thinks for

himself, which does not mean that he is less loyal, but it does mean that he does not act blindly either. With these actions, Éomer is not only risking the King's (or rather Gríma's) wrath, but also losing the respect of his own faction. However, his deeds will prove a hint at his good leadership skills in and outside the battlefield.

Mosher and Sirkin believe that hypermasculine men find danger exciting and they see that surviving dangerous situations "is a manly display of masculine power over the dangerous environment," they are therefore encouraged to participate in "hypermasculine behaviors such as dangerous risk-taking, exploitative sex, or violence" (1984: 152). Éomer, for example, is engaged in these behaviours when he is carried away by his own fury as he sees both his king and foster father, and apparently also his sister, dead. He is so impulsive that he does not think twice and goes to battle to avenge them, his first reaction is thus to resort to violence. However, in this scene fortune eventually "turned against Éomer," as "his fury had betrayed him" (*RK V 6: 827-828*), his "lust of battle," though, never leaving him (*RK V 6: 829*). There is no time to grieve or bury Théoden, war comes first.

Roger Horrocks believes that the "cryptic message of masculinity" is "conceal your weakness, your tears, your fear of death, your love for others. Conceal your impotence. Conceal your potency. [...] Dominate others, then you can fool everyone, especially yourself, that you feel powerful" (1994: 25). Nevertheless, although this quotation could be applied to the hypermasculinity that the Men of Rohan are endowed with, Éomer and the Rohirrim do not conceal exactly their emotions and suggest their humanity by these gestures: they show their fear when they see some Nazgûl as they leave Isengard, when "several of the Riders cried out, and crouched, holding their arms above their heads, as if to ward off a blow from above: a blind fear and a deadly cold fell on them. Cowering they looked up" (*TT III 11: 581*); Éomer weeps when he sees his king dead and also, what moves Éomer to fight for Aragorn is not just a sense of duty and honour, but also a love that he does not fail to express in words, "Since the day when you rose before me out of the green grass of the downs I have loved you, and that love shall not fail" (*RK VI 5: 948*).

The Men of Rohan therefore represent the heroic values that Tolkien admired so much and are far from the chivalrous attitudes he criticized in *The Homecoming*. Their

hypermasculinity, their power and respect for the Northern heroic code that takes them to fight in the Pelennor Fields proves finally also essential in the destruction of the Ring. The writer therefore endows them with the positive traits of the Northern spirit found in epic texts. However, not all the characters who could be regarded as hypermasculine share these positive characteristics, as the following sections will show.

3.2. Gondor and its stewards

3.2.1. Denethor: declining steward

The Silmarillion relates that the realms of Gondor and Arnor were founded by Elendil's sons, Isildur and Anárion, and they were inhabited by Númenoreans that arrived in this land after the drowning of Númenor. After living an era of wealth and prosperity, Gondor began to decline because of several reasons: the line of Anárion's son failed and the Númenoreans' blood was less "pure" as they mingled with other Men. As a result, they lost some inherent characteristics, they became less powerful and wise, and did not live as long as they used to (Tolkien 1998: 296).

The line of Númenorean kings therefore faded away, and when the last king Eärnur died, there seemed to be nobody of pure blood that would claim the throne (1991: Appendix A, 1027), so the kingdom was left to the Stewards, who would rule it until the arrival of a rightful heir. Thus, when the War of the Ring starts, Denethor is the 26th Steward of Gondor, and in the appendices he is described as a "proud man, tall, valiant, and more kingly than any man that had appeared in Gondor for many lives of Men; and he was wise also, and far-sighted, and learned in lore" (1030).

The realms of Rohan and Gondor are very different in many respects: the society of Rohan is, as aforementioned, an archaic tribal organization that relies on oral tradition and songs to praise the deeds of its heroes, which contrasts with the more sophisticated Gondor, whose extensive library, which Gandalf visits regularly, provides an example of their interest in learning and lore. Whereas Rohan is an Anglo-Saxon reconstruction, Gondor rather resembles Byzantium, and as Gondorians come from the line of the Númenoreans, they are also historically and culturally regarded as "higher" if compared with the "lesser Rohirrim." The state in which we find Gondor at the end of

the Third Age resembles historically a declining Byzantium, or as Tolkien referred to it, an “increasingly impotent Byzantium” (Carpenter 1995: 157). The cultural differences between Rohan and Gondor are shown in numerous instances throughout the book: in the Council of Elrond, later when Merry and Pippin become esquires of Théoden and Denethor, respectively, and between characters like Éomer and Aragorn, who are faithful representatives of their societies.

Denethor and Théoden also prove to be very different ruling figures in Middle-earth. Both as a steward and as a father, Denethor is authoritarian, dominant, stubborn, and imposing, and when he sees that his plans do not go according to what he has in mind, his answer is death. Consequently, he represents a type of masculinity that is constructed on the domination, oppression and power over everyone else, including other men, even his own sons, Boromir and Faramir. However, he is not completely to blame for this, for his mind is also under someone else’s influence. The Denethor we find at the end of the Third Age is very different from how he was in his youth, and one of the main causes of this is not revealed to the reader until the steward is about to die. His use of Anárion’s *palantír*, which is directly connected with Sauron, has had devastating consequences in Denethor, who, believing himself capable of “dominating” it, has become dependent on it and has lost his own free will to discern what is happening in his own realm, manipulated by Sauron, who controls what the steward can see in the stone.

Apart from Sauron’s manipulation, which is the first consequence of Denethor’s use of the *palantír*, the steward is also prematurely aged, as is related in the *Unfinished Tales* and the Appendices. Sauron has used in Denethor the same strategy that Saruman used with Théoden: they have made the rulers of Rohan and Gondor older than they are, hence putting their hypermasculinity at risk by making them believe they have grown powerless. If hypermasculinity in the patriarchal societies of Rohan and Gondor is understood as a display of physical strength and power and the perception of danger as exciting, although Denethor still takes risks when looking into the *palantír*, he has completely lost his power over himself and his physical strength has lessened as he has grown older and weaker after his struggles with the Dark Lord.

His pride had taken the steward to believe that he was strong enough to resist Sauron, and started to use the stone right after his wife's death, but this inevitably affected his qualities as steward, for although he became more knowledgeable in the things that happened in his realm, "he bought the knowledge dearly, being aged before his time by his contest with the will of Sauron" (Appendix A 1031). When Gandalf and Pippin are about to meet Denethor, Gandalf compares him to Théoden and refers to the steward as a man who is "proud and subtle, a man of far greater lineage and power, though he is not called a king" (*RK V 1: 737*). Appendix A also explains that "pride increased in Denethor together with despair [...] and mistrusted all others who resisted Sauron, unless they served himself alone" (1031); this excessive pride and obsession prevent him from listening to anyone who may try to give him some piece of advice – he thought that what he had seen in the stone was true, unaware that Sauron was actually controlling what he wanted Denethor to see.

Denethor is not only a steward that has failed his people but is also a flawed father. Croft suggests that Denethor's relationship with his sons is based on the father's attempt to control his offspring in every possible way (2004: 69), but it could also be argued that it is just one of his tasks as leader to control what his vassals do, and in the case of Boromir and Faramir, they are not only his sons but also captains of Gondor, so the steward's relationship with them is personal and professional at the same time. Denethor is authoritarian both as a father and as a leader, the boundaries between them not always clear when he talks to his sons. Jungian analyst and psychiatrist Jean Shinoda Bolen believes that authoritarianism sometimes has dysfunctional relationships as a result (1992: 6), and Denethor's relationship with Faramir has at times certain traits that remind us of this type of relationship.

In Appendix A readers are told that Denethor loved his wife deeply and he had indeed a favourite son, the eldest, Boromir, who he loved even more than his wife. Finduilas's death affected the steward deeply, and he "became more grim and silent than before" (Appendix A, 1031). His emotional inarticulateness worsens with the passing of time and he becomes a colder man and an estranged father, mainly as the result of his use of the *palantír*, as has been stated above. Apart from Sauron's influence on him, there might be other reasons behind his emotional detachment. Gandalf hints at one of them when he talks to Pippin at their arrival in Minas Tirith: Denethor loved his

son Boromir “*too much* perhaps [my emphasis]; and the more so because they were unlike” (*RK V 1: 737*). After many generations without a king, Denethor, who has been highly regarded and has enjoyed a certain status in Gondor so far, may have very well projected on his own son Boromir his secret aspiration for the Stewardship to be permanent. His relationship with his sons is also clearly marked by his open favouritism for his elder son, which is clear in several instances in the book. Although it is mentioned in the Appendices that there was never rivalry or jealousy between the brothers, this patriarchal preference for the first-born undoubtedly affected Denethor’s emotionally strained relationship with his second-born, who is paradoxically “like him in looks but otherwise in mind” (Appendix A 1031).

The first time Denethor expresses his preference is when he does not hesitate to admit that he would have preferred Faramir to go to Rivendell (and therefore die), rather than Boromir (*RK V 1: 738*), even openly to Faramir, which is even more painful. Denethor’s second-born was aware of this, for even when Boromir attended the Council of Elrond, he stated that his younger brother “was eager to heed the dream and seek for Imladris; but since the way was full of doubt and danger, I took the journey upon myself. Loth was my father to give me leave” (*FR II 2: 240*). This reluctance is heightened after Boromir’s death, for which Denethor blames Faramir, and every time he exchanges a few words with his younger son, it is with bitterness and resentment. Had he not sent Boromir to Imladris, he would not have lost his favourite son; believing his son to be strong and powerful, it very well could be that Denethor never thought Boromir might fail in his mission, so he may feel somewhat guilty for having allowed him to leave.

Apart from the effects that this preference on primogeniture may have had for Denethor and Faramir, their relationship is also strained because the father believes himself discredited by Gandalf in the case of Faramir, who has taken a liking for the wizard, known as Mithrandir in Gondor, as he helps him satiate his thirst for knowledge. Denethor always distrusted him and his jealousy always made him see Gandalf with suspicion: “Less welcome did the Lord Denethor show me than than of old, and grudgingly he permitted me to search among his hoarded scrolls and books” (*FR II 2: 245*). Moreover, his treatment of Faramir is not only that of a father who is emotionally detached but also an unjust lord when his captain returns from battle:

Your bearing is lowly in my presence, yet it is long now since you turned from your own way at my counsel. See, you have spoken skilfully, as ever; but I, have I not seen your eye fixed on Mithrandir, seeking whether you said well or too much? He has long had your heart in his keeping.

My son, your father is old but not yet dotard. I can see and hear, as was my wont; and little of what you have half said or left unsaid is now hidden from me. (RK V 4: 794)

He thus acknowledges that he knows of his son's admiration for Gandalf – he has always been jealous of the father-figure Gandalf has represented for Faramir, as he could see his own failure in it.

In a letter to Naomi Mitchison in 1954, Tolkien claims that he never made his characters exclusively good or bad, there were not two clear sides in Middle-earth, contrary to what some critics like Muir stated at the time. However, this is difficult to see in the case of Denethor, particularly at the end of his days in Gondor. When he believes Faramir to be near death, interpreting this as the end not just of Gondor but of the lineage of the stewards, he loses his mind and decides to set himself and his son on a pyre. It is only at the end when he has fallen into despair that we are shown how old he has grown, and it is possible to link his age with his utter loss of hope. In a moment of utter selfishness, believing that there is no future either for himself or his son, and thinking only of himself, he gives in to despair and decides to commit suicide. He is no longer the hypermasculine steward that was powerful, knowledgeable and in control of everything (or that is what Sauron made him believe). He could have chosen to fight, to face Sauron and go to battle; instead, in his desperation, he can only see death as an end to his problems. Believing that Sauron has finally managed to get his Ring back and that this heralds the end of his realm (Shippey 2001: 172), and “convinced of the inevitable failure of Gondor and its allies,” he “commits suicide and advises everyone else to do the same, rather than be a slave under a puppet government” (Croft 2004: 26).

In the same letter to Naomi Mitchison, Tolkien explains Denethor's death as follows:

Denethor *was* tainted with mere politics: hence his failure, and his mistrust of Faramir. It had become for him a prime motive to preserve the polity of Gondor, as it was, against another potentate, who had made himself stronger and was to be feared and opposed for that reason rather than because he was ruthless and wicked. Denethor despised lesser men, and one may be sure did not distinguish between

orcs and the allies of Mordor. If he had survived as victor, even without use of the Ring, he would have taken a long stride towards becoming himself a tyrant, and the terms and treatment he accorded to the deluded peoples of east and south would have been cruel and vengeful. (Carpenter 1995: 241)

Denethor never manages to redeem himself for his heart is full of envy and hopelessness – he has never quite accepted the fact that one day the true King will be back, his position as Steward not being enough for him, and he has lost all remaining hopes to see Gondor survive Sauron’s attack. When Aragorn presents himself as the heir to the throne of Gondor, Denethor cannot bow to him, on the grounds that he sees him as the “last of a ragged house long bereft of lordship and dignity” (*RK V 7*: 836). The type of masculinity he represents is thus characterized by his lust for the domination of others. We could also say that Denethor provides us with an instance of *ofermod*, for his “overmastering pride” and overconfidence in his own strength and skills make him believe that he is stronger than Sauron and can restrain him. However, he ends up yielding to cowardice and desperation in the end, thus representing the end of the old declined Gondor.

3.2.2. Boromir’s hypermasculinity

Boromir is first introduced in the book as “a tall man with a fair and noble face, dark-haired and grey-eyed, proud and stern of glance” (*FR II 2*: 234), which can be connected with his description in Appendix A, which says that he is like his father “in face and pride, but in little else.” Also, he is “a man after the sort of King Eärnur of old, taking no wife and delighting chiefly in arms; fearless and strong, but caring little for lore, save the tales of old battles” (1031); indeed he is more interested in fighting than his brother, and excels in the battlefield. In Scheps’s view, “the explanation of Boromir’s behavior, his pride, vainglory, and selfishness, has already been alluded to: the blood of Westernesse does not run as truly in him as it does in his father and brother” (1975: 50). Actually, despite being a man of Gondor, Éomer also sees Boromir as “more like to the swift sons of Eorl than to the grave Men of Gondor” (*TT III 2*: 425). He is thus closer to the hypermasculine Rohirrim than the Gondorians.

As has been aforementioned, Boromir is Denethor’s heir, so he will inherit the position of Steward of Gondor when his father dies, until the rightful King comes back.

Like Éomer, he bases his (hyper)masculinity in his physical strength and his power, even “Pippin marvelled at his strength, seeing the passage that he had already forced with no other tool than his great limbs” (*FR* II 3: 285-286). The difference between them is that although Éomer will be king one day because Théoden’s son is dead, Boromir can only aspire to be a steward, not a king (although hierarchically in Middle-earth, a steward of Gondor is above a King of Rohan).

One of the main differences between Boromir and Faramir lies in their perception of war. Appendix A compares them and states that although Faramir’s courage was “judged less than his brother’s,” it was not because they were not equally strong, but because Faramir “did not seek glory in danger without a purpose” (1031). The brothers believed each other to have no rivals in the battlefield, but as “Boromir was the helper and protector of Faramir,” he decided to go to the Council of Elrond instead of his younger brother. Despite the fact that the prophetic dream he and his brother had came first and more often to Faramir, Denethor’s heir decided to take the journey himself because the way was perilous. Contrary to his brother, Boromir believes that “valour needs first strength, and then a weapon” (*FR* II 2:260), not knowledge or strategies.

The character of Boromir is full of lights and shadows as the plot progresses and he suffers from what Chance has identified as moral deterioration (2010: 57). His excess of pride and lack of humility condemn him from the very beginning. In the Council of Elrond, he feels threatened by Aragorn when Elrond clarifies that he is a descendant of Isildur. He is full of doubt about Aragorn, and, in their conversation, their differences are heightened, for even if they are both “Men of Gondor,” their upbringing has been different. Whereas Aragorn is a pure-blooded Númenorean, the blood of Westergesse runs true in Faramir but not in Boromir (*RK* V 1: 742), as Gandalf explains to Pippin. This clearly highlights the fact that masculinity differs from one character to another depending on the surrounding circumstances. Aragorn speaks from the perspective of a person who is humble but certain of his origins and his fate. On the other hand, proud Boromir does not quite believe what Aragorn says about being the heir of Elendil, and mocks him with these words: “Mayhap the Sword-that-was-Broken may still stem the tide – if the hand that wields it has inherited not an heirloom only, but the sinews of the Kings of Men” (*FR* II 2: 261).

From Boromir's point of view, the fact that he is facing a man who claims to be Isildur's heir has a significant meaning for him: this would mean that the stewardship of Gondor has come to an end, for the so-long-awaited King is finally come. For a long time, the men in his family have been the Stewards of Gondor, they have ruled this land on their own, so their "reigning period" is coming to an end. Moreover, in a conversation between Frodo and Faramir, the latter confesses that his brother could not understand how, after so many years waiting for a king that did not come, they could not be kings of Gondor, which makes us believe that Boromir somehow may have aspired to be something more than just a steward. Bearing in mind Kaufman's words that "masculinity is power" (1987: 13), once Boromir sees his future as steward challenged by the appearance of Aragorn, he sees his own hierarchical status and his power threatened as well. He feels thus disempowered and this affects his initial relationship with Aragorn, so that, from the Council of Elrond onwards, he will always feel that his status is challenged by Aragorn's mere existence.

The fact that he feels superior is evident when he laughs at Bilbo's volunteering to destroy the Ring. His pride makes him claim that he has not attended the Council of Elrond seeking "allies in war" (*FR* II 2: 239), but counsel from Elrond. This self-sufficiency blinds him, as he remarks that "the Men of Gondor are valiant, and they will never submit; but they may be beaten down" (*FR* II 2: 260). He has not fully understood what the consequences of bearing the Ring would be, and although Elrond explains to him why nobody can wear it, for even the slightest desire of it "corrupts the heart" (*FR* II 2: 261), he still has his doubts. Like his father, Boromir provides a clear example of *ofermod*, for he is clearly overconfident in his own integrity to be corrupted by the Ring.

Boromir cannot understand why such an important weapon that might help them to win the war must be destroyed. He believes that they can use it for a good cause and that the Great Ring may have "come into our hands to serve us in the very hour of need" (*FR* II 2: 260). Boromir may want to use the Ring, not just to save his city and its people but, as part of the Northern heroic code, to gain glory. In fact, Faramir infers that Boromir might have wanted Isildur's Bane to save Minas Tirith but also for self-glorification, so he knew his brother very well. Despite his initial good intentions, his lust for power will lead him to his end. However, Boromir certainly cannot be blamed

for trying to be patriotic,⁸ and despite his pride, he finally admits that they need help, but would never dare ask for it: “for though I do not ask for aid, we need it. It would comfort us to know that others fought also with all the means that they have” (*FR* II 2: 261).

It is always clear to him what path he should follow: he wants to go back to Minas Tirith and save his people, but he decides to accompany the Fellowship from the beginning thinking that at some stage they will help him, as Aragorn had promised. In Lothlórien, he repeats again his wish to go back to his people, but also admitting that he is not the leader of the Company, leaving all possibilities of choice to a “doubtful and troubled” Aragorn (*FR* II 8: 358). Even without having touched the Ring, its influence on him steadily grows until it becomes obvious in Lothlórien, where Frodo sees something strange in the way Boromir looks at him. He begins to lose his self-control after leaving this land, when he is sitting on the boat “muttering to himself, sometimes biting his nails, as if some restlessness or doubt consumed him, sometimes seizing a paddle and driving the boat close behind Aragorn's”, with “a queer gleam in his eye, as he peered forward gazing at Frodo” (*FR* II 9: 373). The time is coming when they will have to decide what course to follow, and Boromir’s intention has not changed; he wants to go back to Gondor, and, in order to do so, he wants (and needs) the Ring. Therefore, when he sees that Aragorn chooses to go first to Amon Hen, he follows him because that is what Frodo will do. Even if his initial intention was to accompany the members of the Fellowship to help the Ring-bearer get rid of his burden, as he has fallen under the influence of the Ring, he believes that if he follows Frodo, he will be able either to convince him not to destroy it or to take it himself.

Boromir is not aware of the fact that he has already fallen prey to the power of the Ring. He wants the Ring madly; he is desperate to avoid its destruction, so he ends up confronting Frodo in an attempt to persuade him to give him the Ring. In this desperation and his later regret and repentance, Boromir appears, in Hammond and Scull’s words, “a tragic figure with many good qualities, but with weaknesses that lay him open to temptation. The Ring has been able to play on his wish to save his country

⁸ Shippey remarks how his patriotism and love of Gondor is what initially takes Boromir to try to steal the Ring from Frodo, “but when this leads him to exalt ‘strength to defend ourselves, strength in a just cause’, our modern experience of dictators immediately tells us that matters would not stay there” (Shippey 2003: 138).

and on his desire for personal glory” (2005: 349); he is indeed the tragic hero of *The Lord of the Rings* with a tragic flaw that brings about his downfall. At the end of the chapter “The Departure of Boromir,” he pays with his life his attempt to save Merry and Pippin, and although Dickerson and Evans state that his “motivations provide one of the worst examples of human fallibility,” he also “exhibits the virtue of self-sacrifice in his final moments” (2006: 254). So when he lies, mortally wounded, with many Orcs that he had killed around him, we can see the image of a warrior who has found his death in battle, who has earned his glory and honour fighting. It is undeniable that his is, indeed, a “good death,” which, according to Miller, is “the proper or fitting death – for the hero is violent, for he *is* the incarnation of deadly force” (2000: 120).

Boromir’s end also resembles a Christian deathbed confession, as he tells Aragorn the truth of his deeds, that he tried to take the Ring from Frodo, and Aragorn’s “words of reassurance” “also suggest the benediction and absolution of a priest” (Burns 2005: 139). Furthermore, his last thoughts go to his people as he asks Aragorn to go to Minas Tirith and save them. According to Gandalf, “he escaped in the end” (*TT* III 5: 485), he redeemed himself, whereas his father did not. Even if both Denethor and Boromir are overtaken by *ofermod*, the fact that their actions at the end of their lives are so different is significant. Boromir embodies both heroic and Christian values at different times in the plot, so in fighting the Uruk-hai he does not only achieve glory, but more importantly, he does not give in to despair, like his father, but fights until the end hoping to save the hobbits, eventually sacrificing himself. Therefore, whereas Tolkien is criticizing the *ofermod* as embodied by Denethor, he praises the fact of being able to redeem one’s sins in the character of Boromir.

3.3. Hypermasculinity, an obsolete pattern of hegemonic masculinity in Middle-earth

The rulers of Gondor and Rohan and their heirs perform a type of heteronormative masculinity which aims at exerting some manly virtues, for in the patriarchal world they live in, they are expected to do so. In the Foreword of his book *Men in the Public Eye. The Construction and Deconstruction of Public Men and Public Patriarchies*, Hearn prefers to talk about “patriarchies” in plural as they can be “dominated by different

types of men, operating simultaneously, overlapping, interrelating, contradicting” (1992: 3). The societal differences between Gondor and Rohan also mark the different types of patriarchies they have. Indeed, they have in common the fact that they are characterized by the domination of men and a hegemonic type of masculinity, which is hypermasculinity. However, even in their portrayal of this, they are somewhat different, as we have seen in the analysis of the characters that represent these societies.

Kimmel also points at the existence of two types of patriarchies, public and domestic. Whereas the public one is more based on the way a society is institutionally arranged, with the “predominance of males in all power positions within the economy and polity,” domestic patriarchy can be referred to as the way a society is emotionally arranged, which in some cases means a mere reproduction of men’s public power in their private life (2005: 417).

In the case of Théoden, Éomer, Denethor and Boromir, they represent dominant patterns of masculinity based on physical and military prowess and power. Théoden and Denethor provide us with instances of a hegemonic type of masculinity in the Third Age which is based on male domination over other men, and which results in different consequences. Several authors define this type of masculinity as characterized by stoicism, phallocentricity, competitiveness and heroic achievement (Higate and Hopton 2005: 433). Concerning the world of Men in Middle-earth, all the characters that can be regarded as hypermasculine are endowed with these traits, but how they develop in the story is quite significant, for the nuances in their performances point at different hypermasculinities.

Théoden and Denethor have contrasting ways of leadership: while Denethor is a cold loveless tyrant (even with his own sons), probably chiefly as a consequence of his use of the *palantír*, Théoden bases his own superior status on love and respect, which is what makes his Rohirrim regard their *comitatus* with reverence, even after seeing their lord fail. According to Chance, “Denethor confuses love with service, desire with need, power with value. Perhaps Denethor’s greatest crime is to put himself before all of Middle-earth: to imagine the ‘mighty gift’ of the Ring as a test of his son’s love” (2010: 107). Therefore, whereas the Men of Gondor follow the Steward out of duty, the Men of Rohan follow their King willingly and because they love their lord. Moreover, although we find both rulers in similar situations and under the control of more powerful

characters as they are introduced in the development of the plot, the dénouement of their individual sub-plots is meaningful: whereas they are both fathers in bereavement for the deaths of their sons, Théoden manages to overcome his personal grief and finally fight in the Pelennor Fields as is his duty, thus achieving a glorious death, but in contrast, Denethor is eventually carried away by the power that Sauron has on him and falls into the Dark Lord's trap believing that this is the end of his lineage.

Chance considers that Denethor fails as a “father, a master, a steward, and a rational man” (1979: 121). In the end he is carried away by his own *ofermod*, his excessive pride, “the concentration of power and the will to dominate” (Croft 2004: 146) which finally lead him to commit suicide. Whereas Éomer and Théoden represent the Northern heroic code and act accordingly, the concept of *ofermod* seems to be criticized through Denethor and Boromir – the excess of pride in these Men of Gondor offer the most negative side of the Northern spirit. However, Boromir's death at the end shows the positive consequence of repentance, which leads to redemption.

Boromir and Éomer are more focused on their military leadership. As stated by Mosse, “the association of militarism and masculinity had always been present” (1996: 109), and it is in the battlefield where they really feel at ease and where they can really show how their masculinity is based on the search for (military) glory. All of them are closer to death than other characters in the sense that they either aim at killing their enemies, thus showing their military prowess, or they seek their own death, by means of which they will achieve glory in battle, as epic heroes do.

Théoden and Boromir finally manage to die heroically, irrespective of their previous mistakes in the story. When setting himself in favour of a more sophisticated culture than that of Rohan or the declined Gondor, what Bowman suggests that Tolkien is doing is reshaping “the northern heroic spirit” into a type of heroism which is more acceptable (2010: 106). Through the deaths of Théoden, Denethor and Boromir, the main representatives of hypermasculinity in Middle-earth, the text hints at the end of a type of hegemonic masculinity which therefore seems to be obsolete, in favour of the type of masculinity that will be analysed in chapter 4. It is the end of *ofermod* in Middle-earth and the end of Old English epic hypermasculinity in favour of a different

type of hegemonic masculinity, which is the one performed by characters like Aragorn, Faramir and Gandalf.

3.4. Jackson's reconstruction of hypermasculinity

3.4.1. Théoden

The New Zealand director Peter Jackson and his screenwriters Philippa Boyens and Fran Walsh wanted to reconstruct Rohan for the big screen as the Anglo-Saxon location it resembles in the book. However, despite the stunning visual debt the Great Hall or the armoury of the Rohirrim, for example, have with Anglo-Saxon culture, the director decided to construct a King of Rohan that was indeed a visual challenge. Théoden has fallen into despair and has been led to believe that he is older than he really is, thus powerless. The first image of the King that appears in the Extended Edition of *The Two Towers* is therefore very much the physical and mental description of this character in the third volume of Tolkien's book, as can be seen in the screenshot below: old, half blind, dispossessed of his own will, which is at the mercy of Wormtongue and, in consequence, of Saruman. Despite this similarity, the King's behaviour from this moment onwards will differ considerably from the book.



After his recovery, which takes longer on screen than in the book, the King's determination to take part in the battle straight away is totally absent. The Théoden that Gandalf and the rest of the Fellowship find in Meduseld moves from being a father that seems to hear about his son Théodred's death indifferently to a father that is indeed in bereavement when he is released from Saruman's spell. Moreover, he is in a certain way

recovering from Wormtongue's control, but despite Gandalf's urging him to fight, "You *must* fight" (my emphasis), Théoden can only answer, with his son's death still recent: "I will not bring further death to my people. I will not risk open war" (*Towers* Scene 20). In the book, he is immediately given his sword and begins to regain his stature as king, calling the Rohirrim to arms, the change that has taken place in him evident to his men who, "thinking that they were summoned, sprang up the stair. They looked at their lord in amazement, and then as one man they drew their swords and laid them at his feet. 'Command us!' they said" (*TT* III 6: 506). This charisma that drives his people closer to their king is nowhere to be seen in the film, where the character is not as assertive as in the book, and where he proves to be, according to Croft, "an ineffective leader" (2011: 218), at least in the first scenes where he seems reluctant to lead his men to war.

The King's overprotective attitude towards his people is slightly striking in the society of Rohan, with all the values it instils in the Rohirrim. Although the scriptwriter Boyens states in the director's commentary that the changes in *The Fellowship of the Ring* are far more important than those in *The Two Towers*, it cannot be denied that they are more dramatic for those spectators that are familiar with Tolkien's Théoden. Neither as active nor as strong as his literary counterpart, the celluloid Théoden does not encourage his people to go to war; on the contrary, he decides to take them to Helm's Deep for their safety. For the king of a society that is eminently warlike, finds joy in fighting and seeks honour in the battlefield, this is somewhat contradictory, although it might have a double interpretation. On the one hand, if spectators are familiar with the books, they will be prone to regard Théoden as a coward. However, on the other hand, Jackson is highlighting Théoden's intention to protect his people – in the film he regrets the high number of losses so far in battle, thus this seems to be a more modern interpretation of the King.

Once in Helm's Deep, as Aragorn arrives and informs him of the thousands of orcs that are getting nearer the Hornburg, Théoden states about the Men of Rohan that "their courage hangs by a thread" (*Towers* Scene 43), for in fact, in the battle of Helm's Deep we can see that even children and old men who can wield a weapon are asked to fight. Aware of his mistakes with both his people and his own kin, and with his own son's recent death too fresh in his mind, Théoden does not want to go to war, in an

attempt to prevent more of his people from dying. He is therefore well aware that part of his mistakes affected his own descendants: there lies the guilt of having seen Théodred die, and also his mistakes as a foster father to Éowyn, as he admits that he is “an old man who should have loved her as a father” (*Towers* Scene 32), and who is even unable to let her know in Helm’s Deep that Aragorn has died falling off a cliff. At the same time, as this character evolves in the film, he represents the Northern heroic spirit as he tells Aragorn: “if this is to be our end, then I would have them make such an end as to be worthy of remembrance” (*Towers* Scene 43). Concerning the King’s hesitation to go and help Gondor since they allegedly stopped helping Rohan and other changes in the films, Shippey suggests that “they lie in the different politico-military expectations of a 21st century audience. Tolkien’s English contemporaries could accept without trouble the idea that the forces of evil might just be stronger than those of good: it was part of their real-world experience” (2007: 375). Therefore, Shippey also believes that a 21st-century American audience nowadays needs another explanation for failure, and that is why Jackson bases it on “disunity and despair,” and creates a King that is disillusioned (*ibid.*).

Tolkien’s Théoden is back to his former self the very first minute that he holds his sword again: “as his fingers took the hilt, it seemed to the watchers that firmness and strength returned to his thin arm. Suddenly he lifted the blade and swung it shimmering and whistling in the air. Then he gave a great cry” (*TT* III 6: 506). On the contrary, Jackson’s Théoden has lost his identity; he is a character full of doubts: “Who am I, Gamling?” (*Towers* Scene 46). Tolkien’s Théoden contrasts thus with Jackson’s more “human” king, who does not take advice easily, not even from Aragorn (in “The King’s Decision” he tells the Dúnedain: “When last I looked, Théoden, not Aragorn, was King of Rohan”) or Gimli (in “Aragorn’s Return” he tells the Dwarf: “I know how to defend my own keep”). Jackson therefore explores a different side of Théoden, less epic and more real to the spectator’s eyes.

It is in the scene “Where is the Horse and the Rider?” that Théoden recites the verses that echo *The Wanderer*, which in the book were given to Aragorn. It somehow seems quite sensible to give these elegiac words to Théoden, for it is his own civilization which is in decay, so he is verbally expressing the glorious past of his people, now gone. In the battle in Helm’s Deep it is Aragorn that tries to give the Elvish warriors some reassuring and encouraging words, not the King of Rohan, who after all

is the King that the Elves are helping in that moment. Aragorn's activity contrasts with Théoden's passive waiting; Aragorn proves to be a more effective leader by guiding them in their fight from the beginning, whereas Théoden only starts fighting at the very end. In "Forth Eorlingas" Théoden's despair in Helm's Deep is clear when it seems that all is lost as he says "The fortress is taken. It is over." Moreover, he seems to be numb and in shock as he is lost in thoughts for a second, as he wonders "So much death. What can men do against such reckless hate?," which contrasts with Aragorn's resolute attitude as he asks him to ride with him, "for death and glory," as Théoden says (*Towers* Scene 58). As they are about to lose the battle, Aragorn still tries to defend them and eventually manages to convince the King to ride with him, this being the first image of a fierce Théoden that Jackson gives the audience.

In the book it is Théoden who asks Aragorn to ride with him, "Will you ride with me then, son of Arathorn?" (*TT* III 7: 527), and Jeremy Mark Robinson sees in this reversing of the roles an Aragorn that is more "pro-active" in contrast with a Théoden that is "a reluctant ruler" (2011: 516). In fact, this could be regarded as an attempt to give Aragorn more prominence as a leader, as if this was some necessary preparation for what is yet to come for the king in disguise. Furthermore, Théoden does not hesitate to acknowledge that it is Aragorn who is to be looked up to: "It was not Théoden of Rohan who led our people to victory" (*Return* Scene 5), praising this way the figure of Aragorn.

Jackson's Théoden does indeed evolve, as the Théoden in the battle of the Pelennor Fields resembles his counterpart in the book. In fact, one of his actions was suggested by Bernard Hill, the actor who plays the King of Rohan, in the scene "The Ride of the Rohirrim," where he encourages his people by delivering an uplifting speech at the same time as he clashes his sword with the Rohirrim's spears, an action which he thought would intensify the courage that the King wants to instil in them, closing with his battle cry "Death!," echoed by his men.

By removing part of the hypermasculinity inherent in the epic code that Théoden represents, and creating a king that is not as decisive, authoritarian and charismatic as his literary counterpart, Jackson and the scriptwriters have created a king that is more "human," a man that resembles a flawed or imperfect leader, maybe more believable for the 21st-century spectators, reducing thus the prefix "hyper" from the type of

masculinity that the director assigns to him. Only at the end is the audience given a glimpse of Tolkien's Théode. The absent king, or rather, leader that is introduced in the scene "The King of the Golden Hall," regains his full stature at the end of *The Two Towers*, and in the Pelennor Fields when he encourages his men to go to war we see part of the lust for battle so characteristic of Rohan, the "theory of courage" only fully present then. Aragorn was militarily in charge of the battle in Helm's Deep but now it is Théoden's turn to show his value in an attempt to redeem himself for his recent past actions and to achieve the type of honour expected of him.

Although all the aforementioned reasons are the evidence that Jackson's Théoden does not seem to have been endowed with the same pattern of masculinity that he has in the book, his longing for redemption was not forgotten by the director. Therefore, in the end he managed to achieve his longed-for glory, as he died in the battlefield. Éowyn witnesses everything and runs to her uncle in one of the King's final scenes, as he tells her: "I go to my fathers in whose mighty company I shall not now feel ashamed" (*Return* Scene 54). Jackson did not include the words in which he appoints Éomer as the new king. In this sense, Brian Sibley compares Denethor and Théoden as they have both lost their sons and "have surviving male heirs, but they don't regard them" (*Fellowship* "J.R.R. Tolkien, Creator of Middle-earth").

3.4.2. Éomer

Jackson and his screenwriters' preference for this area of Middle-earth is clearly seen in their reconstruction of Rohan. The decoration of Meduseld, full of horse motives, such as those found on the banners and Théoden's chair, the place where Edoras is set, upon a mound overlooking the plains, the armour of the Rohirrim, Éomer's helmet, etc., all these details heighten the influence of a literary Anglo-Saxon culture on Tolkien, hence, Jackson's creation of this land. The Rohirrim's appearance in the film is also overpowering; they can be seen riding from a distance with their horses, their armour and their spears, approaching Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli, so all the scene is laden with shots of their strength and military prowess. Jackson was very interested in showing a faithful image of the Rohirrim's horse culture, as can be seen in the following screenshot.



Jackson's Éomer is very much like Tolkien's, except for a few nuances that affect his storyline. When he appears together with Gríma, and the malevolent counsellor refers to Théoden's foster son's "warmongering," the truculent attitude Shippey refers to in *The Road to Middle-earth* is clearly manifest (2003: 127-129). Seen all clad in armour, as a warrior, he cannot hide his loathing for Gríma and for what he is doing to Théoden, hinting in their conversation that he knows he is after his sister ("Too long have you haunted her steps" (*Towers* Scene 8)), a yearning he is not initially aware of in the book. As Gríma manages to make the King banish his nephew from Rohan and Éomer goes into exile with his men, the dramatic tension of the film is increased. As Carretero González suggests, this "also permits the inclusion of the topic of exile, a key aspect of Anglo-Saxon culture and literature, marginally present in *Beowulf* but central to so many Anglo-Saxon elegies" (2015: 42-43).

The fact that Jackson has introduced the banishment of Éomer in the plot does not add any difference in the construction of this character's masculinity, which is very much like the hypermasculinity he is endowed with in the book, all heightened by his close-ups as a fierce warrior, as, for example, in the Pelennor Fields.



Part of this hypermasculinity and his feeling of superiority over others are seen in a conversation that the scriptwriters added before the battle of the Pelennor Fields. As Éomer is sitting down by the fire next to another Rohirrim, he tells Éowyn that Merry's intention of going to war is crazy, and when his sister replies that he has earned that right, very much referring to herself as well, his answer is "You know as little of war as that hobbit" and highlights that "war is the province of Men" (*Return* Scene 29). Moreover, it seems that this character's performance is more developed through his facial expressions and the exertion of physical strength than his dialogues, thus enhancing this image of hypermasculine strong and stout-hearted warrior that Jackson wants to give him.

As unexpected as in the book is Éowyn's participation in the battle of the Pelennor Fields, but Éomer's reaction to his sister's death is somewhat different. Whereas in the book "a cold fury rose in him," in Éomer's close-up holding Éowyn in the film, the image shows an utterly devastated brother crying as he believes his sister to be dead.



Due to time constraints in the films, the character of Éomer is not developed to the same length as he is in the book, and readers are likely to miss some important exchanges between Éomer and Aragorn, which explain Éomer's sense of duty towards Aragorn and the fact that he fights *for* and *with* him out of love. Similarly, it is not explained how Éomer becomes the new King of Rohan, although it is easy to infer that despite not having been appointed directly by Théoden, Éomer inherits the throne.

3.4.3. Denethor

Anthony S. Burdge and Jessica Burke argue that “the greatest digression from Tolkien” would be Denethor (2004: 142) because Jackson creates this character weaker than Gandalf in their first encounter, when in fact the book presents these characters as more power-balanced. Whether this is the character that departs the most from its literary counterpart would be debatable and subject to interpretation, but Shippey and Croft also agree that Jackson's Denethor is less noble than Tolkien's, and whereas Shippey believes that it is not very difficult for the readers to feel some kind of sympathy for Tolkien's Denethor, “one cannot say the same of Jackson's” (2007: 377).

It is mainly through his actions that the Steward of Gondor is introduced as a failed father and a gradually powerless and negligent steward, above all at the end. Moreover, Jackson also introduces a Denethor that can be seen as a cruel character at times. On the one hand, he does not attend to the needs of his city as he is mourning his elder son's death so “Gandalf must remind him of his duty to set aside his grief and defend his city” (Croft 2011: 219). On the other, Jackson shows the audience that he is a delusional character who appears to see his dead son as he is speaking to Faramir, making his preference for the dead rather than the living even more blatant. Although Jackson's Denethor's dialogues are not as rich as Tolkien's, the Steward of Gondor is indeed a great master of words and knows how to use them to achieve his own benefit, as can be seen in this dialogue between Faramir and his father in which Denethor's emotional blackmail stands out (*Return* Scene 26):

Faramir: What would you have me do?

Denethor: I will not yield the River and Pelennor unfought. Osgiliath must be retaken.

Faramir: My lord, Osgiliath is overrun.

Denethor: Much must be risked in war. Is there a Captain here who still has the courage to do his lord's will?

Faramir: You wish now that our places had been exchanged. That I had died and Boromir had lived.

Denethor: Yes, I wish that.

Faramir: Since you are robbed of Boromir, I will do what I can in his stead.

Denethor is aware that he is sending his son to a certain death but does not seem to care, contrary to the rest of Gondorians who cannot hide their sadness as they say goodbye to Faramir. He has completely lost control of the city and the war, and ignores all types of advice from Gandalf.

As Faramir marches to Osgiliath in the scene "The Sacrifice of Faramir," which so openly explains what is about to happen, the camera goes back to Minas Tirith, where Denethor is with Pippin. This scene, which could be defined as shocking for what it implies, is seen by Shippey as "one of the more blatant uses of cinematic suggestion" (2007: 377). In it, Denethor is having a meal right after sending Faramir to a suicide mission. As if Jackson wanted to show the father's careless disregard for this fact and for what is happening beyond his walls, Denethor is seen in front of a sumptuous feast, eating with his hands, tearing meat with his fingers and gobbling it down, with stains of either red wine or tomato in the corner of his mouth. In the director's commentary, Jackson says that Denethor is deranged and does not even lose his appetite in such a moment, as he is completely disconnected from what is happening.





Shippey states that here he is “made to look greedy, self-indulgent, the epitome of the ‘château general’ who sends men to their deaths while living himself in style and comfort” (ibid.). This scene with Denethor’s close-ups could be seen as a metaphor of how, as a failing father, he devours his son, so it is difficult not to think of Goya’s painting *Saturn Devouring His Son* (circa 1819-1823), insomuch as both scenes could be regarded as the failure of fatherhood,⁹ Denethor’s release of wrath against having lost his adored son instead of the other, or his own conflict with Faramir. Along these lines, Shippey compares Denethor and Faramir’s relationship to a theme that is “particularly popular in recent (American) film, that of the son trying desperately to gain the love of his father, and of the father rejecting (till too late) the love of his son” (2007: 377-378). In the film, Faramir desperately tries to gain his father’s respect, therefore he obeys him and goes on a suicide mission. Although Gandalf reminds him that his father loves him before he leaves, the wizard also states, more to himself than to Faramir, that he will remember it before the end, as if foreseeing what is to happen.

Jackson’s reconstruction of Denethor’s masculinity is similar to Tolkien’s since the director, despite some changes, manages to create a character that is an authoritarian and whose pride prevents him from admitting that Aragorn is the rightful king of Gondor. Denethor greatly represents a dominant hegemonic masculinity that is based on the exertion of power over the rest, even his own sons, because “*Power*, indeed, is the key term when referring to hegemonic masculinities” (Kaufman 1994: 145). Gandalf already hints at the fact that Aragorn was indeed superior to the rest concerning his

⁹ Goya’s painting, based on another one by Rubens, seems to have had quite a few interpretations since it was first exhibited, ranging from cannibalism to the god Kronos’s fear of losing his power (Watson 2015: 23).

lineage, as he tells Pippin of the decay of Gondor by explaining that “the rule of Gondor was given over to lesser men” (*Return* Scene 12), but Denethor does not want to admit it. He is also a father that has no respect for his son Faramir’s life, a man that is cold and cruel, a man that will not and cannot accept the end of his hegemony and his loss of power. In the film, it is not so clear that this Denethor we find is the result of his use of the *palantír*, as he is dominated by it, hence by Sauron. This will prove to be self-destructive for Denethor. He feels closer to Boromir because he admires him as the successful warrior he is, and alienates Faramir because his younger son is not an extension of the hegemonic masculinity that he represents. Although we know from the book that Faramir is more interested in learning than in fighting, this aspect is not so clear in the film, where he appears fighting next to his brother, but Denethor’s view of his second-born is that of a lesser warrior, unlike Boromir, so if Denethor’s masculine ideal is his elder son, Faramir is therefore to his eyes quite un-masculine, unworthy of being his son.

As had happened with Éomer, the character of Denethor is visually richer in his facial expressions than his dialogues, as they range from disgust and wrath when talking to Faramir, to pride and happiness when he is with Boromir. Described as Shakespearean by Jackson, we find indeed certain echoes of two of the Bard’s tragedies in Denethor: he shares with Macbeth the trust in evil sources, as they both receive a wrong interpretation, Denethor from the *palantír* and Macbeth from the three witches, and he shares with King Lear his attitude against his offspring (Petty 2007: 166-167). In the end, his own delusion and desperation, together with his own guilt and grief for the “death” of his younger son, take him to put him in a pyre and finally attempt to immolate himself with Faramir.

3.4.4. Boromir

Jackson’s Boromir shares many similarities with Tolkien’s, but, at the same time, Jackson, Boyens and Walsh added a few scenes in the three films that allow for some deeper reading of this character in his interaction with other characters, more precisely with Aragorn, Faramir and the hobbits. The first time we see Boromir is when he enters Rivendell riding his horse and with his shield, so the spectator may be able to identify him as a warrior. Right after this, he appears in a significant scene with Aragorn, right

before the Council of Elrond, unaware that he is Isildur's heir. The scene opens with a close-up of Aragorn in a place in Rivendell, where he is seen later with a book. The setting of the scene is highly meaningful, for we see that, as Boromir enters the place, he looks in awe at a painting of Isildur wielding Andúril, already broken, and confronting the Dark Lord.

This place in Rivendell is devoted to the keeping of the shards of Narsil, which are held by the statue of a lady, and which Boromir quickly identifies as they appear the same as in the painting. The camera quickly moves several times from a reading Aragorn to Boromir, who holds one of the shards of Narsil with what might be curiosity. When he touches the blade to find out if it is still sharp, he cuts himself; Aragorn, who witnesses this from a certain distance, and Boromir, who is holding the sword, look at each other, the rightful heir of Gondor and the steward-to-be.

This scene could be understood as a metaphor that Jackson uses to tell the audience that Boromir may not be worthy of it or that Narsil is still useful as a sword, even broken. Even if he refers to it as "no more than a broken heirloom" (*Fellowship* Scene 25), his proud look tells the opposite, and shows that he still admires the sword, even if it is incomplete. This scene anticipates the differences between these two warriors – Boromir will prove later on to be the fierce proud warrior that he is in the book, which contrasts with a more learned and serene Aragorn, as we see him in Rivendell.

During the Council of Elrond, Boromir cannot take his eyes off the One Ring when he first sees it; and consequently, Aragorn cannot take his eyes off Boromir. Therefore, Jackson creates a character that is tempted by the Ring very early in the film, almost from the very beginning when he first lays his eyes on it, as he sees it as a small token that could grant them victory against Sauron. Although his speech in the Council is longer in the book, Boromir sees the Ring in both texts as a gift, so his idea is clear: why should it be destroyed? Too much blood has already been spilled by his people, so he sees the Ring as the perfect weapon to wield against the enemy. He cannot understand why the rest of the members of the Council do not want to put it to good use. What is more, he somehow accuses them of not using it when they could, as he thinks that this could grant their victory and would probably save many lives. He sees that his people are in part suffering for this "inaction" and are dying in battle, so his impulsive

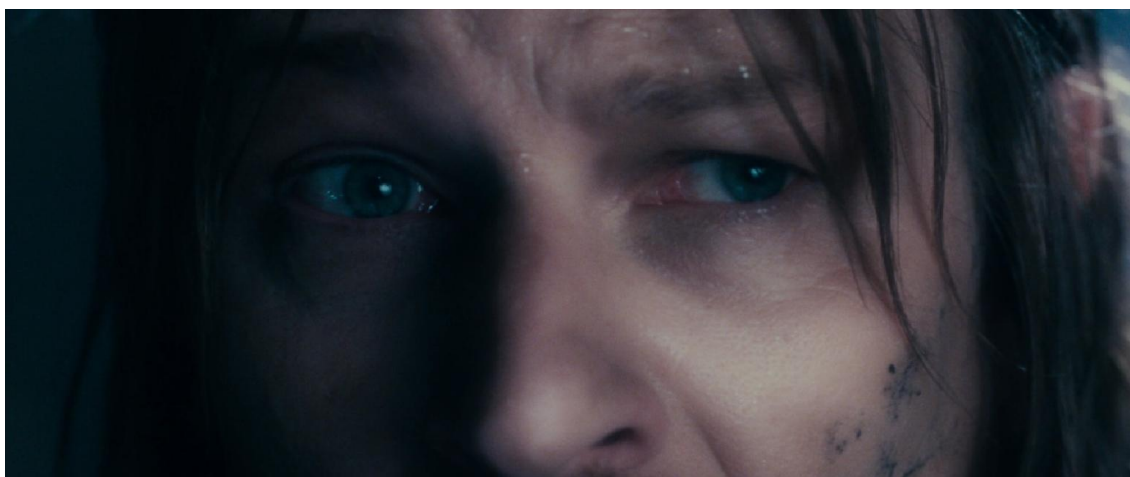
nature therefore makes him stand up and say with pride: “by the blood of our people are your hands kept safe” (*Fellowship* Scene 27).

He does not only accuse the members of the Council of not doing what he thinks they should with the Ring, but he goes even further and refuses the existence of an heir of Gondor by stating that “Gondor has no king” and “Gondor needs no king,” thus both rejecting Aragorn as Isildur’s heir and confirming himself and his kin as ruling heirs of Gondor. He had already implied so in his previous interaction with Aragorn as he gave the shards of Andúril little importance. It is Legolas, instead of Aragorn, who makes Boromir see who the true heir of Gondor is. Aragorn tries to prevent Legolas from causing any hassle on his account, which also serves to introduce another difference between the two Men: whereas Boromir seems to be more passionate, proud and impulsive, Aragorn is, on the contrary, more humble and tactful. In this departure from the book concerning Boromir’s resistance to accept that there is someone that can claim Gondor’s throne, Kristin Thompson suggests that “in the film, Boromir’s resistance to the idea of a king returning to Gondor may not be true to the book, but it creates the drama of his gradual acceptance of Aragorn as his sovereign” (2011: 37). Even if his pride does not allow him to accept Aragorn as his true king initially, he will progressively manage to understand that Gondor has indeed a worthy heir to its throne, acknowledging it when he is about to die.

Furthermore, it is not difficult to see why Boromir does not want to see that the rightful heir of Gondor is finally come. If Aragorn finally claims the throne of Gondor, the stewardship will not be necessary anymore and it will disappear. The proud fierce Boromir, who has proved his prowess in the battlefield and is Denethor’s heir and future steward as long as there is no king, would have to become Aragorn’s subordinate. The scene “Sons of the Steward” in *The Two Towers* may serve to illustrate this, for as Boromir appears speaking to a crowd of people, cheering them up after winning a battle, he is shown in a preeminent position – should he have to acquiesce the existence of a king, he would be relegated to a secondary role, which would be logically difficult for a person that has experienced the sweet taste of success and has believed himself to be the future steward of Gondor.

Boromir is undoubtedly introduced as a character that has a negative side and cannot be trusted: it happens during the Council, as seen in Aragorn’s attitude, it

happens in Caradhras, where a suspicious Aragorn grabs the hilt of his sword waiting for Boromir to give Frodo back the Ring, whose look of longing and lust nearly betray him; and, finally, it happens in Lothlórien, where Galadriel already knows that Boromir is tempted by the Ring and is likely to fall into temptation. Boromir is very uncomfortable in her presence, blinking at her gaze, showing fear and sweating in a close-up. Lady Galadriel has already seen what evil he has inside, hence his assured statement: “I will find no rest here” (*Fellowship* Scene 38).



Øystein Høgset suggests that with all the changes that this character undergoes in the film, “instead of being presented as a hero, all the scenes depicting Boromir do nothing but reinforce the first impression of him being a villain” (2004: 169-170). Notwithstanding, although Høgset explains this labelling of Boromir as a villain as being only a first impression, it seems a little simplistic due to the evolution of this character both in the film and the book. Despite the fact that Jackson’s reconstruction of Boromir can make the audience doubt his inner good nature throughout the film, there are also other moments which show his more positive side, for example, his bonding with the hobbits right after the Council of Elrond, as he is training Pippin and Merry how to fight with a sword, when he even apologizes for hurting the hobbit in this play fight and even plays with them right before they have to hide because some crows are approaching them. Moreover, in one of the director’s audio commentaries in the first film, Jackson states that they never saw Boromir as a villain, but as “somebody who has very legitimate reasons to want to have the Ring” (*Fellowship* Scene 38), so the fact of seeing him as a villain is somewhat subjective, even for a first impression. To understand how they depict Boromir, it is essential to bear in mind where he comes

from, that his people are in danger and that he believes the Ring could help him save them. Furthermore, one of Boromir's most "human" moments that also distance him from this image of villain, is after Gandalf's death, when he asks Aragorn to "give [the hobbits] a moment, for pity's sake" (*Fellowship* Scene 36).

Jackson and his crew also bring Boromir closer to the audience in Lothlórien in a scene when Boromir confides in Aragorn that his father's ruling is failing. There is a significant exchange between them, with Boromir telling him that one day they will be back in Gondor, uttering that "the lords of Gondor have returned." Boromir's words imply here that he sees Aragorn as his equal and not as his superior, his king, for although he is indeed the lord Aragorn, he is also the heir of Gondor. In the same scene the following speech, full of beautiful imagery about Gondor, helps us understand Boromir's "obsession" to save his people, together with his love for his land, clearly expressed in his nostalgic reminiscence:

My father looks to me to set it right, and I would do it, I would see the glory of Gondor restored. Have you seen it, Aragorn? The white tower of Ecthelion glimmering like a spike of pearl and silver, its banners caught high in the morning breeze. Have you ever been called home by the clear ringing of silver trumpets? (*Fellowship* Scene 38)

It is important to bear in mind that this conversation takes place in Lothlórien, where time seems to stop and they are all momentarily safe, but Boromir cannot stop thinking that his people are still dying in battle. Concurrently, "this quiet, meditative passage is spoken by a warrior" (Ricke and Barnett 2011: 283), one who unhesitatingly wants to do as his father commands and does not want to let either him or his people down.

Boyens explains in the director's audio commentaries that Boromir feels that there is something wrong with his father, and that "he is – like any son that loves his father – trying to sort out that paternal conflict he feels between the growing madness of his father and what his father needs and desires of him. And it's a conflict that ends up tearing him apart, and that's how the Ring works" (*Fellowship* Scene 38). He is mostly influenced, as in the book, by his relationship with his father and his own pride, which determines his relationship with Aragorn.

In the films, in the inclusion of one added scene in *The Two Towers*, Boromir's relationship with Denethor is perfectly explained. In "Sons of the Steward," Boromir,

Faramir and their father appear together in Osgiliath after a battle that Boromir has won. Whereas Denethor is all praise to his elder son, he only finds reproaches for his younger son, a moment in which we can see the father's (dis)connection with his kin, as Denethor's genuine admiration for Boromir, his heir, thus contrasts with his unfair treatment and cold speech towards Faramir. This could probably be explained by the Steward of Gondor's blind trust in his elder son, who he believes likely to do his will and bring him the One Ring to defeat Sauron. Nevertheless, Boromir considers his father's contemptible treatment of Faramir unfair, so the bond that Jackson creates between the brothers is similar to their bond in the appendices of the novel.

Concerning Boromir's temptation, the book is more specific about the possibility of the Ring having started to operate upon his wish to use it to save Gondor. In one chapter, for instance, he is presented sitting next to Merry and Pippin and muttering to himself, "sometimes biting his nails, as if some restlessness or doubt consumed him, sometimes seizing a paddle and driving the boat close behind Aragorn's. Then Pippin [...] caught a queer gleam in his eye, as he peered forward gazing at Frodo" (*FR* II 9: 373). As the reader sees how the Ring takes over his will, Boromir's tragic flaw seems easier to accept, and so is his redemption. Høgset argues that the audience does not have this opportunity, as

while Tolkien presents the character of Boromir as one of the truly great heroes of mankind, and shows how the seductive powers of the Ring gradually corrupt and contaminate him until he finally gives in and tries to take the Ring, the adaptation does no such thing. The audience is made aware of Boromir's flawed character from the moment Jackson introduces him. (2004: 169)

Nevertheless, although Boromir's temptation seems to be introduced already in the Council of Elrond, this could be seen as Jackson's attempt to show the audience a character that will likely be tempted by the power of the Ring, but this does not diminish at all the stature of this character, as this will be counterbalanced in other scenes that we have already discussed.

Although his superiority can be perceived in relation to his brother, at least from a military point of view in the scene in Osgiliath, Boromir does feel superior to the hobbits and cannot understand the reasons that led Elrond to choose Frodo to destroy the Ring. Therefore, when he sees the opportunity, he decides to follow Frodo who has moved away from the rest of the Fellowship in order to ponder the next course of

action. When he finds the hobbit, Boromir develops again his argument against the destruction of the Ring, as he simply wants to defend his people. Denethor's son is absolutely blinded by the power that the Ring has on him and distrusts Frodo as he believes that the hobbit could betray them to take the Ring to Sauron – he gives in to despair and tries to steal the Ring from the hobbit. He is somehow affected by the same delusional madness as his father, unable to see what other characters see in the hobbits: hope. They are both driven to their tragic end by their inner struggles and the way they deal with them. Sean Bean, the actor who plays Boromir, claims that this is the aspect of the character that attracted him to play such a warrior, the fact that

he's valiant, he's strong, physically, but the battle that he can't really face is the battle with himself. That's what he can't fight. And you see his soul sort of decaying. This fine man he sort of takes away his soul and I suppose by the end he comes to realise that he's been on a hell of a learning curve and that the only way he could possibly redeem himself is in battle. Which he throws himself into (*Fellowship* Scene 32, cast commentary).

Like Tolkien's Boromir, he does regret his moment of fury against Frodo, which happens too late, for the hobbit has already decided to leave his friends behind in order to protect them. Boromir's verbal repentance takes place when Aragorn finds him, stabbed by orcs' arrows, as he confesses what he has done to Frodo and asks for forgiveness. Aragorn tries to reassure him by reminding him that he has fought with honour, and promising not to let Gondor fall. Boromir finally acknowledges him as his king, uttering an emotional farewell: "I would have followed you, my brother, my captain, my king" (*Fellowship* Scene 45), which does not happen in the book. Thompson suggests that his death is like a "spurt to make him [Aragorn] swear his commitment to save Minas Tirith" (2011: 38). This seems to serve thus as a kind of awakening for Jackson's Aragorn, this being the first instance he openly states that he will go to Minas Tirith and save *their* people, Boromir's and his.

Sean Bean understands that this is a great ending for Boromir because "he dies nobly, he dies tragically" (*Fellowship* scene 44, cast commentary). His heroic fight against the Uruk-hai, as he bravely approaches them when the camera gets closer to him, in an attempt to save the hobbits and compensate the Fellowship for his mistake is undoubtedly a perfect climax for the end of the first film. Moreover, the close-up of Aragorn crying while he kisses Boromir's brow, lamenting the brave warrior's death,

has been a major topic in slash literature, where this gesture has been transferred to the sexual field after the release of the film *The Fellowship of the Ring* in 2001.¹⁰



Boromir's final words also seem to bring them closer, as opposed to the book, in which Boromir does not recognize Aragorn as his king and "simply" asks him to go to Minas Tirith and help *his* people (*TT* III 1: 404). In the film, this is a moment of intimacy shared between two brothers-in-arms living an extreme situation in which one of them is dying. This intimacy was shared by many soldiers in WWI, as some monuments that pay homage to the Great War illustrate, such as the monument of one soldier carrying a wounded comrade called "Cobbers" in an Australian Memorial Park, and the statue of a Turkish soldier carrying another wounded Australian soldier in the Gallipoli campaign in Anzac Cove (Turkey).

¹⁰ Slash literature analyses some of these instances of physical intimacy and touch between men, as will be explained in chapter 6. Any indication of a possible sexual attraction between Boromir and Aragorn extracted from this scene is a new interpretation which can be found in different fandom websites, such as *The Library of Moria*.

4. New patterns of masculinity in Middle-earth

In spite of being homeland to characters who are representative of old heroic patterns of masculinity and have been regarded as hypermasculine in the previous chapter, Gondor has other characters whose performance is rather different from Denethor's and Boromir's. Also endowed with heroic values, Aragorn son of Arathorn and Denethor's second-born, Faramir, represent a different type of heroic masculinity in Middle-earth, as the following sections will argue.

Aragorn, who descends from Isildur, the king that cut Sauron's finger and believed himself capable of enduring the power of the One Ring, was fostered by Elrond in Rivendell as a boy and was loved by the Elf as if he was his own son. His identity was hidden in an attempt to protect him, but when he became twenty years old, Elrond informed him of his lineage and true name. These first years of his life, so important in the development of his character, would prove essential in his future, together with the years that followed this confession, as they meant for Aragorn a succession of tests that he had to endure in order to grow stronger, more mature and more learned. When the plot begins in *The Lord of the Rings*, Aragorn is introduced as Strider, a Ranger of the North, who later on will be revealed as a Dúnadan of royal blood who is in the prime of his life despite being 87 years old, and is the heir to the throne of Gondor. He wanders Middle-earth waiting for his time to finally claim what is his by birthright.

In the case of Faramir, he is Denethor's second-son, and part of how he is has already been revealed in the analysis of his brother, Boromir. Both as a man and as a warrior, Faramir seems to share more similarities with Aragorn than with his own kin; this is explained in the text by Gandalf, who remarks that the blood of Westnesse runs nearly true in him. As has been already explained, his father's favouritism for Boromir marks their father-son relationship, although this never affects what he feels for his older brother. A Captain of Gondor, he fulfils his duty willingly, but his interest in battles differs from Boromir's, since Faramir's approach to fighting is the same as his mentor's, Gandalf.

Both Aragorn and Faramir revered Gandalf as a father figure but, above all, as their guide and mentor. The Wizard is a Maia who has been sent to Middle-earth to help destroy Sauron. Although the Valar originally sent five Istari for this task, in *The Lord of the Rings* the readers only get to know three: Gandalf, Saruman, and Radagast. These Maiar were immortal spirits whose main task was to encourage the Free Peoples of Middle-earth to gather their forces against the Dark Lord, but without confronting him themselves directly, which Saruman disobeys. One of Gandalf's tasks in Middle-earth was to guide Aragorn before he was ready to claim his throne, and he taught him and Faramir the value of life and of a just war. Gandalf is therefore ultimately responsible for their learning and training; such is his importance that he will be analysed first. Part of the philosophy of the just war or *jus ad bellum* theory admits that war is justified under certain conditions and it should be also the last resort.

These three characters therefore try to prevent fighting if possible, they are highly respectful towards all sorts of life, and only fight if it is strictly necessary. The performance of their masculinity is thus based on these three requirements, which contrasts with two of the characteristics of hypermasculinity, violence and the perception of danger as exciting, as the following lines will try to illustrate.

4.1. Gandalf

4.1.1. The “Wise Old Man”

The Maia Olórin appears with several names in Middle-earth: Mithrandir in Gondor, the Grey Pilgrim for the Elves, Gandalf in the Shire, Greyhame in Rohan, etc. In this sense, it could be said that Gandalf has a certain veil of invisibility which hides his true identity at will and which he decides to lift back when necessary, to his own convenience. According to Burns,

Tolkien creates a wizard who is both a Grey Pilgrim and a steward guardian, Rangers who are healers and protectors, and hobbits who are heroic and home-loving at once – hobbits such as Bilbo, who combines the roles of adventurer, burglar, and cake-baking, bustling host. (2005: 135)

Gandalf is therefore first introduced as an embodiment of the Wise Old Man, a Jungian archetype that appears in literature in the image of a powerful wizard, like King

Arthur's Merlin or the Norse Odin, in fact, a helper (Matthews 1975: 33). Petty has also identified him as the Hero of Myth within Frye's hierarchy: "If superior in kind both to other men and to the environment of other men, the hero is a divine being, and the story about him will be a myth in the common sense of a story about a god" (Frye 1971: 33), and David Day has seen Gandalf as "Aragorn's mentor, war counsellor and spiritual guide" (2003: 174), characteristics which are essential for the analysis of his personality and his performance of masculinity.

Gandalf acts as a mentor and spiritual guide for several characters in Middle-earth, but his relationship with the hobbits stands out from the rest. The story being hobbito-centric, it is therefore through the hobbits' eyes that the reader first meets Gandalf, and immediately associates him with an old man. At Bilbo's birthday party, he is but the person in charge of the fireworks and is introduced as an old man wearing "a tall pointed blue hat, a long grey cloak, and a silver scarf. He had a long white beard and bushy eyebrows that stuck out beyond the brim of his hat" (*FR I 1*: 24). Tolkien had already introduced this character in *The Hobbit*; therefore, readers of the earlier publication would have immediately recognized him before the name is given. Only later would his hidden powers be revealed.

A Maia and Emissary sent by the Valar in the body of an old man, he projects in others an image of what he is not: weak, powerless, decrepit – so in a way it is easier to disguise his own identity, as few in Middle-earth know who he really is. The Wizard, whose undercover task in Middle-earth is only known by certain characters, is mainly known in the Shire for his skill with fireworks. Although he loves the hobbits and feels at ease in their presence, his suspicions take him regularly to check on Bilbo Baggins, as he suspects that the Ring he found in his adventures with some Dwarves some years ago is not merely a golden piece of jewellery. During all the years that he spends in their company, he also shows that his love for this small folk transcends the boundaries of mere friendship, and so he acts like a father figure and has what Tolkien called an "avuncular attitude" towards them (Carpenter 1995: 271).

In this paternal side of Gandalf, the character is shown in his most "human" behaviour, as these lines will try to show. In comparison with other fathers or father figures that appear in *The Lord of the Rings*, despite his initial grumpiness and his

definition by Richard Purtill as imperfect, impatient and “even slightly arrogant” (1984: 86), Gandalf has been endowed with positive traits that seem to be inherent of the type of masculinity that he performs in Middle-earth. Gandalf’s most outstanding trait is his protectiveness towards the hobbits, for even when he was not near the Shire, he was prudent enough to ask the Rangers to protect it and never leave it unguarded, as Strider explained to the hobbits (*FR I* 10: 169). This is undoubtedly a gesture of his concern about and closeness to this race, a worry that increases when his suspicions about the Ring that Bilbo kept are confirmed, for the welfare of the hobbits and their safety are one of his priorities for as long as he is in Middle-earth.

Moreover, although Gandalf is a character that never shares his emotions randomly or freely, he shows how much he suffers for his beloved hobbits when any of them is in danger: when he believes Frodo to be captive and tortured we can read about the “anguish in his face,” and how this affected him so much that “he seemed an old and wizened man, crushed, defeated at last” (*RK V* 10: 872). Furthermore, his will to protect Pippin makes him take him to Minas Tirith after the hobbit looked in the *palantír*. Even though his main goal is clear and most of Gandalf’s actions are aimed at helping the forces of Good of Middle-earth conquer the Evil represented by Sauron, he wants to protect at the same time the apparently weak race of hobbits, for, after all, the preservation of Middle-earth and all its living creatures is one of his main tasks in the plot.

In an attempt to be protective, he is also authoritarian, mainly with Pippin, who is the most immature of the hobbits. In this sense, he rebukes the hobbits whenever he sees it convenient, but always with a certain touch of humour that only the reader can perceive and which has been heightened by Jackson in the films. One layer below the reprimand, we can see his love for the hobbits as he tries to prevent anything from happening to them; he is always constructive in what he says, a pure mentor that tries to guide the hobbits into keeping out of mischief. There are several instances that may serve to illustrate this in the book: for example, when he sees Frodo in Rivendell after having been attacked by the Nazgûl and tells him: “you are lucky to be here, too, after all the absurd things you have done since you left home” (*FR II* 1: 213), or when Pippin drops a loose stone in a well that might alert of their presence in Khazad-Dûm and

Gandalf says: “This is a serious journey, not a hobbit walking-party. Throw yourself in next time, and then you will be no further nuisance. Now be quiet!” (*FR* II 4: 305).

The relationship between Gandalf and the hobbits is therefore very close throughout the development of the plot. Despite this, only in Bree do the hobbits start to see who Gandalf really is as Aragorn explains to them that the Wizard is greater than the Shire-folk know, for although they fundamentally see his jokes and fireworks, the duty that he has been asked to fulfil will be his greatest task (*FR* I 10: 169). Later, in Rivendell, Frodo gets a glimpse of his hidden personality, perceiving him “like some wise king of ancient legend. In his aged face under great snowy brows his dark eyes were set like coals that could leap suddenly into fire” (*FR* II 1: 220). Gandalf is in control of the impression he wants to give everyone, and only those that know him closely are not misled by his age or his looks. Like Aragorn, he chooses when he wants to show his true self, and even after having “resurrected,” he still wears an “old tattered cloak” (*TT* III 5: 492) that conceals who he really is from unwanted eyes.

He uses the possibility of going unnoticed in several instances in the plot. He remains “cloaked” for most part of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, as it is necessary for him to continue his task as counsellor to those that need his help, like Aragorn, Faramir or Frodo. Even though Denethor and Théoden perceive old age as a sign of the loss of their hypermasculinity, Gandalf uses it to his own benefit in order to conceal his true nature. In a scene parallel to Beowulf’s arrival at Heorot, Gandalf enters Théoden’s Golden Hall with his staff, even against the King’s implicit wishes (through Gríma’s tainted counsel) to forbid anyone to enter the room with a weapon. The result of this is that Théoden will regain his former self and the Rohirrim will finally take part in the War of the Ring.

Despite the physical age of his body, Gandalf’s spiritual strength is indisputable, but he is also physically strong, as is shown when he saves Faramir from dying in a pyre: “Then Gandalf revealed the strength that lay *hid* in him, even as the light of his power was *hidden* under his grey mantle. He leaped on to the faggots, and raising the sick man lightly he sprang down again” (my emphasis, *RK* V 7: 834). Nevertheless, although Gandalf is a Maia and is indeed so powerful as to resist the temptation of the One Ring when Frodo offers it to him, he is neither infallible nor invulnerable. At some

stage Gandalf's age also pays its toll: for example, when he confronts the Balrog in Moria, a moment in which he confesses that he is "rather shaken" and "weary" so he cannot make light with his staff for a while (*FR* II 5: 318), implying that his link to his staff is through his own inner strength. In Moria his image as an old man is heightened, and even Gimli has to help him to sit down. In his confrontation with the fiery creature, he is seen as "grey and bent, like a wizened tree before the onset of a storm" (*FR* II 5: 322). The loss of the revered Gandalf is a devastating blow to the Fellowship – with his death, they have lost a friend, a counsellor, a guide, a father-like figure.

A wizard and an "angelic being embodied in human form and sent to help in the battle of good against evil" (Purtill 1984: 86), he comes back with his former body, so when Gimli, Legolas and Aragorn see him, he is again the image of an old man:

It looked like an old beggar-man, walking wearily, leaning on a rough staff. His head was bowed, and he did not look towards them. In other lands they would have greeted him with kind words; but now they stood silent, each feeling a strange expectancy: something was approaching that held a hidden power – or menace. (*TT* III 5: 481)

However, although he bears the same physical appearance, Gandalf has developed into a mightier character after his fall and "resurrection"; he himself remembers that he used to be Gandalf the Grey, but is now Gandalf the White. Shippey reports Tolkien's words that "Gandalf is an angel" (2003: 151), or rather, as Tolkien stated in a letter, "an angelic emissary" (Carpenter 1995: 354), so as readers it is inevitable not to see his coming back as a kind of resurrection.

While he remained with the Fellowship, before his "death," Gandalf may well have imposed his will on the rest of the characters, for he is more powerful than the other members, even more so after he falls in Moria in an act of sacrifice and comes back "enhanced" (Carpenter 1995: 202). However, he usually chooses not to do so, and instead, he advises Frodo to head to Rivendell when he actually knows that it is the course of action that must be followed, for example, and he also asks the Fellowship to vote whether to go to Moria or not, instead of imposing it as the most likely successful option. Gandalf only uses openly his power over other characters in certain instances; with his role as a guide and counsellor, he gives others the chance to take their own

decisions and follow their paths. It is not until the very end that Gandalf completely lifts back his “cloak” and lets the others see that he possesses the Third Ring of power.

As a father figure and mentor, his teachings are based on one of the most important lessons offered in *The Lord of the Rings*: life is the most valuable thing that we have and it must be preserved, so actions must be carefully pondered on, as they affect other characters as well. Gandalf’s guidance is therefore based on various Christian values, such as pity and mercy, and the importance of a just war.

4.1.2. The war counsellor

When Gandalf the Grey starts the journey with the Fellowship of the Ring, the reader already knows that he is a Wizard and has a high status in the hierarchy of Middle-earth, together with other wizards like Radagast and Saruman, but even among themselves, their powers are different, as has already been explained in the introduction of Part II. In the case of Gandalf, he has some foreseeing powers: he predicts that Frodo will have used the Ring by the time he arrives in Bree, he knows that his time is coming (*FR II 1*: 214), he suspects that Gollum may still have an important part to do in the destruction of the Ring (*FR II 2*: 249), and in general, his words apparently contain more often than not certain riddles that have to do with the fate of some characters or the future of Middle-earth.

Burns highlights the fact that behind every character of Middle-earth there lies “a history of literary, mythological, and linguistic complexity,” which cannot always be clearly traced as most times these borrowings are “more implied than manifest,” and in the case of Gandalf he is very much like his Norse mythological counterpart Odin, from whom he may have inherited his “seer” abilities (2000: 219). It is impossible to think of Gandalf without comparing him to Saruman, the most powerful wizard in Middle-earth at the beginning of the Third Age, as despite this mythological “borrowing” from Old Norse, Olórin does not appear as the mightiest Istari in Middle-earth in the first chapters of *The Lord of the Rings*. Even Gandalf admits that Saruman is “the greatest” of his order (*FR II 2*: 250); he was indeed the head of the White Council, whose members were Elves and Wizards and whose main task was to decide what strategies should be

used against Sauron. Nevertheless, even if Saruman seems to be more powerful, Gandalf proves that he is wiser as he is able to refuse the Ring and does not fall into its power.

The Saruman that the reader sees in Middle-earth has already fallen under Sauron's power, though; this Wizard thus feels superior to the rest, calling Radagast, who is an inferior wizard, "Radagast the Simple! Radagast the Fool!" (*FR* II 2: 252). He dislikes it when Gandalf the Grey calls him "the White," because he feels that one colour is not enough for him – he wants to dominate them all. Indeed he has become Saruman of Many Colours, he has lost the purity that the white colour represented and is now wearing undecipherable rainbow clothes, which "if he moved they shimmered and changed hue so that the eye was bewildered" – he cannot be trusted anymore (*FR* II 2: 252). This contrasts with Gandalf's new status as Gandalf the White in *The Two Towers*, where he proves that he is indeed worthy of wearing a colour that represents his new acquired power and that he is pure in heart.

Saruman believes that, as he wants the Ring for himself, so does Gandalf – he cannot imagine who would not want to use Ring for his own benefit. Therefore, in Saruman's attempt to dominate the world, he wants to trick Gandalf, so he uses the pronoun "we" implying that they can both do it, Gandalf and Saruman together. He tries to seduce Gandalf with his soft voice, his characteristic verbosity and his good promising words. But in these apparently good words there is hidden a "desire for personal power, the power to order all things as he wills. It is a power that ruins its allies and any who try to buy into it" (Dickerson and Evans 2006: 202). Whereas the members of the Fellowship follow Gandalf out of love and respect, almost blindly, so Gandalf never needs to convince them to do anything because they completely trust him, this contrasts with Saruman's need to use his seducing ability when Gandalf meets him again in Orthanc, after the Ents have restrained him there. His voice is "low and melodious, its very sound an enchantment," he allures those that listen to him and attracts them to his own web, convincing them to do what he wants them to do. It is not only the sound of his voice but his words what manage to deceive others. Aragorn also refers to Saruman's ability to dominate other people's minds: "he had a power over the minds of others. The wise he could persuade, and the smaller folk he could daunt" (*TT* III 9: 553).

Gandalf, on the other hand, does not try to attract or deceive anyone with beautiful words. Both Aragorn and Gandalf are in charge of deciding what paths and courses to follow when the Fellowship of the Ring starts their journey. None is above the other in terms of decision-making. He is a true leader of the company, together with Aragorn. When the pass through Caradhras proves ill and they decide to go through Moria, despite the initial fear and hesitation of going there, the Fellowship follows Gandalf just because of who he is and what he represents. Gandalf has gained his status as leader in the Fellowship out of the admiration, respect and love that the rest of characters have for him – he is not imposing but collaborative, which is one of the main traits that conform this new pattern of masculinity in Middle-earth.

The Grey Pilgrim is therefore an essential (war) counsellor whose friends follow unhesitatingly, and the most vital advice that he gives the Fellowship concerns the importance of pity and mercy. His words of wisdom to Frodo trigger the hobbit's mercy for Gollum, which will prove crucial in the destruction of the Ring. Frodo, who can only see Gollum as an evil creature, wonders why Bilbo did not kill him when he had the chance: "What a pity that Bilbo did not stab that vile creature, when he had a chance!" to which Gandalf replies that "it was Pity that stayed his hand. Pity, and Mercy: not to strike without need" (*FR* I 2: 58). Hence, Gandalf's most famous quotation concerning life and death in the same conversation with Frodo: "Many that live deserve death. And some that die deserve life. Can you give it to them? Then do not be too eager to deal out death in judgement" (*ibid.*).

As a mentor to the hobbit and also Aragorn and Faramir, he teaches and shares with them his life-preserving attitudes, but even more so with the latter, as they both believe that the end does not justify the means, and war should be resorted to only if necessary. The importance of just war will undoubtedly mark Aragorn's and Faramir's doings in Middle-earth too. In this sense, Gandalf does not only preach it but practice his own advice of being pitiful and merciful, for example, when he shows his mercy towards Saruman, giving him the opportunity to leave "freely." The main difference between these two wizards is clear from the beginning: while Saruman enacts a dominant type of masculinity based on the exertion of power over others, and also, destruction – Gandalf is a protector of all different forms of life. Saruman is very well described by Treebeard as if he represented the consequences of the Industrial

Revolution: “He has a mind of metal and wheels; and he does not care for growing things, except as far as they serve him for the moment” (*TT* III 4: 462). He also hints at the fact that he has been experimenting with Orcs and Men, as a kind of genetic study, and “there is always a smoke rising from Isengard these days” (*ibid.*).

Gandalf is completely the opposite of Saruman: he represents ancient wisdom, experience, charisma and also Christian values, as seen in his defence of just war and mercy. His role is so important in Middle-earth that even after he dies, he is allowed to go back and finish his task. In Gandalf’s attempt to save and protect other characters, as in the cases of Denethor, Faramir or the hobbits, Dickerson and Evans see in him also a steward – he goes to Gondor to offer Denethor his help so “he is not there to exercise authority and claims the rule of no realm, great or small. Nor is this empty rhetoric: Gandalf’s actions lend credence to his words. Putting these two together, we might say that he exists for others, but others do not exist for him” (2006: 43).

With respect to this, Dickerson and Evans also recall Gandalf’s words, “But all worthy things that are in peril as the world now stands, those are my care” (*RK* V 1: 742). Gandalf is thus not only in Middle-earth to help defeat Sauron but indirectly to defend and protect life in general. First of all, he protects those that he loves most in Middle-earth, the hobbits, but we cannot forget his relationship with nature and animals in general, as it situates him nearer the Elves than any of the other characters in Middle-earth. He is respectful with nature and values and reveres creation, and out of this consideration that he has for all living creatures, he treats animals as equals, not as beasts of burden, as can be seen in his relationship with Shadowfax. In this sense, Gandalf sees himself as a steward, as he tells Denethor in the chapter “Minas Tirith,” but a very different type from the one Denethor has become, as Dickerson and Evans suggest. Gandalf is in Middle-earth to offer his help to anyone that needs it and not to impose himself on any character, he therefore enacts a kind of “Christian stewardship” (2006: 40).

Some of the values that he instils in his pupils are therefore also based on Christian values, as has been aforementioned, and the type of stewardship he represents will be inherited by Faramir.

4.2. Faramir

4.2.1. The second-born son

Four tall Men stood there. Two had spears in their hands with broad bright heads. Two had great bows, almost of their own height, and great quivers of long green-feathered arrows. All had swords at their sides, and were clad in green and brown of varied hues, as if the better to walk unseen in the glades of Ithilien. Green gauntlets covered their hands, and their faces were hooded and masked with green, except for their eyes, which were very keen and bright. (*TT IV 4: 642*)

Introduced in a Robin Hood-like fashion and not described directly, but as one of his men, Faramir only stands out at the beginning as being the tallest of the group. Frodo sees in them and their manner of speech some kind of resemblance with Boromir. Faramir is Denethor's youngest son, and as stated before, not his favourite at all. In Appendix A, we learn that Faramir resembles his father physically but they have completely different personalities:

He read the hearts of men as shrewdly as his father, but what he read moved him sooner to pity than to scorn. He was gentle in bearing, and a lover of lore and of music, and therefore by many in those days his courage was judged less than his brother's. But it was not so, except that he did not seek glory in danger without a purpose. He welcomed Gandalf at such times as he came to the City, and he learned what he could from his wisdom; and in this as in many other matters he displeased his father. (Appendix A, 1031)

It is inevitable not to compare Boromir and Faramir, both being brothers and Men of Gondor, and at the same time, in their comparison, it is important to highlight their difference as first-born and second-born in the patriarchal world of Gondor. Whereas Boromir represents everything that Denethor seems to admire and, being the elder, favoured and meant to inherit the Stewardship of Gondor, Faramir is the second-born who might be regarded by his father as a reminder of his wife, for he is very much like Finduilas, which might cause his father pain because he loved her deeply. Being the second-born, he is not meant to inherit anything so his only aspiration might be apparently to fulfil his tasks as a Captain of Gondor. The bond existing between Denethor and Boromir is therefore stronger – to his eyes, his elder son is everything that his young one is not. Moreover, this is not the only difference between these brothers, for whereas Boromir was presented in the previous chapter as a hypermasculine Gondorian whose power was based on his physical strength and military prowess,

Faramir is, on the contrary, a learned man who has been taught by Gandalf. The difference between both brothers is clearly marked in the association of Faramir and his “keen wit” (*TT* IV 5: 648) and Boromir and his love of war as he “seems to enjoy fighting for its own sake and the glory he earns by it” (Scull 1995: 154). Their different personalities are obvious to their men, as echoed by Beregond:

he is bold, more bold than many deem; for in these days men are slow to believe that a captain can be wise and learned in the scrolls of lore and song, as he is, and yet a man of hardihood and swift judgment in the field. But such is Faramir. Less reckless and eager than Boromir, but not less resolute. (*RK* V 1: 750)

Faramir was the first one that had recurrent prophetic dreams, whereas Boromir only dreamt once of the broken sword, so it would have seemed more reasonable for Faramir to go to the Council of Elrond instead of his brother, but Boromir volunteered to go to Rivendell because he thought that the way would be dangerous (*FR* II 2: 240). As Denethor’s older son and future steward, he may well see this as *his* task but, at the same time, it might be perceived as if he was indirectly hinting at his brother’s inferiority, or rather, his own superiority and physical strength – indeed he wanted to protect Faramir, but he may have also believed himself better prepared to fulfil this task.

When Denethor’s hypermasculinity and *ofermod* were analysed in the previous chapter, his relationship with his younger son was also regarded as somewhat dysfunctional, and, at the same time explained on the grounds of patriarchy and primogeniture. Whereas everything that Boromir does is praised by Denethor, he seems to find difficulty in finding the same rewarding words for Faramir when he wins a battle, above all, the text shows us this after Boromir’s death. He believed his heir to be capable of doing anything and everything for him, hence his utter disappointment when Boromir fails and dies and Faramir does not do what was expected of him as a Captain of Gondor, which was to bring Denethor the One Ring. Seeing his heir as a successful warrior and worthy future steward serves to heighten Faramir’s “failure” to his father’s eyes as he chooses not to bring home such a “weapon.” This strains their relationship even more, also because he is suspicious of Faramir, who openly admires Gandalf and has had him as his mentor. According to Tolkien, Faramir is always “daunted” by his father (Carpenter 1995: 323), but even in this disheartening situation for Faramir, he is never revengeful and never shows his anger. On the contrary, he is “courageous and

decisive, but also modest, fair-minded and scrupulously just, and very merciful” (ibid.); he does not disobey Denethor, not even when his father sends him on a suicide mission and he does not hesitate to obey him, even when it is clear that he is losing his mind. Faramir may also want to make up for his brother’s loss; we cannot forget that Faramir has also lost his brother, so he is in bereavement too. However, Denethor’s heart is so corrupted by his struggle with Sauron, and he is so suspicious and jealous of Gandalf, that Faramir’s attempt is doomed to fail.

In this troubled father-son relationship, Faramir might have grown up to lack self-esteem, but possibly because of his acquaintance with Gandalf, this never happened. The Wizard acted like a father figure for him and taught him valuable lessons in life, the most important being the need to preserve life and only fight if necessary, as the following sections will evince.

4.2.2. The officer and scholar

Garth defines Faramir both as an officer and a scholar, “with a reverence for the old histories and sacred values that helps him through a bitter war” (2004: 310). Hammond and Scull also offer a detailed description of this character as “perceptive, merciful, brave, responsible, restrained, aware of his position but neither boastful nor arrogant, choosing to do what he feels to be right even if it may be to his disadvantage” (2005: 468). In this sense, Faramir is culturally more evolved than the Rohirrim and Éomer. Faramir also understands that there are different types of Men:

For so we reckon Men in our lore, calling them the High, or Men of the West, which were Númenoreans; and the Middle Peoples, Men of the Twilight, such as are the Rohirrim and their kin that dwell still far in the North; and the Wild, the Men of Darkness.

Yet now, if the Rohirrim are grown in some ways more like to us, enhanced in arts and gentleness, we too have become more like to them, and can scarce claim any longer the title High. We are become Middle Men, of the Twilight, but with memory of other things. For as the Rohirrim do, we now love war and valour as things good in themselves, both a sport and an end; and though we still hold that a warrior should have more skills and knowledge than only the craft of weapons and slaying, we esteem a warrior, nonetheless, above men of other crafts. (*TT IV 5: 663*)

From Faramir's words we can infer several things. First of all, he acknowledges that even within the race of Men there is a certain hierarchy. He mentions first the High Men or Númenoreans, a race that was superior to other Men in knowledge and skills which they learned from the Elves. In fact, Elendil and his sons descend from these Men, and so does Aragorn. However, although they descend from the Númenoreans, and thus have the blood of Westemnetesse in them, the Men of Gondor cannot be considered "High Men" anymore, as time has witnessed certain changes in them since they have grown nearer the Rohirrim. This leads to Faramir's second acknowledgement, which is his explanation that they cannot be called "High" anymore, and so they have become "Middle Men." Faramir refers here to the already mentioned decline of Gondor. This decline emphasises Gondor's resemblance to Byzantium; both realms, having lost part of their land (Arnor and the Western Roman Empire, respectively) as they were conquered, had different fates, for whereas the Byzantine Empire fell, Kingship was restored in Gondor, which saw a new age of splendour. In the gradual deterioration of Gondor, Rohan, on the contrary, evolved as it was in touch with this more sophisticated society, thus the closeness that Faramir alludes to between the Men of Gondor and the Rohirrim. Croft contrasts the Gondorians with the Rohirrim, who "are described as less advanced than the men of Gondor, and these visual divisions between the leaders and the led stand in contrast to the behavior of the men who will lead Gondor into the Fourth Age" (2004: 77). However, in this evolution of the Men of Rohan as they grew "enhanced in arts and gentleness," Gondorians have also suffered some kind of "regression" and have become more similar to the Rohirrim. Therefore, it is not difficult to understand how Faramir and Éomer both saw Boromir nearer the Rohirrim in attitude than to the Men of Gondor. However, even then, the perception was different, for Shippey believes that "Éomer thinks that is all to the good, while Faramir does not. The two contrasted scenes are making a very strong assertion about cultural evolution" (2003: 130), or in the case of Boromir, he has stepped backwards instead of forwards.

In the above quotation, Faramir also states the importance of a warrior who is learned in lore, so his knowledge is not based just on having certain war skills, which is what has always characterised the Rohirrim – Faramir recognises here that "there are other qualities than those of a warrior or a general" (Shippey 2001: 102). In this sense, if compared with his brother, Faramir also proves to be the wittiest – he is curious and intuitive, as he shows when he meets Frodo, when he tells him that he has "read" in

Gollum that he has killed before (*TT IV 6: 678*), sharing this ability to see inside people with Galadriel. Faramir has warrior skills, but he complements them with those of a scholar. Furthermore, in this encounter with Frodo in *The Two Towers*, Faramir always shows that he never takes a decision hastily, he is not impulsive like Éomer or Boromir, and he is so wise that he can infer many things just by reflecting upon a matter. Despite the fact that Frodo has not confessed how Boromir fell into temptation, an action that honours him, Faramir infers that Boromir's tragic fate was linked with whatever it is that Frodo is carrying, not knowing at this stage that it is the One Ring. Although he does not know exactly that Isildur's Bane is so near him when he interrogates Frodo in Ithilien, he states that he would never take it for himself, not even after learning Frodo is taking it to Mount Doom to destroy it, thus forfeiting his own life.

In his attitudes as a warrior and his rejection of militarism, Faramir very much exposes Tolkien's "own thoughts about the world and life" (Hammond and Scull 2005: 468) – Tolkien himself stated so in a letter in 1956: "As far as any character is 'like me' it is Faramir" (Carpenter 1995: 232). Faramir's attitude towards war responds to what is expected of a society more sophisticated than that of Rohan – he is not utterly against war, but should only be thought of as the only solution if strictly necessary. As Gandalf's disciple, Faramir also exhibits more positive virtues than his brother, and is an advocate of the just war, as he likes to "judge justly in a hard matter" and does not "slay man or beast needlessly, and not gladly even when it is needed" (*TT IV 5: 650*). Both Faramir and Aragorn represent Tolkien's own attitude towards war; and as Benvenuto remarks, "although not a 'pacifist' in modern terms, Tolkien grew to detest it, as he knew firsthand the pain and misery it wreaked on people" (2006: 50). These characters' reluctance to kill for the sake of killing, not even small animals, is but part of their life-preserving attitudes, which are an extension of Tolkien's beliefs and the embodiment of the "just war" cause, as we can see in Faramir's words: "War must be, while we defend our lives against a destroyer who would devour all; but I do not love the bright sword for its sharpness, nor the arrow for its swiftness, nor the warrior for his glory. I love only that which they defend" (*TT IV 5: 656*). In this sense, they are not pacifists but peace-lovers, like Tolkien.

Croft refers to Faramir's attitude toward war as "more modern and thoughtful," which is somehow easier to "emulate for the twenty-first-century reader," and "even

suffering from these doubts about the very value of war he is as beloved an charismatic a leader as Aragorn and as effective and skilled in battle; he has the same leadership style and characteristics, but thinks (or at least speaks) more deeply about why he fights” (2004: 101). Even though he only fights when he feels that he must and war is not his vocation, Faramir is an outstanding soldier (Benvenuto 2006: 50), he is a captain that everyone would follow, a charismatic leader, like Aragorn, and “as effective and skilled in battle” (Croft 2004: 101). Even Pippin compares both Aragorn and Faramir when he first meets the latter:

Here was one with an air of high nobility such as Aragorn at times revealed, less high perhaps, yet also less incalculable and remote: one of the Kings of Men born into a later time, but touched with the wisdom and sadness of the Elder Race. He knew now why Beregon spoke his name with love. He was a captain that men would follow, that he would follow, even under the shadow of the black wings. (RK V 4: 792)

There are very few characters in Middle-earth who can resist the temptation of the Ring, and the fact that a man like Faramir manages to let Frodo continue his journey without trying to steal the Ring from him invites the reader to reflect upon the stature of such a character. As a hero, Faramir’s depiction departs from the epic perception of heroism which his brother embodied and which was based on the seeking of glory and even death in the battlefield, war being the only possibility to earn this renown. Faramir’s way of thinking is in part a reflection of his mentor, Gandalf. Frodo also ends up sharing Faramir’s attitude based on sparing a life as his quest progresses, for example, when he decides not to kill Gollum on several occasions. There is therefore a certain evolution in this character, as will be analysed in chapter 5 – whereas we have a Frodo that wonders why Bilbo did not kill Gollum when he had the chance at the beginning of his quest, in his journey to Mount Doom he learns the importance of Bilbo’s mercy and shares it himself. Without knowing it, he is in fact saving his own life. The influence of Gandalf’s mentoring is not exclusively seen on Frodo and Faramir, but also on another character in Middle-earth: Aragorn son of Arathorn.

4.3. Aragorn

The characters that perform this model of collaborative masculinity are those whose principles are based on cooperative and diplomatic attitudes, those who resort to killing only when necessary, choosing whenever possible to preserve the life of others, in a way verbalizing Tolkien's own ideas. The author, being so influenced as he was by his participation in the Great War, wrote in a letter to his son Christopher in 1944 about "the utter waste of war, not only material but moral and spiritual, [which is] so staggering to those who have to endure it" (Carpenter 1995: 75).

These characters indicate, in various instances in *The Lord of the Rings* the importance of Christian values, such as mercy and sacrifice, for Gandalf's fall with the Balrog in Moria perfectly illustrates this. Gandalf, Aragorn, and Faramir contrast with the Rohirrim in their approach to war: whereas the Men of Rohan sing when they fight against the Uruk-hai (*TT* III 3: 449) or in the battlefield, where "they sang as they slew" (*RK* V 5: 820), Faramir and Aragorn do not use their swords gratuitously and, in fact, both show their mercy to Gollum in different scenes, reflecting upon the matter of killing such a creature.

The differences are not only cultural or social, but even between characters that belong to the same society, as is the case of Aragorn, Faramir and Boromir, who do not display the same pattern of masculinity. Shippey understands that even in their manner of speaking, with Aragorn's language "deceptively modern, even easy-going on occasion" and Boromir's "slightly wooden magniloquence" (2003: 121), there is a clear separation between these Gondorian characters, as is certainly manifest in their confrontation in the Council of Elrond, which is a clear "hint of future trouble in the veiled challenges from both sides" (Shippey 2001: 73).

In the case of Aragorn, it is necessary to deconstruct his public and private personae in order to fully understand his performance in the book. First of all, his upbringing could be compared, according to Hammond and Scull, to that of King Arthur as a child, as his true identity was concealed to him for a long time (2005: 698). Aragorn, who is Isildur's true heir, lived oblivious to his own background and name during his childhood and adolescence in Rivendell, where he had moved with his mother, becoming Estel to the Elves' eyes. After spending some time in Lórien,

Aragorn fell in love with Elrond's daughter, Arwen. As a father, Elrond is reluctant to allow his daughter to marry someone that he considers "inferior," he therefore sets an ultimatum to Aragorn, only when he proves he is really worthy of her will he allow her to marry Aragorn.

Aragorn is a king in disguise who wanders Middle-earth as a Ranger of the North, as Strider, until he can claim his throne, and he therefore embodies several archetypes, but probably mainly Moore and Gillette's King, and as he is a good King, he is also "a good Warrior, a positive Magician, and a great Lover" (1990: 49). Although these scholars acknowledge that it is very difficult to see the King in fullness, Aragorn undoubtedly is an example of this archetype: as a Warrior, his "aggressive might" only appears when necessary, "when order is threatened," as a Magician, he "acts out of [...] deep knowingness," and as a Lover, he uses "words of authentic praise and concrete actions that enhance our lives" (1990: 61). Carretero González sees him as the quintessential traditional hero without a throne (1996: 166), a hero of the "high-mimetic mode," a leader who has "authority, passions, and powers of expression far greater than ours, but what he does is subject both to social criticism and to the order of nature" (Frye 1971: 34). Finally, Petty also sees him as the "Hero of Romance" within Frye's division of heroes (2003: 252),

superior in *degree* to other men and to his environment, [...] [his] actions are marvellous but who is himself identified as a human being. The hero of romances moves in a world in which the ordinary laws of nature are slightly suspended: prodigies of courage and endurance, unnatural to us, are natural to him. (Frye 1971: 33)

He therefore combines both types of heroes and represents all those who, by one or another circumstance, have had to disguise themselves, like Arthur as a boy. Moreover, Aragorn undergoes Joseph Campbell's hero's journey, as his quest in Middle-earth can be divided into Departure, Initiation and Return, and in this process he follows to become the King of Gondor, we can see different types of facets of this character: as the Ranger Strider who wanders Middle-earth, as a leader of the Fellowship of the Ring, and finally as King.

4.3.1. Strider

It was still too soon for Aragorn to claim the throne of Gondor when he fell in love with Arwen, so he spent the next decades of his life as a Ranger of the North protecting the people from the Shire, waiting for his moment to come; Flieger therefore describes him as “the traditional disguised hero, the rightful king, in medieval romance terms the ‘fair unknown’ who steps from the shadows into the limelight when his moment comes” (1981: 42). In the Prologue, it is reported that hobbits ignored the presence of the “Guardians” in their lands (Tolkien 1991: 5) – which is due to the Rangers’ discretion and their ability in going unnoticed, so the hobbits were protected, and it was thanks to them. Also, the first acknowledgment that we have of Rangers is right before the hobbits meet Strider in Bree, when they are described as

taller and darker than the Men of Bree and were believed to have strange powers of sight and hearing, and to understand the languages of beasts and birds. They *roamed* at will southwards, and eastwards even as far as the Misty Mountains; but they were now few and rarely seen. (my emphasis – *FR I 9*: 146)

People were suspicious of them – “I wouldn’t take up with a Ranger,” Mr Butterbur says to the hobbits – a mistrust that Aragorn is well aware of, as he grants to the hobbits that his looks are against him (*FR I 10*: 167). Rangers were not as well known folk, for even the owner of the Prancing Pony does not know Strider’s real name.

The first time the reader encounters Strider, he is sitting on a vantage position at the inn, from which he can observe everything while going “unnoticed.” The hobbits perceive

a strange-looking weather-beaten man, sitting in the shadows near the wall [...]. He had a tall tankard in front of him, and was smoking a long-stemmed pipe curiously carved. His legs were stretched out before him, showing high boots of supple leather that fitted him well, but had seen much wear and were now caked with mud. A travel-stained cloak of heavy dark green cloth was drawn close about him, and in spite of the heat of the room he wore a hood that overshadowed his face. (*FR I 9*: 153)

Strider’s is one of Aragorn’s most prominent facets in *The Lord of the Rings*. He introduces himself as such to the hobbits in Bree and also during the first encounter with the Riders of Rohan. Even if he knows that he is the heir to the throne of Gondor, his

present occupation is that of a Ranger, so he adopts his Ranger name. The hobbits, however, feel that there is more to him than meets the eye, some kind of truth “hidden” behind his ragged appearance (*FR I 10*: 163).

Flieger believes that readers love Strider more than Aragorn, and “the more we know him, the less familiar he becomes” (1981: 42). There is a veil of mystery that surrounds him, which he only chooses to remove at his own convenience. His concealment or secrecy is both physical and metaphorical: physical because he can avoid being seen – like when Mr Butterbur enters the hobbits’ room without noticing him there (*FR I 10*: 165) – and metaphorical because his true identity remains hidden for most of the characters of the book. This mystery could also be due in part to the fact that Tolkien began to construct the character as the plot progressed, as he stated in a letter to W.H. Auden, so he suddenly found himself in Bree, and “unexpectedly” found Strider in a corner, without knowing much about the character, like Frodo (Carpenter 1995: 216). Despite Tolkien’s explanation, Flieger believes that this presentation of Aragorn “buried in obscurity” (1981: 44) is on purpose, and she also adds in another article that Tolkien introduces the character “in the worst light” so his progressive transformation is even more effective (2003: 101).

Before Aragorn gains his full status as king of Gondor (and as a result his position to marry Arwen), there are several tasks that he needs to fulfil, and the first one is to have his broken sword forged again. When he became twenty years old, Elrond told him his true identity and gave him the heirlooms of his house: the ring of Barahir and the shards of Narsil, which had been Isildur’s sword, and the one he had used to cut the One Ring of Power from Sauron’s hand. Although there are several famous mythological swords in the literary tradition, Narsil directly reminds the reader of Arthur’s Excalibur – for both Arthur and Aragorn, the man that wields the sword will rule the kingdom. However, in the case of Aragorn, he has inherited a broken sword, hence the implication that it is a flawed heirloom, a hint that the strength, power and purity of the Kings of Gondor have diminished. Therefore, he needs to prove that with the re-forging of Narsil, he is capable of not making Isildur’s mistakes again, for he is his heir, but not Isildur himself (*FR II 2*: 241).

As the plot advances we get certain glimpses that emphasise Aragorn's image as a Ranger of the North: until his sword is re-forged again, he only travels with its shards and with no other weapon for he is not shown as a warrior yet, thus he confronts the Ringwraiths in Weathertop with flaming torches (*FR I 11: 191*). It is only after the Council of Elrond when Elven smiths re-forge Narsil, which Aragorn names Andúril, that readers begin to have a proper image of who Aragorn really is as he shows his strength and his readiness for the final battle against Sauron.

Aragorn chooses to reveal his true identity when he needs or wants to do it, for example, in Bree, where he introduces himself to the hobbits as who he really is: "I am Aragorn son of Arathorn; and if by life or death I can save you, I will" (*FR I 10: 168*). Even in Rivendell he goes in disguise again as Strider with his old clothes for the Council of Elrond, instead of the elegant Elven garments that he had worn the night before. Aragorn is presented in layers which Tolkien will remove as the time approaches for him to be crowned king; little by little the reader is given some clues of his true personality. The riddle "All that is gold does not glitter, Not all that wander are lost. [...] The crownless again shall be king" (*FR I 10: 167*) will finally find its answer in the evolution of this character.

One of the tests that he will have to pass is to show that the prophecy that Ioreth remembers in Gondor is true and he is indeed a king that is capable of healing. On his way to Rivendell, he already tried to heal Frodo using some leaves and whispering some words to the hobbit, but we can see him in his full stature as a healer in the Houses of Healing, as he manages to save Éowyn, Faramir and Merry with the herb *athelas*, which only works if applied by the rightful king – it is not his knowledge of herbs that saves them but the fact that he is the rightful king-to-be of Gondor. However, before we reach this moment and he shows who he really is, Aragorn will remain Strider for most of the story, until they pass the Argonath, the Pillars of the Kings, when Frodo sees Strider no more, but Aragorn son of Arathorn, "a king returning from exile to his own land" (*FR II 9: 384*).

4.3.2. Leader

When Elrond informs Frodo that Aragorn will be part of the Fellowship of the Ring as one representative of the Men within the Free Peoples of Middle-earth, nobody appoints him directly as leader of the group, but he somehow ends up making the most important decisions, together with Gandalf, and they never impose them. Croft wonders whether Aragorn is Tolkien's ideal leader, as "we never see him doubting the wisdom of war or considering it philosophically – he simply accepts that it is a normal part of the duty of a king" (2004: 101). Nevertheless, there is no doubt that he is a charismatic leader, he even encourages the Rohirrim when they are in Helm's Deep, despite the fact that they are not actually "his" men, but there was such a great power and royalty in him "as he stood there alone above the ruined gates before the host of his enemies, that many of the wild men paused, and looked back over their shoulders to the valley, and some looked up doubtfully at the sky" (*TT III 7*: 528). Everyone that follows him does so willingly because they admire and love him, in Legolas's words, "for all those who come to know him come to love him after his own fashion, even the cold maiden of the Rohirrim" (*RK V 9*: 856) – they fight for their races (Gimli for the people of the Lonely Mountain and Legolas for those of the Great Wood, for instance), they fight for their lord, they fight for their friendship (*RK V 9*: 860), and they also fight with him to repay him for his help, as in the case of Éomer, for Aragorn helped him and his people when the Third Marshall of the Riddermark needed it (*RK V 9*: 862).

Nonetheless, despite his charisma and his depiction as a high-mimetic mode hero, Tolkien does not give us a character that is absolutely perfect – in fact, Aragorn is not flawless, as can be seen on several occasions as the plot progresses. Even physically, Aragorn is human, and in the battle in Helm's Deep, the reader sees him stumble because he is exhausted. Moreover, Aragorn always seems to feel somewhat inferior to Gandalf in matters of leadership. Unsure of what course to follow, the more they move on to Amon Hen, the more doubtful he is, so he struggles to decide what to do, and he even loses hope when Gandalf falls in Moria (*FR II 6*: 324). Already in Amon Hen he ponders on his own decisions as he feels that everything he does "goes amiss" (*TT III 1*: 403) – he is in this sense very well aware of his own flaws and admits his failure. He believes that he has failed his friends as a leader after Boromir's death: "It is I that have failed. Vain was Gandalf's trust in me" (*TT III 1*: 404), because he was not able to see

that Boromir was falling into temptation, and the result of this is that he has lost a “brother-in-arms,” two hobbits have been kidnapped and Frodo and Sam have continued their perilous journey on their own.

Holly A. Crocker interprets the breaking of the Fellowship as a signal of Aragorn’s personal failure and considers that his “momentary indecision shows that he is not yet ready to assume his role as leader” (2005: 119). He takes several decisions throughout his own quest, and despite the fact that he is the king-to-be of Gondor, and he has a comprehensive background of decision-making, he doubts sometimes whether his choice is the best. He is the one who chooses to go to Weathertop, where they are attacked by the Ringwraiths, which leaves him “heavy-hearted” (*FR* I 12: 194). He is a friend to the hobbits, he is their protector, and he establishes a very tender relationship with them throughout the story – he suffers not knowing what may have come out of Pippin and Merry’s kidnapping, he feels guilty for what may happen to Frodo and Sam after Boromir’s falling into temptation, and although he tries not to show his imperfections, he never denies his emotions. He is a meditative character, always concentrating on the best course to follow, “silent and restless” (*FR* II 3: 277). Flieger points out at Aragorn’s “emotionally charged dialogue with himself” as a sign of his confusion and ambivalence when he must choose between following Frodo or rescuing Merry and Pippin (2009: 168). When he finally decides to follow the Orcs to save the hobbits from “torment and death,” he does not ask Gimli and Legolas to follow him – it is implied that they will (*TT* III 1: 409). Although he is tormented by his ill choices before Amon Hen, the others are determined to follow him, such is his charisma. As a leader, Aragorn is followed by thousands of Men under his command when he goes into Mordor, where he also proves that he is an understanding chief, and, as he knows of some of these Men’s fear, he gives them the possibility to stay behind and try to retake Cair Andros instead of forcing them to stay and fight – eventually, his words encourage them to continue.

As Isildur’s heir, Aragorn believes that it is his duty to help Frodo in anything he can to destroy the Ring as a way of repairing “Isildur’s fault” (*FR* II 2: 245), for after all, he is “the heir of Isildur, not Isildur himself” (*FR* II 2: 241), a quotation that may have two different readings. On the one hand, that he is not as strong as his ancestor, or on the other, that he is his descendant but has evolved from what the first Númenoreans

were, which would not mean that he is weaker, but rather, that he is not as faulty. With his actions and his resistance to temptation to take the Ring, he is showing, in fact, that he is an improved Isildur. He has indeed been preparing himself for decades to claim what is his, the throne of Gondor, and everything that will result from it, that is to say, his union with Arwen. According to Croft,

[i]n Aragorn, Tolkien presents an ideal king, proven worthy by his long *cursus honorum* and by his battlefield experience; an able and responsible leader, without hubris or the overmastering desire for conquest and power. Aragorn claims the throne he knows is his by right of birth, but he has no quarrel with being required to prove himself worthy of it. (2004: 91)

Through characters like King Théoden and above all, King Elessar, Tolkien reflects upon the state of kingship in Middle-earth. As he stated in a letter to his son Christopher in 1943, he believed in an “unconstitutional” monarchy (Carpenter 1995: 63), a type of monarchy that leaves all power in the figure of one person. This form of government is possible for these kings because they epitomise, in Chance’s words, “the good king” (1979: 122). In fact, Chance believes that Théoden represents a Germanic king who rides together with his Rohirrim and takes part in battle as one of them, providing like this “a noble and inspiring example for them to follow” (ibid.). Concurrently, she sees Aragorn as a Christian king “because of his moral heroism as a healer rather than his valour as a destroyer” (ibid.). With Aragorn starts a new period in Middle-earth, the Fourth Age, the Dominion of Men, in which he represents a type of hegemonic masculinity different from hypermasculinity – his performance is therefore rather based on a collaborative or collective pattern.

Aragorn’s main reason to be part of the Fellowship of the Ring is his will to help Frodo take the Ring to Mount Doom and destroy it, but, at the same time, although he is very much aware that this is actually Frodo’s quest (*FR* II 6: 327), he also undergoes his own private quest. Despite the fact that such an important task has been given to a hobbit, a priori a weak character, Aragorn is always respectful towards Frodo, never underestimating him and always giving him fully independence to do whatever he wants to do concerning the Ring.

Aragorn starts the journey with Frodo in Bree mainly as a protector, as he vows to protect the hobbits even with his own life, but also as a leader as he takes them to

Rivendell. He never truly shows himself superior to others, but when he arrives in Meduseld and is asked to leave Andúril behind to meet Théoden, we can see that he places himself in a higher rank: “It is not clear to me that the will of Théoden son of Thengel, even though he be lord of the Mark, should prevail over the will of Aragorn son of Arathorn, Elendil’s heir of Gondor” (*TT* III 6: 499). He shows like this that he keeps a rightful pride of his ancestry.

Aragorn is well aware that he owes himself to his people. Gondor awaits a king that is to come, and he cannot let them down, so his is an example of *noblesse oblige*: his responsibility lies with his people. In this sense, if compared with the characters that represent a hypermasculine pattern, he is not as impulsive as Éomer, he is not as proud as Boromir and he passes the test of the Ring, not falling into temptation, and even in his worst moments he never falls into despair, like Denethor. There are two interesting parallelisms between Aragorn and Denethor and Aragorn and Boromir. First of all, although both Denethor and Aragorn end up using Anárion’s *palantír*, it should be noticed that both their approaches to the stone and the consequences are significantly different. Whereas the Steward of Gondor’s pride makes him believe that his will is strong and can therefore confront Sauron, Aragorn looks into it understanding and accepting its danger, never underestimating the power of the *palantír*. The consequences for Denethor have already been analysed in chapter 3, the result being his suicide. For Aragorn, it helps distract Sauron’s attention from Mordor, where Frodo is dangerously approaching Mount Doom, to focus on the existence of a powerful enemy that is Isildur’s heir. Secondly, concerning Aragorn and Boromir, their perception of the Ring is also different – whereas Boromir believes himself capable of resisting its power, thus incorruptible, Aragorn knows how dangerous it is so he does not only refuse it thanks to his strength and willpower but also because he knows himself fragile if he dared use it. This is, indeed, a sign of his humility.

The reader already knows that he is brave and strong and will do whatever he must: “If a man must needs walk in sight of the Black Gate, or tread the deadly flowers of Morgul Vale, then perils he will have” (*FR* II 2: 247). Indeed he proves his courage when he goes into the Paths of the Dead – this could be seen as a kind of death for him, it is the death of the person he leaves behind in order to embrace his future as King of Gondor. Aragorn’s quest, if we understand the journey through the Paths of the Dead as

a metaphor, is indeed a “journey from darkness to light” (Flieger 1981: 42). It could be therefore seen as a symbol of the acceptance of his fate – by doing so, he will be born again, and this time, as the rightful King that he is.

The pattern of hypermasculinity represented by Denethor and Boromir thus contrasts with Aragorn’s, which is characterized by more positive traits, such as humility and compassion. Aragorn, also called the “Renewer” when he is crowned (*RK* V 8: 845), is indeed in charge of revitalising and renewing Middle-earth, so Chance suggests that some of the members of the Fellowship of the Ring might also be regarded as the heirs of the “old men” (Bilbo, Glóin, Thranduil, Isildur, Denethor), so symbolically they represent “vitality, life, newness” (1979: 104). Aragorn’s leadership in the Fellowship of the Ring is based on the service and protection he offers its members, above all, the hobbits (Crocker 2005: 117).

Aragorn’s masculinity therefore rests on rendering service and protection, not on an excess of authority or power, and because he decides to set himself as just another member of the Fellowship instead of its leader, Crocker considers that he is incorporating “a model of manhood that others revere” (2005: 120). When other characters decide to follow his counsel or follow him to war, they do it out of the love and admiration he proves worthy of throughout the book. Bearing in mind Armengol’s consideration that gender is culture-specific and context-bound, in the case of Aragorn, his lineage, his upbringing with the Elves, his experiences in the battlefield and his own beliefs are the basis of the pattern of masculinity that he performs. Aragorn cannot be defined as only Estel, or only Elessar, or Strider, or Aragorn son of Arathorn, for he is all those: “I am Strider and Dúnadan too, and I belong both to Gondor and the North” (*TT* III 9: 549).

Croft believes that Tolkien was in favour of a type of heroism in *The Lord of the Rings* that was based on a duty that was fulfilled “through morally acceptable means” (2004: 77), and not the mere fight to achieve fame and glory, as was the case in the pattern of masculinity performed in Rohan. So even when Aragorn is about to be crowned, he shows that he is a fair and just king, he does not forget the path that has taken him to where he now stands, so he publicly acknowledges the decisive role played by Frodo and Gandalf in the successful outcome of his own personal quest:

By the labour and valour of many I have come into my inheritance. In token of this I would have the Ring-bearer bring the crown to me, and let Mithrandir set it upon my head, if he will; for he has been the mover of all that has been accomplished, and this is his victory. (RK VI 5: 946)

Flieger suggests that Tolkien presents different types of heroes in *The Lord of the Rings*. On the one hand, he has created Aragorn, “the extraordinary man to give the epic sweep of great events,” and, on the other, Frodo, “the common man who has the immediate, poignant appeal of someone with whom the reader can identify” (1981: 41). In this sense, Flieger compares Aragorn with the epic heroes that can achieve great deeds and so, although he is a character that can be indeed admired, it is difficult to identify with him because he is larger than life. Frodo, on the other hand, makes the same mistakes that we might make, feels what we might feel if we had been appointed his task, so he is, in short, a hero from Frye’s “low-mimetic mode,” as will be shown in the following chapter. Aragorn’s full status is achieved when he is crowned, when he is described as he really is:

he was revealed to them now for the first time. Tall as the sea-kings of old, he stood above all that were near; ancient of days he seemed and yet in the flower of manhood; and wisdom sat upon his brow, and strength and healing were in his hands, and a light was about him. (RK VI 5: 947)

This description increases the image of Aragorn as Frye’s hero from the high-mimetic mode. He shares many of the traits of the “traditional epic/romance hero, larger than life, a leader, fighter, lover, healer” (Flieger 1981: 41) with another Gondorian character: Faramir.

We have already seen then all of the facets that Flieger mentions: Aragorn shows his value as a leader of the Fellowship of the Ring, as a skilful warrior in the battlefield and as the lawful heir of Gondor when he passes the test of healing Faramir, Éowyn and Merry in the Houses of Healing. There is one aspect of Aragorn, though, that is not quite elaborated by Tolkien, and it is that of Aragorn as lover. As Burns states, Tolkien is more interested in showing the reader the importance of selfless friendship, the importance of “allegiance and service on a broader scale” than “courtship and romantic devotion” (2005: 134). In fact, almost everything the reader knows about Aragorn and Arwen’s relationship is narrated in the Appendices, where we are told how they met and, after some time, became betrothed. Their story resembles that of another mortal

man and an Elf woman, Beren and Lúthien – like her ancestor, Arwen gives up her most precious gift, her immortality, to stay in Middle-earth and live with her beloved, at least for the time that is given him, for although Aragorn is a Dúnadan and will live for many years, he will perish when his time is come. We do know from the text that he will be able to marry Arwen once he proves that he is worthy of her, for as Elrond says, “Arwen Undómiel shall not diminish her life’s grace for less cause. She shall not be the bride of any Man less than the King of both Gondor and Arnor” (Appendix A 1036).

Nevertheless, although Tolkien does not develop the character of Aragorn as lover in the main text of *The Lord of the Rings*, he cannot be accused of being completely oblivious to other forms of love, as he does pay attention to the Greek concept of *agape*, the form of love that he shows his friends in the Fellowship of the Ring, a kind of brotherly love. It is in this love that the new pattern of masculinity finds its grounds in Middle-earth, a pattern that is collaborative rather than imposing, fraternal rather than competitive, comprehensive rather than exclusive.

4.4. Emerging patterns of masculinity in Middle-earth

If in the previous chapter the characters’ pattern of hypermasculinity stemmed from their exertion of power over others, the use of this power, and the lust of glory in battle, this chapter has dealt with what might be regarded as a new type of masculinity which seems to be somewhat far from the often-stereotyped image of the epic warrior who is expected to go to battle without complaining, without reflecting upon the reason for fighting, and who finds some kind of pleasure in the battlefield. Aragorn, Gandalf and Faramir do not respond to this traditional concept of empowered hegemonic masculinity.

Faramir and Aragorn are nearer the more sophisticated image of the chivalrous knight of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, King Arthur’s legends and the nineteenth-century revival of Arthurian stories. This association of some characters of Middle-earth with knights is supported by Fendler’s words,

[f]antasy is modeled on this mythical structure and makes use of the image of the knight. For the ideal of the knight and of chivalry that is still in existence is a

product of the Renaissance and was revived in the nineteenth century. The ideal of chivalry is based on Christian virtues. (2003: 104)

These Christian virtues are therefore found in characters like Gandalf, Faramir and Aragorn, who have shown their pity and mercy throughout the plot of *The Lord of the Rings*. There seems to be thus some contrast established with other heroes that are based on characters from epic texts, and who are vengeful heroes who will eventually face a certain defeat, hence their lack of hope and their attempt to gain pagan immortality by having their deeds sung.

Tolkien's heroes have a quest that they pursue for various reasons. In the case of Aragorn, he needs to prove worthy of being crowned king and of marrying Arwen, both to the eyes of Gondor and Elrond. He has been therefore compared sometimes to an Arthurian figure as it was understood in the Victorian Arthurian Revival, in which "the figure of Arthur (Christian Worthy, Patriot King and Once and Future King) came to typify, indeed embody, the components of manliness, honour, heroic leadership and liberty which comprised the Teutonic notion of Englishness" (Bryden 2005: 34).

King Arthur was then set as a perfect example of a chivalrous knight and a gentleman, a perfect model of manliness for the Victorians, according to Inga Bryden, as "he could signify physical manliness (if his battle prowess was stressed), or moral manliness if the Christian nature of his heroism was emphasized" (2005: 82). This is the model that influenced Tolkien's father's generation and the atmosphere in which Tolkien himself grew up, the model that would try to maintain the status of Great Britain as Empire and which instilled concepts such as manliness and patriotism in young boys who would contribute to this upkeep.

Aragorn, Faramir and Gandalf represent both physical strength and morality: they are strong soldiers when required, their prowess in battle uncontested, and they are morally impeccable, with or without doubts. Although the war is a perfect setting for them to exert their masculine energy, they do not abuse of it and do not drive their men willingly to certain death, or as Patricia C. Ingham suggests concerning the issue of Arthurian Masculinities, chivalry and war "are not primarily the occasions for male submission and victimization" (1996: 26). They are the perfect mixture of a Victorian gentleman and a medieval hero, very much like the concept of the muscular Christian

that was so widely spread in the nineteenth century and which promoted an image of physical health and Christian beliefs, which were the basis of vigorous masculinity, or as Yamaguchi puts it, “a man healthy in body and in mind who lives and who dies in the code of chivalry” (1996: 86).

All the images “of medieval heroes and manhood in an all-male world” in the Victorian medieval revival contributed to creating an ideal of masculinity (Yamaguchi 1996: 86) that permeated all sorts of fields, like the literary (Lord Tennyson) or the artistic (the Pre-Raphaelites). Aragorn somehow represents an ideal of masculinity in Middle-earth which substitutes an obsolete pattern of hegemonic masculinity – Deborah C. Rogers suggests that he is “Tolkien’s man par excellence” (1975: 73) – with his actions and his high values; he is the indirect protagonist of the third volume, *The Return of the King*, for a reason, which is the beginning of a new Age in Middle-earth and the appearance of new heroes that perform a new pattern of masculinity which is more in consonance with Tolkien’s time and his moral and religious code (Carretero González 1996: 164). However, at the same time, he represents a pattern of masculinity that would find its end during the Great War, for although he might be indeed Tolkien’s man par excellence, there are other characters that perform more contemporary patterns, as the next chapter will illustrate.

Gandalf, Faramir and Aragorn share some characteristics which are the main features of the pattern of masculinity they represent. In the case of King Elessar’s steward, he is not as impulsive or proud as his brother, and although not emotionally inarticulate like Denethor, neither Faramir nor Aragorn or Gandalf are as emotionally charged as the hobbits, the unexpected heroes in the War of the Ring. The characters that have been analysed here, although not perfect perform an “ideal” pattern of masculinity, based on the Christian values of pity, mercy, humility, respect, and compassion for others. They also want to act as equals with their friends or comrades; to illustrate this, we have Faramir’s example, who dresses like his men and tries to go unnoticed as their Captain, or Aragorn’s, who “wants to maintain solidarity with his followers by living and dressing like one of them. As his actions after the victory at Minas Tirith demonstrate, Aragorn’s policy was always to refuse to claim more than he felt was his due” (Croft 2004: 77).

Shippey suggests that when Tolkien conceived some of his heroes, he wanted to create “a new image for ultimate bravery, one milder but not weaker than Beorhtwold’s” (2003: 158), and he also establishes a contrast between “Faramir’s capacity for subtlety, understatement, a reverence for truth which nevertheless includes a relatively oblique approach to it” and “Éomer’s blunt aggressions and withdrawals” (2001: 102). Tolkien managed indeed to create several types of heroes in Middle-earth: from the epic warrior Éomer to the more “modern” type of hero that Faramir represents. What is more, some of Tolkien’s characters are atypical warriors – they would rather not fight unless it is completely necessary: Aragorn uses his diplomacy when he first encounters the Rohirrim, and Faramir accepts Frodo’s mercy towards Gollum and decides not to kill him, also thanks to Gandalf’s moral lessons. Although they are characters for whom peace is so important, this does not mean by any means that they escape their duties in the battlefield, on the contrary, they are highly skilled warriors, but as Croft states, they represent

some of the best aspects of more modern military leadership: for example, leaders who are modest and close to their men; the consultative leadership style, not loving war for itself but only for what it defends; glory ranked well below duty as a motivation. But he would also keep the best of the old heroic style: personal responsibility and assuming risk on the behalf of others. (2004: 104)

Together with the concept of a just war personified in the character of Faramir, Aragorn’s healing power eventually stands him out as the true King in the Houses of Healing. Related to this idea of healing and preserving life, Crowe suggests that

Tolkien’s ecological consciousness was ahead of its time, and in many ways worthy of a contemporary ecofeminist. The nurturing values of home and hearth may be more frequently ascribed to females, but they are given great importance and respect, not denigrated as they are so often in the Primary World. (1995: 277)

When Faramir, Aragorn and Gandalf are described as life preservers concerning their task to preserve and protect life in Middle-earth, life should be understood in the widest possible sense, so when Dickerson and Evans state that Gandalf’s main purpose is “the protection and preservation of all life in Middle-earth” (2006: 43), life encompasses human and non-human life. Tolkien also included very much of his social criticism in the creation of Saruman as a type of genetic engineer who experiments with creatures, and that is reflected in “The Scouring of the Shire,” which the critics have

seen as a representation of those modern changes that were the result of the nineteenth and twentieth-century Industrial Revolution in England. The hobbits, who are the characters directly affected in this scouring, share some life preserving attitudes with the characters here analysed, as will be shown in the following chapter.

In Murphy's view, "literary representations of manhood have both relied on dominant cultural assumptions about masculinity and exposed the untenability of those assumptions" (1994: 6), so Tolkien goes beyond these assumptions in the sense that he decides to construct in Aragorn, Gandalf, and Faramir, a new pattern that is at the same time an echo of the Middle-English literary knights and a representation of some modern attitudes towards war. Although Aragorn, for example, might be regarded as the ultimate hero of Middle-earth, and heroism is indeed in his blood, it is actually the hobbits who are the heroes of the novel.

4.5. New patterns of masculinities in Jackson's films

4.5.1. Gandalf

As Burdge and Burke state, "in [Jackson's] haste to bring *LOTR* to the mainstream, Jackson has succeeded in flattening Tolkien's heroes into one mode, thereby demoralizing and humiliating Tolkien's creation" (2004: 137). In the case of Gandalf, he becomes a hero closer to the low mimetic mode on screen.

In Jackson's attempt to make characters closer to the viewers, Gandalf appears more "mortal" and less "angelic," and more like the rest of the characters of the Fellowship. His introduction in Odinic form and as the archetype of the "wise old man" achieves a similar effect in both types of narrative, as their physical similarities are undoubtedly heightened. Although he tries to keep a serious countenance as he meets Frodo, the audience can see the existence of a special and close bond between these two characters, the character thus appearing like a fatherly figure for the hobbit. Jackson uses different close-ups in the films to show us Gandalf's closeness and affection towards the hobbits, also highlighted during Bilbo's party as he scolds Merry and Pippin, a mixture of his love and strictness (for their own sake) always present in this character. With these traits that Jackson highlights, he somehow endears Gandalf to the

viewers, who are likely to see him more as a grandfather than a Maia if they have not read the novel.



Although Burdge and Burke state that “Gandalf is exposed as a clumsy old fool” (2004: 138) in the first film, and there are moments that might make the audience agree, in truth the effect achieved here is the one that Ian McKellen, the actor that plays Gandalf, explains in one of the audio commentaries of the Extended Edition: he concentrated on the ordinary rather than Gandalf’s immortality in order to play his character, and that is what stands out on screen. As Jackson admits, they wanted a Gandalf that was really human and fallible (*Fellowship* Scene 34), and his first encounter with Bilbo in Bag End in which he hits his head with a beam is in tune with that image.

McKellen’s performance follows Jackson’s creation of a Gandalf that is closer to the audience in some of his attitudes and behaviour, which contrasts with Tolkien’s Gandalf, who is less harsh and impulsive in some of his actions. The director enhances the wizard’s humanity and old age, using the physical characterization of the actor to show that time has taken its toll on him. In Moria, as he realises that they are about to face a Balrog, a demon of the ancient world whose power is beyond theirs, this visual image of an old Gandalf seems to be even more powerful than in the novel, as can be seen in the following screenshot, where he appears aged and tired.



Some of his reactions thus displace him from the high mimetic mode to the low mimetic one, which is part of Burdge and Burke's criticism. To illustrate this, there is a scene in which Gandalf appears in Bag End after Bilbo's party (some years later in the book), in this aura of mortality that surrounds him in *The Fellowship of the Ring*. Jackson admits that they wanted McKellen dishevelled, as if Gandalf had rushed to Bag End, as if he had been sleeping in ditches, etc. (*Fellowship* Scene 10), as if he was utterly worried or scared after what he had learned about the Ring. The writers showed his most human side, his worries and tension, departing from the book, where Gandalf visits Frodo seventeen years after Bilbo's party, stays with the hobbit and asks him to see the Ring again to confirm it is actually the One Ring.



Tolkien's Gandalf is well aware of the Ring's power and of the possibility that he might succumb to its temptation. This is even heightened in Jackson's Gandalf, who does not even want to touch the Ring and leaves it on the floor where Bilbo drops it and does not even dare touch it when he is back in Bag End. This aspect which Tolkien

developed in Gandalf as the story progressed appears in Gandalf's initial reaction towards the Ring on screen. Therefore, those unfamiliar with the book may well think that it is because Gandalf is afraid of being corrupted by the Ring and would not be able to fight its power – Jackson achieves in one scene what Tolkien gradually explains in words. The director also increases the tension in this part of the film as Gandalf sends Frodo hastily (and “accidentally” Sam) to Bree, but without giving them further indications – in the book he advises Frodo to go to Rivendell, without imposing it, but at least it seems to be something he has pondered, and not a hasty decision. Even though the moment urgently requires this pressure of action and time, the fact that Gandalf simply sends Frodo to an unclear destination does not only add tension to the scene but also presents a wizard that must improvise at some stage. The literary Gandalf would not leave Frodo so “unguided.”

In Rivendell, right before the Council of Elrond, Gandalf exchanges a few words with Elrond and states that “it is a burden he should never have had to bear. We can ask no more of Frodo” (*Fellowship* Scene 24), as if suspecting Elrond's “intentions” and in an attempt to protect the hobbit. Despite being aware of the important role that the hobbit is still to play in the destruction of the Ring and dreading what is yet to come, Jackson offers once again a close-up of an emotional Gandalf during the Council – in this case, the pain in the wizard's eyes is obvious when he hears Frodo volunteer to destroy the Ring.



Gandalf's humanized masculinity in the films is therefore highlighted through the wizard's non-restriction of emotions. Therefore, although in the book Gandalf's more human side is heightened particularly when he is with the hobbits, in the first film this is

quite a ubiquitous image, apart from the instances in which he uses his powers. Thompson describes Gandalf in the book as an “unconventional wizard” who becomes “the standard wise helper figure, at least as long as he is the Grey” (2011: 30), a fact which has been faithfully adapted on screen.

The fact that he is provided with at least two different staves in the films is indicative of the change that has operated on the wizard after his fall in Moria. Moreover, this therefore influences his performance of masculinity, bringing Gandalf the White closer to a hero of the high mimetic mode. The father-figure has become a sort of angelic figure, “the hero is a diving being” (Frye 1971: 33); he still keeps the same traits as Gandalf but looks less human, also physically: his hair is always straight, he is not dishevelled, and if Gandalf the Grey’s clothes seemed to be like in rags in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, these completely change after his death. Jackson sees in the Gandalf of the first film quite an affectionate character, whereas in the second film he is quite “dry,” even more distant, and in the third he is more vibrant and energetic, and shares “much more humorous and intimate moments” (*Towers* Scene 22, writers’ and director’s commentary). Moreover, after his resurrection, the image of Gandalf as a fierce warrior is also enhanced, so he is usually linked to the battlefield, in Helm’s Deep and in the Pelennor Fields. After his “resurrection” he is usually surrounded by whiteness and light:





In Rohan he shows how powerful he has become, even managing to beat Saruman, who was ultimately responsible for Théoden's bewitchment. His new incarnation as Gandalf the White resembles Saruman's physically. The actor even changed the wizard's voice, making it clearer in contrast with the voice he used for Gandalf the Grey, which was quite raspy "because of all the smoking he did, and a man of a certain age" (*Fellowship* Scene 7, cast commentary). Gandalf has become indeed "less old." In fact, when McKellen was asked about Gandalf in an interview, he answered that he understood very clearly these two aspects of Gandalf as the Grey and the White. For him, Gandalf the White is "younger" despite his white hair, "He's a man of action, he's a samurai, he's a warrior, he's a commander, and he's in control," whereas Gandalf the Grey is more subservient, "He may tell people what to do, but he's not really in control of what's going on. In the second two films, he's much more focused." About Gandalf the Grey, the actor also adds that

[h]e had enormous strength, resilience, intelligence and determination, passion and generosity. He was also very human, very frail, in the sense that he liked to drink,

he liked to smoke, he liked to laugh, he liked to play. He also was human in the sense that he was worried he wasn't doing the job properly--that he'd somehow let Middle-earth down by not anticipating Sauron's revival. He had to really organize himself. (McKellen, "Interview")

Jackson and Boyens also discuss in the director's commentaries that Gandalf is shown in "The King of the Golden Hall" as a "manipulator," or rather a persuader, as Boyens prefers. Jackson sees Gandalf as a character that "manipulates people into doing what he wants them to do," as he encourages Théoden to wield his sword again in an attempt to help the King of Rohan remember who he once was (*Towers* Scene 20). Although Jackson may have interpreted that this "manipulation is due to the wizard's exertion of power in order to achieve a good goal, the term "manipulator" seems to be excessive if we bear in mind Gandalf's initial intention, which is to help the king. Moreover, he is in fact acting like Gríma, giving Théoden some advice, some counselling which is not poisoned. A comparison can be established thus between Gandalf and Wormtongue, as three scenes after the aforementioned one, in "The King's Decision," the wizard appears sitting down next to the king, just as Gríma had appeared before. The contrast between these two scenes is immediately marked as Gandalf appears all clad in white, whereas Saruman's accomplice is all dressed in black, a metaphor for the type of counselling that the King is given.

This is not the only instance in which Gandalf appears next to a ruler giving him some advice, as he also offers Denethor his counselling skills when he arrives in Minas Tirith and tells the Steward: "War is coming. The enemy is on your doorstep. As steward, you are charged with the defense of this city. Where are Gondor's armies?" (*Return* Scene 11). The Steward of Gondor, however, rejects the wizard's advice.

Gandalf does not only embody the archetype of the "Wise old man," but also appears as a warrior in *The Return of the King*, as has been mentioned above. He had already fought in Helm's Deep in *The Two Towers*; in this third part of Jackson's films, he helps Faramir arrive safe and sound in Gondor and acts as a leader in the siege of Gondor, in which Pippin ends up saving his life. More often than not he appears thoughtful, never forgetting Frodo, wondering where he is, trying to focus on his heart, which tells him the hobbit is still alive, but regretting that he might have sent him to his death. Gandalf the White is mightier and stronger than the Grey and also than his counterpart in the book, who is more spiritual.

Brian D. Walter suggests that Jackson's Gandalf is "without a question, a much more screen-friendly version" (2011: 195), and although Gandalf as an angelic being is indeed more humbled "both literally and metaphorically" (198), this leads to "substantial benefits to the dramatic tension of numerous scenes and to the fuller, richer depiction of numerous other characters" (196). Moreover, in the case of Gandalf, he never loses his humanity and vulnerability; as Walter states, "in the films, Gandalf is much more a captain, perhaps even a champion, uniquely powerful among the forces that resist Sauron, but still vulnerable, still vanquishable" (209). Walter does not perceive in Gandalf's diminishment the "atrociousness" that Burdge and Burke did; on the contrary, he sees it is necessary for the benefit of other characters, namely Frodo and Aragorn (209), thus implying that victory was possible thanks to everyone's contribution and not only that of a few.

4.5.2. Faramir

Théoden and Faramir are probably two of the characters that present a stronger departure from the way they are developed in the book.¹¹ In fact, as Yvette Kisor claims, "for that portion of Jackson's audience who are also lovers of Tolkien's original conception, the changes Jackson makes may finally be too great" (2011: 110). Jackson's interpretation of the aforementioned characters affects the type of masculinities they perform; in the particular case of Faramir, it is heavily influenced by his will to please his father and live up to what he expects of him as a warrior.

The relationship between Boromir and Faramir, and the one they have with their father is briefly developed in Osgiliath, in the scene "Sons of the Steward," where the camera shows an exultant Boromir, standing as an utterly successful warrior, and Denethor longing to see him, while not so thrilled to see Faramir. The brothers are elated to see each other, a reflection of the good relationship existing between them and explained in the Appendices of the novel (Appendix A 1032), but when Faramir sees Denethor, his face changes, coldly informing Boromir that "he is here" (*Towers* Scene 41). The dialogue that follows this brotherly reunion in this scene is very significant and almost self-explanatory concerning the relationship between the father and his sons:

¹¹ In the case of Arwen, it is rather the creation of a new character than departure, as will be explained in chapter 7.

Boromir: One moment of peace, can he not give us that?
Denethor: Where is he? Where is Gondor's finest? Where's my first-born?
Boromir: Father!
Denethor: They say you vanquished the enemy almost single-handedly.
Boromir: They exaggerate. The victory belongs to Faramir also.
Denethor: But for Faramir, this city would still be standing.
Denethor: Were you not entrusted to protect it?
Faramir: I would have done, but our numbers were too few.
Denethor: Oh, too few. You let the enemy walk in and take it on a whim. Always you cast a poor reflection on me.
Faramir: That is not my intent.
Boromir: You give him no credit, and yet he tries to do your will. He loves you, Father.
Denethor: Do not trouble me with Faramir.....I know his uses, and they are few. We have more urgent things to speak of.

In this conversation, not only is Denethor's preference for Boromir set clear, but also his disdain for his younger son as he utters these bitter words. Nothing that Faramir does to please his father seems to be enough for Denethor, who is even blind to Boromir's praise of his younger brother. It is very interesting to see how these two great warriors from Gondor feel suddenly uncomfortable in this conversation with their father and Steward, after what they have achieved, and Faramir seems more affected by what his father thinks of him in the film than in the book.

Faramir is seen as a less fierce warrior here if compared with Boromir, but this is Jackson's interpretation of the character throughout the second and third films. Always under pressure to please his father, he also undergoes an internal struggle, as his brother does, but of a different sort, for he knows that his father will never see in him what he sees in his first-born. When Boromir, surprisingly for his father, refuses to go to Rivendell and bring him the One Ring, Faramir volunteers, but his father scorns him and does not accept it, saying that Boromir will not fail him.

Denethor's tyranny over his son seems to affect even Faramir's behaviour, as it seems that Jackson has diminished one character in order to show the imposing power of the other in contrast. Faramir does not appear as the "scholarly officer ideal," which is a "model drawn from Tolkien and his colleagues during the bitterness of WWI" (Burdge and Burke 2004: 159). Although the director prevents the viewers from knowing this aspect of Faramir's life, hence his identification in the book as officer and scholar somewhat absent in the scene, Jackson does not forget to endow him with the life-preserving attitude that he had in the novel. This is clearly seen in the scene "Of

Herbs and Stewed Rabbit,” as Jackson gives him some of the words that Tolkien gave to Sam:

The enemy? His sense of duty was no less than yours, I deem. You wonder what his name is... Where he came from. And if he was really evil at heart. What lies or threats led him on this long march from home. If he would not rather have stayed there... in peace. War will make corpses of us all (*Towers* Scene 30).

In this speech, Faramir is openly referring to the just war cause, an attitude to war which is characteristic of Tolkien’s Faramir, as was analysed in the literary character’s section. The fact that Jackson has given him some of Sam’s words is a tool which the director uses to establish part of Faramir’s nature, and which has not appeared so far on screen.

David Wenham, the actor that plays Faramir, calls him “morally courageous” (Wenham, 2012) when he refers to the scene when Faramir retreats to Minas Tirith. Wenham believes that Faramir is only trying to save his men, for the character would gladly give his life for Gondor and his people. However, there is a momentary deviation from the character in the book, as he seems to forget his altruistic nature, that which made him let Frodo continue his quest. In the film he thinks first of himself when, in what seems an attempt to impress his father, he falls into the same trap as Boromir and decides to take the Ring to Gondor: “Take them to my father. Tell him Faramir sends a mighty gift. A weapon that will change our fortunes in this war” (*Towers* Scene 57). He ignores Sam’s vehement speech about Frodo and his burden, which Tolkien’s Faramir would have never done. According to Burdge and Burke,

the quality of Faramir is exploited in the film to suit the needs of the screenwriters who felt that he needed to go on a journey, a journey which would isolate him from his society and bring pathos into the tale. This change allows him to be as desirous of the Ring as his brother Boromir. (2004: 161)

Wenham also agrees that this journey is somehow necessary for the character he plays because Faramir does not change much in the book so that this is a way to make him a rounder character in the film, and also remind audiences that the power of the Ring is still at work. Notwithstanding, by diminishing the character’s self-control and not presenting him as a learned scholar, “Faramir is turned from an honorable vestige of the race of Númenor, a shining ray of hope for mere mortal readers and for Frodo in the wilds of despair, into a corrupt display of mechanical greed and everything Tolkien was writing against” (138).

He is nearer his corruptible brother in the film, very far from the knowledgeable Faramir that is well aware from the beginning of the perils of the Ring. This change might be very difficult to accept for some readers of the book who, as Kisor claims, might believe that this character “is seriously compromised by making him a weaker version of Boromir” (2011: 113 footnote 14). By making it difficult for Faramir to resist the Ring, Jackson and his crew are not only adding some dramatic tension to the plot, they are also changing the type of hero that Faramir is and the type of masculinity he performs. Nevertheless, Jackson could not change the fate of the Ring; accordingly, Faramir becomes the prudent character he is in the book. He understands what the Ring did to Boromir and decides to set the hobbits free, unheeding a warning from another man of Gondor: “If you let them go, your life will be forfeit” (*Towers* Scene 60).

As Faramir confronts Denethor in a later scene, he tries to make his father see that Boromir would have taken the Ring for himself. Hurt by the fact that his father bluntly tells him that he would have gladly seen him die instead of his brother, Faramir embraces the suicide mission his father is sending him to. In this same scene, “The Wizard’s Pupil,” Denethor is delirious, as he sees his son Boromir in his mind, unable to see that it is Faramir standing in front of him: a son that would do anything for his approval but for whom he only has bitter words:

Faramir: Then farewell! But if I should return, think better of me, Father!
Denethor: That depends on the manner of your return (*Return* Scene 22)

In Jackson’s adaptation of this character there are, as has been explained so far, certain nuances that the director and the other scriptwriters introduce in Faramir and which differentiate him from his literary counterpart. First of all, his fallibility is clear, as Jackson has deprived him of the wisdom that allowed him not to fall into the temptation of the Ring in the novel. He is therefore taken on a journey that is meant to “isolate him from society and bring pathos into the tale” (Burdge and Burke 2004: 161). By doing this, he has therefore distanced him from Gandalf’s teachings, which are in fact only hinted at by Denethor at some stage. The fact that Jackson has created a corruptible Faramir somehow seems to diminish his inner strength and helps to lessen his status in Middle-earth, changing him into a hero of the low mimetic mode.

The performance of masculinity of characters like Faramir is therefore closer to a new definition of masculinity, one that contests a dominant hegemonic masculinity and

which offers the spectators the possibility to feel identified with the character embodying it, as they are turned by Jackson into heroes closer to those of the low mimetic mode. At the same time, by situating Aragorn and Faramir far from a concept of masculinity inherently linked to violence, Jackson is offering a more positive and alternative type of masculinity, as, indeed, Tolkien does in the book. Although scholars like Burdge and Burke understand that “by not adhering to Tolkien’s heroic structures, Jackson demoralizes and diminishes each of Tolkien’s characters, reducing their impact, making them flat, unstructured, thereby robbing them of their deeper meaning” (2004: 162), the director and his crew are undoubtedly constructing different patterns of masculinities in the films which, despite sharing certain traits with their literary counterparts, emphasizes the humanization of characters like Aragorn and Faramir, who can thus be seen as postmodern heroes.

4.5.3. Aragorn

In her PhD thesis *The Currency of Heroic Fantasy: The Lord of the Rings and Harry Potter from Ideology to Industry*, Beatty understands that “the protagonist of heroic fantasy is typically action-oriented and exhibits a strong social conscience” (2006: 207). Concurrently, she puts forward the idea that “how the hero claims masculine power is therefore conveyed by his character and actions” (2006: 210). She proceeds then to identify Aragorn as a “Warrior Hero”, Sam as an “Everyman Hero,” and Frodo as a “Spiritual Hero” and a martyr (215), a fact which Tolkien had already stated concerning the hobbit in a letter: “Frodo undertook his quest out of love – to save the world he knew from disaster at his own expense, if he could; and in also in complete humility, acknowledging that he was wholly inadequate to the task” (Carpenter 1995: 327).

In the case of Aragorn, he is an example of a character whose complexity goes beyond that of his counterpart in the book. The way Jackson changes Aragorn makes him more “believable to a contemporary audience” (Beatty 2006: 407), closer to a low mimetic hero, as Burdge and Burke suggest (2004: 155). His evolution and some characteristics Tolkien endowed him with will also influence the masculinity he performs in the film. The following paragraphs will try to illustrate how Jackson’s Aragorn is depicted as Ranger, leader, and king-to-be.

The first shot the film gives us of Aragorn in Bree presents us with a character surrounded by a veil of mystery, just as much as he is in the book. Moreover, Boyens mentions in the director's commentaries of the first film that they wanted him to look more dangerous as if to increase how enigmatic the character was and the fact that the hobbits did not really know what he was going to do (*Fellowship* Scene 16, writers' and director's commentary). This is illustrated by Aragorn's first shots, as he appears half hidden in the shadows, sitting down far from the hobbits, with a close-up of his eyes, suddenly lit up as he lights his pipe.



However, he is only temporarily the “mysterious” Ranger of the North that Mr Butterbur is suspicious of – the hobbits’ almost immediate acceptance of this character contrasts with their reluctance to rely on a stranger in the book. Strider thus seems to be rather a complement of Aragorn, but only in terms of his looks and some of his skills as tracer and guide in the wilderness, whereas on paper this is very much an important part of the Dúnadan’s personality. Whereas it is Gandalf who tells Frodo in a letter who Strider really is in the novel, on screen they follow him without asking many questions, and Gandalf’s advice of going to Rivendell is passed on to him in the film. Furthermore, according to the director, Aragorn seems enigmatic when he is with the hobbits and also when he sings, but, at the same time, the fact that he wants to feed the hobbits is a way to slowly humanize this character (*Fellowship* Scene 17, writers’ and director’s commentary). With these variations, Jackson is enhancing Aragorn’s humanity and imperfection, distancing him thus from the hero of the high mimetic mode that appears in the novel. Burdge and Burke see this as a way of flattening the character in order to bring the novel to the mainstream (2005: 139), but there is another plausible interpretation, which is that Jackson is simply creating a different product, even if it is

the adaptation of a novel. The director and his crew are therefore creating patterns of masculinities that are closer to the audience and, in a comparison with the novel, the result is inevitably a different one.

Although he does not have a proper sword in the book until Narsil is re-forged, in a 21st-century film it would be more difficult to believe that a warrior such as Aragorn does not carry any sword with him, which is what happens in the novel, as Aragorn confronts the Ringwraiths with a flaming torch in Weathertop. In the director's commentaries, Jackson believes that if Aragorn had carried a broken sword with him, as he did in the book, it would have been laughed at in the film, especially by people who are not familiar with the books. By abandoning the whole idea of doing that, they somehow began to change Aragorn's character in the film (*Fellowship* Scene 15, writers' and director's commentary). By not carrying such an important heirloom, the character is presented as somehow distanced from what fate has prepared for him, which is to reclaim the throne of Gondor. Moreover, as Jackson also decided not to include either Tom Bombadil or the Barrow-wights, he has to provide the hobbits with weapons in Weathertop by using another element, in this case it is Aragorn who gives them the swords. Weaponless in the book, Aragorn's image with a sword changes into that of a complete warrior in the film, this is in fact how he appears in the first and third films' posters.

One of the greatest departures from his counterpart on page, and also one that has earned some detractors, is the image of an Aragorn who, according to Elrond, has chosen exile, he has diverted from his fate as Isildur's heir and has so far willingly decided not to accept it: "I do not want that power. I have never wanted it" (*Fellowship* Scene 28). Beatty suggests that Jackson, Boyens and Walsh have actually "rewritten his character to better reflect contemporary masculinity. While Tolkien's Aragorn never waivers from his destiny, the cinematic version enacts the purported current masculinity crisis before securing his manhood and his kingdom" (2006: 238). In the film he is insecure, he carries the weight of being a descendant of Isildur on his shoulders, which makes him "unsure of his ability to refuse the lure of the ring, given his forefather's actions" (ibid.); he is, thus, a "reluctant heir" (Burdge and Burke 2004: 138). Aragorn is tormented by the fact that Men are weak, and does not know how he should respond to the task of being their leader in Middle-earth. Therefore, when he explains to the hobbits that the Ringwraiths were once Men who fell into greed and then darkness, he is

also voicing Elrond's own opinion about the race of Men, as he sees them as what he might become. Even Boromir accuses Aragorn of being afraid and hiding all his life in the shadows, "scared of who you are, of what you are" (*Fellowship* Scene 42). The fact that he finds it so difficult to accept who he is influences thus the opinion that some important characters have of him.

Concerning this reluctance to accept his fate, when Aragorn is in Rivendell and he talks to Arwen right before the Council of Elrond, Jackson gives her some of the words that belonged to Aragorn in the book. She insists on reminding him that he is Isildur's heir, *not* Isildur himself: "You are not bound to his fate," although Aragorn insists that he shares with his ancestors "the same weakness" (*Fellowship* Scene 25). Everything about Isildur in the film seems to be negative, as he is presented as a character that is flawed as he decides not to destroy the Ring, a scene that Jackson decided to incorporate in the first film. We therefore see that this is a doom that never leaves Aragorn's mind, as he does not want to make the same mistakes as his ancestor. The director is therefore indirectly telling the audience that Isildur's weakness is bound to be found either in his lineage or in any Ringbearer, resulting in Aragorn's doubts and Elrond's prejudice, both understandable in this context. Arwen's words, however, seem to be quite reassuring on an Aragorn that is on the verge of tears and who is suffering an internal fight (*Fellowship* Scene 28, writers' and director's commentary).



Burdge and Burke refer to Jackson's Aragorn as a character that is "reinterpreted," a character who shows reluctance to "take on the mantle as a hero of high romance, but [Jackson] reflects him as a hero craving the pathos of *low mimetic* mode" (2004: 155). The fact that he does not show openly who he really is, not even in the Council of

Elrond, where it is up to Legolas to unveil the mystery, is another way of highlighting the fact that he has not fully accepted his fate yet. He does not even confront Boromir when he calls him a Ranger as if from a superior position. This scene of the Council of Elrond emphasizes the differences between these two characters, which Jackson began to show when Boromir held Narsil in a previous scene. During the Council, whereas Aragorn's facial expression is always solemn and calm, Boromir's truculent and proud attitude never leaves his face.

As the film moves on, there are several instances in which the audience may have the feeling that both Elrond and Arwen seem to "push" Aragorn to finally meet his fate, thus indirectly hinting at a character that is less monolithic than his counterpart in the book. Tolkien's character did have some doubts, but they were rather related to his decisions, and never concerned his bloodline or his acceptance of the throne of Gondor. While Arwen believes that there is still hope, her love for Aragorn contrasts with her father's distrust of the Dúnadan. Elrond does not hide his opinion that "Men are weak," as he explains to Gandalf that Isildur decided not to throw the Ring into the Cracks of Doom when he had the opportunity; he distrusts Aragorn and believes it is due to the fallibility of Men that the Ring has not been destroyed yet. After all, Galadriel says in the Prologue that Men were given nine Rings, for "above all, Men desire power," and "the hearts of Men are easily corrupted" (*Fellowship* Scene 1).

All these changes in the cinematic character do not make Jackson's Aragorn less charismatic than his counterpart in the book; his charisma is, however, different. In the book, right after Gandalf's fall into the abyss with the Balrog, he urged the rest of the Fellowship to continue their journey. Although his attitude seems to be rather insensitive as both Legolas and Boromir ask him to give the hobbits a moment to cry the wizard's "death," Aragorn's down-to-earthiness does not allow him to mourn for Gandalf like the others, for he is aware that they are being chased by orcs and must escape immediately. He never says farewell to Gandalf either – they are in danger and they must go on. In the book his decisions are never questioned, whereas in the film, Gimli, for instance, questions Aragorn's decision on the path to take after having left Lothlórien. Aragorn never imposes his will in the novel, he always takes into account the rest of the Fellowship's opinions, so in the films there is, as Croft admits, "less depiction of the consensual leadership style which is so essential to Aragorn's character" (2011: 221). This shows us an Aragorn that seems to be less democratic and

“closer to the classic loner of the American monomyth, who typically rejects democratic discussion and decision-making and favors instead independent action without accountability” (ibid.). Jackson’s Aragorn is therefore more individualistic than in the novel and is more similar to this American monomyth, a theory developed by John Shelton Lawrence and Robert Jewett, who understood this hero as selfless, and “who emerge to renounce temptations and carry out the redemptive task” (qtd. in Croft 2011: 217). This is a variation of Campbell’s theory of the monomyth, for both Aragorn and the American monomyth are loners who are firstly seen outside their community.

As Jackson has diminished the type of hero that he is from high mimetic to low mimetic, it is difficult to see the same evolution in both his and Tolkien’s Aragorn. In the film, when he sees the Argonath, the camera only shows Aragorn looking at them in awe, whereas the book says that there is a certain transformation in him. Frodo indeed sees a change in him, which he perceives first in his voice: “‘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 [...], a light was in his eyes: a king returning from exile to his own land” (*FR* II 9: 384). Aragorn is approaching the moment of truth as Isildur’s heir and passing beyond the statues of Isildur and Anárion, his ancestors, emphasizes the entrance of the king-to-be in his land.

In respect to Aragorn’s identification as a low mimetic hero, Jackson wanted to create a character that was “more complex” (*Fellowship* scene 25, writers’ and director’s commentary), as he understood that the lack of internal conflicts of Tolkien’s Aragorn would not be as appealing. Along this line, Croft believes that, thanks to these changes, “we are meant to relate to and pity his self-doubt, soul-searching, and lack of faith in love – instead of admiring and aspiring to the original Aragorn’s clarity of purpose, self-assurance, and confidence in Arwen’s promise” (2011: 223). This is one of the aspects that redefines Aragorn’s pattern of masculinity in the film, which distances him from the pattern that Tolkien constructed for him in the book, as the character has been more humanized and thus appears less idealized (ibid.).

Jackson’s close-ups of an Aragorn that is on the verge of tears, always in touch with his emotional side, are frequent in the three films, which succeeds in presenting Aragorn at his most human. At the end of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, as he allows

Frodo to continue his quest alone, aware of the perilous journey ahead for the hobbit, there are two parts of his personality that Jackson heightens: his moving farewells to Frodo and a dead Boromir contrast with his fierceness as a warrior as he fights against the orcs. The director consequently has created a character with whom the audience can relate to, a character that is in touch with his feelings and at the same time an action hero who does what is expected from him. Jackson has incorporated both facets in consecutive scenes, hence stressing the humanisation of the future king of Gondor.



Aragorn's conversation with Frodo is quite relevant at this stage of the film, particularly for the Ranger. After Aragorn's belief that Men are weak and all his doubts concerning Isildur's failure and what this could imply for himself, he finally sees that he has the strength to be able to resist the temptation of taking the Ring, which acts as a sort of personal disclosure, for if he began to have hope in himself. Jackson also adds that Boromir's death triggers Aragorn's determination to accept his own fate and pursue it (*Fellowship* Scene 45, writers' and director's commentary). In all this turmoil of

feelings he still shows his excellence as a warrior, and his decisions make him a more resolute hero at the end of *The Fellowship of the Ring* as he decides to find Merry and Pippin.

The first film introduced Aragorn as a hesitant hero, reluctant to accept his fate, but at the same time loyal to his friends and willing to make up for his ancestor's failure. As the Fellowship is broken and the characters take different paths, Aragorn's encounter with the Rohirrim shows him in his most diplomatic side, willing to avoid any type of confrontations. There is, however, one slight difference in how Aragorn can be perceived in both narratives: while in the film he introduces himself as Aragorn, in the book the first name he uses to identify himself is Strider. Only a few moments later will he reveal that his name is Aragorn son of Arathorn, and "he seemed to have grown in stature" (*TT III 2: 432*). In *The Two Towers*, whereas in the book he keeps the name to himself for a while and continues using the name of Strider, he introduces himself as Aragorn straight away, by means of which Jackson seems to highlight the character's true status and the recent acceptance of his fate.

Soon after meeting the Rohirrim, Gimli, Legolas and Aragorn find Gandalf, already turned into Gandalf the White, and all of them decide to go to Edoras. As they arrive at Meduseld, even before knowing that Aragorn is the future king of Gondor, they regard him as a vigorous and mighty warrior, and furthermore, the Lady of Rohan feels almost immediately Aragorn's allure. The second film focuses thus on Aragorn as a military leader and warrior, and introduces another departure from the book as we are given flashbacks of his time in Rivendell. In Aragorn's trip to Helm's Deep with the people of Rohan, he talks to Éowyn and suddenly the scene changes to Rivendell in a flashback as Éowyn asks him about his pendant, the Evenstar. As Aragorn reminisces his last moments with Arwen, they appear kissing on camera, and she tells him: "You cannot falter now" (*Towers Scene 33*).

This is not the first time that Arwen reminds him of everything that is at stake if he does not succeed. At the same time, Aragorn remembers a conversation with Elrond about Arwen regarding her belonging to an immortal race, so different from his. This triggers in a way Aragorn's conversation with Arwen, in which he tells her that he will not be coming back to Rivendell, that they belong to different races, they have therefore different fates – he is giving up their love, thus providing her with the chance to keep

her immortality, for his future is uncertain. As a result, he believes that she is indeed going to the Undying Lands, as he will later tell Éowyn, unaware that Arwen has a mind of her own and is determined to fight for their love. As Croft explains, “[Jackson’s] Aragorn doesn’t allow Arwen the independence to make her own decision about whether she wishes to risk her life or not – even when Arwen has already established as a quite capable swordswoman and outstanding rider who can take care of herself” (2011: 220). Nevertheless, although Aragorn’s decision could be read as patronizing towards Arwen, it should not be forgotten that he always has in his mind the story of Beren and Lúthien, as can be seen in the extended edition of the first film, when he sings a song about them. Richard C. West believes that, because of time constraints, the theatrical versions of the films seem to be more focused on action than in these moments (2011: 232), highly relevant for some characters’ development. In the case of Aragorn, he is sacrificing his own love, for he is aware of Lúthien’s fate and is trying to protect Arwen. Their love story is therefore given more dramatic tension, which contrasts with the novel, where it is almost taken for granted.

There are several matters that could be analysed in the scene “The Evenstar” in *The Two Towers*; the question here, however, is why the director chooses to show this intimate moment between Aragorn and Arwen at this stage in the film. Jackson clearly wants to hint that Aragorn has been actually “tempted” by Éowyn, a fact which is not perceptible in the novel. He did use Arwen and developed her love story with Aragorn in an attempt to attract a wider audience, and he also seems to use Aragorn’s interactions with Éowyn to create a possible love triangle between the three characters. Aragorn’s relationship with both women is expanded in the films, especially in the added scenes of the extended editions.

Although Éowyn’s feelings for Aragorn are clear, even if the origin of these is subject to interpretation depending on the reader or the scholar, there is a moment in the second film that Jackson uses to add some tension to the relationship between these two characters. Aragorn falls off a cliff while he is fighting with a warg, and everyone believes him to be dead. As the warriors arrive in Helm’s Deep and Éowyn sees them, Gimli approaches her and she instantly understands that Aragorn has died. Boyens refers to this scene as the perfect excuse for Éowyn to expose her true feelings for Aragorn (“to herself and to the audience”) (*Towers* Scene 34, writers’ and director’s commentary). The fact that Aragorn is awoken, as he lies unconscious, by an imagined

Arwen, puts a quick end to any possible hint of hesitation in Aragorn's feelings. If Jackson plays with the idea that Aragorn might feel something for Éowyn, he soon discards it.

Surrender is never an option for either Jackson's or Tolkien's Aragorn. When he arrives in Helm's Deep, after surviving the fall, his entrance in the hall is visually striking, as the doors open all of a sudden and show the character that Théoden believed dead.



Aragorn immediately informs the King of Rohan about the approach of an orc army that is near Helm's Deep. The King's original intention to go there was to keep his people – old men, women and children – safe from the war, and they are now facing a siege. Although Legolas and Aragorn are well aware that it is folly to fight against this ten-thousand-soldier army with so many weak people, Aragorn chooses to fight, as he answers the Elf: "Then I shall die one of them" (*Towers* Scene 45). This is an example of his determination to offer his life defending those who have need of his aid.

Even without having had any rest, he tells the King what they have to do, they must fight, and he ends up becoming the leader of the battle in Helm's Deep, encouraging both the Men of Rohan and the Elves, and finally compelling a hopeless Théoden to fight. The second film undoubtedly unites some of the most appealing scenes with Aragorn as a warrior, alone or with other characters. When compared to Théoden, it is inevitable to see Aragorn as the greater hero. Not only is he more resolute and more assertive, but he is also a compassionate character, as he stops Théoden from killing Gríma: "Enough blood has been spilt on his account" (*Towers* Scene 20), in a

scene in which Aragorn even offers the counsellor his hand to help him stand up, only for Gríma to spit on it.

The character of Aragorn reaches the climactic moment in his personal quest in the third film when Elrond visits him and tells him that Arwen's life is "tied to the fate of the Ring" and she is "dying" (*Return* Scene 30), as if pressing Aragorn to embrace his fate and defeat Sauron. This, of course, means more pressure on Aragorn, who had already been told by Arwen not to falter. According to Boyens, in the end Aragorn is forced to confront Sauron for Arwen's sake, as she is becoming more and more vulnerable (*Return* Scene 30, writers' and director's commentary). Tying Arwen's fate to the defeat of Sauron changes Aragorn's motivation to fight, so in Høgset's view, "[Jackson] undermines the aspect of heritage, destiny and obligation. Aragorn suddenly appears to accept his birthright because it is the only way he can save Arwen, not because he is destined to rule men" (2004: 173). As his motives have become more personal, the character seems to lose part of his characteristic altruism and "is no longer governed by his sense of duty" (*ibid.*).

Before leaving, Elrond advises him to go through the Paths of the Dead and encourages him to "put aside the Ranger. Become who you were born to be" (*Return* Scene 30). Moreover, he gives him the re-forged Narsil, and as was analysed in the novel, this could be seen as Aragorn's recovery of his masculinity, the broken sword a symbol of an incomplete Aragorn.



With his re-forged Andúril, he is determined to accept his fate completely. Right before entering the Paths of the Dead, there is an instance with Éowyn in which Aragorn tells her that he cannot give her what she seeks (*Towers* scene 31), which Croft

finds quite harsh if compared to the book, where “with great delicacy of care for her feelings, Aragorn speaks only of their respective duties to their peoples” (2011: 220). This probably encourages viewers to get the idea that Éowyn goes to the battlefield more out of despair for her unrequited love than out of eagerness to fight as any other Rohirrim.

One of the problems that the interpretation of the character of Aragorn in the film poses is that his reasons to become king are not as clear as in the books, and the stages he must go through or the tests to prove he is worthy of the Kingdom of Gondor are inexistent in the films. He is indeed well able in the battlefield, he manages to challenge Sauron through a *palantir*, he goes through the Paths of the Dead and raises its army, and finally, he is seen as a healer, but no more than “an adept herbalist” (Burdge and Burke 2004: 156). In an added scene in the Extended Edition of the third film, he tends to Éowyn when she is hurt, but the viewer is not allowed to know that the use of *athelas* and the fact that Éowyn does, indeed, heal, present him as the rightful heir to the throne. He also enters Gondor ignoring the customs that he does respect¹² in the book, which makes Aragorn’s entrance in his kingdom less reverential and more informal. Burdge and Burke, however, understand this gesture as disrespectful towards his people and his crown, for it seems to disregard the Steward, Faramir, “and taking the crown without any thought to honor, fealty, or ritual.” They also suggest that this is contradictory with the fact that he felt embarrassed during the Council of Elrond when Legolas explained who he was (2004: 157).

In a Hollywood blockbuster, it should not come as a surprise that Jackson’s makes of Aragorn’s skills as a warrior and a Ranger his most appealing traits. He always fights for a good reason, and as Jackson states, “Aragorn’s heroism is his attempt to put his own life and the life of his troops in the line,” hoping that it will give Sam and Frodo an opportunity (*Fellowship* “From Book to Script”).

Jackson’s Aragorn in the films is a character that is therefore based on his self-doubt, his initial reluctance to accept his fate, which he sees as a burden, his altruism and his struggle to prove worthy of his crown, worthy of Arwen’s love, and above all,

¹² Jackson explains this scene by stating that it would have been too complicated for the film to have Aragorn waiting outside Minas Tirith as they would have had to introduce a new character, and the amount of characters in the book had already posed a problem in several scenes (*Return* Scene 59).

accept himself as he is. Less “royal” than Tolkien’s Aragorn, who is a man proud of his lineage, Jackson creates a character that is postmodern in its conception and development, and easier for a 21st-century audience to relate to; he is in fact a type of hero that needs to undergo a process in order to accept himself before he lets others accept him as well. This delay in Aragorn’s acceptance adds more complexity to the character, which, for Smith and Matthews, makes him more interesting than the classic heroic archetype (2004: 219), an opinion which does not necessarily have to be shared by readers who came to love the character in the book.

Both Jackson and Tolkien let the viewers and readers see Aragorn’s compassionate side, his ability to feel sympathy for others and help those in need, only recurring to violence if strictly necessary, this aspect of his masculinity thus common in both interpretations of this character. He is what Judy A. Ford and Robin A. Reid have defined as a “modern, self-doubting hero” (2009: 77), and they also suggest that Jackson’s Aragorn’s characterization “may be more appealing than the original to some in the contemporary audience although it would probably irritate Tolkien and does irk some scholars” (2009: 84), because if Tolkien’s Aragorn was a successful and admired leader for Tolkien’s generation, the same character might not have worked so well on the big screen. This is, nevertheless, a question of taste; what is interesting about Jackson’s interpretation is that he gives Tolkien’s work a new re-envisioning based on “multiple ideas of kingship, heroism, and truths, embodying them for different readers” (ibid.).

Jackson has reconstructed Aragorn’s masculinity as one type belonging to the 21st century and not the middle of the 20th, which is when this character was created. Aragorn’s performance seems to suggest the beginning of a new type of alternative patterns that contrast with the obsolete hegemonic masculinities found in Gondor or Rohan. Both in the films and the novel, King Elessar’s reign will be characterized by some of the traits that this character portrays, for he will not be an isolated ruler. His ruling period will be differentiated from that of Denethor’s in the sense that it will not be based on an exertion of power over the rest but on a system of equality and respect for everyone. Nevertheless, even if the patterns of masculinities that Jackson’s and Tolkien’s Aragorn have been endowed with share some similarities, their differences will certainly determine the fact that, although they both represent a new pattern,

Tolkien's belongs to an idealized type whereas Jackson's is more humanized and closer to the audience.

Characters like Gandalf, Aragorn and Faramir stand out from the rest in the book not only because they are heroes of the high mimetic mode but also because they are easy to look up to. This seems to have worked very well for the novel in the fifties, and even if the heroes that Jackson creates in the 21st century are "diminished," as Burdge and Burke state, because they are closer to those of a low mimetic mode, they all excelled in their good qualities and showed the importance of taking good decisions that also affect others. Even if Jackson reconstructs these characters giving them flaws that are not so pronounced or simply inexistent in the novel, he still makes their virtues and sacrifices stand out in comparison with their mistakes, emphasizing the idea that despite them, they become heroes in the end.

Their masculinity is based precisely on these and other facts; as preservers of life in the novel they are voicing Tolkien and his views on war, they are representatives of a type of masculinities that emerged in the period between wars. Some soldiers who had enlisted to fulfil their duty and respond to the stereotype that inextricably linked masculinity and warfare, came back disillusioned from the front, and only in the event that they were lucky enough to survive the conflict. What had been until then rigid notions of what masculinity and femininity meant, were demystified as the boundaries between these two concepts became blurred. Those that survived were physically and emotionally scarred for life. The outcomes of the war thus called for a redefinition of masculinity after shell-shocked and emasculated men were affected forever. The experience of this war reshaped the figure of the chivalric knight that must fight for his land and his people. Different masculinities became thus visible and one thing which Tolkien achieved in his novel was to dissociate the stereotypical combination of masculinity and militarism by creating characters like Faramir, Aragorn and Gandalf, who are only warriors when they must and always try to protect life, above everything else.

Nevertheless, sixty years later, it seems that these characters might be more difficult for the 21st-century audience to identify with, hence Jackson's interpretation and reconstruction, not only affected by the need of creating dramatic tension but also by the intention to bring the heroes closer to the spectators. In order to achieve this, the

director and his crew highlight certain traits that are common in these three characters, that is to say, they humanize them and make them vulnerable, prone to make a mistake and far from perfection.

In Jackson's aim to offer a world that is believable, in consonance with the inner consistence of reality that Tolkien had in mind, he did have to change some of the characters. With these changes he has also created multiple masculinities in his interpretation of Middle-earth, with their similarities and differences from Tolkien's characters. At the end of the third film, as Tolkien did in his book, there is one type of masculinity that metaphorically "dies" with Théoden, Dénethor and Boromir, that which can be regarded as dominant. The masculinities performed by Aragorn, Faramir, Gandalf and the hobbits might be understood as alternative patterns and they undoubtedly stand out from the rest. They comprise traits that have been traditionally regarded as masculine or feminine: physical strength, toughness, compassion, sympathy, anxiety, fear, and all can be found in several characters, irrespective of their gender.

5. The permeable pattern of masculinity in Middle-earth

“In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit” (Tolkien 1999: 3). These are the famous lines that open *The Hobbit*, the novel which introduced readers into the secondary world of Middle-earth, the setting of *The Lord of the Rings*. Whereas Middle-earth is inhabited by fantastic creatures (Elves, Dwarves, Men, Wizards...) that are part of the popular and literary collective imagination, hobbits mainly sprang from Tolkien’s inventiveness, they were his original creation.

The first chapters of *The Fellowship of the Ring* offer a clear idea of the hobbits’ nature. These characters are earth-linked, a characteristic which they share with the Elves, and also down-to-earth, “charming, absurd, helpless,” as Gandalf would describe them (*FR* I 2: 48). They love their homeland, this small “rural England,” as it has been constantly referred to. Hobbits have a small microcosm which they hardly ever leave, hence their unawareness of what evils lie beyond their borders, so they are always suspicious of people outside their world or even other hobbits. They are enemies of anything modern so they lead a quiet peaceful life in the countryside; they are also good-hearted, traditional food and drink lovers, pipe smokers, seemingly weak at first sight but ultimately a tough race. Garth summarizes the characteristics of this race by stating that Tolkien “could model hobbits directly on English people as he had known them in and around his cherished childhood home on Sarehole near Birmingham, borrowing aspects of custom, society, character, and speech” (2004: 307) – they somehow represent a “nineteenth-century Englishness” (Shippey 2001: 175).

The Shire resembles the Warwickshire Tolkien lived in as a child, and the hobbits are also an echo of his own experiences as a man, before, during and after WWI. This fact therefore brings the characters close to the readers, so it is easier to relate to them, more than with Aragorn or Legolas. Furthermore, hobbits are not very adventurous, but as there are different types of hobbits, it turns out that Bagginses and Tookes are somewhat the opposite, as they are the ones that will eventually be part of the Fellowship of the Ring.

As the main protagonists of the book, Tolkien gives readers quite a thorough explanation of hobbits in the Prologue and the first volume of his novel, hence highlighting their relevance from the very first lines. For those readers who are familiar with *The Hobbit*, Bilbo's neighbours and relatives very much resemble the image of hobbits found in Tolkien's previous book. Although the resemblance between the hobbits the English citizens of Tolkien's England before the First World War has been thoroughly alluded to (Garth 2004, Curry 1997), it was in fact Tolkien himself who first stated his identification with this race, as if they were an extension of himself. In a letter to Deborah Webster in 1958 he wrote:

I am in fact a *Hobbit* (in all but size). I like gardens, trees and unmechanized farmlands; I smoke a pipe, and like good plain food (unrefrigerated), but detest French cooking; I like, and even dare to wear in these dull days, ornamental waistcoats. I am fond of mushrooms (out of a field); have a very simple sense of humour [...]; I go to bed late and get up late [...]. I do not travel much. (Carpenter 1995: 288-289)

Their friendship and loyalty among Merry, Pippin, Frodo and Sam is their most outstanding trait. According to Petty, "their friendship begins at a comfortable, predictable level where their niche in the hobbit society and social structure of the Shire is completely understood and unquestioned" (2003: 203). This suggests that Tolkien is reproducing what he lived himself with the T.C.B.S. and their experience in the First World War. Of course he was affected by the war and the death of two of his best friends, so his creation of the hobbits and their reconstruction of Tolkien's own experience in WWI can be read as a great hymn to male bonding.

Tolkien gave hobbits a prominent role in Middle-earth, for they were not only actively essential in the destruction of the One Ring, but the narrative point of view is mostly focused on them. As Tolkien himself stated, the book is "hobbito-centric" (Carpenter 1995: 237) as this book, together with *The Hobbit*, is supposed to be a compilation of writings contained in the Red Book of Westmarch, which narrate Bilbo, Frodo and Sam's adventures in Middle-earth.

The four hobbits that become part of the Fellowship of the Ring are, as we have seen in the introduction to this section, relevant figures in their society: Merry is the Master of Buckland's son, Frodo is Bilbo's heir, and Pippin is the Thain's son, the

Thain being a military leader in the Shire. Sam is the only hobbit within the Fellowship that seems not to have any important title in his family – he is simply Frodo’s gardener. The differences and similarities among these hobbits are apparent at the beginning and are developed as the plot progresses, affecting also their different masculinities.

They leave the Shire endowed with what could be regarded as a type of “domestic” masculinity, if we understand by this a type of masculinity that is characterized by all the traits that have already been mentioned: as creatures rooted to the land, they are earthly characters and interested in anything that is “worldly,” like eating, drinking, smoking, and in short, having fun. There is therefore a certain difficulty in identifying a unique pattern that they perform before leaving the Shire, for there are also great differences among them. If we had to define them by their main trait, Frodo would be an intellectual hobbit, learned in the Elves’ lore, Sam mainly cares for the land, Merry is practical and Pippin is immature. Moreover, if we understand that this is their journey into maturity, this implies that their masculinities are probably still under development, and even if they were fully formed, they would be subject to change.

The fact is that the hobbits do not display any particular interest in becoming heroes. As Shippey suggests, the four hobbits are “militarily unambitious, even in their most dramatic moments” (2001: 151). So only an important threat could make these hobbits leave the safety and comforts of their home. The reader is already aware, if familiar with *The Hobbit*, that Bilbo is in possession of a special ring, which appears again in *The Lord of the Rings* as he decides (somehow reluctantly at first) to leave his nephew and heir this token before departing to Rivendell. Gandalf could only suspect what kind of ring it was, but when his suspicions are confirmed, he advises Frodo to leave his precious Shire and go to Rivendell. As Sam is caught eavesdropping, Gandalf appoints him as Frodo’s companion in this quest, and they will be joined by Merry and Pippin shortly after. When Meriadoc Brandybuck and Peregrin Took find out that their cousin Frodo is leaving the Shire, they cannot but try to join him in his adventure. This initial nonchalant attitude will change gradually as the quest goes on and they advance on the perilous road that will take them to Elrond’s land.

The following sections will try to explain how these four hobbits' permeable masculinity evolves and fluctuates progressively into very different patterns as the end of the Third Age draws near. Initially their personalities are based on their innocence and carefree nature and their journey of initiation will always be characterized by their loyalty, friendship and naïve attitude towards life in general, for theirs is indeed a journey into maturity, and the War of the Ring will eventually change them all. It is therefore essential to analyse this journey, for in it they will prove that theirs is a type of permeable masculinity as they allow themselves to be influenced by the drives of those closer to them in order to succeed in a new environment. They will therefore end up performing different patterns when they go back to the Shire after the destruction of the Ring.

5.1. Merry and Pippin

Merry and Pippin are determined to follow their cousin Frodo from the very beginning. There is not a word that Frodo can say to dissuade them from their determination, but in this stubbornness to follow him, there are also some touches of immaturity and naïveté, characteristics of their evolving pattern of masculinity, as has been stated above, for they were like some young soldiers that enlisted in WWI, who knew little about the realities of war when they put their lives at the service of a greater cause. Although Merry and Pippin chose freely to follow Frodo, Merry admits at some stage that when they decided to do so, they did not “realize what that would mean. It seemed different so far away, in the Shire or in Rivendell” (*FR* II 10: 394); and when they are kidnapped by the Uruk-hai, Pippin also regrets not having followed Elrond's advice to stay behind.

The fact that they are separated with the breaking of the Fellowship increases the different types of evolution for Merry and Pippin on one side, and Frodo and Sam on the other, for the adventures they are going to embark on will mark their lives different but indelibly. The differences in their personalities are also there, although their true hobbit nature never abandons them. They will have to go through tests that will determine their courage and bravery, and also the strength of their bonds in the case of Sam and Frodo.

Pippin is the youngest of the hobbits and happily behaves as such – he is demanding, he gets tired easily, and promptly marks his higher social class status over Sam at the beginning. He adds a humorous touch to some scenes, so much so that Shippey also refers to the hobbits as the “true vehicle of the ‘theory of laughter’” (2003: 158). Pippin’s function as a comic relief element is quite abundant in the plot, for example, when he realises that he can trust Strider: “But handsome is as handsome does, as we say in the Shire; and I daresay we shall all look much the same after lying for days in hedges and hitches” (*FR* I 10: 167) or when he is sarcastic about Gandalf: “Gandalf has been saying many cheerful things like that [...]. He thinks I need keeping in order” (*FR* II 1: 220). With his actions, he always reminds the reader that he is the most immature and probably the most oblivious to what lies ahead; moreover, due to his immaturity, he is probably the character that is more likely to be influenced by other characters.

When these two hobbits left the comforts and taken-for-granted safety of their beloved Shire, they never thought that they would come back not as the plain hobbits that left it but as a knight of Rohan and an esquire of Gondor. Merry and Pippin are both underestimated when they swear their oaths to Théoden and Dénethor, respectively, as what could be seen as a mocking gesture becomes a very important moment for the hobbits. Their masculinity begins to change as they need to adapt themselves to new situations and interactions with other patterns of masculinities and other cultures completely different from theirs.

5.1.1. Merry, esquire of Rohan

The way Merry and Pippin vow to serve Rohan and Gondor, respectively, comes to highlight the already mentioned differences between both realms, and above all, between Théoden and Denethor. On the one hand, when Merry freely volunteers to serve Théoden, it is out of love and gratitude for this king who has allowed him to ride with him and has treated him as an equal:

‘I have a sword,’ said Merry, climbing from his seat, and drawing from its black sheath his small bright blade. Filled suddenly with *love* for this old man, he knelt

on one knee, and took his hand and kissed it. ‘May I lay the sword of Meriadoc of the Shire on your lap, Théoden King?’ he cried. ‘Receive my service, if you will!’

‘Gladly will I take it,’ said the king; and laying his long old hands upon the brown hair of the hobbit, he blessed him. ‘Rise now, Meriadoc, esquire of Rohan of the household of Meduseld!’ he said. ‘Take your sword and bear it unto good fortune!’

‘As a father you shall be to me,’ said Merry. (my emphasis, *RK V 2: 760*)

We can see in this gesture of prompt and spontaneous fealty an echo of knighthood rites, which are described by Richard E. Zeikowitz as a moment in which

[t]he knight is not only bound to honor and serve his lord but also the ‘friends of chivalry,’ which situates him within a brotherhood of knights all upholding the same ideals. At the ordination ceremony the officiating knight kisses the squire who is about to be made a knight. While the kiss is ceremonial it illustrates a normative expression of male-male affection; the kiss is emotionally charged, as is the ritual bathing and dressing prior to the ordination, because presumably the squire has a strong desire to become a knight and the officiating knight is desirous to welcome the novice knight into the brotherhood of chivalry. (2003: 24)

When Merry decides to offer his service to Théoden without actually being a warrior, he does not feel himself forced to do so, but it is his love for the King that makes him do it. Théoden’s consideration of Merry is equally very important, and when he allows the hobbit to ride next to him towards Edoras, Merry is utterly delighted. Although as a hobbit endowed with a pattern of masculinity that is not yet fully formed Merry does not feel any pleasure or joy in the battlefield and will never be, apparently, like the Rohirrim, this simple gesture of pledging fealty to Théoden draws him nearer the masculinity that the Men of Rohan perform, as his return to the Shire will prove, and which will be analysed in this section.

Merry and Théoden’s bond is also another example of the various fosterage relationships in *The Lord of the Rings*. It may well be because of Merry’s height that Théoden displays a paternalistic and protective attitude towards him, for he is no warrior. Merry believes himself to be some kind of unwanted baggage, and he is indeed undervalued, so when the time comes to go to battle and Théoden decides to release him from his service and leave him with Lady Éowyn, he cannot bear being left behind, unable to see that Théoden is just trying to save him from a certain death. Nevertheless,

Merry is determined to go to battle and prove his valour in it; he wants to take part in it, as his friends have done, admitting he would feel ashamed otherwise (*RK V 3: 784*).

When he sees King Théoden lying dead in the battlefield, he is not just utterly scared of the Lord of the Nazgûl that is not far from him, the fact of seeing Théoden dead is also a shock, “for he had loved his lord as a father” (*RK V 6: 822*). But it is even worse to see Éowyn confronting the dark figure, for he was well aware that she sought death in battle, and then “pity filled his heart and great wonder, and suddenly the slow-kindled courage of his race awoke. He clenched his hand. She should not die, so fair, so desperate! At least she should not die alone, unaided” (*RK V 6: 823*). Merry is not as daring as to think he may beat the Lord of the Nazgûl, but he will do anything in his power to help Éowyn, and this is what he does, he stabs the Nazgûl, so Éowyn can finish him off. This is a climactic moment not only in the plot but also for the evolution of Merry’s pattern of masculinity, as it has finally been permeated by the Rohirrim’s when he finds his hobbit courage and helps kill one of the most powerful forces of Evil. The fact that he manages to do it is quite significant, for it is a hobbit and a woman that manage to kill the Witch King, who could not be killed by any living man on Middle-earth. At the same time, we begin to see Merry’s stature as Warrior as Moore and Gillette defined the archetype, for “this sense of the imminence of death energizes the man accessing the Warrior energy to take decisive action” (1990: 82).

Tolkien creates a Merry that is down-to-earth, practical, responsible, thoughtful and mature, and thus he seems to perform at first a domestic pattern of masculinity that is at its highest in the chapter “Three is Company.” Here, his practicality, for example, is obvious when he made all the preparations for Frodo’s trip even before he was accepted on the Ring-bearer’s quest. Having left the Shire as a plain practical hobbit, Merry manages not only to survive during the War of the Ring but he also lives totally unexpected adventures on his own “there and back again” quest.

Merry’s masculinity undergoes a process of change and evolution and proves its changeable nature when the hobbit goes back to Hobbiton with the rest of his friends in “The Scouring of the Shire.” Even before being knighted in Gondor by King Elessar, Merry had already lived adventures that would change him forever: he has been kidnapped by orcs, he has met the Ents, he has helped kill a Nazgûl and has recovered

in the Houses of Healing in Gondor, and, above all, he goes back as an esquire of Rohan.

We begin to see Merry's change into the archetype of the Warrior when his initiative becomes visible first in his interaction with Treebeard. As the Ent tells them that they are going to Isengard, Merry does not hesitate for a moment and tells him they will go with him and do what they can (*TT III 4: 463*). He starts to understand that they cannot remain idle in the war. Moreover, he is quite intuitive as he believes that the Ents "could be roused," and if this happens, they will have an important role in the war to save Middle-earth (*TT III 4: 470*). Both Merry and Pippin are therefore witnesses first, before they arrive in Rohan and Gondor, that it is sometimes necessary to fight, as the end seems sometimes to justify the means, for, had the Ents not been roused, they would not have destroyed Isengard and trapped Saruman in Orthanc.

Some chapters later, when Merry is riding with the Rohirrim, Théoden, Aragorn, Gimli, and Legolas, a Rider informs the King that there are some horsemen behind them. Merry's first reaction is to wonder what he should do if there was a fight; right after this, he draws his sword, ready to fight. Although he has not already sworn fealty to Théoden, we can see already Merry's willingness to protect him, but in this case, "it seemed that there would be no need to die in Théoden's defence, not yet at any rate" (*RK V II: 757*).

When he arrives in the Shire, all these situations have therefore influenced him. Moore and Gillete refer to the fact that the Warrior "knows through clarity of thinking, through discernment" when aggressiveness is appropriate under the circumstances. Merry is therefore always "alert," like the Warrior (1990: 80), aware that it will be necessary to fight in this case. He does not dare confront Bill Ferny and even threatens him to use his sword if he does not open the gates to let them in.

When he sees what has become of the Shire in their absence, he resorts to violence as the solution to this problem, not hesitating to use his sword against the ruffians. As he tries to make Frodo see, "if there are many of these ruffians [...], it will certainly mean fighting. You won't rescue Lotho, or the Shire, just by being shoecked and sad, my dear Frodo" (*RK VI 8: 983*); moreover, when he is told that all these

ruffians have weapons, he tells Frodo: “There you are, Frodo! [...] I knew we should have to fight” (*RK VI 8*: 986). Merry thus decides to raise the hobbits against the Shirriffs and ruffians, they have to do something as “it’s no good ‘getting under cover’. That is just what people have been doing” (*RK VI 8*: 983). Merry understands that, due to the fact that hobbits have been unable to live a peaceful life for so long, they do not know what to do in these circumstances, so he takes charge of the rebellion against these Men, making plans and showing his strategic skills. He leads the battle after which he will be remembered as Captain Meriadoc and does not hesitate to slew the leader of some ruffians who were under Saruman’s orders. We can see how his loyalty lies with his people and now also with a cause: to free the Shire from the Wizard’s Men and ruffians, for as Moore and Gillette state, “the Warrior’s loyalty, then, and his sense of duty are to something beyond and other than himself and his own concerns” (1990: 85). He has not only matured, his nature and masculinity have also changed as he has become the embodiment of the archetype of the Warrior.

5.1.2. Pippin: esquire of Gondor

Pippin’s first interactions with the other hobbits define his character from the beginning, showing glimpses that reveal that he is more impulsive and less mature than Merry (Hammond and Scull 2005: 118). It seems that the stereotype that closely links young age with immaturity is true in Pippin. Impatient, stubborn, but good-hearted and funny, he shows different traits of his personality throughout the story. Because of his personality, some characters often display a patronizing attitude towards him, but like the rest of the hobbits, he is a good representative of the proverb of “there is more to him than meets the eye.”

It is probably his pure hobbit character and innocence that get to other characters’s heart, as is the case with Gandalf, since he is at times seen rather as a rascal than as a warrior. When his quest starts, his behaviour is sometimes closer to that usually seen in a child, as he is also the youngest of the four hobbits: he always verbalizes whether he is tired, sleepy or hungry, and he is often impatient. We can see an instance of his immaturity when he believes they are far from danger and tells a group of strangers in the Prancing Pony how Bilbo disappeared in his birthday party, getting probably too

closely to telling them that Frodo had inherited Bilbo's Ring. Nevertheless, he also wants to give the others the impression that he is tougher than he looks (*FR* I 11: 174). As Merry, he is indignant when he learns that Sam will go with Sam in his quest, not knowing what this will really mean, but decided not to let them go without him.

His interaction with Treebeard is a clear example of the beginning of change in this character. In a conversation with Merry, we can see how he perfectly understands the difference between acting or remaining idle, as "there might be all the difference between an old cow sitting and thoughtfully chewing, and a bull charging; and the change might come suddenly" (*TT* III 4: 470). He is first witness, together with Merry, of the importance of the rousing of the Ents and the positive consequences it had ultimately in the destruction of the Ring.

In a parallelism between Rohan and Gondor, Pippin will have to pass his test in the gloomy atmosphere of Gondor. After having been separated from his "thick-and-thin" fellow Merry, Pippin loses part of his hobbit charm and carefree good humour when he arrives in Gondor and meets Denethor. Shippey highlights the difference between the scene when Pippin offers the Steward his sword and that with Merry and Théoden, as the scene in Rohan "makes much the better impression, kindlier, more casual, and with more concern for the feelings of the junior party" (2001: 99). If Merry offered his service to Théoden out of love, Pippin swears fealty to Denethor in an attempt to repay for Boromir's death, who gave his life for him:

'Little service, no doubt, will so great a lord of Men think to find in a hobbit, a Halfling from the northern Shire; yet such as it is, I will offer it, in payment of my debt.' Twitching aside his grey cloak, Pippin drew forth his small sword and laid it at Denethor's feet. (*RK* V 1: 739)

Whereas Shippey believes that Merry acts spontaneously, he sees that Pippin's reaction is more complex, as the young hobbit's motives are pride and anger when he hears Denethor's words, as something "stirred strangely within him, still stung by the scorn and suspicion in that cold voice" (*ibid.*). The change in the hobbit's personality is probably due to several reasons, one of them being that Pippin is not the same hobbit after looking into the *palantír*. On the one hand, he cannot remain completely unchanged by either this fact or his abduction by the Uruk-hai and their abusive

treatment, and, on the other hand, becoming the esquire of a lord who has lost almost all hopes and being forced to be separated from Merry have affected the young hobbit's character and also the pattern of masculinity that he has performed so far in Middle-earth.

Pippin wants to show his friends that he is brave, and this is one of the aspects which stand out in his evolution. Before his arrival in Gondor, he had already declared his regret about having joined the Fellowship (*FR* II 4: 290), however, he eventually proves his valour and courage when he manages to help Merry escape from the Uruk-hai that kidnapped them and enter the unknown forest of Fangorn. In Gondor, when Pippin is introduced to other Men, they look up to him, even if only because he was a friend of Boromir's and he is now under Lord Denethor's orders, his status is then ennobled. In this land, Pippin undergoes some kind of transition, his journey into maturity reaches its climax when he saves Faramir from being burnt in a pyre with his father after telling Gandalf of the Steward's intention. He risks his own life by doing so, and this heroic deed situates him next to other heroes in the plot, like Merry, as we have just seen. Pippin is therefore near Moore and Gillette's archetype of the Warrior.

He is, in fact, chosen to represent the people of the Shire when Aragorn goes to the Field of Cormallen. In this battle, he overcomes all his fears and tries to do his best, endowed with the energy that is necessary in a Warrior – indeed, he succeeds, as he kills a troll (*RK* V 10: 874). He believes he is giving his own life for a greater good, to help save Middle-earth, and, concurrently, as an action to take revenge for the torture that Frodo is suffering.

Joseph Kestner suggests that adventure fiction in the years before WWI imprinted certain “codes of masculinity: rescue, heroism, survival, courage, duty, isolation, voyaging” (2010: 1). This process of imprinting that Kestner refers to is characterized by four different moments: departing, encountering, transgressing, potential re-integrating. In this process the hobbits are living, they find themselves dealing with different types of races under different circumstances, and their adventures in Middle-earth serve as rites into adulthood and as rites of accepting certain codes of masculinity which are not usually ascribed to hobbits. This does not mean that they completely change their pattern of masculinity which they used to perform before leaving the Shire

to adopt a different one, it only means that their “old” pattern has evolved and the experiences that they have lived and the characters that they have met have influenced them deeply so the consequence is that they end up portraying new traits.

In 1955 Edwin Muir wrote a review of *The Lord of the Rings* in *The Observer*, in which he referred to the hobbits as “ordinary boys” (Carpenter 2002: 297). Although he might be right in part when referring to the hobbits that leave the Shire, he overlooked the fact that by the end of the book, all of them have undergone some kind of process or rite into adulthood. What is more, by the time they are back in the Shire, they have all become heroes, Tolkien’s heroes par excellence. Herdt highlights the fact that “in all societies, there is an issue of connecting childhood with adulthood, with the transition from sexual or biological immaturity to sexual maturity” (2008: 39). Nevertheless, the difference here is that hobbits do not reach their maturity sexually but heroically.

In the case of Pippin, his evolution is similar to Merry’s in the sense that he leaves his pattern of masculinity behind as we can see when he arrives in the Shire and sees how this land has been scoured by ruffians under Saruman’s orders. Even if at first he had confessed in Gondor that he was not a warrior, disliked “any thought of battle” (*RK V 1: 749*), and he even felt uncomfortable being clad like a warrior (*RK V 4: 789*), he finally resorts to violence to rid the area of these evil Men by raising the Shire against them. Pippin has understood, after his experience in the bathefield, that it is sometimes necessary to fight. It is here that Pippin’s status as a Warrior becomes clear as he needs to resort to aggressiveness, which understood by Moore and Gillette in the archetype of the Warrior, is appropriate under the circumstances, and is “a stance toward life that rouses, energizes, and motivates” (1990: 79-80), as we can see in Pippin. Realising how nobody acknowledges Frodo’s achievement and the fact that he has saved the Shire also encourages him to confront a ruffian:

I am a messenger of the King [...]. You are speaking to the King’s friend, and one of the most renowned in all the lands of the West. You are a ruffian and a fool. Down on your knees in the road and ask pardon, or I will set this troll’s bane in you! (*RK VI 8: 982*)

The young hobbit who left the Shire and whose masculinity was not yet fully formed, goes back home after having shown his warrior skills in the battlefield, using

them to fight for his people and not as a means to achieve glory. He shows thus how his masculinity has finally evolved and has become closer to the archetype of the Warrior, known for his courage and fearlessness.

5.2. Sam and Frodo

Frodo and Sam start their own journey into maturity as soon as Frodo accepts to take the Ring to Rivendell and Sam accompanies him. In this departure from the Shire, the four hobbits embark on a quest as an attempt to flee from familial domesticity and its “feminine implications” (Burns 2005: 134), and in search for more adventurous tasks, although Frodo always admitted from the very beginning that he was not “made for perilous quests” (*FR I 2*: 60), probably a result of his own humility and hobbit nature.

Both Frodo and Sam seem to be initially insignificant characters in the quest to destroy the Ring, as their strength is sometimes underestimated, although whenever Frodo offers the Ring to other more powerful characters like Gandalf, Aragorn, or Galadriel, they refuse it. It is difficult for these hobbits then to understand their own importance and the fact that their actions have major consequences, whether they want it or not.

Frodo and Sam are characterized by their humility. Moreover, Frodo is surprised by the fact that great lords such as Elrond, Glorfindel and Aragorn “should take so much trouble” to help him and treat him so kindly (*FR II 1*: 218). He has not realised yet his essential role as Ring-bearer, which bears witness to his humbleness. Sam also proves to be essential in Frodo’s quest, for he does not only help Frodo physically but his psychological help and support are priceless, although he is not aware of it. Even at the end, when the Ring has been destroyed, they both acknowledge their relief to be together in such a moment, right before an imminent death.

Frodo is more mature than the other hobbits – he is aware that he may never come back, and the fact that he sells Bag End is significant, for it shows that, of all the hobbits that embark on the quest, he is the most down-to-earth. Sam also feels that there is

something that lies ahead and compels him to follow Mr Frodo, apart from his obliging character. It is not enough for him to have seen Elves, there is something else in the quest which he does not know yet – some kind of adventurous and curious nature has just woken up in him, and he needs to follow his instinct. Sam had always been interested in what lay beyond the Shire, and this is the reason why he enjoyed Bilbo's company so much – he was the one that opened his eyes to a new world in his narrations of Elves. Bilbo was somehow Sam's mentor, as Gandalf was Faramir's. Sam first does what he believes is his duty: to follow and protect Frodo, for he is, after all, his master. Nevertheless, once his thirst for adventures is fulfilled and he really faces the truth of Frodo's quest, he can only think of going back home to rest and work in the garden, as he admits when they are near Cirith Ungol, proving thus the genuinely unambitious character of hobbits. Moreover, he never loses his hope that they will eventually go back home.

Both hobbits also seem to perform different types of masculinity when they leave the Shire. The experiences they will have to go through will change them forever, as the following sections will show. In their case, their evolution starts earlier than for the other hobbits, mainly for Frodo after he is wounded by a Nazgûl in Weathertop. Their interactions with Gandalf, Aragorn, Faramir and Galadriel will prove essential in how their masculinity fluctuates in their journey into maturity, above all as Frodo becomes nearer Tolkien's prototype of the merciful Christian hero (Carretero González 2005: 156).

5.2.1. Sam: servant and healer

Whereas Merry and Pippin are introduced as Frodo's cousins and friends (*FR I 2*: 41), the text only refers to Sam first as Mr Bilbo's gardener, as he helps his father in that task. Sam is undoubtedly more "rustic" or "rural" than the others, and his status is clearly not the same; Sam always addresses Frodo as Mr Frodo or Master, thus marking the fact that their relationship is originally a professional one. Frodo, Merry, Pippin and Sam represent different types of social classes, with Sam belonging to a working class, a status which he keeps all the time and is not just hobbit-bound (he calls Aragorn Mr Strider). Scott Kleinman's words could be applied to some extent to this initial glimpse

of Frodo and Sam's relationship: "Victorian culture maintained the social distance between master and servant through an elaborate etiquette for servant behaviour which emphasized deference towards the master in all ways" (2005: 144). Although there is indeed some kind of distance between Frodo and Sam in the ways Sam addresses Frodo, their relationship just shows the end of that Victorian social division, for as the quest progresses, their bonds are heightened and Frodo ends up addressing Sam as "my dearest hobbit, friend of friends" (*TT IV 2*: 610).

Meredith Veldman defines hobbits as "stereotypical Englishmen: provincial and parochial, often petty" (1994: 79). In fact, of the four hobbits that are part of the Fellowship of the Ring, Sam could be defined as the most parochial, which is also in part due to the fact that he represents the working class of the Shire as stated above. Patrick Curry defines Sam's "accent and idiom" as belonging to a "rural peasantry, while those of Frodo, Bilbo and their close friends range through the middle classes" (1997: 41).

Sam is a true believer and a very practical character too, also characterized by his pure naïveté and candidness at times. A loyal friend and faithful servant, Sam seems to be the clearest embodiment of the "domestic" pattern of masculinity that hobbits are endowed with. His job as gardener, which roots him to the land both physically and metaphorically, also differentiates this character from the other hobbits, and clearly marks his ethics of care, not only for the land but for his master too. Moreover, Sam seems to be always the "second" in everything: he is Mr Frodo's gardener, but only because his father served Mr Bilbo, he is the second Ring-bearer in the plot, he is like Frodo's shadow, and he seems to belong to a secondary category, different from that of Frodo's friends Merry and Pippin.

Sam is a character that never restrains his emotions. Although gentle and good-hearted, a certain part of his negative side appears when they meet Gollum: "His eyes, filled with anger and disgust, were fixed on the wretched creature as he now began to move again, still whispering and hissing to himself" (*TT IV 1*: 599). The reasons why he feels such loathing towards Gollum are varied, but he mainly fears what he could do to them. Sam's attitude contrasts with Frodo's mercy for Sméagol, "he has done us no

harm” (*TT IV 1*: 600), this being one of the very few instances in which master and servant disagree.

In different moments as the plot is developed, all characters are tested, some succeed, others fail: Gandalf is tested in his fight with the Balrog, Aragorn has to prove that he is the rightful heir of Gondor (in the Paths of the Dead and in the Houses of Healing), Galadriel is tested when she is offered the One Ring, Boromir when he fails to resist the temptation to take the Ring and later redeems himself saving the hobbits, Merry passes his test of courage and bravery when he stabs the Nazgûl and so does Pippin when he saves Faramir from dying in a pyre.

Although all heroes in *The Lord of the Rings* undergo Frye’s steps in a quest, departure, initiation, and return, it is in the case of the hobbits that this process is more visible, as they seem to be the characters that are a priori farther from achieving the stature of hero in Middle-earth. In their initiation, in their deeds before the Ring is destroyed, they develop certain traits that are not specifically “typical” in all hobbits – in a certain way they undergo a process by means of which they discover aspects of themselves which might have remained unknown even for them, had they not had to face adverse and unusual circumstances. In the case of Sam, he finds in himself a strength he was unaware he had when Shelob attacks Frodo, “Fury at the treachery, and desperation at the delay when his master was in deadly peril, gave to Sam a sudden violence and strength that was far beyond anything that Gollum had expected from this slow stupid hobbit, as he thought him” (*TT IV 9*: 710-711).

The plot therefore reaches a climactic moment for Sam in his fight against Shelob, for even if he manages to beat the monster, it is a bittersweet moment for him as he realises that he has “failed” to remain with his master. After all they have gone through following him to Mordor, he finally ends up facing what had never occurred to him: that his master might die before him, leaving him all alone, his dependence “temporarily” broken. His loyalty is unconditional, and his love for his master is blind, so when he suddenly and unexpectedly finds himself “utterly alone” (*RK VI 1*: 877), he becomes the owner of his actions and decisions – he had not had to take any decision on his own until then. The strongest bond of friendship between these two hobbits, only broken temporarily by Frodo’s apparent death, makes Sam force himself to face the impossible:

to try to destroy the Ring. He therefore begins to acquire his own stature as a hero of the story as he resists the temptation to wear the Ring when great warriors, like Boromir, did fall for the Ring's attraction.

The main idea that could be deduced from Sam and Shelob's fight, despite Partridge's and Stimpson's aforementioned sexual theories, is that the author created it purposefully as a way to show a different Sam, a Sam that could become a hero; the sturdy hobbit has been a mere shadow of his master until that moment, but this is the second step in his initiation process to act as a warrior. The new Sam that appears in Cirith Ungol is desperate when he sees his master lying, mortally wounded, so much so that he drops all sorts of formality and addresses him as "Frodo": "Frodo, Mr. Frodo!" he called. 'Don't leave me here alone! It's your Sam calling. Don't go where I can't follow! Wake up, Mr. Frodo! O wake up, Frodo, me dear, me dear. Wake up!" (TT IV 10: 713). Initially he shows his more vindictive side by seeking revenge for his "death," but right after that, he does fall into despair and thinks of committing suicide, although eventually he gathers all his strength and decides to continue Frodo's quest. He questions his decision of leaving his master behind when some Orcs find Frodo's body and Sam realises that he is not dead yet, but this turns out to be part of the success of the destruction of the Ring.

There are several moments that show the special bond existing between Sam and Frodo and their intimacy. For example, there is an intimate moment between them when Sam finally finds his master in the tower of Cirith Ungol, and hugs him after a little ordeal to find him. Frodo is also relieved to see him, "and he lay back in Sam's gentle arms, closing his eyes, like a child at rest when night-fears are driven away by some loved voice or hand" (RK VI 1: 889). In addition, Sam does not hesitate to kiss his master's forehead, such is his happiness. As stated before, he shows certain traits that seem to respond to traditionally feminine characteristics: gentleness, nurture, sensitivity and no restriction of emotions, and they are at their highest in his relationship with Frodo.

One of the moments in which we can see how Sam is hurt by Frodo's words is in the tower of Cirith Ungol. When Frodo realises that he does not have the Ring and feels that he has failed everyone, Sam confesses that he took it, and feels "*reluctant* to give

up the Ring and *burden* his master with it again” (my emphasis, *RK VI 1*: 890). This reluctance can have two readings: on the one hand, as the hobbit is purely unambitious, we might be tempted to believe that Sam simply wants to prevent his master from suffering, as he was well aware that the Ring was “a burden on the body and a torment to his mind” (*RK VI 3*: 914); on the other, it would be sensible to consider the possibility that Sam has not remained totally unaffected by the short time he has endured the temptation of the Ring, and maybe wants it so that “at his command the vale of Gorgoroth [becomes] a garden of flowers and trees and [brings] forth fruit” (*RK VI 1*: 881). Sam eventually has to confront the possibility of choosing to keep the Ring and not give it back to his master, but thanks to his love of Frodo and the fact that, ultimately, a small garden is all he needs to satisfy him (*ibid.*), he manages to overcome this temptation. After such an emotional moment, it is painful to see Frodo accusing Sam of stealing it – it is a sign of how much Frodo is under its spell. Frodo’s reaction results in a heartbroken Sam, “as if he had been stabbed in the heart” (*RK VI 1*: 891), after all he has endured to save his master.

Frodo means everything to Sam, who always puts his needs first. They are, as Garth points out, a perfect representation of a soldier and his batman:

The batman performed domestic chores for an officer: making his bed, tidying and polishing, and furnishing his table with the best. This was a practical arrangement, not just a luxury. Officers undoubtedly led a cushier life than the other ranks, but they had little time to spare from training, directing working parties, and, on ‘days off’, censoring the men’s inevitable letters home. (2004: 171)

And in the case of Tolkien, he “developed a profound admiration for the batmen he knew” (*ibid.*).

As the novel advances, Sam’s character becomes essential for Frodo: he gives him moral support, he is tender with him, he is in charge of giving him food and water, he tries to raise his spirits, and he encourages him when Frodo thinks that all is lost. Whenever Sam sees that his master is losing hope, he turns to food and water to make him feel a little bit better, and his maternal attitude is more easily seen as they get near Mount Doom:

He gave Frodo water and an additional wafer of the waybread, and he made a pillow of his cloak for his master's head. Frodo was too weary to debate the matter, and Sam did not tell him that he had drunk the last drop of their water, and eaten Sam's share of the food as well as his own. (*RK VI 2: 907*)

Frodo is already aware that he is "almost" in the Ring's power (*RK VI 3: 916*) as they approach Mount Doom, and it is precisely because Sam has worn it and knows what a heavy burden it is, that he finally spares Gollum's life in Mount Doom, with the positive and unexpected consequences this has:

[D]eep in his heart there was something that restrained him: he could not strike this thing lying in the dust, forlorn, ruinous, utterly wretched. He himself, though only for a little while, had borne the Ring, and now dimly he guessed the agony of Gollum's shrivelled mind and body, enslaved to that Ring, unable to find peace or relief ever in life again. (*RK VI 3: 923*)

This personal choice affects the dénouement of the plot, for this plays an essential role in the development of the story and the destruction of the Ring. This also responds to Gandalf's teaching not to strike without need. The mercy that Sam shows Gollum connects him directly with the prototype of merciful Christian in accordance with Tolkien's own religious beliefs.

When Frodo and Sam are near the Cracks of Doom, they decide to leave unnecessary things behind, and Sam departs from his cooking-gear with sadness. Right until this moment he had not lost his hope to go back to the Shire, but as their journey comes to an end, he finally faces the fact that it is nearly impossible for them to go back, so he realises that he will not be needing these things anymore. As he gets nearer the top, his self-esteem gets lower and lower, to the point of having a conversation with himself in which a voice reminds him of his foolishness in having followed Frodo all along, only to realise that they will probably die right there. However, he is stronger than that and is determined to go with his master to the very end of the quest, even if he has to carry Frodo himself, which eventually, he has to do, and which is probably one of the most compelling scenes in the book. Petty defines this moment as "proof of the deep level of his commitment to Frodo" (2003: 204).

Dickerson and Evans suggest that Sam is the character that experiences the greatest evolution in the story (2006: 150). He is indeed a low-mimetic hero with whom

it is easy to identify – it is in part his emotions “that easily invite reader identification” (Hein 1998: 195). This behaviour illustrates “the ideal of servanthood, which, in Christian terms, is the epitome of heroism” (207). Sam’s loyalty towards Frodo never falters, to the extent that Petty believes it

expands into a higher type of love – the Green concept of *agape*. Sam truly does become his brother’s keeper in the biblical sense; his display of self-sacrifice to protect and support his companion is done out of genuine love for another person, not for any external gain to himself. (2003: 203)

When Sam returns to the Shire with the other hobbits, he does not hesitate to draw his sword to support Pippin against some ruffians. He also participates actively in the war to get rid of the Shirriffs that have taken over Hobbiton in their absence, first by informing Farmer Cotton of their plans and later by confronting these Men. As Merry and Pippin, he understands that if they want to make the Shire as it was before the War of the Ring, they must act and they must fight. We also see an instance of the archetype of the Warrior in Sam as Saruman tries to kill Frodo, and “a dozen hobbits, led by Sam, leaped forward with a cry and flung the villain to the ground,” after which he draws his sword against the wizard (*RK VI 8*: 996). As Hobbiton is rid of ruffians and in the process to become as it once was, Sam leaves his warrior side behind as it is not necessary and embraces a different role.

Frodo’s gardener contributes to the reconstruction of the Shire, thanks to Galadriel’s gift – the Lady of Lórien’s gift for Sam was a small box with land from her orchard, which he uses to reconstruct the Shire. He is utterly affected by what has become of this beloved area under Saruman’s oppression, and is determined to use his skills to “heal” his homeland, thus becoming a healer himself:

So Sam planted saplings in all the places where specially beautiful or beloved trees had been destroyed, and he put a grain of the precious dust in the soil at the root of each. He went up and down the Shire in this labour; but if he paid special attention to Hobbiton and Bywater no one blamed him. (*RK VI 9*: 1000)

Although Gillette and Moore develop the archetype of the Magician, Sam is rather the portrayal of one specific aspect of the Magician, which these scholars have compared to a shaman, as “the shaman in traditional societies was the healer, the one who restored life, who found lost souls, and who discovered the hidden causes of

misfortune. He was the one who restored the fullness of being to both individuals and communities” (1990: 110). Sam is therefore the restorer of nature in the Shire.

As the embodiment of merciful Christian hero that can be found in *The Lord of the Rings*, Sam is respectful of life in general, both of human and non-human lives. Therefore, he adopts what John Elder calls an environmental position in the Foreword to the book *Ents, Elves and Eriador. The Environmental Vision of J.R.R. Tolkien*, which is based on Tolkien’s religious beliefs, as his environmental ethics was “firmly rooted in a deeply Christian, Catholic understanding of the world and its creator” (2006: XXII). His love of nature and his “project of ecological and social restoration on behalf of his family, community, and land” (XII) link him thus with other characters like the Ents and the Elves, or Treebeard and Galadriel (232), more specifically. This position is essential for Middle-earth, so much so that “in fulfillment of a prediction by Frodo, Sam becomes not only a great gardener but also a forester – which in the Shire involves the planting of trees, not the felling of them” (Dickerson and Evans 2006: 231). He becomes, the “hero of the reconstruction” of the Shire (2006: 18).

From the “rustic” hobbit endowed with a more “rural” pattern of masculinity when he left the Shire, we finally see a Sam that has grown and become a hero. He has not only helped his master destroy the One Ring, but he has also helped the inhabitants of Hobbiton by helping restore peace in the area. In his evolution, his masculinity has evolved into one that contains traits performed by characters like Faramir, Gandalf and Aragorn, a new and eco-conscious collaborative pattern that sees life as the most important aspect to preserve in Middle-earth. Moreover, he has ended up adopting a role that has traditionally been associated with the feminine, as he also becomes a steward of the land, *the* steward and healer of the Shire, thus being a perfect example of the assimilation of masculine and feminine traits.

5.2.2. Frodo: emasculated hero

Garth devotes a whole book to explaining the impact that the war had on young Ronald and his friends, and how this influenced his personal and professional life. The hobbits’ journey into maturity is very much like the soldiers’ journey to a war from

which they may never come back and which would transform them. At first, they are all totally oblivious to whatever is going on beyond the borders of the Shire, and although Frodo is Bilbo's nephew and shares his blood and love of adventure, when Bilbo departs for Rivendell, Frodo is not ready to leave the Shire "yet" (*FR I* 1: 32), as he is still rooted to the land. On the other hand, when Gandalf confirms the truth behind Bilbo's Ring, Frodo is aware that he is putting the Shire at risk every minute he stays there with it, so even without knowing what lies ahead, he decides to proceed with his determination to save his fellow hobbits – his sense of sacrifice is enormous, and his first heroic action is an act of love for his friends and comrades (Carretero González 1996: 169).

The reader is witness to how Frodo and Sam share some attitudes (and situations) with WWI soldiers throughout their perilous quest and in their own learning process. The text is laden with significant examples that illustrate Garth's ideas: the Dead Marshes have usually been compared to the Battle of the Somme, after Caradhras, Frodo is aware of the fact that if he returns to Rivendell without having accomplished his mission, it will be with shame (*FR II* 4: 287). Of all the hobbits, Bilbo's nephew is the only one that verbalizes this fear to go back home feeling this shame, and whereas the others look with hope at the slightly possible prospect of going back to Rivendell, Frodo knows it is not a plausible option as it would mean accepting defeat. Frodo's thought probably echoes the fear of defeat experienced by some soldiers in WWI, as the prospect of losing a war would certainly mean humiliation and some would even believe it equivalent to a loss or lack of masculinity.

Frodo and Sam could also be easily compared to two foot soldiers in the First World War, as Hammond and Scull do (2005: 610), seeing in "The Land of Shadow" the hobbits as two soldiers completely worn out, with scarce provisions left, and little hope of survival. As witnesses of the consequences of the war, these two hobbits also become the voice of Tolkien in some chapters, where the author's experience in WWI is inadvertently present. For example, Tolkien's ideas concerning the aftermath of a war, the identity and nationality of those he fought against, and whether these soldiers would have rather stayed at home in peace, are clear through Sam's thought when he sees for the first time that Men fight against Men (*TT IV* 4: 646).

All the hobbits, sooner or later, must face the reality they embarked on: Merry will fight side by side with the Rohirrim, Pippin will witness Denethor's suicide and save Faramir, and Sam will rescue his Master from the orcs and become the Ring-bearer for a short period of time. Although they prove individually that they are worthy of the category of strong warriors, it is when they are together that they are at their best, though. Friendship is essential for hobbits – so much so that when Frodo finds out that his friends are going with him to Mount Doom, he is utterly relieved, despite the fact that the quest is a perilous one, but not going alone is a much stronger feeling for him. He knows, up to a certain extent, that it is a perilous quest, he does not want to put his friends in danger, but ends up accepting them. It is painful for Frodo to think that he should ask Pippin and Merry to follow him, however, he feels he needs to follow Gildor's piece of advice and take "trustworthy and willing" friends (*FR I 3*: 83).

Despite all their vicissitudes, Frodo's fight is the hardest. Although he is the most mature of the four, he is not prepared for what he is yet to live. Unfortunately, we never really manage to get to know how Frodo was before he inherited the Ring, as he becomes the Ring-bearer from the very beginning, and his personality and character develop around the Ring, which completely takes him over and becomes his obsession. Therefore, all the experiences that he has to go through and his burden change him. During the quest, there are glimpses of the torture that Frodo must be enduring. Frodo's inner torment is clear even when he wakes up in Tom Bombadil's house, "The thought of going had been heavy upon him from the moment he awoke" (*FR I 7*: 127).

Frodo suffers physically and mentally in his quest, as if each step of the way was one of the Catholic Stations of the Cross, in which the journey becomes increasingly more difficult and he begins to lose his will. He is stabbed in the shoulder by the lord of the Nazgûl, he is also stabbed in Moria, although his mithril shirt protects him, he is bullied by Boromir, who wants the Ring, he has to resist the temptation to wear it, he is jabbed by Shelob, and, finally, he has one of his fingers bitten off by Gollum. Although Frodo chooses not to get rid of the Ring at the end of his journey, while he is still strong and the Ring has not taken over him completely, he does manage to offer it to Gandalf, Galadriel and Aragorn, but as Curry states, "virtually every major character in *The Lord of the Rings* refuses to accept the Ring, knowing that no matter how morally strong, they could not resist its power" (1997: 76). It seems that it is only a small insignificant

hobbit the one that can achieve such a task, and this is, in fact, Frodo's true heroism, that he admits that he is small but he knows that the destruction of the Ring depends on him (Carretero González 1996: 173). Part of this is his unambitious and carefree nature, as the other characters are so well aware that it is better to destroy the Ring rather than use it for their own purposes and interests.

In this process, there is also one character that plays an important role: Gollum. If at first he may not have understood why Bilbo spared Gollum's life, as the plot develops and Frodo spends more time with him, he manages to see the important meaning of Gandalf's words, that it was "pity that stayed his hand. Pity, and Mercy: not to strike without need" (*FR I 2*: 58). Sméagol, a hobbit that fell into the temptation of the Ring and endured its torture for years and years, after which he came to be called Gollum, is a treacherous creature that will end up guiding the hobbits through Mordor. He seems to undergo some kind of change in the company of Frodo and Sam, as he gradually becomes more articulate in his speech, becoming more Sméagol and less Gollum. There is the slightest glimpse of a possibility of redemption and recovery for him, but although Frodo perceives this change, he is also well aware of the fact that Gollum will always want the One Ring, his Precious, and he will never change completely.

Frodo, who is a good-natured character, cannot believe at first why Gandalf or Bilbo did not kill Gollum when they had the chance, for now it is him who must "pay" for the other's actions, or rather, inactions – at least that is how he sees it when he complains to Gandalf about Bilbo finding and keeping the Ring (*FR I 2*: 58). Nevertheless, his opinion begins to change after meeting Gollum and seeing what the Ring has done to him. Gollum is, in fact, a reflection of what he might become. Frodo's own learning is therefore the hardest, because only through his own suffering and after having endured Gollum's experience with the Ring, can he finally empathize with Gollum and understand the importance of mercy and respect for a life. For a "short" period of time if compared to Gollum's experience, he lives the same torture and carries the same burden; he begins to feel what Gollum felt. Therefore, the words that he uttered wondering why Bilbo never killed this creature when he had the chance, become meaningful as he meets Gollum in "The Taming of Sméagol": "For now that I see him, I do pity him" (*TT IV 1*: 601). Frodo's lesson of pity and mercy is thus a hard one, as he

does not completely understand it until he meets Gollum. As a consequence, he will save Gollum a few times from being killed by Sam or Faramir's Men, as both counsel him not to trust the vile creature. In the end, although Gollum could really not be trusted, Frodo will be decisive.

There are several moments throughout the journey from the Shire to Mount Doom when Frodo is tempted to wear the Ring, which he can at times resist while others temptation is more powerful than his inner strength: when they are on their way to Crickhollow and a Black Rider approaches them (*FR I 3: 73*), in the Prancing Pony (*FR I 9: 154*), in Weathertop (*FR I 12: 191*), and in Amon Hen (*FR II 10: 390*). In *The Two Towers*, the temptation grows even stronger, but as they are approaching Mordor, Frodo manages to resist it, however, although this torment finally takes its toll on him, for the strength he needs to overcome it is too great even for such a tough hobbit. He even falls into despair on his way to Cirith Ungol, where he is "overcome with weakness" to such an extent that he weeps (*TT IV 8: 692*).

His imperfections and the fact that he is not a traditional epic hero enable the reader to identify with him. In this sense, Flieger contrasts Aragorn and Frodo, for they represent very different types of heroes: whereas Aragorn is presented as a high mimetic hero, someone the reader may find more difficult to relate to, Frodo is the common man we can all identify with (1981: 41). Aragorn's is "a true quest," whereas Frodo's is an "anti-quest" (Shippey 2003: 324) – his duty lies on destroying something, rather than on finding it. This means a change in traditional patterns of heroism and, in this deviation from a traditional quest, Frodo's is therefore a journey of renunciation and sacrifice, as his main goal is not to find glory and honour in what he does. The hobbit becomes a kind of martyr as he sacrifices part of himself so that the rest of his friends in the Shire can leave in peace.

In this contrast between Aragorn and Frodo, it could also be concluded that whereas Aragorn achieves his main goal, which is to claim the throne of Gondor, Frodo's last choice not to cast the Ring into the Cracks of Doom seems to somehow taint or shade his heroic deed, even if his original goal is finally achieved. Moreover, Flieger also believes that whereas Aragorn's journey goes from darkness to light as he leaves his life as king-in-disguise to be crowned as King of Gondor, "Frodo's is a

journey from light into darkness – and out again” (1981: 42). He leaves his beloved Shire, oblivious to all the perils that lie ahead, and his journey gradually becomes darker and darker until it reaches its peak in Mount Doom – every time he wears the Ring, he is actually stepping further and further from the hobbit he once was. However, thanks to the fact that he spared Gollum’s life on a few occasions, he manages to survive his quest and, as the Ring is cast in the fire, he begins to see the light again. Nonetheless, he will never be the same, just as Gollum was unable to become Sméagol again, so although he does go back physically to Bag End, his is a journey with no true return. At the same time, this process that has taken him to Mordor has also affected his pattern of masculinity. In the case of Frodo, his masculinity seems to have acquired traits of all the characters that have influenced him, mainly Gandalf and Aragorn, as the next paragraphs will try to illustrate.

Apparently, Frodo is the only character that goes back home with what would now be diagnosed as post-traumatic stress disorder, known as shell-shock in Tolkien’s times. For the ten days he lived and suffered in Mordor he had no rest, and all the internal fighting with his own will certainly broke him. However, in this process he learns a very important lesson and its consequences. The mercy that he learnt from other characters who were also merciful with Gollum led to the final destruction of the Ring. In his attempt to possess the Ring again, Gollum bites Frodo’s finger and, in his joy, he falls into the Cracks of Doom and dies. It is easy to resort to a psychoanalytical interpretation of this as a symbol of castration for Frodo, but in his case, although this alteration in his body is physical, he is more affected emotionally, as it symbolizes that Frodo will never be whole again. Horrocks explains castration as the moment when

something has been cut off, literally the male genitals. But we also talk about men ‘cut off’ from their feelings, or simply that someone seems very cut off. So this is a kind of emotional castration: an inability to be present with others, a state of being withdrawn or remote. (1994: 105)

During the First World War, the types of wounds that soldiers suffered were of various kinds. In the cases of emasculation, scars were deeper, both physical and emotional, as they perceived that they had been deprived not only of their manhood but also of their masculinity. In the case of Frodo, he may be even compared to a shell-shocked soldier; this “emasculation” he suffers affects him deeply too – this ultimately

influences his performance of masculinity as he goes back to the Shire, as he rejects all sorts of violence.

Although Garth believes that “parallels between Tolkien’s life and his art are debatable,” it is undeniable that “the war certainly had a practical impact on him as a writer” (2004: 92). As has been mentioned before, Tolkien himself admitted in the Foreword to the second edition of *The Lord of the Rings*, that “an author cannot of course remain completely unaffected by his experience” (XVII). When Tolkien was diagnosed with trench fever, he never went to battle again, but the horrors he had witnessed in the war had already had an effect on him.

Blunden’s views on the Great War could very well be applied to Frodo: “My experiences in the First World War have haunted me all my life” (qtd. in Fussell 2000: 256). This is what happened to Frodo once he was back in the Shire, where he was still affected by all the wounds he had suffered in his journey to Mount Doom. Carretero González relates Frodo’s inability to remain in the Shire to the fact that he has grown too much in heroic stature (1996: 177). Although the other hobbits have also achieved great deeds in the process that leads to the destruction of the Ring, Frodo is the character that has suffered the most and has therefore saved the world for his friends, not for himself.

In “The Scouring of the Shire” Frodo tries to avoid confrontation as much as possible, he is completely against any kind of killing, “if it can be helped” (*RK VI 9*: 983), and “unless it must be done, to prevent them from hurting hobbits” (*RK VI 9*: 987). His conduct, “marked by passivity” contrasts therefore with the “masculine aggressiveness of Sam, Merry and Pippin” (Keenan 1968: 69). He has become a pacifist and has thus acquired traits that we have already seen in Faramir, for instance, so in the Battle of Bywater, “his chief part [was] to prevent the hobbits in their wrath at their losses, from slaying those of their enemies who threw down their weapons” (*RK VI 8*: 993). Although Tolkien wrote in a letter that “Frodo’s attitude to weapons was personal. He was not in modern terms a ‘pacifist’” (Carpenter 1995: 255), it is difficult not to relate him to this trait as, even if Merry tries to make him see that he will not achieve anything just by being sad and shocked, Frodo is determined to use no weapon.

At the end of *The Return of the King* we therefore see a completely different Frodo as he even shows his mercy towards Saruman, despite all the things that the Wizard has done against this area of Middle-earth, for he understands that “it is useless to meet revenge with revenge: it will heal nothing” (*RK VI 8: 995*). Even Saruman can see that Frodo can no longer remain in Middle-earth: “Yes, you have grown very much. [...] But do not expect me to wish you health and long life. You will have neither. But that is not my doing” (*RK VI 8: 996*). His permeable masculinity has been influenced by other characters’ traits, as aforementioned, and this has turned Frodo into a pacifist, but his experiences and his suffering are what have changed him the most. He has understood in the end the importance of sparing a life, which were Gandalf’s words in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, hence his attempt to avoid violence in the Shire. If at first we have a Frodo that hastily states: “What a pity that Bilbo did not stab that vile creature, when he had a chance!” (*FR I 2: 58*), this changes by the time he goes back home, as now his masculinity is based on pity and mercy. Tolkien writes about this pity in a letter referring to it as “a piece of folly, or a mystical belief in the ultimate value-in-itself of pity and generosity even if disastrous in the world of time” (Carpenter 1995: 234). It is only when Frodo sees Gollum for the first time that he understands Gandalf’s advice. Carretero González observes how this act of mercy and pity for Gollum is what will finally lead to the destruction of the Ring (1996: 174).

At the end of the book, Frodo’s only chance is to go to the Undying Lands with Gandalf and his beloved Bilbo; his is not a “there and back” again journey, for, as he remarks, “I tried to save the Shire, and it has been saved, but not for me. It 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” (*RK VI 9: 1006*). Frodo’s journey is therefore based on sacrifice and renunciation (Carretero González 1996: 173); he becomes a martyr for his people, and Tolkien said, “he is rather a study of a hobbit broken by a burden of fear and horror – broken down, and in the end made into something quite different” (Carpenter 1995: 186). Even if his heroic deeds are different from the other hobbits’, it cannot be denied that Frodo reaches indeed some heroic stature in Middle-earth, and, in fact, his rejection of violence serves to present his masculinity as dissociated from this traditionally considered masculine trait. By redefining Frodo’s masculinity and constructing it on the

grounds of pacifism, Tolkien is constructing a new type of masculinity that is based on traits such as humility, pity, mercy, love, forgiveness, and respect for the others.

5.3. The evolution of the hobbits' patterns of masculinity

There is no doubt then that this quest represents for the hobbits a process into which they must leave behind themselves as children/adolescents and some of their child-like attitudes, so as to grow into mature hobbits. In this process, their masculinities will also change as they will be permeated by other characters' own masculinities. In this rite of initiation, they break with everything that is dear and feels secure to them, which is, to start with, their life in the Shire. As Matthews puts it, a child "must die as a child in order to be reborn" (1975: 32). Therefore, the hobbits must die metaphorically as they originally were in the Shire for the circumstances that surround them require some adaptation. Even then, the way their masculinities develop will be different as they will not live the same situations.

The four hobbits undergo different rites of initiation in which they separate from each other and accept a temporary type of life which is exactly the opposite of what they had at home. But it is precisely this new life which is going to mark their personality and new roles afterwards. Throughout the book, whenever there is some kind of attempt to separate the hobbits – for example, before leaving Hobbiton or in the Council of Elrond – they stick together, a fact which gives them strength. Their stubbornness proves essential for the success of the Fellowship's quest. Aragorn is aware of the special bond between Sam and Frodo, because when Frodo lies wounded in Weathertop, it is Sam he calls to talk about *his* Frodo; Gandalf is also aware of the importance of the hobbits' bonding, which is why the wizard defends Pippin when he claims that he wants to go with Frodo in his quest, against Elrond's advice. His friends are so important to him that when Frodo feels that he has to protect the other hobbits, he breaks the Fellowship and decides to continue his quest alone; after seeing how Boromir has fallen into temptation, he intends to sacrifice himself to keep the others safe. It is, indeed, true of the hobbits that they "literally go through the jaws of death for each other" (Petty 2003: 203).

When the war ends, the hobbits have completely changed. In their process of learning and their evolution, Merry and Pippin end up acquiring some of the traits portrayed by the Rohirrim or the Gondorians. They seem to somehow approach a pattern of masculinity that is not common in Hobbiton: they are seen as powerful hobbits now who can even raise their fellow citizens against those that are trying to dominate them. This idea is clearly illustrated when they return to the Shire and they feel they must use violence in order to expel the ruffians from their land. Merry and Pippin behave like true esquires of Rohan and Gondor when they confront the Men that have taken over Hobbiton: Merry planned the attack, he killed the leader, guiding his fellow hobbits in order to get rid of unwanted strangers in the Shire. It was, indeed, a battle that showed the rest of the inhabitants of this area the kind of warriors Pippin and Merry had become.

“The Scouring of the Shire” is a chapter in which the hobbits show how they have evolved. When they arrive, one year later and after all their deeds, they are “grown up,” as Gandalf says – they left it as four somewhat immature hobbits and go back as mature adults. They have undergone their rites of initiation in journeys through Gondor, Rohan and Mordor, so when they go back, they are not the fearless hobbits they were thought to be. Merry and Pippin go back as representatives of the archetype of the Warrior after their experiences in the battlefield. Alert to the evil that has arisen in the Shire, it is clear for them that they must fight it actively, so they do not even doubt that violence is necessary in this case. Their Warrior energy is based on their courage, power and control, “both inner and outer, psychological and physical” (Gillette and Moore 1990: 83); they always show themselves in control of the situation. These two hobbits do not need to show their people how they have changed, they do not do so in order to reassure themselves, but they do show their commitment to the Shire and their loyalty to both their people and the welfare of their land.

The evolution in Frodo’s and Sam’s masculinities is somewhat different to Merry’s and Pippin’s, for they represent different archetypes as they go back to the Shire. Merry and Pippin seem to represent a pattern of masculinity closer to the type studied in chapter 3, whereas Sam and, above all, Frodo, seem to have acquired some traits typical of the pattern explained in the chapter 4. Part of this difference is that whereas Merry and Pippin have physical enemies to fight against, Sam and Frodo have

to face their worst enemy, themselves, in order to survive temptation, despair and torment. Although Sam takes part in the Battle of Bywater and tries to kill Saruman after the Wizard attempts to kill Frodo, having understood that war is necessary if the cause justifies it, he finally becomes a healer and life preserver in Middle-earth. He shows his utter kindness and generosity when he decides to use Lady Galadriel's gift not only for himself but also for the people he loves, so he plants the special seeds from Lórien all over the Shire.

Frodo has grown extremely sensitive concerning life and death; by trying to avoid killing anyone, whether they deserve it or not, he is showing the reader how much he has evolved from the first time he asked Gandalf why Gollum had not been killed so far. He realises now that had it not been for Gollum's intervention, he would never have destroyed the Ring – his mercy proved mightier than the desire to kill, or the hasty belief that someone deserved to die. Following this idea, Hammond and Scull believe that we can see Tolkien's ideas through characters like Aragorn, and mainly Faramir, who were so important in Frodo's becoming a pacifist, as the hobbit finally understood that

violence should be only a last resort. [...] He accepted that fighting is sometimes necessary in a just cause, and especially in defence when attacked, but he objected to excessive force, the pursuit of revenge, or national aggrandizement. In wishing to spare even the ruffians, Frodo is following Aragorn's example of mercy towards the former allies of Sauron. (2005: 659)

Nonetheless, for Frodo it is a bitter victory, eventually. By the time they reach the Ford of Bruinen on their way back to the Shire, Frodo realises he will never be the same again; in fact, he feels that nothing will ever be the same for him, which proves to be true in the end: "There is no real going back. Though I may come to the Shire, it will not seem the same; for I shall not be the same. I am wounded with knife, sting, and tooth, and a long burden. Where shall I find rest?" (*RK VI 7: 967*). When he is back home, Frodo realises then that he has saved a world which is not for himself but for the rest of Middle-earth, for his dear friends, and for the Shire. The hobbits did expect a suitable welcome in Bree, for, after all, they had saved the world from Sauron, but "their hearts sank a little" when they received none (*RK VI 7: 967*), they are thus the unsung heroes of the book.

The hobbits in the Shire do not completely realise what Frodo has done for them, that he has saved their world, and “Sam was pained to notice how little honour he had in his own country” (*RK VI 10: 1002*) – only he could know what his master had really gone through, for he was there too, although he had never fully lived the experience of the Ring as long as Frodo. Shippey also suggests that when Sam’s feelings may be seen as a hint of the sentiment of families who sent their sons to the battlefield in the First World War. Had it not been for the sacrifice, personal and general, of these men, the world might not be as it is today, like the Shire. Frodo therefore comes back with what Shippey has defined as the “disillusionment of the returned veteran” (2001: 156).

In effect, this disillusionment and the physical and mental consequences of the war can be compared with that which soldiers lived as they returned home after the First World War. One instance is provided by a situation Robert Graves had to go through in order to help his friend Siegfried Sassoon. As Sassoon returned to London in 1917, encouraged by pacifists like Bertrand Russell, he wrote a statement in which he declared that “this war, upon which I entered as a war of defence and liberation, has now become a war of aggression and conquest” (qtd. in Graves 1987: 176), which he made circulate among journalists and writers. As a protest against what the government was doing, he over-stayed his leave and sent this statement to the Commanding Officer of his Battalion. When Robert Graves was informed of what his good friend Siegfried Sassoon had done and that he was unwilling to withdraw his latest remarks on the futility of war, he tried to act on his behalf before he was court-martialled. Sassoon had been asked to appear before a Medical Board and Graves managed to convince him to do so as Sassoon was determined not to do it. The Medical Board finally declared Sassoon to be “in a state of mental collapse” and had to undergo a psychological treatment (180) – he was suffering indeed from shell-shock, but this was also used to hide a soldier’s true and sensible sentiment about a war that was only going to last for a few months initially and which finally went on for four years. What is interesting here is that, although Graves agreed indeed with his friend concerning the futility of war, the fact is that Sassoon’s actions felt like an act of disloyalty to him, and “loyalty to one’s comrades was of the first importance; and however much one disapproved of the continuation of the war, one must see it through to the end in their company” (177).

Shell-shock was therefore one of the main psychological effects that the war had on some soldiers. In the case of Frodo, Croft also believes that his return to the Shire was worsened because of his “guilt” for not having thrown the Ring into the fire, and considering Horrock’s definition of castration, Frodo also suffered some sort of emotional restraint, in part due to his inability to talk about his emotional state right after coming home, or as Croft puts it, his attempt to keep his “pain hidden” (2004: 138). Frodo does not want to make his friends worry about him either. As he says, he has saved the Shire, but not for himself.

The four hobbits have therefore proved that they are the unexpected heroes of Middle-earth, for what will save the world is the hobbits’ pattern of masculinity, which is based on simplicity, loyalty and friendship, and not on power or manipulation of others, or ambition. They are not flawless, but prove heroic in their individual actions, as well as the collective ones. As Rogers puts it, “individually, we are hobbits; collectively, we are Aragorn” (1975: 76).

According to Ulrike Horstmann, “the protagonist becomes a hero and thereby an exemplar of masculinity. This does not have to mean that he is flawless – that would be boring” (2003: 81), so it is despite Frodo’s imperfection that Middle-earth is saved in the end. Consequently, when comparing the different patterns of masculinity in Middle-earth, the impression is that Tolkien might be in favour of a different type of masculinity than the one he constructed for Théoden or Denethor, for instance, one which is less bent on personal glory. We can see this in his creation of the hobbits as totally unexpected heroes who work together and cooperate under principles of respect and honesty. Moreover, they reach the status of heroes “not because of their successes, which are often limited, but because of their courage and tenacity in trying” (Garth 2004: 303). After all, Frodo sacrifices himself for the rest of the inhabitants of Middle-earth, and Sam sacrifices himself for Frodo, enduring torment and agony, like his master, but voluntarily, “with no great cause to strengthen his will; rather it was only for the sake of one he loves beyond everything else” (Bradley 1968: 124).

Sale suggests that, because Tolkien’s Men are echoes of an ancient past – the Rohirrim are like “Dark Age Germanic tribes” and the Gondorians may provide an echo of Constantinople, the type of heroism they represent – and, one could add, the pattern

of masculinity they embody – “is also ancient: stern, solemn, filled with belief in portents and in absolute loyalty to tribe and city” (1973: 221). Hobbits, in their comparison with First World War soldiers, are therefore the embodiment of a more modern type of masculinity, one which is permeable and changing, as it fluctuates according to the influences it finds in life along the way and which makes the hobbits’ masculinities evolve differently and acquire traits typical of the Warrior and the Healer.

5.4. The Hobbits’ masculinities in Jackson’s films

5.4.1. Merry and Pippin

Merry and Pippin are initially used by Jackson as the “comic relief” of the films (Burdge and Burke 2004: 138). From the very beginning, the director shows their innocence, playfulness and naughtiness at Bilbo’s party, where they use Gandalf’s fireworks without asking for permission, until the wizard finds out what they have done:



They continue offering some humorous moments throughout the films, singing and dancing, happy and cheerful most of the time. Even the way they volunteer to go with Frodo in Rivendell reduces the tension of the scene, as well as the way they follow Frodo and Sam “accidentally” on their way to Rivendell, as they are escaping a Black Rider that was chasing them. This nonchalant attitude that makes them embark on such adventures seems to lighten in a way the real sacrifice that these hobbits are doing.

Merry’s practicality and down-to-earthiness are a little hidden in the film for Jackson does not show how he helps Frodo with all the preparations to leave the Shire;

Pippin's immaturity, on the contrary, is clearly stated in his first appearance in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, during Bilbo's party, as he lights the fireworks that had the shape of a dragon. Moreover, his carelessness also appears more often than not in this first film, for example in Bree, when he gives away Frodo's real name, which does not happen in the book. Pippin is very much characterized as in the book – always worrying about food and making jokes. However, even with these similarities and differences from their counterparts, it seems that Jackson has even heightened the use of these two hobbits as an element of comic relief.

Nevertheless, Jackson does not forget to show that this is also their journey to maturity, as can be illustrated on Amon Hen, when they bravely try to call the orcs' attention to give Frodo a chance to escape. They are growing in strength and courage, and Jackson praises the fact that in the middle of the entire ordeal they are living, these little hobbits manage to be brave and escape the orcs (*Towers* Scene 4, writers' and director's commentary).

The hobbits' performance of masculinity is also based on their innocence, which the director shows in several close-ups of Merry and Pippin, and it changes throughout the film. In their evolution, their encounter with Treebeard will mark how their masculinities also begin to change, for they begin to leave behind their immaturity and become aware of the importance of this war. Boyens admits in the director's commentaries that they did want the hobbits to be more proactive, and by doing so, they make the characters evolve as they try to make the Ent see the importance of confronting Saruman and take part in the war (*Towers* Scene 52). In this scene, Merry is astonished to see that in the Entmoot Treebeard has only introduced their names so far and have agreed that they are not orcs. They have not even taken a decision about Saruman, so when Treebeard asks him not to be hasty, Merry cannot understand the Ent's slowness while his friends are in danger. This is one of the first instances when these two hobbits do not show an innocent non-chalant attitude, as Merry's expression shows:

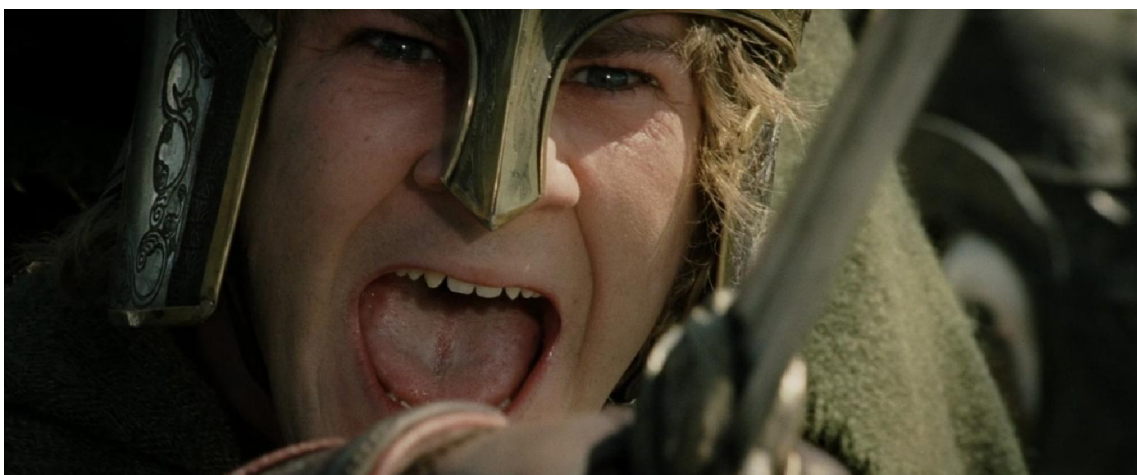


It will be in *The Return of the King*, just as in the novel, where we will see how the performances of these two hobbits' masculinities are somewhat similar to the book, as they offer their services to Rohan and Gondor. Their experiences in the war, just as Tolkien explained in the Foreword of the book, cannot leave them unaffected. Although Jackson did divert in the evolution of the patterns of masculinities performed by Sam and Frodo at the end of *The Return of the King*, the patterns that he reconstructs for Pippin and Merry seem to evolve into acquiring some of the characteristics of the archetype of the Warrior in the end, even if Jackson does not fully develop it as "The Scouring of the Shire" does. We can see how these two hobbits mature as they are separated and have to prove themselves useful in societies that are at war – Pippin manages to save Gandalf and Faramir, and Merry helps Éowyn kill a Nazgûl, thus earning the titles of warriors.

There are two scenes where their size is highlighted in comparison with the rest of the characters that appear on screen, which serves to remind the viewers how heroic these two hobbits are. In the first scene, Pippin's smallness contrasts with Faramir, as he saves him from the pyre; in the second, Pippin has found Merry, who lies wounded in the Pelennor Fields, where we see him very small compared to the Olyphaunt he has behind.



The following screenshots show the viewers two hobbits that have changed from the image they had of them in *The Fellowship of the Ring*. On the first one we can see Merry's fierce expression as he is fighting, together with Éowyn and the Rohirrim, in the battle of the Pelennor Fields; on the second, we see Pippin in the battle of the Morannon:





These hobbits have also become more thoughtful, which helps to highlight their evolution in Middle-earth. We can see this in two conversations. In the first one, Merry is speaking with Éowyn about war, as he is aware that he is only a hobbit:

My lady. You are fair and brave and have much to live for and many who love you. I know it is too late to turn aside. I know there is not much point now in hoping. If I were a knight of Rohan, capable of great deeds..., but I'm not. I'm a Hobbit. And I know I can't save Middle Earth. I just want to help my friends; Frodo, Sam, Pippin. More than anything I wish I could see them again. (*Return* Scene 39)

In the second conversation where we can see how much these characters have evolved, Pippin is talking to Gandalf about death. Jackson gives the wizard here some words which originally uttered Frodo in the book:

Pippin: I didn't think it would end this way.

Gandalf: End? No, the journey doesn't end here. Death is just another path, one that we all must take. The grey rain curtain of this world rolls back and turns to silvered glass. And then you see it.

Pippin: What? Gandalf? See what?

Gandalf: White shores and beyond, a far green country under a swift sunrise.

Pippin: Well, that's not so bad. (*Return* Scene 49)

The way Jackson uses the camera, which travels from Gandalf to Pippin and vice versa, is used to highlight Gandalf's paternal side, which even heightens the perception that Pippin is like a child:



Merry and Pippin change indeed as the plot moves on, as we have just seen, but the evolution of their masculinity seems to be somewhat different in the films. Even if we see them fighting in the third film, the energy and aggressiveness that is characteristic of the Warrior seems to be only “used” when necessary to save Faramir and help Éowyn, in the battle of the Pelennor Fields and the Field of Cormallen, but it does not appear again when they go back to the Shire. By not presenting their masculinity as that of the archetype of the Warrior in full, depriving these characters from the resolute hobbits that confront the ruffians and Saruman in Hobbiton, Jackson is also approaching these hobbits to the audience as the heroes of the low mimetic mode they are.

5.4.2. Frodo and Sam

The image of Hobbiton in *The Fellowship of the Ring* is that of a land that is full of life – lively hobbits, the lush forests of the Shire, with all different shades of green, inhabited by farmers and peasants who seem to enjoy the simplicity of life, loving “peace and quiet, and good, tilled earth” (*Fellowship* Scene 2). Hope, friendship, camaraderie, and the feeling of being at home is what the soundtrack also evokes, so every time it sounds in the background of a scene, the spectator’s mind inevitably goes back to the Shire and everything it represents. The actions of the hobbits throughout the three films and their relationships with other characters and among themselves will help establish the differences or similarities with the pattern of masculinity that they perform in Tolkien’s narrative.

Placed in a bucolic environment, Frodo is first introduced reading, which establishes the idea of a hobbit whose personality is partly based on his love of books and learning, and who also has a very special bond with Gandalf. Moreover, the cast of big-blue-eyed Elijah Wood as Frodo introduces a hobbit that is younger than his counterpart in the book, and has more child-like features than the other hobbits. Smith and Matthews point out that “Tolkien’s association of the countryside with innocence is only a part of our present culture in a greatly reduced form,” so, in this sense, Frodo is associated with a “different more contemporary idea of innocence,” which has to do more with youth and not pastoralism (2004: 106).

There is indeed, as can be seen in his exchange with Gandalf, certain warmth and closeness in their relationship, very similar to an avuncular one, which “naturally adds further pathos and emotion to Frodo’s mourning of Gandalf’s (apparent) death later in the film” (Smith and Matthews 2004: 104). In this introduction of Frodo, Jackson connects his personality with that of Bilbo, a cultivated hobbit, in contrast with Merry and Pippin’s appearance as “little rascals” in Bilbo’s party. This is undoubtedly the director’s attempt to heighten the humorous tone of these hobbits in the film, as if he was comparing them with either children or teenagers. The director shows this side of hobbits, for example, when they need to be reprimanded by Gandalf, who punishes them to do the washing-up for having used his fireworks without his permission. It is also during Bilbo’s party that the audience gets to meet Sam as a shy, affable and good-natured hobbit, who seems to be in love with Rosie. Unlike the book, his love interest is very early stated in *The Fellowship of the Ring* from the very beginning, maybe to make the audience familiar with her.

Jackson, Walsh and Boyens introduce here one of the changes that will affect two of the most important hobbits in the plot, Frodo and Sam, whose relationship seems to be established on terms of friendship rather than service, as can be seen in “At the Green Dragon” when they leave the pub, thus contrasting with the way their relationship starts off in the book. As they are seen singing, dancing and, of course, drinking, at the Green Dragon, the four actors that play the hobbits comment on how much they fought to have this scene included in the theatrical version because, as Elijah Wood says, he thought that it absolutely included the hobbit nature, it established their

relationship and showed how happy they were before they started their journey (*Fellowship* Scene 9, cast commentary).

Jackson's interpretation of both hobbits' friendship does not include all the physical and emotional gestures that can be found in the book, as the director may have been wary of possible misreadings from a 21st-century audience, which Tolkien may not fear at all. Jackson also placed them as equals, so Sam seldom refers to Frodo as Mr Frodo, and he never uses the word "Master," for, as Smith and Matthews explain, there would be an obvious connection with slavery (2004: 165). Whichever the reason, the omission of this word and the scarce use of "mister" highlight the fact that the relationship of these characters is grounded on the basis of friendship and camaraderie; it seems to be more "appropriate in an early twenty-first century, international context, and it makes Sam respectful and socially inferior without implying *actual* inferiority" (Smith and Matthews 2004: 165). Along this line, Smith and Matthews see in some of the gestures between Frodo and Sam some attitudes which they deem as protective and sometimes even paternal. Moreover, they understand that "[Sam's] selflessness is not so much that of a friend as that of a worried parent who would do anything in their power to protect their vulnerable child" (2004: 187). Examples that illustrate this can be found throughout the three films, where we can see different instances of Sam's care of Frodo as he urges him to eat and rest, Sam's concern putting Frodo's welfare first, and his over-protectiveness towards his master when he tries to protect him from Gollum and even from Faramir.

By altering the class barrier between these two characters, Høgset believes that Jackson also changed the balance between them, and "while he has reduced Frodo, he has strengthened Sam, making him far more capable of dealing with the challenges they face on their journey" (2004: 174). It has often been argued that Tolkien constructed these two hobbits on the basis of an officer/batman relationship, but Boyens states that they did not want to do so: "It's not so much that we moved Sam away from his roots but we tried to sort of... not to give the impression that Frodo was in any way his superior. Because I don't at all believe that Frodo feels that" (*Fellowship* "From Book to Script"). Nevertheless, Sam's attitude is at times in the film that of someone who feels inferior to Frodo, and this gradually changes as they approach Mordor, as the bond between them grows stronger.

In the book Frodo is introduced as a hobbit with an iron will and inner strength. In the film, however, Frodo's image seems to have been a little diminished and he appears weaker, already very early in the plot as Sam must stop him when he is tempted to wear the Ring as a Black Rider approaches them. His image in the film is that of an ordinary hobbit, as we can see in Weathertop, as he shows his fear, maybe more than the rest. In this hill of Middle-earth, the four hobbits are scared and initially crouch on the ground as they are attacked by Ringwraiths in the book, whereas in the film, they all gather around Frodo instinctively, leaving him in the middle in an attempt to protect him. Despite being endowed with unknown inner strength to confront such evil, after a fight Frodo must face them alone, and he acts, according to Høgset, like a "scared child – a misrepresentation of hobbits in general and of Frodo in particular" (2004: 174). His inability to fight against the Ringwraiths in Weathertop and the fact that Jackson reinterprets the escape to the Ford of Bruinen by substituting Glorfindel for Arwen and by having Arwen take Frodo to Rivendell and confront the Nazgûl, which Frodo does alone in the book, also affect the character's impression on the audience. He is therefore seen as weaker and more passive than his counterpart in the book.

When he arrives in Rivendell and is healed by Elrond, the first person he asks about when he wakes up is Sam. This is not so in the film. When Sam finally enters the room, he holds Frodo's hand, happily, whereas in the book "he stroked it gently and then he blushed and turned hastily away" (*FR* II 1: 219). In the film it was thanks to Ian McKellen who advised the hobbits not to forget such an important gesture that it eventually took place – he suggested it because he thought that it was an essential and innocently physical action that emphasized in the book their deep friendship. However, it is especially curious what he says next that this gesture "might be missed by two resolutely heterosexual actors who mightn't appreciate that gay people like myself saw in a touch something perhaps more meaningful than others might" (*Fellowship* Scene 23, cast commentary).

The absence of Sam's sudden shyness in the film removes the supposed "awkwardness" of the hobbit holding his master's hand, possibly owing to Jackson's attempt to prevent any sort of queer readings of such moments. Although visually there are not as many instances in which they are seen sharing physical intimacy, their relationship takes one further step after Lothlórien, when Boromir tries to take the Ring

from Frodo and the hobbit tries to leave the rest of the members of the Fellowship behind and go to Mount Doom alone. Aware that he will not be able to succeed on his own, and with Sam “swimming” after him, he has no other choice but to accept him, so they hug and shed some tears.



Although Jackson reduces some physical tension in some scenes, he does not restrict the characters’ emotions, for he would be indeed changing the essence of some of them, mainly the hobbits’. Without knowing what awaits them ahead, Frodo admits that he is glad Sam is with him, while Sam looks at him lovingly at the end of *The Fellowship of the Ring*.



This example of non-restriction of feelings is one of the instances that have been rewritten into slash fiction stories and reinterpreted from a queer point of view, concerning the homoeroticism that might be associated with the hobbits. The films have therefore encouraged this type of re-readings, as “fans are even more actively involved in the production and creation of content based on Middle-earth” (Brayton 2006: 138). New fandoms have therefore appeared since the releases of the films, and the Internet has “positively contributed to [their] global popularity” (ibid.), to such extent that even the director took into account some fans’ opinions while making the film. Among these, slash fiction writers have therefore reinterpreted Frodo’s and Sam’s friendship in websites such as *The Library of Moria* or *West of the Moon*, with titles as varied as “No More Lonely Nights,” “So You Touched Your Best Friend and Now You’re in Trouble,” “True Love,” “An Awkward Position,” or “Bathing in Love.”

Sam’s good-hearted nature is put to the test in *The Two Towers*, as the Éowyn-Aragorn-Arwen is not the only “triangle” in the second film. Sam only begins to lose his most positive side as they approach Mordor, above all, after finding Gollum. Always suspicious of what Gollum might do to them, he leaves part of his hobbit naïveté behind and shows quite a different side.

As Frodo begins to sympathize with Gollum gradually, he also blames Sam for calling him names or mocking him – their relationship also becomes more complex because, whereas Frodo is able to see Gollum as Sméagol, i.e. who he once was, Sam is unable to see the same. Frodo wants to believe that there is still hope for Sméagol, as this would mean that there is still hope for him, so he begins to treat Gollum as an equal. He stops using a rope to control him, he tries to feed him some *lembas*, and

always speaks respectfully to him; the Ring has tied their fates forever. When Gollum says, “Master cares. Master knows” in “The Passage of the Marshes,” Frodo is already aware of what Gollum has had to go through, a realization that Gollum shares, agreeing that “Once it takes hold of us, it never lets go” (*Towers* Scene 14). Thus, Frodo starts to believe that Gollum’s redemption is possible (“Because I have to believe he can come back,” *Towers* Scene 28), contrary to Sam, which ends up being the reason of one of their confrontations. His sympathy for Sméagol will be a constant in their relationship, since even after having taken him into Shelob’s Lair, Frodo cannot but feel pity for the poor creature, as he perfectly understands the effect that the Ring has on Gollum.

Frodo’s deterioration and the increasing power of the Ring over him are obvious as the films progress, up to a point in which he nearly offers a Nazgûl the Ring and Sam prevents it. They fight and Frodo tries to use his sword against Sam, to the gardener’s shock: “It’s me. It’s your Sam. Don’t you know your Sam?” with tears in his eyes (*Towers* Scene 60). When he comes to his senses, Frodo is shocked at his actions, for it is thanks to Sam that he has not given the Ring, and it will be thanks to him that he will not lose it in Cirith Ungol. Sam is always encouraging Frodo; he is always the ultimate hopeful believer, as in *The Return of the King* he still thinks that there might be a chance for them to go back to the Shire, no matter how small this chance is. Smith and Matthews suggest that “he is maintaining the charade that there is a chance of success as much out of an attempt to keep Frodo’s spirits up as from any real belief” (2004: 164). Sam is created by Jackson as a stronger and more “psychologically complex” character than in the book (*ibid.*).

The climactic moment in their relationship therefore takes place in Cirith Ungol, after Gollum blames Sam for having eaten all the *lembas* and Frodo asks Sam to leave. According to Boyens, this decision was based on their wanting to add more dramatic tension to the film by having Frodo go into Shelob’s Lair alone (*Fellowship* “From Book to Script”). However, it also allows us to see Frodo as an imperfect character, according to Burdge and Burke (2004: 153), “his treatment of Sam, his alliance with Gollum, and his actions at Mount Doom reflect wickedness inherent inside Frodo.” This is a heartbreaking moment in the plot, in which a devastated Sam is seen going down the stairs, tripping over and nearly falling.

Nothing separated the hobbits in the book; therefore, with this departure, Jackson manages to convey the audience the idea that Frodo is becoming Gollum and that Sam is stronger than anyone could think. When Frodo is eventually stung by Shelob, Sam's appearance in the scene is that of a warrior and a hero who does not doubt the course of action to follow when he thinks that his master is dead. The film does not quite show the struggles he has to undergo and the bravery required of him in order to find Frodo, but Jackson's visual rendering of Sam fighting Shelob is definitely appealing.



Finally, right at the end before they reach Mount Doom, Frodo is a completely battered hobbit, at the end of his possibilities, who even crawls to try to reach the top of the mountain. When he is finally there and about to destroy the Ring, he changes his mind as he tells Sam "The Ring is mine." For this scene to be more dynamic, Jackson wanted to give Frodo a more active role, so he had him fight with Gollum, the result of this fight being that both of them seem to fall into the fire. It gives the scriptwriters the

perfect excuse to have Frodo hanging from a ravine, having to decide whether to let go and end it all or take Sam's hand.

In Jackson's reconstructions of Frodo and Sam, the audience can see two heroes of the low mimetic mode, albeit diminished in the case of Frodo and maybe enhanced in that of Sam, but similar to their counterparts in the book. Their performances of masculinities are therefore similar as they leave the Shire, but they suffer a different evolution as the end is near. On the one hand, we understood that Frodo's masculinity was closer to that of a person that rejects any sort of violence, a pacifist, even if it is to achieve a certain goal, such has been the influence of the war on him. In the films, however, we never manage to see this evolution in Frodo. Moreover, Jackson has also deprived Sam of becoming the Healer he becomes when he returns to the Shire. The director truly shows his Warrior, but by having left out of the films "The Scouring of the Shire," he has not completed the total transition these hobbits undergo in the novel. Sam is never acknowledged the reconstruction of the Shire, as in fact, Galadriel does not give him in the film a little box which he will later use to do this, but some Elvish rope. They are therefore not endowed with the permeable patterns of masculinity they had in the novel, and although they do go back to the Shire changed, we do not get to see that change in action.

6. Queer readings of *The Lord of the Rings*

Having offered some insight into the patterns of masculinity created by Tolkien in *The Lord of the Rings*, it is now time to focus on different types of readings which have been usually referred to as “queer.” Although they existed before, these re-readings proliferated particularly after the release of Jackson’s films. The Internet is a rich source of queer readings of the book, understanding the term “queer” as an attempt to challenge heteronormative sexual behaviour in fiction.

Queer re-readings of Tolkien’s text have ranged from websites that re-write the relationship between Frodo and Sam, like *The Library of Moria*, to videos on YouTube under the title “Brokeback of the Rings” that recreate their story through different stills illustrating a supposed love story between these two characters. In all of them they playfully challenge the notion that a heterosexual reading of the novel is the only possible one. Most of these new re-readings can be framed within the genre of slash fiction. Henry Jenkins points out that Slash focuses more on sensuality than penetration, arguing that “it seems false to define this genre exclusively in terms of its representations of sexuality. Slash is not so much a genre about sex as it is a genre about the limitations of traditional masculinity and about reconfiguring male identity” (2013: 191).

This fan fiction genre appeared between the 70s and 80s and it focuses on the interpersonal relationships between same-sex characters, either friends or arch-enemies, generally male, and usually – although not always – portrayed having sex. It has offered adaptations of the most popular fantasy or science fiction novels or television series, reinterpreting the relationship between two same-sex characters, offering instances of them engaged in a homoerotic relationship: Frodo/Sam from *The Lord of the Rings*, Harry/Draco from *Harry Potter*, Spock/Kirk from *Star Wars*, Holmes/Watson from *Sherlock Holmes*, etc. Although fan-fiction writers do not need to base their stories on any real interaction between characters in the book, there are characters that, because of how they are portrayed in their relationships with other characters, are more likely to appear in these stories. In the case of *The Lord of the Rings*, the subjects of these visual

narratives are usually the couples Sam/Frodo, Merry/Pippin, Aragorn/Boromir, and Legolas/Gimli. The first characters to be “slashed” appeared in *Star Trek* in the 70s, when some writers began to suggest that there was something queer in the relationship between Captain Kirk and Spock. Those that believed so reflected in this new genre the unresolved sexual tension they perceived in the novels, films or TV series, which were not explicit in the text.

In the case of *The Lord of the Rings*, slash fiction challenges the heteronormative presupposition that all the characters in Middle-earth are heterosexual, thus pushing “the homosocial into the realm of the sexual” (Smol 2004: 970). When slash fiction began to appear in connection with Tolkien’s characters, some ardent fans were certainly dismayed, which is why, according to Christopher Wrigley, Jackson had to be careful in how he approached the relationship between Frodo and Sam:

Delicacy is indeed essential, for any suggestion that there was more than affection and loyalty between Frodo and Sam would give great hurt to Tolkien’s more traditional admirers. And since their love is never avowed and they are required to part in the end, equal offence would be given to progressives, who do not accept that there is anything wrong or second-best about being gay or bisexual. (2005: 54-55)

Nevertheless, in slash fiction the examples of homoerotic relationships taking as their protagonists some characters from *The Lord of the Rings* are not scarce. The fan fiction websites devoted to this genre are numerous and varied, ranging from complete stories to fan art. Although the book offers fans plenty of ideas to develop within this genre, the films have influenced fan writers the most. As a consequence, the Internet is rife with texts which often imagine “the characters as they are represented by the actors in the film” (Smol 2004: 970). Smol suggests websites such as *Henneth Annûn Story Archive* and *West of the Moon*, but the list is endless, as these stories appear not only in websites entirely devoted to *The Lord of the Rings* but also to other novels, films or TV series, as can be seen in the *Whispered Words* recommendations database: *Avatar*, *CSI*, *Glee*, *Grimm*, *James Bond*, *Sherlock*, *Star Trek*, *Stargate*, *The Hobbit*, etc.

Their open display of emotions is an essential trait in Tolkien’s and Jackson’s *Hobbits*, which has led Ruth Goldberg and Krin Gabbard to see how “most of the film’s homoeroticism lies in the relationship between Frodo and Sam” (2006: 272). In fact,

Smith and Matthews explain that, one possible reason for avoiding the word “Master” is because it might have a direct association with S&M domination,

which would fuel the already homoerotically tinged elements of the hobbits’ relationships in an uncomfortable way. (The four hobbit actors have admitted to deliberately exploring ‘queer’ readings of their characterisations, and trying to imply on screen that Frodo/Sam and Merry/Pippin are couples, but claim to have done so largely because it was funny). (2004: 165)

The examples of slash fiction in which hobbits are the protagonists are quite varied, as in this sense, slash writers have seen that the border between the hobbits’ friendship and homosexuality is too fine, above all after the release of the films. Slash fiction therefore offers examples of the re-interpretation of two recurrent themes in recent times based on Tolkien and his works: homoeroticism and homosociality (Craig 2001, Rosenthal 2004, Smol 2004, Saxey 2005). As explained, the social construction of Middle-earth is based on the grounds of a hierarchical set of relationships established between the different races that conform this society. These relationships are an echo of Tolkien’s own literary tastes and personal homosocial background. The male bonding in Middle-earth is therefore influenced by his own homosocial bonds with the T.C.B.S. and the Inklings. Thus, it makes sense to start exploring the male bonds established between the members of the Fellowship of the Ring.

In the case of *The Lord of the Rings*, there has been some debate around the relationships between some of the male characters of the book and how their behaviour and intimacy are portrayed, mainly between the tandems Aragorn/Boromir, Legolas/Gimli, and mainly, Frodo/Sam, the characters that the following sections will focus on. A priori, the association of the book and the theme of homosociality seems to be some kind of platitude bearing in mind the fact that most characters in the Fellowship of the Ring are male questors and/or friends.

The relationship between Frodo and Sam has attracted different types of queer readings from some scholars, as the hobbits’ tactile intimacy in the novel has made some critics wonder whether their relationship has indeed been regarded from a heterosexist point of view and has left out other nuances. Esther Saxey is one of the latest writers that has focused on the topic of homoeroticism in *The Lord of the Rings*, concluding that, in fact, the characters in the novel are “potentially *all lovers*” (2005:

137). Moreover, Saxey believes that Jackson's film adaptations "bridge the homosocial and the homoerotic" (124). She sees in Jackson's reinterpretation – and incorporation – of women, the "possibility of sex," which was inexistent in the book, where most of the relationships were homosocial, mainly because of the scarcity of female characters (136-137).

In his analysis of homoeroticism and chivalry, Zeikowitz quotes González-Casnovas's explanation of the terminology surrounding medieval same-sex relationships:

Homosociality refers to the preference in professional and recreational relations for members of the same-sex... *Homophilia* ... signifies a predilection for same-sex friendships based on close intimacy, which can extend over the full range of emotional attractions and sentimental expressions that lie outside genital interaction... *Homoeroticism* develops homophilia further by stressing 'romantic love' within the same sex, which can include passionate expressions and courtship rituals that lead to physical intimacy with or without genital behaviour. (qtd. in Zeikowitz 2003: 3)

The following sections aim thus to analyse some male-male relationships from the point of view of homoeroticism, homophilia and homosociality. Moreover, the last paragraphs will try to offer some insight into the slash genre concerning *The Lord of the Rings*.

6.1. Homosociality in the Fellowship of the Ring

Sedgwick understands "homosocial" as "a word occasionally used in history and the social sciences, where it describes social bonds between persons of the same sex" (1985: 1). Given that it includes the Greek prefix "homo," Sedgwick understands that this neologism is "obviously formed by analogy with 'homosexual,' and just as obviously meant to be distinguished from 'homosexual'" (ibid.). Nevertheless, with her broader understanding of the term homosociality pertaining thus to all sorts of same-sex bonding, Sedgwick argues that, by linking the term "male homosocial" and "desire" or "the potentially erotic," the effect is actually the opposite, as some activities defined as male bonding are characterized in our society "by intense homophobia, fear and hatred of homosexuality" (1985: 1-2). The following paragraphs aim at establishing how

homosociality can be found and interpreted within the male-central society of Middle-earth.

Nils Hammarén and Thomas Johansson also explore the concept of homosociality, distinguishing two types: vertical/hierarchical and horizontal, both of which could be applied to the same-sex relations that appear in *The Lord of the Rings*. They define hierarchical homosociality as “a means of strengthening power and of creating close homosocial bonds to maintain and defend hegemony,” whereas vertical homosociality “is used to point toward relations between, for example, men – relations that are based on emotional closeness, intimacy, and a nonprofitable form of friendship” (2014: 5).

Homosocial relationships in *The Lord of the Rings* are somewhat compulsory given the scarcity of female characters. The absence of women therefore seems to encourage or give rise to same-sex relations. War also led to these homosocial bonds in Middle-earth as women were left out on purpose from the War of the Ring – we never see any female warriors in the battlefield, apart from the case of Éowyn, which is a special one.

Almost all the members of the Fellowship of the Ring are directly chosen by Elrond, who decides to designate relevant representatives of different races, thus establishing the foundations of their future homosocial bonds. Although the boundaries are not always clear between hierarchical and horizontal homosociality within the Fellowship of the Ring, the relationship among the hobbits seems to fall in the second type, whereas their bond with the rest of the group is in part hierarchical. It is precisely the hierarchy of power within the Fellowship which biases the way their relationships are built.

The hobbits are partly inspired by Tolkien’s male contemporaries, as has been stated in chapter 5. As such, their friendship also mirrors those Tolkien kept during his life. According to Saxey, “biographical information on the male friendships between the Inklings can be used to demonstrate that Tolkien was interested in intellectual life as a ‘boy’s club’ – intensely homosocial and perpetually juvenile” (2005: 124-125). Moreover, his bond with the other members of the T.C.B.S. was also very strong. They were young, inexperienced, and they missed each other deeply when they were not

together. Although they took different paths when they went to university, it was the war that separated them forever. Garth's description of the T.C.B.S. may well be applied to the hobbits: "This was a fellowship founded on laughter, schoolboy pranks, and youthful enthusiasm" (2004: 136). The hobbits' is a clearly horizontal homosociality, despite their social differences. Pippin, Merry, Sam and Frodo's friendship comprises some of the qualities that Reginald Hyatte finds in the Aristotelian-Ciceronian tradition: "mutual admiration, confidence, affection, proper mental attitudes such as humility and generosity, living together" (1994: 109).

Of all the instances of male bonding that appear in the book, some are founded on fosterage (Bilbo, Théoden), mentorship (Gandalf) and even based on an a priori unlikely friendship¹³ that grew into respect and admiration (Legolas, Gimli). They leave everything behind in order to fight for the same (higher) cause, which Burns compares with "the willingness of medieval or Renaissance heroes to set romance (at least temporarily) aside," and which was later reproduced in Victorian times (2005: 142). *The Lord of the Rings* therefore focuses on the homosocial relationships that are established among the characters that are part of the Fellowship of the Ring, highlighting thus the importance of friendship.

6.2. Homoeroticism and homophilia in Middle-earth. The case of Sam and Frodo

The line that separates homosociality, homophilia and homoeroticism in *The Lord of the Rings* is sometimes really fine, and even more so in Jackson's cinematographic adaptations of the book. It is mainly within fan fiction websites that the subject of homoeroticism finds its highest expression and has been widely developed into overtly sexual readings of the text. However, the academia has also analysed the presence of homoeroticism in the novel. Partridge carried out one of the first sexual readings of Tolkien's texts in 1983, when she stated that both Lewis and Tolkien found a common context in which acceptable male intimacy could take place: "war provides a context in which men can be acceptably intimate because they are at the same time being seen to

¹³ For further development on the relationship between Elves and Dwarves, see *The Silmarillion*.

live up to the socially desirable stereotype image of the aggressive male” (184). She goes on to analyse Frodo and Sam’s relationship as homoerotic, mainly due to the intimate moments they share on their way to Mount Doom, and even claims that their relationship is “contained within and subconsciously masked by the religious overtones” (186). Partridge concludes that, although Sam goes back to the Shire and marries Rosie, their relationship “will never reach the depths of passion and spiritual intensity” that he shared with Frodo (187).

Ty Rosenthal starts his article about sex in Tolkien’s writing by stating that sex and Tolkien seem to be “mutually exclusive terms,” only to disagree, adding that sex is simply “marginalized” (2004: 35). Both Craig and Rosenthal analyse the friendship between the two hobbits in the context of the beginning of the twentieth-century, when close male friendships were not suspicious of anything sexual, although it was “an important mode of expression for men who felt themselves attracted to other men,” as homoerotic poetry of the period has shown (Craig 2001: 15). Craig’s manifest intention is to look “both at the conscious intentions of Tolkien, but also at some of the more unintentional meanings present in the text” (11), with the risks that this implies. He even hints in his conclusion that Frodo and Sam’s relationship was homosexual, when he writes that “their quest is held by their love and it is an irony (though probably one Tolkien would deny) that the love which conquers all is the love which dare not speak its name” (18). Valerie Rohy also agrees with Craig in seeing Frodo and Sam as homosexual, arguing that the absence or not of sexuality depends in fact of the reader, as “sex seems absent to readers for whom the only real sexuality is hetero and in whose optic the homo consequently cannot register as sexuality at all” (2004: 929). Rosenthal does not go so far but does conclude that desire is in fact restrained in Middle-earth (2004: 42). It is there to be analysed, though, mainly by fans, who have updated the plot by sexualising it, as the section on Slash fiction will try to illustrate.

Just as Craig and Rosenthal did in their articles, we must also contextualize the hobbits’ friendship. In the heteronormative world that Tolkien created, where homosociality was the norm, he reconstructed instances of intimacy which are a reflection of the experience lived in the trenches by some soldiers in WWI. It is interesting to notice how the scholars above mentioned have all framed their analyses bearing in mind Tolkien’s vital experiences. Therefore, Tolkien’s own background

(public school system, sex segregation at school and university, male reading clubs), his historical context (beginning of the 20th century), and his experience in the Great War, definitely marked his understanding of relationships. It is precisely in the war that men found a way to express their desires for other men and their intimacy in such a restrictive atmosphere of sexual repression.

Soldiers in the Great War enlisted due to several reasons: out of patriotism, as a response to an idealized view of the war, and because it was expected of them. Those that decided not to enlist immediately were scorned, as we have seen in chapter 5. As these soldiers, the hobbits find in the war “a test of their manhood” (Mosse 1996: 108), or rather, a test to prove that they have become adults. They share with the soldiers who fought in WWI a somewhat naïve idea of the war, for they did not know exactly what they would find on their way, and only as their quest progresses, do they manage to understand completely the meaning of being at war with the Dark Lord. After the nineteenth-century revival of Arthurian legends, young men somehow saw themselves as medieval knights since, according to Vance, “the traditions of physical manliness and of chivalry and gentlemanliness which helped to mould mid-Victorian Christian manliness were social and literary phenomena” (1985: 26). As argued by Paul Fussell, “for most who fought in the Great War, one highly popular equivalent was Victorian pseudo-medieval romance” (2000: 135). They found in these stories a common ground to find inspiration, so for some of them, their code of behaviour was based on the idealized concept of medieval knights. According to Mark Girouard, “all gentlemen knew that they must be brave, show no sign of panic or cowardice, be courteous and protective to women and children, be loyal to their comrades and meet death without flinching” (1981: 7), a conduct that was already instilled in them as part of the British Empire mentality. If soldiers volunteered to go to war as chivalrous representatives of their society, with the idealized “belief that war was glorious and ennobling,” the fact is that “seldom survived a few months at the front” (290). The end of the Great War was the end of this code of chivalry.

If intimate moments are more likely to exhibit homoeroticism in a text, in *The Lord of the Rings*, examples of intimate gestures between characters abound. Generally speaking, intimacy is mostly portrayed between characters that have fought together, as we have seen in the case of Frodo and Sam. One of the most powerful moments in this

regard is shared by Aragorn and Boromir, when the latter is about to die, both in the novel and in the film. As Aragorn takes his hand and kisses his brow as a brother-in-arms, he “knelt for a while, bent with weeping, still clasping Boromir’s hand” (*TT* III 1: 404). Horrocks suggests that it is when characters are about to die that we can see “the full intensity of male love,” as it is quite common to “find this equation of love and death in writers and filmmakers” (1994: 150), and above all in war scenes. According to Lehman, war is a wonderful “literary and cinematic site of a great deal of anxiety” because men fear losing their masculinity in it, although initially they take part in it because they want to prove it and affirm it (1993: 71). It seems thus that, although Middleton believes that “men’s lack of intimacy is a strategic secrecy” and a means to avoid giving “others power over them” (1992: 121), it is acceptable for a man to love another man “if they are mortally wounded” (Horrocks 1994: 151). Moreover, kisses between knights were not strange, as Zeikowitz notes concerning the rites they had to go through:

The knight is not only bound to honor and serve his lord but also the ‘friends of chivalry,’ which situates him within a brotherhood of knights all upholding the same ideals. At the ordination ceremony the officiating knight kisses the squire who is about to be made a knight. While the kiss is ceremonial it illustrates a normative expression of male-male affection; the kiss is emotionally charged, as is the ritual bathing and dressing prior to the ordination, because presumably the squire has a strong desire to become a knight and the officiating knight is desirous to welcome the novice knight into the brotherhood of chivalry. (2003: 24)

Smol also suggests that it is not hard to find examples that show these intimate moments of men sharing kisses, embracing each other, resting on each other, or holding hands, in medieval literature, where their relationship was characterized by “loyalty and physical gestures of closeness or affection”, as in *The Song of Roland* or *Beowulf* (2008: 321). The intimacy shared at times between some characters in *The Lord of the Rings* evokes that which appeared in texts such as *Beowulf* or *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Allen J. Frantzen, for instance, makes reference to some scholars such as Howell D. Chickering who have also seen eroticism present in *Beowulf* (1999: 94).

Nevertheless, although homoeroticism is one plausible reading of Tolkien’s writing, it is not equivalent to homosexuality. All the instances in which tears, kisses or embraces are present in both *Beowulf* and *The Lord of the Rings* can also be seen as nothing but the simple gesture of brothers-in-arms or friends in a world in which loyalty

and male bonding were more social than sexual. Frantzen observes that both “*Beowulf* and *The Wanderer* offer evidence of gestures of kissing and embracing – social rather than sexual – that are rare in heroic and elegiac Old English verse” (1999: 104). Concerning intimacy in Old English or medieval texts, he states that

[n]onsexual intramale acts, including embraces and kisses, took place within an institution of male friendship, defined by the bonds between a lord and his retainer, that the culture authorized and indeed valorized. Intramale relations are powerful, suggestive, intimate, socially, even sexually, charged (one man is dominant, the other subordinate, one sitting, one kneeling, and so forth), but not necessarily about sexual intercourse. And so long as sexual intercourse is not involved, the acts cannot be considered deviant. But neither are they meaningless, or without erotic significance. (108)

In the case of Aragorn and Boromir, their relationship has evolved from the Council of Elrond, from one based on mutual distrust, until it reaches the final moment of Boromir’s confession and repentance, in which Aragorn comforts him by praising his victory and promising to go to Minas Tirith. Larry May and Robert Strikwerda believe that there are certain male experiences which lead to the formation of comradeship and provide “the occasion for mutual self-disclosure among males” (1992: 97). In war, this opportunity of sharing is even heightened, and they are taken emotionally and physically to inconceivable limits, so in Aragorn’s gestures, there is but the respectful farewell to a comrade-in-arms.

Wrigley believes that “because of the conventional reticence of his generation, and perhaps his own inhibitions, Tolkien was unable to write about the love of men and women with any conviction” (2005: 46); Tolkien even received some criticism in a letter concerning the speed of Faramir and Éowyn’s love story, which he replied by explaining that, as it took place in a period of great stress, it is sometimes not necessary more time to take a decision (Carpenter 1995: 324). Nevertheless, he does somehow make his characters heterosexual and gives them a heteronormative ending: Aragorn ends up marrying Arwen, Faramir weds Éowyn, Sam marries Rosie at the end of the book, and even the appendices relate Merry and Pippin’s offspring. Even if Tolkien world was laden with relationships based on homosociality and homophilia, even homoeroticism for other scholars, the writer prepares a heteronormative and conventional eucatastrophic or “happy ending” for almost everyone that survives in the Fellowship of the Ring, except for Gimli, Legolas, Gandalf and Frodo. Rosenthal

believes they have been “ascribed asexuality” (2004: 37). As this scholar suggests, a 21st-century reader or viewer may find it difficult to see this absence of sexuality in *The Lord of the Rings*, which may be one of the reasons why the relationship between Frodo and Sam has been “re-written” in the fandom world.

According to Rost, many Tolkien scholars, among them David Bratman or Daniel Timmons, dread queer readings of *The Lord of the Rings* (2011: 1364). Even if Tolkien may have never conceived of a sexual tension between his male characters, “it is hard not to discern a tension between conflicting kinds of feeling and this gives *The Lord of the Rings* part of its compelling fascination” (Wrigley 2005: 56). Hence, the existence of readings on homoeroticism as present in the book, mainly carried out by Craig’s and Smol’s theories, the latter also based on Fussell’s book *The Great War and Modern Memory* (first published in 1975).

In his book on the Great War, Fussell defines the term homoerotic as “a sublimated (i.e. ‘chaste’) form of temporary homosexuality” (2000: 272), a common feature in some male-male relationships in the front during the war, based on “mutual affection, protection, and admiration” (ibid.). He compares them with “the ‘idealistic,’ passionate but non-physical ‘crushes’ which most of the officers had experienced at public school” (ibid.), their “unique physical tenderness” appearing as one of the main topics used in the homoerotic literary tradition that emerged during and after the First World War. One of these physical moments was the bathing time, which also appears in the quest of the hobbits. Fussell considers that the “awful vulnerability of the naked flesh” marked the contrast “between beautiful frail flesh and the alien metal that waits to violate it” (2000: 299). Even if there is nothing sexual in the hobbits’ bathing time, their nakedness highlights their vulnerability.

Craig defines this bathing episode as a moment of male bonding (2001: 16), and he also adds the chapter in which they run naked after having been saved from the barrow-wights. These instances are not scarce in the novel because “the quest facilitates physical contact” (Saxey 2005: 128). In this sense, the hobbits that share the most relevant moments of physical intimacy and closeness are Frodo and Sam, whose relationship has usually been compared to that of a soldier and his batman. As Garth explains,

[t]he batman performed domestic chores for an officer: making his bed, tidying and polishing, and furnishing his table with the best. This was a practical arrangement, not just a luxury. Officers undoubtedly led a cushier life than the other ranks, but they had little time to spare from training, directing working parties, and, on ‘days off’, censoring the men’s inevitable letters home. (2004: 171)

As master and servant, Sam takes up activities that belong to the domestic – or traditionally associated with the “feminine” – sphere, such as cooking and tending to his master. Craig explains that it is the absence of women in the plot that makes other characters “take their functions,” and the result is that “the definition of masculinity is necessarily shifted” (2001: 15). On the other hand, Kleinman believes that Frodo and Sam’s relationship is based more on servility than same-sex desire:

Although today’s readers may arguably eroticize the homosocial relationships more than Tolkien intended, their propensity to find Frodo and Sam’s relationship ‘queer’ may derive from the same confusion of servile and erotic devotion demonstrated by Éowyn. Today’s reader may also see Frodo and Sam’s relationship as ‘queer’ because Sam’s love for Frodo is manifested almost entirely through his servility. (2005: 147)

As Saxey explains, “the textual ‘evidence’ for Hobbit same-sex desire, then, is partial, riddled with interpretative problems and dodging de-sexualizing explanations with the text” (2005: 130). As Tolkien has left sex out of Middle-earth, it is difficult to find any evidence in the text of the existence of sexuality present between these two characters, leaving the potential existence of desire between Frodo and Sam open to interpretation. Hearn suggests that there are “difficulties around the very notion of ‘homoeroticism’, especially within a heterosexist culture, particularly the invoking of ‘homosexual desire’ that is most unambiguously shown in private domains” (1992: footnote 42, 250). In the present deconstruction of the hobbits’ behaviour as homoerotic, their relationship is based on an extreme sense of service, but also same-sex love between two friends.

The recently-coined – and certainly fashionable – term “bromance” has been useful to define their relationship in the field of slash fiction. Hammarén and Johansson describe bromance as a “close and intimate nonsexual and homosocial relationship between two (or more) men” (2014: 6). Bromance focuses on love, friendship, and intimacy, offering men, regardless of their sexual orientation, a comfortable niche to express their intimate male friendship. It has appeared in cultural studies in the last

years, particularly concerning TV series, or even to define the close relationship established by some actors (the names of Brad Pitt and George Clooney or Matt Damon and Ben Affleck, generally popping up as examples of “bromances”). In general this term seems to refer to heterosexual relationships, but the scope can be wider; only by not restricting bromances can homophobia be fought or compulsory imposed heteronormativity contested. The fact that some scholars perceive that it should only be used for straight males might be considered a reflection of a heteronormative society that aims to label every person’s sexual orientation in every single situation. Although “bromances imply intimacy that slips between the boundaries of sexual and nonsexual relationships” (ibid.), the relationship normally established between males that engage in it is mostly nonsexual, and Hammåren and Johansson link it to the aforementioned horizontal homosociality.

According to Rosenthal, there are many readers who believe that due to their behaviour, Sam and Frodo are “on the edge of homosexuality” (2004: 37), and in fact, Rosenthal goes on to suggest that “far removed from Tolkien’s Victorian ideals of male friendship, the emotional closeness between male characters is now often viewed not as boon companionship but as sublimated homosexuality” (42), a view shared by Rohy (2004). Rosenthal and Rohy’s interpretation would be argued by fans who believe that “as Tolkien didn’t put male-male sex into his world, it cannot be plausible ‘seen’ there. Other fans argue that homosocial closeness is a feature of Hobbit society, and is never sexual” (Saxey 2005: 128-9). The truth is that the tendency to sexualize Tolkien is more and more common nowadays, as a way of the fans to “update Tolkien’s myths and place them in their own context” (42).

Against this recent sexualisation of the book, Kleinman argues that Sam and Frodo represent the common Victorian relationship between a master and his servant, where the social distance between them was a must. This social division is clear in the way Sam addresses Frodo, his deferential behaviour “is the vehicle for Tolkien’s evocation of Victorian social division, rather than any clearly defined class relations” (2005: 145). When Sam leaves the Shire with Frodo, he is, indeed, a servant, not a friend. He is driven to follow Frodo by his own desire to live an adventure and get to see some Elves, although he had promised Gandalf not to leave Frodo alone.

The quest means a rite of passage into adulthood for all the hobbits, but for Frodo and Sam it also means an evolution in their relationship. Because they have to endure most of their quest on their own, their bond is strengthened, and the possibility of physical contact is facilitated and becomes more intense as they spend more and more time together and the perils increase. The key moment that may make the reader reflect upon the hobbits' relationship is when they are in Rivendell. Until then, we only get but a glimpse of Sam's devotion to Frodo in Weathertop, when his master is wounded, and he chokes with tears when Strider tells him that he believes that the Black Riders think Frodo "has a deadly wound that will subdue him to their will" (*FR I 12*: 192).

In Rivendell, when Frodo awakes after having been healed by Elrond, Sam runs to him and takes his injured hand "awkwardly and shyly. He stroked it gently and then he blushed and turned hastily away" (*FR II 1*: 219). Craig sees this as "a moment of physical intimacy" which is even more increased by "Sam's embarrassment at it" (2001: 16). In this scene, Sam also tells Frodo: "'It's warm! [...] Meaning your hand, Mr. Frodo'" (*FR II 1*: 219). Saxey wonders what makes Sam add "meaning your hand" (2005: 128). Had he not blushed or added these words, this moment may have gone unnoticed. A possible queer reading of this scene might understand it as a homoerotic moment in which Sam blushes because he feels shy after touching Frodo's hand, but, at the same time, it seems equally plausible to see that Sam merely blushes because he is not used to this type of intimacy with another hobbit, let alone with one who, after all, is his master; he is simply not supposed to stroke his master's hand due to their class difference.

Their intimate (and physical) moments are abundant throughout the book: when they are near the Passage of the Marshes, Sam "took his master's hand and bent over it. He did not kiss it, though his tears fell on it" (*TT IV 2*: 610). Their physical contact is mainly established through their hands. Burns believes that in this affection that Sam feels for Frodo, "something of the affection and care that we generally associate with marriage or with the parenting of young children clearly enters in" (2005: 140). In her view, Sam's affection for Frodo is expressed in different ways: he cooks for him, he tends to him, he urges him to eat and drink, etc. The way Sam describes Frodo, or rather, the way Tolkien puts into words what Sam thinks, helps the reader see how this intimate relationship has become: "it looked old, old and beautiful, as if the chiselling of

the shaping years was now revealed in many fine lines that had before been hidden, though the identity of the face was not changed”, and he murmured to himself: “I love him. He’s like that, and sometimes it shines through, somehow. But I love him whether or no” (*TT IV 4*: 638), as if he was admitting he loves Frodo just as he is. In “The Stairs of Cirith Ungol,” we find one of the scenes that moved Tolkien most deeply, one which offers another instance of physical intimacy between the hobbits. Sam’s protective attitude towards Frodo has its most relevant expression when he asks him to sleep: “Safe, if you lay close to me. I’d be dearly glad to see you have a sleep. I’d keep watch over you; and anyway, if you lay near, with my arm round you, no one could come pawing you without your Sam knowing it” (*TT IV 8*: 698).

Of all the different expressions of the love between Frodo and Sam that Burns sees, we may add that Sam is also jealous of Frodo’s particular feelings for Gollum. Both Sam and Frodo are alone and resting in the chapter of “The Forbidden Pool,” in Sam’s lap “lay Frodo’s head, drowned deep in sleep; upon his white forehead lay one of Sam’s brown hands, and the other lay softly upon his master’s breast,” while Gollum seems to have gone missing in search for food for himself. Right then, when they were sound asleep, Gollum arrives and contemplates the scene. If there is anything that decidedly linked Gollum with his past life and Sméagol, that was the time he spent with the hobbits leading them to Mount Doom. In this scene, it seems likely that he catches a glimpse of his past and his friendship with Déagol, the hobbit he killed, and, for a moment, the reader believes there is still hope for him: his eyes went “old and tired”, and it seems he was “engaged in some interior debate”. When Sam sees Gollum touching his master, he immediately becomes suspicious and shouts at Gollum calling him “old villain” and accusing him of “sneaking off and sneaking back” (*TT IV 8*: 699). If there was any hope for Gollum to change, it is lost forever, a possibility, however, that Tolkien had completely discarded from the beginning given that he had been under the influence of the One Ring for too long. Smol outlines that “it is a moment in which Gollum might have found redemption by connecting with the intimate bond that he finds before him” (2004: 964), but Sam prevents it from happening.

Sam’s motherly attitudes towards Frodo continue when the destruction of the Ring is near: he wakes him up by smoothing “the hair back from Frodo’s brow” (*TT IV 8*: 700), and he tries to comfort him “with his arms and body” when he is shivering later

on (*RK VI 3*: 919). Sam and Frodo are physically, but mostly emotionally, attached by the experiences they have to endure, and this scene is similar to some of the examples that Fussell provides us with. However, these homoerotic moments are not necessarily an expression of a latent homosexuality, a type of interpretation that is bound to appear quite frequently in the treatment of these characters in slash fiction. The analysis that is being offered in this section is one of the many interpretations that try to define the emotional and physical intimacy shared by soldiers in the trenches in the Great War. According to Smol, Tolkien's plot "represented the complexity of a twentieth-century writer's experience, someone who had served in one war and had sent two sons into another" (2004: 953).

Concerning friendships in the First World War, Das suggests that

[i]n the trenches of World War I, the norms of tactile contact between men changed profoundly. Mutilation and mortality, loneliness and boredom, the strain of constant bombardment, the breakdown of language, and the sense of alienation from home led to a new level of intimacy and intensity under which the carefully constructed mores of civilian society broke down. (2002: 52)

Das highlights the idea that all these emotions that soldiers felt, such as "pity, thrill, affection and eroticism" were usually "fused and confused depending on the circumstances, degrees of knowledge, normative practices, and sexual orientations" (*ibid.*). It is difficult to assert whether erotic contact was conscious or unconscious, but what is clear is that male-male friendships reached a "new level of intensity and intimacy" (53). The extent of Frodo and Sam's intimacy and physical tenderness can only be understood in the circumstances of the war, as it reflects, according to Smol, "this unique twentieth-century experience of male friendship" (2004: 955). Theirs is a relationship that cannot be reduced exclusively to male friendship, romantic love, or homoerotic relationship, for it is all of them at the same time.

When Frodo and Sam are alone, the external expressions of friendship and love are at their highest but they change when they go back to the Shire. The reader is then surprised to see Sam marry Rosie, who he has hardly mentioned in his adventure, their relationship not developed at all, thus breaking with any "suspected queerness" in their

male bond and responding to the Shire's understanding of a hobbit's life.¹⁴ Tolkien referred to this union in a letter as "essential":

I think the simple 'rustic' love of Sam and his Rosie (nowhere elaborated) is *absolutely essential* to the study of his (the chief hero's) character, and to the theme of the relation of ordinary life (breathing, eating, working, begetting) and quests, sacrifice, causes, and the 'longing for Elves', and sheer beauty. (Carpenter 1995: 161)

Not having elaborated on this explanation anywhere else, Tolkien left the concept that Sam and Rosie's relationship was "absolutely essential" somewhat free for the reader to interpret. On the one hand, had he not married Rosie, the character might have left for the Undying Lands with Frodo, because he was also a Ringbearer. Moreover, Tolkien is also giving continuation to a character in his land, emphasizing the importance of "ordinary life" after having been on a quest. The hero is back home and given the reward that he deserves: a long life to spend with his wife and children and a true eucatastrophic ending. *The Lord of the Rings* started with a party in which we could see merry hobbits, and it also ends with a happy hobbit at home.

Nonetheless, this marriage may also be regarded as an instance of what Sedgwick has defined as "triangulation" (1985: 21-27), as an attempt to "heteronormalize" Sam, although it differs from Sedgwick's theory of the erotic triangle in the sense that Frodo does not feel any attraction for Rosie. Tolkien is by no means the first writer to do this, for others before him also introduced a female character "between" two male friends. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, for example, did something similar with Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson. According to Richards,

[d]espite Watson's marriage to Mary Morstan and Holmes' reverence for *the* woman – Irene Adler, the pairing of Holmes and Watson epitomises the depth of affection, trust and loyalty that so often grew up between men in the male-dominated society of nineteenth century Britain. (1987: 109)

Even if both Tolkien and Conan Doyle introduce a third element in their characters' friendships, these did not change and remained a great example of the friendship that Lewis understood as "one of those things which give value to survival"

¹⁴ The films seem to mark Sam's heterosexuality from the beginning, a reminder of which appears in the scene "The End of All Things," as Frodo remembers the Shire and Sam's thoughts go first to Rosie Cotton. This does not prevent, however, a queer reading of the friendship between Frodo and Sam.

(1960: 71), and which only ends when one of the friends die or, in the case of Frodo, departs to the Undying Lands. In this world that Tolkien presents to us, there is hardly any space for women; yet, in a matter of a few chapters, some characters suddenly end up happily married. Bilbo and Frodo, however, never marry and end up leaving the Shire. Of the three Ring-bearers (possibly because he carried it for a short time), Sam is the only one who can stay in the Shire and become a functional heteronormative member of this society.

Philip L. Culbertson suggests that men have been taught to feel uncomfortable with male friendship, so they “mask their fear by making sure their heterosexual status is clearly proven in public, by reaffirming marriage as more important than friendship” (1996: 161). He adds that “Christianity’s obsession with homosexuality” is also to blame for this, which gives even more importance to heterosexual marriage (164). For Tolkien, homosociality was the means of interaction that he felt most comfortable with for the reasons pointed out when dealing with his biography: he attended a public school, he engaged in male groups such as the T.C.B.S. and the Inklings, and finally he became a university Professor at a time when there were very few female students. As a result, it seemed that the company of other men was preferable to that of women, simply because he was used to it. Tolkien never challenged the traditional sexual order prevalent in his lifetime; therefore, in case there was the slightest possibility of any suspicion of “queerness” between Frodo and Sam, he writes an ending for Sam in which he returns home and marries.

The aim of this section has not been to heterosexualize the text in a twenty-first century context, but to analyse the circumstances that lead two characters created under Victorian assumptions of sexual restriction and as a reconstruction of two World War soldiers to develop some physical intimacy that was fairly common in the trenches during the war. Although Sam and Frodo represent a type of special male friendship that surfaced in the first half of the twentieth century, it seems equally plausible to see homoeroticism in some instances between them from a queer reading point of view. Smol states that

given Tolkien’s conservative Christian views about the corrupt, fallen world marked by sexual sin, it is also extremely unlikely that he would consider representing consciously in his fiction the possibility of sexual desire between men.

But what Tolkien cannot contemplate, many of his contemporary readers can.
(2004: 967)

In Rosenthal's approach to the concept of sex in Tolkien's works, there are a few ideas that respond to Tolkien's Victorian/Edwardian upbringing: sex must be understood as happening within marriage, the desire for which is therefore healthy and normal; there is always a "male authority figure" that gives or withholds approval for marriage; finally, there is some kind of cultural separation of women and men. Although there are some exceptions in the text like Galadriel and Éowyn, other female characters "live constrained by, even happy with, the limits of their culture and with traditional gender roles" (2004: 36).

In slash fiction, there are certain episodes, mainly from the films, that have been therefore sexualized, such as when Aragorn kisses Boromir, which may seem to be more erotically charged in the film than in the book. Legolas and Gimli also appear as protagonists of some of these stories. Their inter-racial friendship, their competitive nature, which brings at times moments of laughter to the plot, particularly in the films, and their longing to show each other parts of their world (Helm's Deep and Fangorn), have also been the excuse to recreate them in homosexual situations in the aforementioned websites.

For Tolkien, friendship was only possible between men, and with women maybe later in life when "sex cools down" (Carpenter 1995:48). His book is thus a great praise of the types of friendship he lived (T.C.B.S. and First World War) and he had read about (epic and medieval literature). Smol admits that many Tolkien fans object to this representation of Middle-earth characters, either because they believe that homosexual relationships are immoral or simply because they find it reduces a special type of same-sex bond to its sexual expression. The scarcity of women and sex also makes it possible for some readers to see beyond the obvious fraternal relationships Tolkien creates in the text, and which leads to a modern interpretation of this homosociality within this new genre. Slash fiction offers thus a new world to be explored by Tolkien fans, but a world that Tolkien would most likely disapprove of (and maybe even cringe at reading).

7. Female masculinity in Middle-earth

In 1998, the queer theorist Judith/Jack Halberstam published the book *Female Masculinity*, a title which could lead the reader directly to questioning whether masculinity is indeed possible for women. Starting from the premise that masculinity should not be reduced to men and is indeed performed by women, Halberstam asserts that as masculinity has traditionally been linked with maleness, and therefore to power and domination, studies of masculinities have ignored female masculinity, an association which in fact had seldom appeared in this field before the publication of the book. She also explained that the versions that we have of masculinities nowadays actually respond to a dominant type that makes us regard male masculinity as the “real thing,” as they support and ratify some “heroic masculinities,” which depend “on the subordination of alternative masculinities” (1998: 1). Female masculinity, however, does not consist on imitating men’s performances of masculinity or maleness, so it offers glimpses of how masculinity is really constructed and re-imagined in several categories or examples which Halberstam analyses in this book, for example, the androgyne, the stone butch, and the drag king.

Sedgwick seemed to have already suggested in her previous research (1990: 9-10) that the traditional (and discriminatory) dichotomy men/masculinity and women/femininity was obsolete when she was asked to write a contribution for the anthology *Constructing Masculinity* (1995), and admitted to having been wary of the fact that it was a (first conference and later) book about masculinities that only took men into consideration, thus still linking maleness and masculinity. So, at the beginning, Sedgwick emphasizes the fact that masculinity is not “always about men” (1995: 12). She pointed at Halberstam in this volume as a scholar who was “exploring” some new issues concerning masculinity, mainly in lesbian contexts, as we can see in the categories analysed in *Female Masculinity*. In her article, Sedgwick referred to the fact that masculinity and femininity are not binary opposites, but they are actually part of an axis with more than two poles, opening thus the traditional social spectrum to more than two variables.

Connell suggests that “‘Masculinity’ does not exist except in contrast with ‘femininity’” (1995: 68), at least this is how the concept of masculinity has been understood in “modern European/American culture,” which seems to situate them on the same level, none subordinate to the other. They have therefore been regarded almost as antonyms inasmuch as it has been historically and culturally understood that if someone is not masculine, then this person is supposed to be feminine. However, Halberstam goes beyond this reductionist approach, stating in the Preface to her book that one of the reasons that actually led her to write it was the little attention paid to female masculinity, or rather, to the fact that some women regard themselves as more masculine than feminine, thus distancing themselves from the heteronormative impositions of society. Precisely because some women usually have been led to hide their masculinity, Halberstam expressed her hopes that the book “will eventually form just one part of a cultural onslaught on the privileged reservation of masculinity for men” (1998: Preface xii).

Middle-earth could be therefore regarded as an imaginary world in which the readers can find not only different patterns of masculinities performed by men, but also instances of female masculinity and even male femininity. The views of the scholars mentioned above on female masculinity offer an interesting lens to look at this concept in Tolkien’s work. Too often studies of female characters in the book have focused on the passivity that Éowyn, Arwen and Galadriel are supposedly endowed with as a result of Tolkien’s Victorian upbringing.

The scarcity of female characters is fairly obvious in *The Lord of the Rings*, but the critical attention they have received is abundant and varied (Hopkins 1995, Crowe 1995, Carretero González 1998 and 2006, Burns 2005, Benvenuto 2006, Michel 2006). Much has been said about the portrayal of women in *The Lord of the Rings* – at times the writer has been labelled a misogynist, and on the other hand, there have been voices who have tried to defend him on this matter. Partridge’s and Stimpson’s Freudian studies and allusions to Tolkien’s misogyny therefore contrast with Benvenuto’s suggestion of the writer’s psychological subtlety in his treatment of Éowyn (2006: 43) or Michel’s declaration that Éowyn in fact represents “the very contemporary problem of frustration” (2006: 68).

Some critics have also tried to justify the scarcity of women in Middle-earth and the literary treatment they receive by making reference to all his influences, understanding that his work is a product of his time and his literary tastes (Neville 2005, Donovan 2003: 107). Moreover, Hopkins explains that the traditional roles for women in medieval literature were “seriously limited,” so they were meant to be passive, wooed or rescued, in short, their fate was decided by a man (1995: 365). The character of Wealhtheow in *Beowulf* can be taken as an example, given that her role was regarded by nineteenth-century scholars as passive as she performed the patriarchally defined social roles of peace-weaver and cup-bearer. Nevertheless, this narrow view has been contradicted by recent studies on the role of women in an Anglo-Saxon society, as scholars like Christine Fell (1984) and Helen Damico (1985, 1990) have focused their analysis of Anglo-Saxon women in literature as endowed with something more than mere passivity. Damico, for example, compares Wealhtheow with a feminine figure that does not exactly belong to English medieval literature but is indeed popular within the Germanic mythological tradition, the valkyries (1985); Overing makes reference to Damico’s interpretation of the Queen in *Beowulf* as not exactly passive as she can be seen as a “powerful political force” (1995: 229).

In Middle-earth there are also two female characters that share some of these mythological roots: Galadrien and Éowyn, who have usually been compared with valkyries and shieldmaidens. The shieldmaiden was a virgin who fought as a warrior in Scandinavian mythology. They were the inspiration for the valkyries, who were female deities created in Norse mythology whose name means “choosers of the slain” because their main role was to take those heroic men that had died in battle to Odin. According to Leslie A. Donovan (2003: 110), they are female warriors with a noble social status, exceeding beauty and a relevant ancestry, some aspects that we can clearly associate with Éowyn. Donovan points out some of the traits Galadriel and Éowyn share with the valkyries, such as their “divine or semidivine origins or ancestry,” their “noble social status,” “superior wisdom, intellect, or acumen,” and “exceeding beauty” (ibid.). Apart from these, these two female characters also “exhibit an otherworldly radiance,” “serve ceremonial functions within the hall such as ritual cup-bearing at official occasions,” and “choose actions based on the operation of their own strong wills,” among other characteristics (110-111).

Tolkien's creation of Éowyn and Galadriel therefore reaches a complexity that not every critic agrees on, or that some readers cannot actually see, as they are the only female characters in the story that depart from the conventional passivity that experts on Old English literature in Tolkien's times saw Beowulf's female characters, for example. In this sense, Donovan puts forward that "Tolkien's women inherit valkyrie-like characteristics carrying medieval cultural connotations, which Tolkien adapts to the modern heroic, cultural and moral attitudes promoted in his texts" (2003: 112).

Galadriel and Éowyn can also be connected with the Norse goddess Freya, a war-goddess at times seen as a valkyrie, through the characters of Galadriel and Éowyn. Although Galadriel does not openly exert her superior power over Celeborn, her might seems to be greater. María José De la Torre's analysis of Anglo-Saxon women serves to outline some of the characteristics that the goddess Freya has, such as her association with gold and fertility, in order to compare her with the Queen of Lothlórien (2012: 6-8). Part of Galadriel's Germanic influences can be found in the similarities she shares with the Norse goddesses Freya – who will be studied in more detail in the analysis of Éowyn – and Frigg: she shares with Freya not only the link with gold but also her direct connection with nature and fertility (she is very much responsible for the reconstruction of the Shire thanks to the box with earth from her orchard that she gave Sam), and with Frigg she shares both the association with fertility and the supernatural power of clairvoyance, which in the case of Galadriel is carried out by reading other characters' hearts. In this sense, Galadriel's knowledge and wisdom seem to go beyond mortal boundaries, for she knows, for example, that Frodo has already worn the One Ring three times when he arrives in Lothlórien. This power makes other characters see her as dangerous or as some sort of sorceress, and even Éomer thinks that some people fall in her "nets" (*TT* III 2: 422), part of what Hopkins calls her bad reputation. The way that other characters perceive Galadriel and their suspicions about her "powers" resemble the traditional association of women with alternative ways to obtain knowledge with witchcraft.

Even if Galadriel was a shieldmaiden in *The Silmarillion* and this image has been pointed at in the films, it is Éowyn's female masculinity that stands out in the text, so this section will study the way she performs both her femininity and masculinity. The most recent reference books about Tolkien and masculinity follow a traditional

approach and focus exclusively on the male characters, thus leaving Éowyn out or referring to her only briefly. However, with the premise that masculinity is not exclusive to men, as aforementioned, Éowyn is part of the current study, as she performs a type of masculinity that escapes the traditional dichotomy men/masculinity.

7.1. Éowyn

7.1.1. Lady of Rohan

The Lady of Rohan is King Théoden's niece and step-daughter, fostered by her uncle together with her brother Éomer in Edoras when her parents died. Carretero González suggests that she conforms to a great extent to the ideal of feminine beauty frequent in medieval romances (2006: 109) when we see the first description that Tolkiens offers of her in *The Two Towers*:

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 Éowyn, Lady of Rohan, and thought her fair, fair and cold, like a morning of pale spring that is not yet come to womanhood. (*TT* III 6: 504)

Already in this first encounter Aragorn realised her unhappiness, as he would later tell Éomer in the Houses of Healing. In the same quotation, not only her looks are highlighted but also her strength and grave demeanour. Concerning her physical appearance, this is the first association of Éowyn and gold in the text, "her long hair was like a river of gold." In this use of epithets and associations of Éowyn and gold, there seems to be some reminiscence of the Germanic goddess Freyja. In the *Prose Edda* we are told that Freya is the most famous of all the Norse goddesses and she is Njord's daughter and Frey's sister; she is also associated with *seiðr*, which is seen as some kind of sorcery and which she combines with her knowledge and strength. In De la Torre's analysis of Freya, she explains that she is usually associated with her necklace, *Brisingamen*, she is the goddess of earth and fertility, among other things, and she is also linked with gold – even her tears turned gold as they touched the ground (2012: 5).

Like Éowyn, Wealhtheow, the “ring-adorned queen,” is linked to Freya in the insistence of her gold ornaments. Moreover, the passage in which the queen bestows “the necklace of the Brosings, jewel and precious vessel” on Beowulf (Tolkien 2014: 1380) is also a hint at this connection with Freya, for this is the necklace that the goddess had worn. Following Damico, this same type of epithets “dealing with gold ornamentation of helmet and bright byrnie” is found in traditional representations of valkyries, intending to highlight their physical beauty (1990: 181). Moreover, they are usually described as ring-adorned, gold-adorned (*ibid.*), as are warrior women of Anglo-Saxon texts such as Elene, Judith and Juliana. Thus, a direct link can be established linking Éowyn to the Germanic Valkyries through their echoes in Anglo-Saxon literature.

In the introduction to *New Readings on Women in Old English Literature*, Damico and Olsen explain how the studies of Anglo-Saxon texts have evolved in the last two centuries (1990: 2-3), offering a new perspective of the nineteenth century canonical studies which focused on male characters exclusively, and branding female characters as passive. This collection of essays offers a revisionist view of female characters in these texts, and in the case of Wealhtheow, Damico had already suggested in another article that she is far from the passive role she has usually been given, as her role of peace-weaver is politically essential. Damico also associates her with a valkyrie, as they were also drink-bearing females, who, at the same time, had a negative side, which, in the case of Wealhtheow, is translated into the instigation of “turbulent and destructive activity” in the figure of Beowulf (1985: 19), as she urges him to go to battle.

As we can see, Éowyn shares certain traits with *Beowulf*'s Wealhtheow, which is not the only parallelism that could be established between the Anglo-Saxon poem and Rohan. Some similarities have already been mentioned in chapter 3, in which Meduseld and Heorot were compared, for example, together with some instances from both plots. They are both societies in which women seem to have been given, apparently, passive roles. In fact, Overing describes *Beowulf* as “an overwhelmingly masculine poem” (1995: 220), and so is Tolkien's reconstruction of this Anglo-Saxon society in Rohan.

In the epic society Éowyn has grown up, she shares the role of cup-bearer, usually performed by noble women in Germanic heroic literature, with the Danish queen, as we

can see when she offers everyone some wine in *The Two Towers*: “The king now rose, and at once Éowyn came forward bearing wine: “*Ferthu Théoden hál!*” she said. ‘Receive now this cup and drink in happy hour. Health be with thee at thy going and coming!’” (*TT* III 6: 511). This she will repeat in *The Return of the King* when Théoden is laid to rest at last in Edoras, where Éomer becomes king, and before Aragorn goes to the Paths of the Dead. Jennifer Neville claims that “the traditional roles attributed to women in Old English poetry include those of hostess, peace-weaver, and ritual mourner” (2005: 104), and in this latter example we can see Éowyn as hostess, performing the rite of wassailing, as Wealhtheow does in Heorot:

Wealhtheow went forth, Hrothgar’s queen, mindful of courtesy; with gold adorned she greeted the men in the hall, and then the cup she offered, noble lady, first to the guardian of the East Danes’ realm, and wished him joy at the ale-quaffing and his lieges’ love. He, king victorious, in delight partook of feast and flowing bowl. (Tolkien 2014: 811)

We should, however, be careful in establishing an absolute equation Éowyn = Wealhtheow. Despite this first introduction of Éowyn as a hostess, Honegger believes that there are many differences between these two characters in the “wassailing,” as Wealhtheow is more powerful, older, “a matronly figure” (2005: 56). Similarly, Neville claims that “Éowyn is *not* a Wealhtheow; she is, if any character in *Beowulf*, Freawaru” (2005: 108), both are cup-bearers but they are not as interested in politics as Wealhtheow, who wants to preserve the crown for her offspring when she fears the future of her sons is threatened by Hrothgar’s desire to name Beowulf as his heir.

Notwithstanding, of all the roles that she is given at the beginning of the plot, there is one which she misses: a role as warrior. In fact, as she expresses to Aragorn, in some of the first lines Tolkien gives to her, her greatest fear is to live in a cage. She remains next to her uncle, who has been bewitched by his malevolent counsellor Wormtongue, placing his welfare before her own desire to take part in battle as the shieldmaiden she is. Concurrently, she has had to bear Wormtongue’s harassment, as is hinted by Gandalf when he asks him: “What was the promised price? When all the men were dead, you were to pick your share of the treasure, and take the woman you desire? Too long have you watched her under your eyelids and haunted her steps” (*TT* III 6: 509).

As Lady of Rohan, Éowyn feels trapped in Edoras, her movements limited and observed. As a shieldmaiden, she yearns for glory in battle, the same as the Rohirrim, but she is somehow “stuck” or “caged” in Rohan partly because of Théoden. As Benvenuto asserts in her thorough analysis of Éowyn, at the beginning she is hardly noticed, standing next to her uncle, and the reader is allowed to perceive her only when Théoden addresses her and asks her to leave the hall. Her evolution from this very first moment of “public” acknowledgment is undoubtedly one of the most thorough psychological introspections provided of a character in *The Lord of the Rings*. Benvenuto further points out that

in his treatment of her Tolkien shows a psychological subtlety for which he is very rarely credited, and which has hardly ever been discussed in full – even though, without any doubt, Éowyn (together with Galadriel) is the female character who has been most often the object of critical attention. (2006: 43)

In this moment in which Éowyn is leaving the hall, she “looked on the king with *cool pity* in her eyes” (my emphasis, *TT* III 6: 504), we can make a wrong interpretation of her feelings for her uncle and understand it as a “somehow patronizing attitude towards his weakness and dotage” (Benvenuto 2006: 45), for there is no doubt later on in the story of her love for him. Nevertheless, it is also clear that she had been very much in disagreement with the way Théoden had been recently ruling the land, after he had become a puppet in his counsellor Gríma’s hands. Therefore, although she grieves her uncle’s death in the battlefield, she also understands that he has managed to redeem himself for his latest actions.

It is not difficult to conclude that, when the reader first meets Éowyn, she is probably experiencing feelings of frustration and despair for her current situation (Benvenuto 2006: 45), for not being able to show what her war-like culture demands of the Rohirrim, which is prowess in war and the search of glory through death in the battlefield; she cannot accept the passive feminine role she has been ascribed as Lady of Rohan. Along these lines, Bevenuto believes that “she evidently has some trouble in relating to her feminine side” (46) – it seems that she will only feel whole by embracing her masculine side – her female masculinity – as a shieldmaiden in battle.

7.1.2. Lord of Rohan and cross-dresser

The type of epic culture we find in Rohan encourages physical strength and prowess, battle skills, and is based on the heroic codes of the *comitatus*. Éomer and Éowyn had grown up in this culture, with Éowyn “possibly in the shadow of [her] strong, warlike older brother” (Benvenuto 2006: 46). There are several circumstances that make Éowyn desire to go to battle. First, her own upbringing makes her long for what the Rohirrim are given the opportunity to achieve, which is glory in battle. She fears that by staying at home to protect her people she will lose her “shield-maiden spirit” and sees little glory in taking care of the old and the sick while the men fight. Second, she does not fear death, and actually seeks it for various reasons: her inability to accept the role that her King has given her before the battle of the Pelennor Fields, which means that she will not be able to take part in it, and the fear of the cage that her society seems to have prepared for her. Third, her relationship with Aragorn will finally trigger her participation in the War of the Ring. The following paragraphs will try to shed some light into these three arguments.

Fredrick and McBride recall that Tolkien underwent phases in which he was not sure about the shape that the character would take, considering either making it a man, a woman going to battle openly as such, instead of cross-dressed as Dernhelm, and even having her married to Aragorn (2007). All these changes in Tolkien’s drafts have left a trace in the complex evolution of the character.

Aragorn’s presence in Rohan is essential for Éowyn’s development. He represents in general for the Rohirric culture everything there is to admire in a person, while he also has what the Lady of Rohan longs for: freedom to go to battle. From the very beginning, she is impressed by this mighty warrior, as she sees in him a “tall heir of kings, wise with many winters, greycloaked, hiding a power that yet she felt” (*TT* III 6: 504). The text offers from this first moment only glimpses of their “potential” relationship, above all, in “The King of the Golden Hall,” where as Théoden has recovered from his numbness, she acts as cup-bearer and offers Aragorn the cup, at which point he realises her eyes are shining and her hand trembles as she touches his. Later, as she is asked to stay behind with her people, she admits that she will endure the wait for Théoden until he comes back from the fight, her eyes looking at Aragorn, though. When she learns that Aragorn is going to go through the Paths of the Dead,

which are believed to allow passage to no living man, everyone around her in Dunharrow could see that “she was in great torment of mind” (*RK V 2: 766*), for this surely meant death for Aragorn. As he is resolute to face his fate, she even asks him to allow her to accompany him, but he reminds her of her duty to remain with her people.

Her relationship with Aragorn has been given different interpretations, as the text seems to be quite open in this respect. *The Lord of the Rings*, concerning love affairs, is characterized by “hasty” relationships, as in the case of Éowyn’s love for Aragorn (and later Faramir), which makes it quite difficult to understand if what she felt for the king-in-disguise was love or pure infatuation. Critics like Benvenuto or Flieger believe that it is rather infatuation than love, and Flieger also believes that “Éowyn’s crush on [Aragorn] was a clear echo of Thomas Malory’s Maid of Astolat and her infatuation with Lancelot” (2005: 18). According to Burns,

it may be that Tolkien’s reluctance to place Éowyn in the public eye comes from the motivation he ascribes to her, but this motivation itself is indicative of how he perceives the female role. For all her stated desires to be a shieldmaiden and her wish to stay by her uncle’s side, Éowyn’s actions appear to be most strongly driven by her infatuation with Aragorn. (2005: 246)

It is perfectly plausible to see it as infatuation, as admiration and hero worship, although it is also evident that Aragorn worries about it, for he knows that between them there can be nothing but unrequited love. He believes that she loves what he represents, a valiant man who can go to battle at his free will, who can aspire to achieve glory, and therefore, he tells Éomer in “The Houses of Healing” that “she loves only a shadow and a thought: a hope of glory and great deeds, and lands far from the fields of Rohan” (*RK V 8: 849*).

Her desire to go to battle, although triggered by Aragorn’s reluctance to take her with him to the Paths of the Dead, and the love that he cannot return, finds its grounds in her upbringing. There is nothing in the text that indicates that she has been constrained in this hypermasculine society, until she is asked to stay in Edoras with the rest of her people. Although she longs for fighting, she obeys her King. Having lost his son Théodred, Théoden appoints Éomer as his heir, and he also needs to leave someone in charge to occupy his place while uncle and nephew go to war. As there is no volunteer for such a task because all the Men of Rohan want to go to war with their

king, Háma suggests Éowyn, as “she is fearless and high-hearted” (*TT* III 6: 512), and thus she becomes “lord to the Eorlingas.” He could have addressed her as *lady* of Rohan, a title which she already bears, but the king chooses to bestow a gendered masculine role upon her, should he or Éomer fail to return, while giving her a sword and a corslet, which is part of the ritual of naming her lord of Rohan in his absence.

It is clear that she has been trained to use a sword, as she later proves in the Battle of the Pelennor Fields. The Éowyn we see here is a woman who is asked to take up a traditionally masculine role. However, she is unable to see this distinction as her only concern is to prove her worth in the battlefield.

Although she is left behind, much to her despair, ““Shall I always be left behind when the Riders depart, to mind the house while they win renown, and find food and beds when they return?”” (*RK* V 2: 767), Éowyn remains in Edoras to protect her people, so her position is not exactly irrelevant. Nevertheless, she perceives this gesture as an attempt to make her marginal. We see her caged once more, unable to express her true feelings, her longing to fight – Benvenuto understands that it is because “she is too proud to give way to her feelings, but she also probably thinks that no one would understand her plight” (2006: 47). The image of the Rohirrim going to war, all surrounded by a loud and happy uproar, contrasts with an Éowyn that remains behind, “still, alone before the doors of the silent house” (*TT* III 6: 513).

The next scene in which Éowyn appears is in *The Return of the King*, back in Edoras, after the fight in Helm’s Deep. In accordance with her warrior spirit, the narrator tells the reader that “when she heard of the battle in Helm’s Deep and the great slaughter of their foes, and of the charge of Théoden and his knights, then her eyes shone” (*RK* V 2: 765). She cannot accept the role that has been given to her, and although Aragorn reminds her of her duty to remain with her people, she feels a shieldmaiden and wishes “to face peril and battle” (767). Wallace sees in her decision to leave her people behind a great dilemma, for she is not only disobeying direct orders from Théoden, she is also failing to fulfil her duty, thus leaving the people of Rohan unprotected, it is a conflict “between duty and desire” (2011: 33). Nevertheless, Éowyn is “weary of skulking in the hills” (*ibid.*), she is so desperate to go to the battlefield that she even kneels down and begs Aragorn to take her with him; Benvenuto understands

from this gesture that “her infatuation with Aragorn leads her to act in a very uncharacteristic way for someone so proud and dignified” (2006: 47). We have seen an Éowyn that is cold and stern at the beginning, almost distant, which contrasts with her tears as the Grey Company leaves, “and in one so stern and proud that seemed more grievous” (*RK V 2*: 768) – the fact that she even begs Aragorn to take her is the first glimpse of a change in the character’s behaviour, her clenched fists at her sides revealing her desperation. The text also tells us that as Aragorn left for the Paths of the Dead, “she turned, stumbling as one that is blind, and went back to her lodging” (*ibid.*) probably in an attempt to keep her reaction and feelings private, so that her people could not see that she is “weak.” Therefore, although Benvenuto understands this as a result of her infatuation, it could also be part of her frustration for her inability to do as she wills, for which she will have to find another way: she will cross-dress as a male warrior.

Until this moment in the plot, Éowyn’s femininity has found expression in two ways: her physical beauty and her role as cup-bearer in Rohan. Her desperation and resolution to fight are such that she does the only thing she can to go to battle: she hides her identity and takes that of a man. As Spenser already did with Britomart in *The Faerie Queene* or Shakespeare with Viola and Rosalind in *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*, respectively, Tolkien gives us a heroine that needs to disguise herself as a man, in this case in order to take part in the fight (Hopkins 1995: 365). The difference between Éowyn and some of the Bard’s heroines is that the latter do it for love and try not to fight, whereas Éowyn “actively wants to be engaged in battle, seeing herself as a shieldmaiden rather than a nurse and longing to prove herself worthy of her descent from Eorl” (*ibid.*). The parallelism among these characters is their general and initial intention to hide their identity to achieve whichever goals they have in mind, and because masculinity is what gives the characters freedom of action, they decide to “become” a man, if only temporarily.

Cross-dressing did not only happen in fiction but in real life too. Catherine Craft-Fairchild (1998) gives a thorough account of different types of cross-dressing: for romantic reasons sometimes, because women sought a type of freedom that only men were allowed to have, or because they wanted to have a relationship with a person of their same sex. Marjorie Garber, for instance, explains that “pirate costumes were popular wear for women in the transvestite masquerades that were a conspicuous feather

of English upper-class social life” (1992: 181); this would mean that literature reproduces the needs of some women to give free rein to their (often sexual) expression, to acquire some freedom to act as they wanted, without social constraints, at least as the charade lasted. Randolph Trumbach also believes that dressing like a man in the eighteenth century made life easier and safer for women who moved in a “hostile environment” (1994: 125). For Éowyn, being a woman is simply not enough. Frantzen’s words illustrate Éowyn’s need to cross-dress:

What motivates the use of cross-dressing in medieval narratives is, in part, the traditional assumption of the superiority of the male, dominated by reason, to the female, dominated by passion, and of the possibility of passing from the latter to the former position. (1999:73)

Therefore, when the Rohirrim depart for the Pelennor Fields, she is already dressed as a Rider, which is how Merry sees her for the first time, wearing a helm and “clad to the waist like a warrior and girded with a sword [...] with long braided hair gleaming in the twilight” (*RK V 3: 778*), as the next step of her transformation. Later on, when he sees her dressed as Dernhelm, he recalls this rider’s eyes, “for it came suddenly to him that it was the face of one without hope who goes in search of death” (*RK V 3: 785*). By adopting the name Dernhelm, she is also implying her identity is hidden, because this name means “‘helm of secrecy’, with which Éowyn concealed her hair and identity” (Hammond and Scull 2005: 563). However, she chooses to defy the male superiority that has left her back in Edoras, a decision which will eventually turn out to play an important part in the dénouement of the War of the Ring and consequently, the destruction of the One Ring.

As a shieldmaiden, Éowyn shows her skill and strength in the battlefield. Like her Scandinavian counterparts, she trespasses a territory which was eminently male (Andersen 2002: 292). In her article about valkyries, Damico explains how they are portrayed in the skaldic poems *Hákonarmál*, *Hrafnsmál*, and *Eiríksmál*. In this explanation we can find certain similarities with the Éowyn that goes into battle: “In *Hrafnsmál*, the valkyrie has shining eyes, is wise, fair-skinned, and golden-haired: these traits romanticize the physical and mental brilliance of the martial maidens” (1985: 181). In Damico’s comparison between valkyries and some of *Beowulf*’s characters, such as Wealhtheow, Modthrytho and Grendel’s Mother, Damico describes the latter as

ambisexual, “as are the *skjaldmeyjar* whom Saxo describes” (1985: 179), for when referring to the shieldmaiden Hetha and Wisna in *The Nine Books of Danish History of Saxo Grammaticus*, they are described as follows: “On these captains, who had the bodies of women, nature bestowed the souls of men” (Buel 1906: 472). This could also be applied to Éowyn, as in her soul, she is not the Lady of Rohan that Théoden wants her to be, she wants to be a true *lord* of Rohan, she wants to be like Éomer.

Éowyn believes she has the same right to go to battle as her brother, for she is “not a serving-woman,” she does not “fear either pain or death,” she is afraid of losing herself with the passage of time and of accepting having been left behind in a “golden” cage in Edoras while “all chance of doing great deeds is gone beyond recall or desire” (*RK V 2*: 767). She is, indeed, “desperate” (*RK V 8*: 849) to go to the battlefield. Éowyn’s attitude in it is nevertheless different from her brother’s in the sense that she does not seem to enjoy the pure pleasure the Rohirrim feel in the fight, in which they even sing. Similarly, Burns compares Éowyn and Denethor, for both of them share the fact that they act for personal reasons, rather than to obtain everyone’s welfare. Burns believes that Éowyn’s main reasons to go to war are “at least as much from suicidal despair over unrequited love as from a desire to play a warrior’s part and to stay by Théoden. Unlike Aragorn (who places Middle-earth’s needs above his love for Arwen), Éowyn’s act is not fully a sacrifice” (2005: 246).

Hélène Cixous’s views that Amazons try to dominate in order to not be dominated (1986: 116) can be well applied to Éowyn. Her will is not exactly to dominate others but to be allowed to do as she wants, to have freedom of choice and action, to have her will “not dominated” by the wills of others. Also, in Cixous’s words, we could also say that Éowyn does not repress her masculinity (81); what is more, in her case, as in the oldest Norse sources like the Eddic poems, women were allowed to “develop within both the male warlike sphere and the biological female one” (Andersen 2002: 293). Éowyn proves to be defiant and strong-willed – in a way we might see these virtues as masculine, as they have traditionally been regarded. In fact, according to Andersen,

the Edda values so-called ‘male’ qualities such as courage, the desire to distinguish oneself and win fame, fighting spirit, the ability to perform heroic feats, the ability to engage oneself in the fate of one’s family and brothers-in-arms and the ability and will to keep one’s promises. (2002: 300)

All these traditionally masculine attributes can be found in men or women. Éowyn is fearless and strong, and in the battlefield she proves, according to Neville, that although we tend to identify power as being an exclusive field of men, male power is not the only way to achieve victory (2005: 109). In the end, it is actually Éowyn, “maiden of the Rohirrim, child of kings, slender but as a steel-blade, fair yet terrible” (*RK V 6: 823*), together with the aid of a hobbit, who beats the Lord of the Nazgûl, who could not be killed by any man: “Then tottering, struggling up, with her last strength she drove her sword between crown and mantle, as the great shoulders bowed before her” (*RK V 6: 824*). Using Neville’s words, Éowyn “soon demonstrates that she can do much more, she shares the essential identity of the traditional marginal female” (2005: 108) who is eventually more important than she was believed to be at the beginning. The Witch King somehow pays for expecting to find only men [+ human, + male] in the battlefield. Thus, he is overconfident believing that none in the Pelennor Fields can actually hurt or kill him. However, Éowyn’s words prove how wrong he is: ““But no living man am I! You look upon a woman. Éowyn I am, Éomund’s daughter. You stand between me and my lord and kin”” (*RK V 6: 822*).

It is precisely here when Éowyn becomes somewhat androgynous, for “Éowyn it was, and Dernhelm also” (*RK V 6: 823*). Although Wallace believes that she never renounces her femininity in order to fight, she does somehow conceal it and only embraces both her femininity and masculinity in the battlefield, when she removes her helmet. In fact, she puts forward the fact that “not only is her womanhood no barrier to fighting, but it is the very reason why she is able to defeat the Witch-king” (2011: 34). It is by assimilating both her masculine and feminine sides that she reaches her full potential and seems to become some kind of improved valkyrie. Furthermore, she is seen as a noble and true representative of the Rohirrim with her courage and will; she is thus closer to the hypermasculinity which is characteristic of her culture and which sees violence as manly, according to the definition given by Mosher and Sirkin (1984: 151).

Despite having played an important role in the destruction of the Ring, Éowyn’s deed is not praised at the end of the War of the Ring. Should readers not continue to the Appendices, they would not even know that certain honour is indeed mentioned there, even if it is, as Burns concedes, “diminished and deferred” (2005: 148). Once the Rohirrim know that Dernhelm is actually Éowyn, instead of praising what she has just

done, they lament the death of the woman, forgetting the deed of the man. In a first moment of shock and lack of understanding, her people can only see the result of her “disobedience,” which is that she is (apparently) dead; her brother, deeply hurt, felt at the same time how “a cold fury rose in him” as he thought her dead (*RK V 6: 826*). Tolkien’s treatment of Éowyn therefore seems quite unfair, as she does not get the praise that she deserves, for after all, she managed to kill an a priori invincible enemy.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that this character, together with Frodo, as chapter 5 shows, undergo the most important evolution in the plot, the end that Tolkien prepared for them was rather dissimilar, as their process is very much the opposite. Whereas Frodo’s nonchalant life in the Shire becomes death in life once he is back from Mount Doom, to such an extent that he is forced to leave it and go to the Grey Havens, Éowyn actually experiences death in life before the War of the Ring, and her “presumed” death in the Pelennor Fields is the starting point of her evolution and the possibility of a new life as healer.

7.1.3. Life-preserver of Gondor

In her Jungian analysis of the characters of Wagner’s Ring cycle, Bolen points out that

The Valkyrie tells us something about the struggle and suffering of the soul, and of how we evolve psychologically through experiences that change us. Like all of the characters in the *Ring*, we cannot control events or make people love us as we want to be loved. What we do when ‘this is how it is’ is the challenge that life presents to us: whether we grow on a soul level through our choices or are diminished by what we do. ‘Who’ we become as a result of our response to life is everyone’s inner story. (1992: 84-85)

This could be very well applied to the character of Éowyn and the evolution it experiences in *The Lord of the Rings*. The Éowyn we first see in Edoras is suffering in her golden cage, struggling against her gendered social role, and longing for a moment that never arrives. Not until she fights in the Pelennor Fields does her life begin to change, for after being wounded, she starts a process of healing in Gondor. Indeed, after the battle, “she undergoes a metaphorical death,” leaving behind her other self, who died in battle (Wallace 2011: 37).

Right until her “death,” Éowyn had been the great unknown for characters that surrounded her, even for her brother Éomer, as Gandalf would remind him of her true reality,

you had horses, and deeds of arms, and the free fields; but she, born in the body of a maid, had a spirit and courage at least the match of yours. Yet she was doomed to wait upon an old man, whom she loved as a father, and watch him falling into a mean dishonoured dotage; and her part seemed to her more ignoble than that of the staff he leaned on. (*RK V 8: 849*)

When she goes to the Houses of Healing, a type of hospital in Gondor where the healers tend those who are injured or sick, either physically or in spirit, it is already clear that her wounds transcend the physical. Aragorn indeed heals the wounds caused by the Witch King, but those of her spirit go beyond a limit that Aragorn’s abilities cannot reach, and which only Éowyn herself will be able to recover from. When they arrive in Gondor, “passivity follows immediately after activity,” a fact which, in the case of Éowyn, “helps reestablish her femininity, a device common in Victorian literature, where the heroine, if she acts with physical courage and on her own, typically collapses after the crisis is past” (Burns 2005: 246).

In the Houses of Healing she meets Faramir, who is well aware from the beginning that Éowyn is a Rider of Rohan, and that she was “one whom no Rider of the Mark would outmatch in battle” (*RK VI 5: 938*). He only needed to look at her to see this. During their process of healing, Éowyn is still focused on the battle and on Aragorn, who has gone to the Black Gate to fight against Sauron and divert his Eye and attention from Mordor in an attempt to give Frodo a chance to cast the One Ring in Mount Doom. Therefore, she does not realise that Faramir, who is also recovering from emotional and physical wounds, seems to have fallen in love with her. Although at first she does not see this, as she spends more time with him, she gradually begins to change. It is Faramir who seems to make her open her eyes to her own feelings, by sharing with her some insight into what he thinks she felt for Aragorn,

And as a great captain may to a young soldier he seemed to you admirable. For so he is, a lord among men, the greatest that now is. But when he gave you only understanding and pity, then you desired to have nothing, unless a brave death in battle. (*RK VI 5: 943*)

As aforementioned, it is difficult to discern whether what Éowyn felt for Aragorn was admiration, infatuation, love, or a mixture of the three – Faramir hints at the idea that Éowyn looked up to Aragorn and saw in him a way to leave her golden cage in Edoras. She also admits to Faramir that she wanted indeed to be loved by Aragorn but not a man’s pity, which seems to be what she thinks Faramir feels for her. However, his words reassure her that what he feels is love, and with this confession, it seems that Éowyn finally recovers completely. Faramir and Éowyn’s love story, which is decided in one chapter, seems a little “hasty”, thus somehow implausible, for as Burns states,

we are given neither time enough nor information enough to make her conversion and new attachment seem fully believable. There is something too convenient and too hurried about it all, as though Tolkien at this point merely wishes to get Éowyn off the stage and properly settled in an acceptable but –alas– far less interesting role. (2005: 148)

However, about the criticism received concerning the speed of this relationship, Tolkien acknowledged in a letter than in “periods of great stress, and especially under the expectations of imminent death,” it was not difficult to see how “feelings and decisions ripen very quickly” (Carpenter 1995: 324). In this matter, his own personal experience seems to be enough to support his words, although we should not forget that he is conceding, at the same time, the same eucatastrophic ending he gives other characters like Aragorn and Arwen or Sam and Rosie. This also seems to be the reflection of traditional happy endings in which the couple marries, thus promising or guaranteeing the continuation of the life cycle.

When Faramir declares his love, Éowyn realises that Aragorn and her previous experience as a warrior, are in the past: “I will be a shieldmaiden no longer, nor view 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” (*RK VI 5*: 943). Éowyn therefore decides to leave behind the old heroic code of Rohan in order to adopt Faramir’s code, based on the belief that war might be the only means to achieve peace, but this does not make it less unpleasant (Carretero González 2006: 111). For the reader, this might look like a sudden change in her attitude, but one cannot forget that when she arrived in the Houses of Healing, she was hurt not just physically, but she also had a shadow in her heart. It is only when she realises that her future does not lie in fighting but in embracing life, that she is fully healed, hence her willingness to leave her death-seeking past as a warrior

behind and evolve into a healer and life-preserver. In her comparison of Éowyn and shieldmaidens, Wallace also observes their similarities, because the Old Norse women who were conquered in battle also underwent a dying of the self, to be reborn as women who expressed no desire to fight (whether they still felt the desire and suppressed it is a matter of conjecture) (2011: 37).

After seeing Éowyn take part in the battle of the Pelennor Fields, it is difficult to understand her choice to become a healer instead of a warrior, which was her first wish. She comes from an ancient society that values glory achieved in battle as the ultimate aspiration of a warrior, so when she is healing from the Nazgûl's wound, she would still choose death in battle (*RK VI 5: 937*) and wants to go back to the battlefield: “I wish to ride to war like my brother Éomer, or better like Théoden the king, for he died and has both honour and peace” (*RK VI 5: 939*). Thus, the interpretations of how Tolkien resolves Éowyn's fate or his reasons to do so are quite varied, her sudden change of attitude not always understood. Croft, for example, sees in this an

unsatisfactory conversion because it is only described in emotional terms and no rational reason is given for her change”, and although Faramir “does not ask her to give up being a shieldmaiden [...] her change of heart is not adequately explained, particularly for female readers who see a role model in Éowyn. (2004: 133)

In the Introduction to *Perilous Realms*, Burns states that Tolkien sometimes has double attitudes, for example, explaining that he is both an egalitarian and an elitist, because although he believes deeply in fellowships, his fellowship is nonetheless hierarchical (2005: 3). A similar double attitude could be applied to Éowyn. In Tolkien's treatment of this character, Burns believes that

[i]t is not a masculinizing or a liberating of the female Tolkien advocates (or achieves) but a celebration of qualities traditionally ascribed to women and found in the best of his characters, male and female alike. Nonetheless it is still true that Tolkien is more restrained in his presentation of female characters than he is with his males, and this makes it easy to understand why readers are likely to feel that Tolkien (by today's standards, at least), fails to do justice to the female sex and relies too readily on easy convention and the usual stereotypes. (2005:128-129)

Melanie Rost interprets Éowyn's and Faramir's marriage as a cure for Éowyn's illness, which is to try to be a man (2011: 1296). Concerning the idea of marriage, Showalter refers to the “odd women” in her book *Sexual Anarchy*, which makes

reference to those women who, at the end of the 19th century, were not married, a fact which seemed to pose a problem for the conservative society of the time. It was almost unthinkable that a woman remained unmarried, since this meant that they had to find, for example, an occupation, and this also gave them a certain independence (1992: 19-20). Feminists saw this as a perfect chance to start fighting in order to get higher education, employment, etc., and single women were therefore regarded as a threat. Had Tolkien “left” Éowyn unmarried, he would have run the risk of leaving her as one of these “odd women.” Although the “happy ending” of the story follows the conventions of comedy with this marriage, it could also be regarded as a reflection of Tolkien’s own traditional beliefs.

Notwithstanding, it would be very unfair for Éowyn to assert that she only marries Faramir to follow the writer’s traditional views. The fact that she embraces Faramir’s heroic code is a sign of her evolution. Therefore, although it may seem that her disobedience, her gender transgression, her cross-dressing, or her shieldmaiden spirit, are metaphorically “admonished” in the plot for, after all, she undergoes a metaphorical death, she is actually given the possibility of having a happier and wholesome future in which life is above battle. She embraces this new life willingly as she admits she would like to stay in Gondor, “for this House has become to me of all dwellings the most blessed” (*RK VI 5*: 944). Concerning Éowyn’s decision, Benvenuto suggests that “it also means embracing some definitely positive values generally considered as feminine, namely the refusal of violence, aggression and power for its own sake in favour of creativity and peace-making” (2006: 51). These are, in short, Faramir’s values, his rejection of militarism and his belief that war should only be resorted to if necessary, which may lead us to regard the new Steward of Gondor as an instance of male femininity in Middle-earth, as he embraces these values traditionally regarded as feminine. In Hammond and Scull’s words,

Her change of heart most especially reflects Tolkien’s belief that conflict and battle should not be exalted, but embraced only at need. Éowyn turns from the more martial ethos of the Rohirrim to the higher ideals described by Faramir [...], in which craft and skill are more valued than prowess at war. (2005: 632)

According to María José De la Torre, some goddesses in Germanic societies were sometimes associated with fertility, motherhood, and the magical powers of healing and

clairvoyance, with the implications they have of wisdom and strength (2012: 4-8). Éowyn becomes an actualization of Freya in the end, as she chooses to embrace the preservation of life, like Aragorn and Faramir. When she decides to become a healer and embrace peace, Croft equates her new way of thinking with Faramir's, for although she will embrace life, she is also aware that "someone must be prepared to defend those who cannot fight", and as a healer, "it is joy and healing, not pain and bitter loss, which turn her away from fighting" (2004: 133).

Although "Éowyn renounces the role of warrior [...] to the disappointment of many readers" (Neville 2005: 109), she finds a social role that she can perform and which is part of her evolution. Despite the initial similarities of her roles in Rohan and Gondor, she escapes the socially and culturally-defined gender role she was ascribed in Rohan adopting a role in accordance with the new period of Middle-earth that is about to start. It is an aspect that is not at all lessened, as it is the way of thinking that other relevant characters like Aragorn, Faramir and Gandalf represent, that of life preservers, in which both her feminine and masculine qualities are combined in Tolkien's attempt to offer the reader a new type of hero, as happened in the case of the Steward of Gondor – both Éowyn and Faramir refuse "values of destruction to embrace those of creation" (Benvenuto 2006: 52).

It is inevitable not to establish some sort of comparison between Éowyn and Galadriel. Both once shieldmaidens, they end up embracing a similar role as life preservers, after having savoured the taste of war as warriors. Whereas some have decided to see in this Tolkien's attempt to give women a secondary or subservient role, a way to take them back to a role that tradition would see more "suitable" for them, a different interpretation is equally plausible. The fact that they choose to defend life above anything else is but Tolkien's preference of peace over war. In the case of Éowyn, instead of seeing her as inferior, Tolkien prepares for her a eucatastrophe that is available for all those characters that choose life over death, regardless of their gender or race.

7.2. Female masculinity in Jackson's films

7.2.1. Éowyn

The character of Éowyn has also experienced some interesting changes in her translation to the screen. In the book she is seen through Aragorn's eyes for the first time, and described as "cold" and as having "cool pity" in her eyes (*TT* III 6: 504). In the film, however, she appears before Aragorn arrives in Meduseld, presented as a loving niece, holding Théoden's hands, tearfully informing him of his son's death. Her disappointment and despair at her uncle's non-existent reaction is evident in her face. In vain does she ask him "Will you not go to him? Will you do nothing?" (*Towers*, Scene 20).

Both in the film and the book, she fulfils several roles in Rohan, as cupbearer, and as a shieldmaiden in the battlefield, but there is a more human side to Éowyn that is introduced in the films, distancing her from the "cold" lady that Aragorn first sees in the book. Some examples may serve to illustrate this: she sings in the burial of her cousin Théodred, she tends to the children that arrive in Rohan, she laughs with Gimli's stories, and she even cooks a stew.

Jackson, Boyens and Walsh decided that they wanted to give some filmic relevance to Éowyn's unrequited love for Aragorn, and therefore, the audience can see more instances of them together in the film, above all in the extended edition, than in the book, which manages to engage the audience in a possible "triangle" between these two characters and Arwen. From the very beginning, it is not difficult to see the qualities in Aragorn that make Éowyn feel attracted to him, such as his leadership skills and his warrior prowess.

This scene takes place before they reach Helm's Deep, in a moment in which the screenwriters decided to show a light-hearted Éowyn, or her 'lighter' side according to Robinson (2011: 517), as she talks to Gimli about female Dwarves. For a lady that is often referred to as cold in the book, Jackson uses Éowyn as comic relief in the scene "One of the Dúnedain," as she cooks some stew that turns out to be inedible. The scene is the perfect excuse to offer some extra information about Aragorn, i.e. that he is a Dúnadan (*Towers* Scene 32); concurrently, the director seems to downplay her character, probably in an attempt to bring Éowyn closer to a contemporary audience.

In some moments they share together on screen, there are some scenes in which either Éowyn is looking at Aragorn or vice versa, thus implying that there might be some attraction between them. As explained before, her feelings are revealed when she believes Aragorn to be dead after a wargs attack, her relief and joy clear on her face as she sees him arrive safe and sound in Helm's Deep. As she looks at him, Legolas gives Aragorn the Evenstar, the symbol of his and Arwen's love, maybe also used by Jackson to suggest that Aragorn "recovered" Arwen's love. In spite of Éowyn's feelings for him and the glances they have exchanged so far, the director is also stressing that Arwen and Aragorn's love is strong, and is careful to show in this scene a reaffirmation of "Aragorn's connection and commitment to Arwen" (Thompson 2011: 31), for there is actually no real possibility of love between the Lady of Rohan and the Dúnadan.

The film presents Éowyn as "a very energetic, restless woman always on the move and, as in Tolkien's text, eager to achieve honor in battle" (Carretero González 2015: 44). Although Éowyn does appear fulfilling her role as a cupbearer in both the novel and the film, Jackson does not forget her role as a shieldmaiden – she therefore appears happy wielding a sword and practising with swift moves as Aragorn approaches her, a scene in which she comments on her greatest fear: to live in a cage, like Tolkien's Éowyn, and admits that she fears neither death nor pain. When Théoden urges her to take her people to Helm's Deep as they are attacked by wargs, she would rather stay and fight but is compelled to do what her king asks of her.

Even if she does not immediately see it and is finally asked to hide in the caves of Helm's Deep instead of fighting, she is given some prominence as Lady of Rohan as she is asked to lead her people there. Her key role as cup-bearer, before and after this scene, which is not developed in the film in the same way as in the book, possibly "in order to not to risk having a modern audience wrongly interpret a ceremony that in Germanic societies signalled the central position of women in keeping the peace" (Carretero González 2015: 45), is somehow compensated by another scene that does give her some relevance. In the scene "Éowyn's Dream," she is given the power of Anglo-Saxon women, translated into the film with her prophetic powers and the dream she has in *The Return of the King* (47), which in the book is partly some words which she tells Faramir in the Houses of Healing and Faramir's dream of "the great dark wave

climbing over the green lands and above the hills” (*RK VI 5: 941*), a recurrent dream of Tolkien’s.

Jackson gets rid of the opportunity for Théoden to assign her a new role as “lord of Rohan” because she is never asked in the book to remain in Edoras and is appointed to go with the rest of women and children to Helm’s Deep, so she always remains Lady Éowyn in the films. Once again in Helm’s Deep she is assigned a “passive” role as she is asked to go to the caves with her people: “To mind the children, to find food and bedding when the men return. What renown is there in that?” (*Towers Scene 45*). In vain does Aragorn tell her that “a time may come for valour without renown” (*Towers Scene 45*); for Éowyn, this is not enough. It is then that she tries to find in Aragorn, the warrior she admires the most, a true comrade that might intercede in her favour and let her stay to fight. However, she does not find in him the answer she expected, as he tells her that the charge she has been given is an honourable one. She also tells him that the others fight beside him because they love him, quite significant coming from her, who loves him too, although in a different way from Aragorn’s followers.

In the film, Théoden never appoints Éomer officially as his heir, and neither does he ask Éowyn to be the “lord to the Eorlingas” in his absence, although he does tell her to take up his seat in the Golden Hall as the people of Rohan will follow her rule in his stead (*Return Scene 32*). Even though the audience is well aware that Éomer is going to war as well, these words can be quite confusing, as it gives the idea that she is left as heiress of Rohan. As in the book, she is always left behind, never the warrior, always the lady in waiting.

She is thus doubly disappointed in both the book and the films, first for not been allowed to go to battle, and secondly for Aragorn’s rejection. In a conversation before Aragorn goes into the Paths of the Dead, she exchanges some words with him:

Éowyn: Why are you doing this? The war lies to the East. You cannot leave on the eve of battle.

Éowyn: You cannot abandon the men.

Aragorn: Éowyn...

Éowyn: We need you here.

Aragorn: Why have you come?

Éowyn: Do you not know?

Aragorn: It is but a shadow and a thought that you love. I cannot give you what you seek.

In the book, Aragorn does not utter these words to Éowyn but to Éomer as Éowyn lies hurt in the Houses of Healing; he therefore only rejects her openly in the film, which seems to be even more poignant for Jackson's Éowyn. With these two disappointments in mind, she decides to go to battle, but although she does not name herself as Dernhelm, which she does in the book, we can still see her clad all in a warrior's outfit, as if trying to hide her identity. In the book when she picks up Merry, the hobbit believes that he has seen the warrior's eyes before and hints at the fact that it is a character that is familiar to the readers. However, this would have been almost impossible to make believable in the film, for in the book it is through Merry's eyes that the reader understands that the warrior might be known. Of course, it would be more difficult to hide her identity visually in a film, as it is easier in a book where the reader does not have any visual hint. Although Dernhelm is not mentioned at all, we still see how she disguises herself as a warrior in order to hide her identity, although Merry is always well aware of who he is riding with and even refers to her as "my lady."

One of the elements that should be highlighted in this scene, "The Ride of the Rohirrim," in *The Return of the King* is that despite her longing to go to battle, as she achieves what she willed, she does look scared before the battle, whereas fear was never stated for Éowyn in the book unless it was to refer to a cage. This is another instance in which Jackson shows a humanized character – the film's Éowyn had probably idealized the concept of the war and a situation like this, and now that she is about to charge against the orcs, she must really face the truth of battle and its horror.



As a round female figure, as Carretero González sees her (2015: 48), Jackson emphasizes in the films her femininity rather than her masculinity. Her gender

transgression is thus more difficult to be seen in the film where Merry does recognize her. In this sense, Jackson, Boyens and Walsh heighten the image of a rebel Éowyn because they cannot really hide who she really is, so they exploit her rebellious side.

In the Pelennor Fields she is given a more active role in the film than in the book, for her role as warrior is expanded as she takes part in the killing of an oliphant. Moreover, the King sees her fight and acknowledges her bravery, despite not knowing initially who she really is. It is when Théoden is lying on the ground, badly hurt, that Éowyn goes in between the Witch King of Angmar and her uncle. She cuts the Lord of the Nazgûl's winged beast's head and the Ringwraith hurts her arm with a mace. This scene is given to us in the book from Merry's viewpoint, while in the film it is Éowyn's. This moment in the film is very similar to Tolkien's novel, but the change in Éowyn's words and the fact that Théoden is aware of her presence are quite significant. First of all, her powerful address to the Nazgûl in the book has been replaced for the phrase "I am no man!" in the film. However, the fact that the Witch King confronts her means that she has indeed succeeded in concealing her identity, for he believed her to be a man and, therefore, unable to kill him. Høgset uses this scene to identify Éowyn as "the modern action heroine, finishing off her enemy with a quick thrust of her sword and a catch phrase," and although he admits that the change in all these elements might "represent the modern film genre and are therefore equivalent to the verbal signifiers of the novel," the spirit of the original text has changed to the worse (2004: 176). This is, of course, a matter of subjectivity, for it cannot be argued that visual rendering of Éowyn removing her helmet is quite striking, and the effect of this scene in the novel and the film, even if one is more developed than the other, is very similar. After all, in the end, Éowyn succeeds in achieving glory in the battlefield and killing a very powerful foe.

Nevertheless, the most important fact in this scene is that Théoden sees Éowyn and he knows that she has killed the Ringwraith. In Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, she is never given enough recognition for what she did in the Pelennor Fields. Even despite having killed the Witch King, her achievement is not praised in the novel. To Jackson's credit, the film at least offers her Théoden's recognition for her actions.

There is one aspect of this character that is not developed in the film, and it is her resolution to start a new life. In the novel, she decides to leave her past as shieldmaiden

and embrace a new future as a healer. In the same chapter, “The Steward and the King,” Faramir and Éowyn decide to get married. The fact that she embraces a future in which she leaves her shieldmaidenhood is, according to Croft, “not adequately explained” in the novel (2004: 133), as she believes that Tolkien gives no rational reason for her conversion; in the film this is not even mentioned. She is not given the praise she really deserves in the film either, and nothing is mentioned about her future, so Burn’s words concerning her literary counterpart may well be applied to Jackson’s Éowyn, as she sees her as “a shadowy, uncertain figure, removed not just from the battlefield but from the world as well” (2005: 148). The viewers are therefore not explained Éowyn’s fate, other than what concerns her love for Faramir, when it would have been quite significant to see how this character who longed for fighting decided to embrace a life far from the battlefield, especially after the scene that has been analysed above concerning her fear before the fight starts and her understanding of the horrors of a war. Had Jackson and his crew decided to show that Éowyn clearly leaves behind the hypermasculinity characteristic of Rohan that finds danger as exciting, in order to fight – albeit metaphorically – for life, the viewers would have been able to see the complete evolution of this character.

7.2.2. Arwen

Although Tolkien’s Arwen is not studied in this dissertation, Jackson’s reconstruction, or rather creation, of this character, is interesting to look at given that the scriptwriters endowed her with some traditionally masculine traits in their transformation of a background character into a central one. The use of Arwen in the film responds to several reasons: first, to the writers’ desire to have a love story as one of the central topics of the films, and second, to avoid the constant introduction of new characters that would only appear for a few minutes on screen, hence the change of Glorfindel for Arwen in order to give her more prominence.

Shippey states that the introduction of Arwen as “the strong active female character now preferred” is a reproduction of the stereotype of the “warrior princess,” and, although he believes that there is not much gained in this, “this is the kind of thing a modern audience expects, or may be thought to expect” (2007: 369). In fact, if her character had been as Jackson, Boyens and Walsh initially designed it, she would have

appeared fighting in Helm's Deep, which was the scriptwriters' initial intention in order to enhance her warrior side. Although the actress that plays Arwen, Liv Tyler, had already learnt how to use a sword and actually shot some of these scenes fighting with it, the writers read some negative comments from fans on online forums and decided not to follow this path in the development of this character (*Towers*, "From Book to Script").

After this, Jackson and his crew seem to have decided to focus on other tasks that were deemed more suitable for Arwen, for, as the director explains, she represents love, and that is why her role is so important in the film. In fact, the love scene between Arwen and Aragorn in Rivendell makes their relationship more believable to the spectator and is also aimed at attracting a wider audience. West's view is that Jackson, Boyens and Walsh chose to change the character of Arwen and give the love story of Aragorn and Arwen more weight "in order to keep the audience mindful of the relationship throughout all three movies released years apart" (2011: 231). It is true that the story was very important in the plotline and for Tolkien, but what the film does is to keep it "alive" until the end; in order to do so, they "adapt" Arwen's character (*ibid.*).

In this scene in Rivendell, Arwen reminds Aragorn of her intention to choose a mortal life, for she would rather live a lifetime with him than "face all the Ages of this world alone" (*Fellowship* Scene 26). Jude Fisher believes that Arwen is the one that sacrifices the most because, although Elves leave behind their life in Middle-earth to go to the Undying Lands, Arwen goes beyond and dies a mortal death (*Fellowship*, "From Book to Script").

In one of the director's commentaries, Walsh explains that they wanted to make Arwen "actively involved in the story and in the plot" (*Towers* Scene 37, writers' and director's commentary). In Jackson's reconstruction of Arwen, we first only hear her voice and see her sword caressing Aragorn's throat with its point, so the viewers may perceive that "she might be, like Strider, a Ranger, a guardian patrolling wild places to protect civilized areas from Orcs and other dangers" (West 2011: 233).

The first image that Jackson offers of this character is emanating the same aura of light that characterizes the Elves, so when Frodo sees her for the first time, she is seen

as some kind of holy creature or angel that has come to help Frodo in a moment of extreme need.



The director and his crew therefore offer both sides of Arwen, as a warrior and as a healer, an assimilation of masculine and feminine attributes. The Lady of Rivendell is therefore introduced as having roles similar to the Lady of Rohan, they are both warriors and whereas one is already a healer, Éowyn will become one as she embraces a new life with Faramir. On the page, Frodo is initially reluctant to leave his friends behind to ride to Rivendell but he still has the strength to ride on Glorfindel's horse to escape from the Ringwraiths, challenging them from the other side of the Bruinen. In the film, Frodo is too far gone to be able to keep himself on the horse, so it is Arwen who volunteers to take him, despite Aragorn's warning that the road ahead is perilous. After all, she states that she is a better rider than Aragorn, so she takes Frodo with her.

The character is therefore given physical and inner strength, and she confronts the Ringwraiths in the Ford of Bruinen: "If you want him, come and claim him!" (*Fellowship* Scene 21). In fact, it also seems to be her who summons the River, when in the book it is Elrond who does it. This screenshot is a very powerful image of Arwen as she is shown as strong-willed and determined to protect Frodo.



In the first film she showed her physical strength and power, in the second, her decision to fight for her love for Aragorn is what stands out, but, as Beatty explains, “although she has pledged herself to Aragorn and has been a source of strength to him as he develops his masculinity, her father, Elrond, insists she leave Rivendell for the Undying Lands” (2006: 240). Even though Jackson finally changed their original adaptation of this character and does not appear as an action-oriented Elf again after the Ford of Bruinen, Arwen’s inner strength and courage not reduced in the subsequent films, so in *The Two Towers* she is determined to stay in Middle-earth despite her father’s will. In an interview to Liv Tyler, she observes that it is not necessary to put a sword in Arwen’s hand to show how strong she is, and goes on to define her as an “incredibly powerful and fearless woman” (*Fellowship*, “From Book to Script”).

Elrond, well aware of Lúthien’s fate, tries to make his daughter see that if she stays in Middle-earth she will only find death, and Aragorn will die before her. However, this is a different image from Tolkien’s Elrond, who, according to West,

is a very caring father, not at all cruel, and by insisting that Arwen ‘shall not be the bride of any Man less than the King of both Gondor and Arnor’ he is only giving his foster son incentive to achieve what it is his hereditary duty to attempt anyway, while also making the best provision he can for his daughter if she does choose to relinquish her Elvish immortality. Elrond loves them both. (2011: 230)

Jackson’s Elrond is thus shown as a very “human father” who tries anything to convince his daughter to go to the Undying Lands, from not telling her that there is also life in her future (she will become a mother) (*Return* Scene 9), to blackmailing her emotionally by asking her “Do I not also have your love?” (*Towers* Scene 38). Arwen’s will is strong, but after her father’s words of a future full of death, without any hope,

and Aragorn's departure from Rivendell asking her to take a ship to Valinor, she starts her journey to the Grey Havens. It is then that Jackson gives her a key role because when she foresees her future and sees a child in it, she goes back to Rivendell to confront her father and asks him to re-forged Narsil, which will prove essential in Aragorn's fate.

Beatty understands the character of Aragorn as inferior to Arwen because when she urges him to accept his fate, she is also exposing his weakness. Moreover, she believes that "women, then, both support and undermine masculinity with their independence and superior skills" in Jackson's films (2006: 239). In this sense, "it is significant that when the symbol of their betrothal, a necklace, is snatched by an orc in battle, Aragorn falls into a fast-flowing river. His luck falters when alienated from Arwen's love, but returns when she appears as if in his unconscious" (ibid.). However, it should be understood that what moves Arwen to convince Aragorn to accept his fate is her hope: her hope in his warrior abilities, her hope in him as a just king-to-be, and her hope in their love. Although it may appear that she does undermine his masculinity, for she is indeed independent and has better riding skills than him, Jackson is introducing a difference in Aragorn's masculinity by creating him as a character who has an inner struggle, for he does not want to become like Isildur and fail everyone in Middle-earth.

Although presented at first as an independent and strong-willed character, this image contrasts with the coy Arwen that appears at Aragorn's coronation. Even though Jackson created at the beginning an Arwen that is somewhat rebellious against her father's wishes, Beatty suggests that "the feisty character Arwen is domesticated at the close of the film adaptation, interpellated as mother by the vision of her future progeny" (2006: 250). Beatty also believes that Jackson seems to try to "update" her character if compared with her counterpart in the book. Moreover, he endows a traditionally feminine archetype – the lady in waiting – with masculine traits, but at the end of *The Return of the King* he seems to have heightened her femininity by reverting her to the traditional roles of wife and mother, her "warrior princess" past forgotten.

Arwen's fate can have a double interpretation: on the one hand, Jackson is just bringing to the main narrative what Tolkien left for the Appendices; on the other, he is reproducing a traditional Hollywood happy ending onscreen, kissing included.

Furthermore, it could also be said that if Aragorn has embraced his new life, a life where violence should only be used strictly when necessary, the fact that Arwen embraces the same life sacrificing her own immortality and her life with her father also enhance the Elf's strength and independence. The assimilation that these two characters offer of masculine and feminine traits help highlight the concept that masculinity and femininity can be actually found in both characters, and the acceptance of both types of traits give a more wholesome image of them.

CONCLUSIONS

As stated in the introduction of the present dissertation, literary criticism from the point of view of masculinity has tried to offer a new approach to the analysis of different texts. Articles, books, conferences, and theses, for instance, have “re-visited” plots and “re-thought” characters in an attempt to offer new re-readings which bespeak the fact that men are gendered beings, something that feminist literary criticism had already pointed out concerning women. It is therefore necessary to question stereotypes, cultural meanings, and even characters’ behaviours which have been usually taken for granted, bearing in mind that “analyzing literary representations of masculinity helps understand the larger social workings of masculinity” (Armengol 2006: 392), both inside and outside a text.

With this set of assumptions, this thesis has effected a re-reading of *The Lord of the Rings* looking at the different masculinities constructed by Tolkien in his most acclaimed book and Peter Jackson’s reconstruction of these. It proved essential to contextualize first the masculinities found in Middle-earth and then establish some similarities and differences with those patterns of masculinities that Tolkien was most familiar with, both in his personal and professional experience.

In an attempt to question and undermine certain cultural (and often negative) stereotypes, pro-feminist scholars of the third wave of the studies of masculinities have also challenged prevailing attitudes concerning some negative aspects of masculinity. Pro-feminist approaches in the field of gender carried out by Kimmel, Connell, Katz, and Messner, among others, have been thus indispensable to set the theoretical basis of this dissertation. Key topics such as the disassociation of the traditional assumptions men/masculinity and women/femininity, the subversion of heteronormative stereotypes, and the complex and fluctuating nature of masculinities have set the relevant foundations on which this dissertation stands.

The literary masculinities we find in Middle-earth are, as happens outside the world of fiction, affected by variables such as cultural background, age, sex, education,

family, or society. It is therefore impossible to talk about just one only type of masculinity in Tolkien's novel, as this study has demonstrated. Part II has used the aforementioned key concepts and variables in order to explain the existence of different patterns of masculinities in Middle-earth. The world that Tolkien created was undoubtedly patriarchal during the Third Age, which is the time when the plot is developed, and it proves to remain so at the beginning of the Fourth Age, for the characters that appear ruling this world and holding the highest power are always men. Notwithstanding, the performance of masculinity of the rulers and other characters will clearly differentiate one period from the other. Furthermore, the situations that they have to endure during the War of the Ring, whether they actively take part in it or not, affects their evolution as characters, in some cases changing them completely for, as Tolkien himself declared, nobody can remain unaffected by vital experiences.

The prevailing pattern of masculinity performed by the rulers of Rohan and Gondor is a hegemonic type that grants them privileged positions inherited from their ancestors. Power is key to acquire and maintain this status, for it is the exertion of this power over others that encourages the imposition of certain socio-cultural values and attitudes. Tolkien had plenty of models, coming from real life and from the texts that conformed the corpus of his research interests, to draw from in his creation of the fictional characters of Théoden, Denethor and their respective heirs. In our analysis of each character's conception and evolution, we have concluded that the type of masculinity they perform can be regarded as hypermasculine, even if in different degrees.

In order to analyse the hypermasculinity enacted by characters like Théoden, Éomer, Denethor and Boromir, it was essential to discern first their position of power within their society and the cultural contrasts between the societies they belong to, Rohan and Gondor. From this analysis, we learnt that Théoden and Denethor's wills had been coerced by other characters: Saruman's accomplice, Gríma, and the Dark Lord, respectively. The implication of this domination by others is that, to a certain extent, some of their hypermasculine traits have been diminished as a sign of their decline and progressive loss of power. Moreover, their old age also presents them in a position that makes us regard them as weaker men if compared with their heirs; indeed, they do not have the same physical or mental strength as Boromir or Éomer.

In chapter 3 we linked hypermasculinity with certain attitudes found in old Germanic codes of conduct that understood war as the perfect means to achieve glory, hence the use of violence as the only way to defeat a foe. An extreme sense of loyalty to their lord, the exertion of power over others, physical prowess and strength, and excellence in the battlefield are also requisites to belong to this pattern. We undoubtedly found Éomer and Boromir as representatives of this conduct, hence exemplars of hypermasculinity in Middle-earth, even despite Boromir's flaw.

In this chapter we learnt how hypermasculinity seems to be usually enacted by warriors. Stout-hearted, successful, impulsive, and always determined to defeat their enemies, they are twentieth-century heirs to their Anglo-Saxon literary ancestor, Beowulf and his heroic progeny. They have been therefore found to perpetuate this pattern that situates them in a powerful position, pointing at a possible continuation of the hegemonic type of masculinity that preponderates in their world. Furthermore, hypermasculinity was also associated with pride. In the case of the Steward of Gondor, his excessive pride or *ofermod* led him to attempt to have control over everything, and paradoxically, this disproportionate zeal made him use the *palantír*, which allowed Sauron to dominate him. We saw that this character was unable to accept Gandalf's advice and was therefore beyond redemption, committing suicide in the end. Boromir, on the contrary, despite his pride, managed to find redemption in the end giving us a perfect example of his hypermasculine performance in an attack against the Uruk-hai to save Merry and Pippin.

Finding characters that belong to different societies, and yet are endowed with the same pattern of masculinity was undoubtedly thought-provoking, and served to help us demonstrate the fluctuating nature of masculinity in Middle-earth. Concurrently, although the death of the rulers that had been devoid of part of their hypermasculinity at the end of their mandates and the death of one of their heirs may be regarded as anecdotic, they also leave the road open for the triumph of a new type of hegemonic masculinity in Middle-earth, which is that enacted by Aragorn. This led us to the conclusion that hypermasculinity was certainly found obsolete, as another type emerged which seemed to be more in consonance with the author's own ideas about life and war. Moreover, we can relate this fact with the crisis of masculinity that has been alluded to in the studies of masculinities, and which may be applied to Middle-earth.

One of the most relevant discoveries in the analysis of the masculinities enacted by Tolkien's characters has been the new pattern analysed in chapter 4, which can be regarded as a new type of hegemonic masculinity in Middle-earth at the beginning of the Fourth Age. By analysing Faramir's and Aragorn's background, given the fact that they have Gandalf's teaching in common, we witnessed again the fluid nature of masculinity as a social construct – we cannot forget they belong to the same society as Denethor and Boromir. Before the War of the Ring, as Aragorn and Faramir became adults, they learnt from the wizard the importance of life and, even if they respect the concept of the just war cause in different degrees, they are aware that violence should only be resorted to if necessary. This new pattern has proven that the presumption that all warriors must long for a fight to seek glory is an overstatement in the case of some characters, which does not reduce their quality as warriors and does not mean that they are “less” masculine. These warriors' aim is not to find glory in the battlefield; this stands for a renewal of the old heroic codes represented by the characters in chapter 3. Because of this, we can see that, if compared with other hypermasculine characters, the characters analysed in chapter 4 are undoubtedly endowed with more evolved traits, for the evolution of a society is also marked by being able to avoid violence.

We can therefore say that Aragorn, Faramir and Gandalf represent a new pattern of masculinity in Middle-earth. Furthermore, we saw some instances in the text where Aragorn and Faramir also share with Gandalf the fact that they are preservers of life and are closely connected with nature and animals, a fact which also links them to the Elves. This trait is exemplified by some of their abilities: Aragorn's herbal lore and knowledge of how to track the hobbits, Gandalf's relationship with Shadowfax, and Faramir's ability to go unnoticed in a natural wild environment, for instance. As has been suggested, they are not the only characters that are completely in touch with nature, for the Elves are in total harmony with it.

By exploring the actions and behaviours of these characters during and after the War of the Ring, we concluded that this new pattern of masculinity is based more on collaboration and fraternity, and combines traits that have traditionally been regarded as feminine, above all in the case of Faramir. Burns also sees Aragorn and Faramir as caretakers (2005: 130), both of the land and their people, and so is Gandalf – one of their tasks is therefore to preserve Middle-earth. She also believes that “Tolkien's most

favourable and most deserving males, in fact, are as likely to be depicted as protectors or nurturers as they are fighters, rulers, or planners of strategy” (ibid.). We found that these characters were therefore endowed with some traits traditionally ascribed to masculinity, such as physical and mental strength, and resilience, and, at the same time, femininity, such as the ethics of care, empathy, or freedom of emotions. These characters have been thus used as an example to demonstrate that violence and masculinity can be dissociated.

The third pattern that we found in Middle-earth was the most difficult to define, since, as it would prove in the end, it was enacted by characters whose masculinity was not fully formed. During the analysis of the four hobbits that are part of the Fellowship of the Ring, we saw that their masculinities evolved and changed more than in any other character. This characteristic made it sensible to talk about a permeable pattern in their case, for their masculinities were susceptible to varying and taking different evolutionary paths during their process of growth. Merry, Pippin, Frodo, and Sam, who are the unexpected heroes of Middle-earth, undergo a process of evolution that necessarily affects their masculine performance. With personalities that were still developing in the case of, for example, Merry and Pippin, they undergo the rite of initiation generally seen in quests, which, after being analysed, evinces that the masculinities that they were endowed with before their arrival in Rivendell fluctuated and evolved as the plot advanced.

By examining their quests individually, we found how they were the characters where we can definitely see more clearly embodied the changing and complex nature of masculinity – their interactions with different cultures and in different contexts define their performances at the end of the book. As proved in our analysis in chapter 5, Merry and Pippin finally end up acquiring traits that are commonly found in the societies where they interact with the Men of Rohan or the Men of Gondor, respectively, particularly through their conversations and interactions with their leaders, Théoden and Denethor. It was significant to see Merry and Pippin leading the Battle of Bywater, showing how their masculinity had evolved into the archetype of the Warrior, more likely to be found in other societies different from the peaceful Shire.

Frodo's and Sam's evolution is completely different, since, whereas their friends need to confront foes in the battlefield, for the master and his gardener, their great confrontation is with themselves, against their despair. At the same time, they interact with two characters on their way through Mordor: Faramir and Gollum. They learn from Faramir the importance of the just war cause and of not striking without need, a lesson that Faramir learnt from Gandalf too, and which Frodo applies in his relationship with Gollum, which will prove essential in the end. In chapter 5 we saw how, by the time he went back home, Frodo had become a pacifist and a merciful Christian-like hero who seemed to prefer to turn the other cheek. In the case of Sam, his masculinity has been greatly influenced by the one performed by characters like Gandalf, Faramir and Aragorn. His love of nature has only increased and he has become the hobbit in charge of the restoration of the Shire, hence his role to heal his homeland. He has become a Healer of the land, thanks to Galadriel's gift, thus the importance of her influence on this hobbit.

The relationships established among the hobbits were also a good excuse to look into some queer readings of the text nowadays. After analysing some of their instances together and, having established the differences between homosociality, homophilia and homoeroticism, we concluded that, despite some of the new interpretations found in the genre of slash fiction, the hobbits' physical gestures are regarded in this dissertation as public displays of male intimacy between friends, because same-sex relationships do not always need to have sexual tinges – this would be reducing the text to interpreting what might lie in the writer's unconscious, and this was certainly not the purpose of this dissertation. Notwithstanding the validity of this kind of readings, Tolkien's religious upbringing may have prevented him from even unconsciously endowing his hobbits with any hint of homosexual desire for each other.

Whichever the interpretation of their relationships is, it cannot be argued that the hobbits were completely unexpected heroes in *The Lord of the Rings*, a fact which has even made them for some readers the heroes par excellence of the book. They are also examples of how masculinity cannot be understood as one unique type with the same characteristics for everybody, and must be thus analysed in each character individually.

One of the characters analysed in this dissertation has given us the opportunity of illustrating that masculinity does exist without men, and some women are endowed with what Halberstam has defined as female masculinity. Recent cultural studies provide us with plenty of examples of this type of masculinity – such as the performances of Linda Hamilton in *Terminator II*, Sigourney Weaver in *Alien III* or Demi Moore in *G.I. Jane* (Halberstam 1998: 28). The character of Éowyn lends itself quite nicely to be analysed from this critical stance. She displays her female masculinity only temporarily in the Pelennor Fields, cross-dressing as a man and adopting a new identity as Dernhelm. Our analysis has observed that Tolkien is careful enough never to show this character far from her femininity, so she never poses a real threat to the conventional attitudes of the society of the time when *The Lord of the Rings* was first published. Therefore, our reading agrees with Hopkins's views that

while aspects of Tolkien's vision of women may still remain within the realms of the conventional, in other ways his treatment of them shows a powerful clarity and novelty, unhampered by that crippling fear of femininity which besets the works of his fellow Inklings. (1995: 366)

Because of this, we can say that the author is not only unafraid to show Éowyn's masculinity, but he also shows other male characters' femininity, as we have seen in the cases of Sam or Faramir. The analysis of these characters seems to contrast some of the author's conservative views concerning gender, and, therefore, sheds some new light on the interpretation of their masculinities, above all, in the case of Éowyn. By re-reading Tolkien's text, we have found that an author who was indeed conservative in his ideas created characters that seemed to be more modern than they were perceived after the publication of *The Lord of the Rings*.

From the analysis of Éowyn, there was a concept that seemed to be somehow controversial and that is how Tolkien conceived her evolution and finally had her marry Faramir. Nonetheless, the fact that she is given the same role as other relevant male characters should not be underestimated, for the embracing of a new life without violence or death should be therefore understood as the greatest possibility for eucatastrophe that Tolkien gives his characters, not as a way of lessening or even punishing the character of Éowyn.

One of the most interesting conclusions we have reached in this dissertation and which is undoubtedly quite relevant within the studies of masculinities is that Tolkien endowed some of his characters with traits that were traditionally regarded as feminine or masculine, the novelty being that they can be found in the same character, either male or female. These attributes are mainly shared by both Elves and hobbits, who “exhibit traits that are typically thought feminine, the one on a more ethereal level, the other on an earthly plane” (Burns 2005: 130). The masculinity and femininity enacted by characters such as Éowyn or Faramir therefore mingle and present us with characters that exemplify the best traits of both. Because of this, we can say that, as Lianne McLarty claims, “his meanings are not fixed but are open to different interpretations by different audiences in different historical moments” (2006: 175). The interpretation of all the masculinities that can be found in Middle-earth thus also resides ultimately in the reader’s perception of these.

In the sections devoted to analysing the way Peter Jackson has rendered the types of masculinities performed by Tolkien’s characters, we can see that the evolution we found in some characters in the novel is up, to a certain extent, absent in Jackson’s films. There seems to be a general impression that Jackson’s adaptation somehow diminishes some of the characters and changes them from heroes of the high mimetic mode into the low mimetic one (Burdge and Burke 2004, Shippey 2007), namely Aragorn and Gandalf. Furthermore, he adapts other characters like Théoden and offers completely new interpretations of Arwen and Faramir.

In all the variations that we found in the analysis of the films, we saw that, whereas Jackson maintained the status of hypermasculine warriors in the case of Éomer, he also tried to humanize characters such as Théoden and Denethor, and even emphasized traits in Boromir by introducing new scenes. Our analysis stems from the assumption that Jackson needed to conform his characters in order to tune them to the sensitivities of a twenty-first century audience. By creating characters that are not flawless and offering a more humanized image of them, he is indeed showing the assimilation of masculinity and femininity that was also found in the novel. However, he does it differently, as we have demonstrated in chapters 4, 5 and 7. Although he has been accused of diminishing some of his characters (Burdge and Burke 2004), hence changing the mimetic mode that they belong to, it should be wondered whether a

faithful representation of them would have had the same reception as the three films in fact had.

The implications of introducing some variations in the performance of masculinities of the characters on screen seem to be not only an attempt to attract a wider audience but a more modern interpretation of three different people: Jackson, Boyens and Walsh, the result being a new perception of Tolkien's book by a man and two women. Although they do follow Tolkien's constructions, the changes in the characters also seem to try to offer the audience characters that were more wholesome, more appealing and multifaceted. Jackson therefore gives us, as we saw in the analysis, an Aragorn that is reluctant to accept his fate, a Faramir that is corruptible and a Gandalf that is ordinary. Because of this, we can say that the films reproduce imperfect characters, and by creating characters that are less larger than life, Jackson is indirectly exploring modern types of masculinities.

Although there are certain adaptations in some characters, it has been more difficult to understand Jackson's reinterpretation of Faramir, and maybe even unfair for the character as Tolkien originally created him. From the analysis, we can infer that he is not only weakened and subject to temptation, but he is also left without "a proper end," and, as we have claimed in chapter 4, as a consequence, most of Tolkien's positive qualities of this character are nearly absent, as Jackson rather focuses on him as a suffering son and a man who can be corrupted. His changes can only be explained in terms of cinematic interest and the addition of dramatic tension, because Faramir is, in fact, one of the most "modern" characters in *The Lord of the Rings*, a character that is educated and is indeed a great representative of the just war cause. As Croft states, "Faramir has a more modern and thoughtful attitude toward war, and is perhaps a more realistic model to emulate for the twenty-first-century reader" (2004: 101). His masculinity can be therefore regarded as similar to the new types of masculinities that emerged after the Great War, different from other dominant or hegemonic ones that had pervaded the British society before the conflict outburst. The pattern that Tolkien constructed for Faramir would have been therefore easily understood and accepted by the audience.

After Jackson's treatment of Éowyn and Arwen, it seems that, to a certain extent Jackson does not feel the necessity to "hide" his female characters. In the case of Arwen, Jackson and his scriptwriters took the character from the appendices and developed it, giving her some prominence in the film, probably also in an attempt to attract a wider range of women viewers. He is not only doing this, though, for he is also responding to a more updated concept of women, showing these characters as independent, powerful and strong-willed, and who do not let themselves be dominated by either their fathers or their partners. In "Neither the Shadow nor the Twilight: The Love Story of Aragorn and Arwen in Literature and Film," West concludes that "the paint and music and drama they [Jackson and his collaborators] have wielded has resulted in a distinct work of art that is worthwhile in its own right" (West 2011: 235). Jackson has therefore created a new narrative, which, on its own, is a different product with certain variations within the masculinities that we find in the book. In Jackson's reconstruction of Tolkien's world and the masculinities enacted by the characters in Middle-earth, he must be granted the fact that he has achieved indeed what Tolkien intended, the inner consistency of reality.

This dissertation has been therefore one interpretation of the different masculinities that can be found in *The Lord of the Rings*, but it is not by any means the only plausible one. The great amount of characters that appear in Middle-earth makes it hardly impossible to include all of them in only one thesis, unless it was the project of almost a whole lifetime. Undoubtedly, this has been one of the main hurdles in the process of research and writing of this thesis. The amount of Tolkien's sources and of the criticism on Tolkien published since the book was released have been, in some cases, a curse rather than a blessing. The focus of this dissertation has been, therefore, on those masculinities that were fully defined and allowed us to frame them into one particular pattern. This research leaves a path open for the analysis of characters that have been left out of this dissertation because they do not belong to one only pattern of masculinity, such as Legolas or Gimli.

Literary and cinematic analyses of works within the studies of masculinities offer a promising future for the study of texts and their adaptations on screen. Furthermore, the construction and reconstruction of masculinities finds a very interesting object of study in the mass media, particularly on television, which is still laden with programmes

and series or film characters that seem to answer to patriarchal models. In this sense, taking a recent look at some current American and British English-speaking broadcasting, there is a wide array of programmes with the most diverse stereotyped topics: the objectification of the individual, like *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette*; the stereotyped sexualization of characters, like Barney and his womanizer attitudes in *How I Met Your Mother*, or *Big Bang Theory*'s Penny, who represents the stereotype of the blonde woman who is not as intelligent as the rest of the characters; and the association of violence with men, like in *Dexter*, *Hannibal*, *Sons of Anarchy* and *Game of Thrones*.

The latest tendency in the studies of masculinities is that, despite these stereotyped ideas, there are also other TV series characters that show how boundaries are somewhat blurred, so women do have certain masculine traits and vice versa, without any hint of negativity in this. To illustrate this idea, there are some positive examples of strong-willed and independent women in the small screen who are extremely powerful in different contexts, for example, Snow White and the Evil Queen in *Once Upon a Time*, Olivia Pope in *Scandal*, Clarke Griffin in *The 100*, and Vanessa Ives in *Penny Dreadful*; and some positive images of male characters who are also in touch with their feminine side, like Sam Tarly and his interest in books in *Game of Thrones*, and Tyreese and his reluctance to turn to violence always in *The Walking Dead*. There are therefore some attempts to show, in John C. Landreau and Michael J. Murphy's words, how we should dislocate "masculinity as the property of men in order to make it available to a variety of embodied practices not all of which are easily comprehensible by a binary gender system" (2011: 133). *The Walking Dead* offers a very recent and interesting case, for example, for it shows how every single character evolves into becoming someone who finally must use violence as a means to survive, and all the characters, either female or male, are endowed at some stage in the series with this trait that has been traditionally defined as masculine and associated with men – the initial and somehow stereotyped gender differences among characters like Carol, Daryl, or Beth seem to dissolve as the plot moves on.

The analysis of these texts from the point of view of masculinities seems to offer a wide range of opportunities for postdoctoral research. This dissertation has continued the path started by some scholars years ago and has tried to comprise some of the most relevant ideas that have been published so far, albeit independently, concerning the

book and the films. In general, we could also add that the analysis of literary, film, and media texts from the point of view of masculinity will continue encouraging the questioning of types of behaviour that have been so far taken for granted, not only in those texts but also in reality. This is therefore indeed a road that goes ever on.

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RESUMEN EN ESPAÑOL

La primera aproximación que tuve a la obra de J.R.R. Tolkien fue en español, hace tantos años que he de reconocer que ni recuerdo exactamente cuándo fue, y he de decir que fue, de hecho, una de las primeras novelas de este género que leí. Pocos años después, cuando realicé el curso de doctorado “J.R.R. Tolkien: Cincuenta años de *The Lord of the Rings*”, dirigido por Margarita Carretero González, tuve la oportunidad de profundizar en la obra en inglés y el análisis temático de la misma. Volver a releer la novela y el entusiasmo demostrado en las clases por la profesora sin duda contribuyeron a hacerme elegir esta obra como objeto de una futura tesis doctoral y a la doctora Carretero como mi directora de tesis. Ya sólo quedaba elegir el tema sobre el que basar mi investigación; con el objetivo de dilucidar sobre qué podría hacerla, leí la tesis de Margarita, *Fantasia, épica y utopía en The Lord of the Rings. Análisis temático y de la recepción*, y teniendo en cuenta que había realizado otros dos cursos de doctorado sobre el tema del género en el lenguaje y la literatura, llegué a la conclusión de que sería interesante abordar la obra de Tolkien desde la perspectiva del género. Fue entonces cuando nació la idea inicial para esta tesis. Examinando algunas obras de referencia y artículos publicados sobre este tipo de análisis, debido al gran interés que habían suscitado las mujeres en la obra de Tolkien (incluso su escasez), pensé que sería interesante centrarme en los hombres que aparecen en *The Lord of the Rings*, idea que luego se desarrollaría para finalmente concentrar mi análisis en los estudios de las masculinidades.

La obra de este escritor de origen sudafricano pero inglés hasta la médula ha suscitado un gran interés por parte de la crítica desde que se publicó *The Lord of the Rings* hace ya sesenta años, y el estreno de la adaptación cinematográfica de Peter Jackson a comienzos del siglo XXI no hizo sino incrementar dicho interés. Desde que vio la luz, han sido numerosas y muy variadas las perspectivas que se han utilizado para aproximarse a esta obra: se han realizado estudios psicoanalíticos, ecocríticos, literarios, medievalistas, feministas, y ya más recientemente, se ha comenzado a estudiar la novela desde el punto de vista de las masculinidades.

Para poder realizar mi investigación, dividí por tanto mi tesis en dos partes, con el fin de dedicar la primera a establecer el marco teórico de la misma. Para realizar mi análisis, fue necesario no sólo centrarme en los estudios de género sino también intentar dilucidar qué aspectos de la vida de Tolkien pudieron haberle influenciado para crear a sus personajes, y consiguientemente, la construcción de masculinidades de los mismos. Tras establecer esta base teórica y considerar la importancia que tiene aproximarnos a distintos tipos de narrativas y releerlas desde la perspectiva del género, ya podía comenzar el análisis textual de los distintos patrones de masculinidades que se encuentran en la obra de Tolkien, junto con la reinterpretación de los mismos en la adaptación cinematográfica de Jackson.

En el primer capítulo recalamos por tanto que una de las principales características de los estudios de género radica en la interdisciplinariedad de este campo, recibiendo por tanto contribuciones desde las perspectivas más variadas, siendo una de ellas la crítica literaria. En los últimos años se ha incrementado considerablemente el interés en realizar análisis textuales de obras recientes o no desde el punto de vista del género. Es en este lugar en el que se encuadra esta tesis doctoral, cuyo objetivo principal ha sido releer la obra de Tolkien con el fin de estudiar las diversas masculinidades que en ella aparecen.

Para cumplir mi objetivo, fue fundamental en un principio entender algunos conceptos básicos relacionados con el género, de forma que pudiera así establecer la base teórica sobre la que se cimentara esta investigación. Teorías tan relacionadas entre sí como la performativa de Judith Butler y la construccionista de Michel Foucault fueron en un principio fundamentales para comprender que el género es un constructo social y cultural, y por esto entendemos que términos como feminidad y masculinidad no son algo estático y delimitado como algunos críticos esencialistas argumentan, sino que, por el contrario, las características que normalmente cada sociedad atribuye a estos conceptos, y por ende, a hombres y mujeres, fluctúan y varían según el momento histórico en el que se encuadran y la sociedad en que se analizan. Fue por tanto básico asimilar la disociación entre hombre y masculino y mujer y femenino, entendiendo por tanto que atributos que tradicionalmente se han considerado como masculinos pueden formar parte de una mujer, y viceversa, y entendiendo también que género y sexo son dos términos que no son sinónimos.

Para llegar a la afirmación de que el género es un constructo social, es necesario entender la evolución histórica y conceptual de los mismos estudios de género, porque aunque en un principio la palabra género engloba feminidad y masculinidad, los estudios de estos dos conceptos han tenido una evolución distinta dentro de estos estudios. Pioneros en este campo fueron sin duda los estudios *sobre y de* mujeres, también considerados feministas en algunos casos, que tuvieron su momento álgido entre los años setenta y ochenta. De hecho surgieron prácticamente como disciplina académica independiente en esta época, en la que diversas universidades comenzaron a introducirlos en sus programas de estudios. Los estudios sobre masculinidades surgieron a posteriori y han visto su evolución dividida en tres distintas corrientes, que son las que analizo en la primera parte de esta tesis.

Durante los primeros años que se comenzó a estudiar el concepto de masculinidad, éste se entendió siempre asociado a los hombres, de ahí que en un principio el análisis sobre ésta se entendiera como algo inherente a ellos; la perspectiva era claramente esencialista, limitadora y heterosexista. Hasta este momento se había entendido que los hombres debían comportarse como la sociedad esperaba que lo hicieran, atribuyéndoles de forma casi innata ciertos adjetivos como agresivo, violento, fuerte y viril, que contrastaban con los atribuidos a las mujeres, que debían ser por el contrario pasivas, sentimentales y cariñosas; un comportamiento contrario al esperado era, de esta forma, reprobado. Diversos expertos en este campo como Àngels Carabí (2008) consideran que es comprensible que en sus inicios los estudios de masculinidades se centraran en los hombres y fueran en cierta forma esencialistas, sobre todo porque los hombres no habían sido estudiados dentro de los estudios de género, habían permanecido ciertamente invisibles como objeto de estudio.

Poco a poco los estudios sobre masculinidades comenzaron a aparecer también en las universidades y se fue viendo una evolución, que en comparación con los estudios de mujeres o *Women's Studies*, fue ciertamente más lenta. La primera toma de contacto con los estudios de género cuyo principal objeto de estudio fueron los hombres concluyó con el surgimiento de una segunda corriente durante la cual las teorías desarrolladas por R.W. Connell ayudaron a entender la existencia de diversas construcciones de masculinidad. Connell introdujo el término de hegemonía masculina, un modelo que se presenta como dominante dentro de la sociedad patriarcal en la que se

asienta. Esto somete por tanto a los hombres a una gran presión, debido a que la inhabilidad de basar su conducta en este modelo les supone ser señalados y su masculinidad pasa a ser considerada como subordinada. Entendiendo patriarcado como una estructura social e ideológica que pretende establecer y determinar la posición de hombres y mujeres, garantizando un cierto poder a los hombres, con el cual poder adoptar actitudes dominantes sobre no sólo mujeres, sino, y aquí es lo interesante, otros hombres, esto supone un tipo de privilegio para todos aquellos hombres que son capaces de desempeñar un tipo de masculinidad hegemónica, la cual les sitúa en una posición de poder, por encima de los demás.

Este privilegio ha sido normalmente asociado a hombres blancos heterosexuales de clase media o alta, como si se entendiera que ellos tenían, por tener estas características, el objetivo de oprimir a los que se consideraban más débiles, entendiendo así que cualquier distinción con respecto a este modelo, sitúa a la persona en una posición secundaria y subordinada. No hay duda de que este concepto influye en todo tipo de estructuras en una sociedad, desde la familiar hasta la laboral. La concepción inicial de unión entre biología y masculinidad sirvió por tanto para perpetuar este tipo de masculinidades en la sociedad, entendiendo que simplemente por el hecho de nacer biológicamente hombres, ya les garantizaba obtener una situación privilegiada. Sin embargo, las consecuencias de esta asociación esencialista han tenido un precio muy alto para los hombres, y tal y como indica Whitehead, sobre todo con respecto a su forma de entender y desarrollar conceptos como la empatía o las emociones (2002: 56). Les obliga a actuar de una u otra forma si quieren mantener esa posición privilegiada en la sociedad. Durante esta segunda corriente en los estudios sobre masculinidades también surgieron voces que pretendieron recuperar la imagen tradicional y heteronormativa de cómo debería ser un hombre, entendiendo que los estudios feministas amenazaban dicha imagen.

Es sobre todo en la tercera (y actual) corriente de los estudios sobre masculinidades cuando surgen las teorías más claras que enfatizan el concepto de género como constructo social. Como tal, no es único de los hombres, sino que las mujeres también pueden desempeñar distintos tipos de masculinidades. Partimos de la base de que como seres humanos estamos cultural, social y políticamente influenciados, concepto sobre el que se asienta la teoría de la performatividad de Butler. Al entender

que lo importante no es quién eres o cómo eres sino lo que haces, Butler entiende que también nos encontramos influenciados por el contexto que nos rodea y hay ciertas variables como por ejemplo, nuestra edad, sexo, raza, educación, etc., que influyen en una u otra forma en nosotros y nuestra feminidad o masculinidad.

Si no somos capaces de tener un determinado comportamiento de acuerdo a lo que se espera de nosotros, si no respetamos la supuesta heterosexualidad obligatoria que marca la sociedad y nos alejamos de la heteronormatividad con la que la sociedad pretende que actuemos, normalmente se nos etiqueta y critica. Ya desde pequeños se enseña al individuo a tener un comportamiento determinado, vestir de una forma determinada e incluso tener una reacción concreta según en qué situaciones; todo lo que se salga de lo que la sociedad espera de nosotros en consecuencia nos define fuera de lo que Jackson Katz llamó la *Gender Box*. Lo que la mayoría de personas intenta, por tanto, según él, es permanecer dentro de esa caja para que no les etiqueten fuera de la masculinidad o feminidad que se supone han de representar. Hay por tanto ciertos conceptos que se han considerado inherentes a los hombres, como por ejemplo la violencia, y que los estudios de esta tercera corriente pretenden disociar.

Algunos de estos estudios se denominan pro-feministas y están encabezados por nombres tan relevantes como Kimmel o Messner. Su objetivo es involucrarse de manera activa en causas similares a las de las feministas, actuando contra la opresión de las mujeres y la violencia contra ellas. Sin embargo, el hecho de que la mayoría sean hombres es también un dato muy significativo, ya que consigue afianzar y aunar esfuerzos contra la violencia doméstica, la desigualdad y las perspectivas esencialistas sobre el género. Algunas de las teorías que se desarrollan pretenden acabar con la eterna dicotomía binaria de hombre/masculino y mujer/femenino, permitiendo así una mayor apertura social para personas que puedan considerarse encuadradas en categorías distintas a las tradicionalmente entendidas por la sociedad. De igual forma, se presenta una mayor atención a masculinidades distintas a la hegemónica y que anteriormente se consideraban subordinadas o secundarias.

La naturaleza oscilante y fluida del concepto de masculinidad se sitúa por tanto como el pilar fundamental del análisis teórico de esta tesis. Entendemos igualmente, que la biografía de un autor puede resultar significativa en su proceso creativo. De hecho, hay ciertos aspectos de la vida de Tolkien, como vemos en el capítulo 2, que se han

estimado altamente relevantes en su obra, como demuestran los trabajos de John Garth y Janet Brennan Croft, los cuales han considerado que la Primera Guerra Mundial jugó un papel fundamental a nivel personal y creativo en este autor.

Sin embargo, no es esta la única experiencia vital para Tolkien. Sin duda, el haberse quedado huérfano a la temprana edad de cuatro años debió de ser no sólo traumático en la vida del escritor sino que también le marcaría de por vida, junto con el hecho de que su madre se ocupó de su crianza y educación en sus primeros años, lo cual sirvió para estrechar sus lazos con ella. Esta ausencia de figura paterna no quiere decir que Tolkien se viera desprovisto de un modelo de masculinidad en el que fijarse, pero sí se vio en parte sustituido por otros modelos externos a la familia. No obstante, el hecho que verdaderamente marcó a Tolkien fue la muerte de su madre cuando tenía 12 años. Mabel Tolkien, que había crecido en el seno de una familia baptista, decidió convertirse al catolicismo en el año 1900, tras lo cual su familia dejó de ofrecerle ayuda económica; pocos años después, descubrió que tenía diabetes. Inculcó a sus hijos su ferviente fe hasta tal punto que Tolkien siempre comparó su muerte con la de un mártir. Si hubiese seguido siendo baptista, habría seguido siendo asistida económicamente por la familia Suffield y sus condiciones de vida podrían haber sido mejor.

Tras quedar huérfanos, Tolkien y su hermano quedaron al cargo del que se convertiría en su tutor legal, el padre Francis Morgan, un cura católico. Sin ser el tipo de modelo masculino que tenían otros muchachos de la época, el sacerdote fue igualmente una figura de gran influencia en la vida del escritor, hasta tal punto que dejó de ver a la chica de la que estaba enamorado porque el cura no lo consideraba apropiado y creía que era una tentación que le alejaba de su deber más inmediato, sus estudios.

Ya desde muy joven Tolkien expresó siempre un gran interés por los grupos literarios, hasta tal punto que en 1911 formó un grupo literario, los T.C.B.S., junto a otros tres chicos en Birmingham. Su educación en una escuela sólo para chicos sería otra de las grandes influencias en la vida del escritor ya que se convirtió en bastión de la masculinidad que la sociedad de la época pretendía perpetuar a través de estos chicos. Elementos como la valentía, la moralidad y la hombría formaban parte de las clases a las que asistían; ellos eran sin duda el futuro, y de ellos se esperaba que actuaran de acuerdo a los cánones sociales que entendían que el hombre debía ser fuerte y ocupar una posición privilegiada de poder con respecto a las mujeres.

El estallido de la Primera Guerra Mundial vino en cierta forma a desmoronar el mundo que hasta entonces había construido Tolkien, que para aquel entonces estaba cursando estudios en la prestigiosa Universidad de Oxford y ya estaba prometido con Edith Bratt, su amor de juventud. La sociedad entendía que el honor patriótico de todos los hombres con edad suficiente para alistarse les debía llevar a hacerlo, hasta tal punto que señalaban a aquellos que, por una u otra circunstancia, no lo hacían. Entre ellos se encontraba Tolkien, que no quería alistarse hasta que no acabara la carrera. Una vez terminada y tras casarse en 1916, fue trasladado a Francia con el batallón de los Lancashire Fusiliers.

El impacto más grande que recibió durante la guerra fue la muerte de dos de sus mejores amigos de la adolescencia, dos miembros del T.C.B.S., tras lo cual quedaría eternamente marcado, como reconocería posteriormente. Tolkien vivió en primera persona no sólo las consecuencias más directas de una guerra en el campo de batalla, viviendo las vicisitudes por las que tiene que pasar un soldado y siendo partícipe de las relaciones sociales establecidas entre los soldados y también con sus ordenanzas, algo muy común en aquella época de claras diferencias sociales. Años después reconocería que las experiencias vitales no pueden dejar a nadie impasible y nos afectan a todos, por lo que este hecho es sin duda uno de los más significativos en su vida.

Tolkien trabajó como profesor de universidad en Leeds hasta que en 1925 logró un puesto como profesor de Anglosajón en la prestigiosa universidad de Oxford. Ya para entonces Tolkien había comenzado a crear el mundo de Tierra Media, pero no sería hasta años después cuando su primera publicación de literatura fantástica vería la luz con *The Hobbit*. Una vez asentado en Oxford, una de las cosas que mayor echaba en falta era la pertenencia a un grupo literario, ya que tras la guerra y la muerte de dos de sus miembros, los T.C.B.S. se disolvieron. Tras ser miembro del grupo Coalbiters junto con otro profesor, C.S. Lewis, uno de sus grandes amigos en Oxford, y a quien le unía sobre todo un gran interés por la mitología nórdica, ambos pasaron a formar parte de uno de los clubs literarios más afamados en esta ciudad inglesa, los Inklings.

En sus reuniones, la mayoría de las cuales se llevaban a cabo en las habitaciones de C.S. Lewis en Magdalen College o el pub The Eagle and Child, los miembros discutían temas variados y leían obras inéditas que aún no habían sido publicadas. Fueron ellos los primeros testigos del nacimiento y desarrollo de *The Lord of the Rings*.

Sin duda los Inklings, formados en su mayoría por profesores universitarios, pertenecían a la élite de la sociedad de Oxford de los años 30, y tenían ideas ciertamente conservadoras.

Fueron precisamente las relaciones marcadamente homosociales, es decir, con personas del mismo sexo, sus amistades con otros hombres, las que preponderaron ciertamente en toda su existencia, desde su adolescencia hasta su madurez, ya fuera a nivel personal o profesional. Son este tipo de relaciones las que encontramos principalmente en su obra, como indica la segunda parte de esta tesis, centrada en analizar los patrones de masculinidades más relevantes de *The Lord of the Rings*.

No podemos olvidar, no obstante, que no sólo estas experiencias marcaron su vida, sino también la literatura de la que era gran experto y conocedor. Como profesor de Anglosajón se convirtió en experto de varios textos como *Beowulf*, *The Wanderer* y *The Battle of Malden*, entre otros, y siempre sintió una gran fascinación por textos de literatura nórdica como la *Kalevala* o *Edda*.

En términos generales se puede decir que diversos estudios han intentado buscar el origen de todos los elementos que conforman la creación de Tolkien, y por tanto, han comparado a los hombres heroicos de Tolkien con los héroes de las grandes épicas literarias, a sus elfos con los dioses irlandeses Tuathá de Danann, o incluso a Gandalf con el dios nórdico Odín. Las fuentes en las que se inspiró el autor son tan numerosas, que incluso él mismo reconoció que podría llevar varias generaciones descubrirlas todas. No podemos obviar por tanto las características que comparten algunos de sus personajes con joyas de la literatura universal.

La segunda parte de mi tesis comienza así explicando algunas de las características de Tierra Media, un mundo imaginario dividido por razas (hombres, hobbits, elfos, magos, enanos, etc.) y donde se establecen diferencias de clase social, jerárquicas e incluso políticas. Entendiendo como antes he explicado que existen diversos tipos de masculinidades y no un único constructo, dentro de *The Lord of the Rings* existen igualmente varios tipos de patrones que reúnen características similares y que nos permiten hablar de ciertas pautas concretas con respecto a distintos personajes, representantes en mayor o menor medida de estos patrones.

El primer modelo de masculinidad que se aprecia en Tierra Media cuando comienza el argumento es el de la hipermasculinidad, capítulo en el que he analizado a personajes tan distintos como Théoden, Denethor y sus herederos, Éomer y Boromir. En el capítulo 3 es significativo ver cómo, a pesar de pertenecer a sociedades tan distintas como la de Rohan y Gondor, todos representan en una u otra forma este patrón. Este hecho demuestra cómo la masculinidad es fluida y no inherente de una sociedad determinada.

La construcción de Rohan se asienta sobre los textos anglosajones que tanto admiraba Tolkien, por lo que la representación de sus habitantes tiene ciertos tintes que la asemejan a la sociedad descrita en *Beowulf*. Investigadores como Shippey y Honegger han destacado que es una sociedad caracterizada por su caballería y la especial relación establecida entre sus guerreros y los caballos. Esta diferencia con respecto a los textos épicos literarios marca también el carácter salvaje y fiero de los Rohirrim, los cuales tienen una gran relación simbiótica con sus animales.

Caracterizados por su fortaleza y esta relación con sus caballos, su código de honor se basa en el código de conducta germánico del *comitatus*, que les une de forma estrecha a su rey, al cual vengarán en caso de morir éste en el campo de batalla. Esta sociedad se caracteriza por ser guerrera y ver en la guerra un medio perfecto para adquirir la inmortalidad pagana que concede la tradición oral, ya que el canto de sus gestas les hará vivir para siempre. Aunque esta no es la razón principal por la que luchan, según Honegger, la alegría que demuestran en el campo de batalla les distingue sin duda del resto de los guerreros de Tierra Media. Igualmente, es una sociedad eminentemente hipermasculina, ya que reúne ciertas características similares a las que Mosher y Sirkin distinguieron para definir este tipo de masculinidad, que es una demostración varonil de la ostentación de poder masculino sobre los demás, hasta tal punto que se ve siempre unida a la violencia, al riesgo y el entusiasmo que conlleva enfrentarse a algún peligro (1984).

Reúnen por tanto diversos atributos que originalmente se han asociado a los guerreros; son fuertes, vigorosos, competitivos, y en ocasiones, hasta violentos. Tolkien les crea siguiendo las características que definen también parte de su masculinidad, y que están intrínsecamente relacionadas con una especie de teoría del valor que les

aproxima a la muerte en el campo de batalla como su máxima aspiración ya que no representa una derrota, sino todo lo contrario, la gloria.

El primer personaje que analizo es su rey, Théoden, cuya introducción en la historia nos presenta a un monarca que se encuentra bajo la influencia de Gríma Lengua de Serpiente, que actúa a su vez como cómplice del mago Saruman. La descripción principal de Théoden es la de un hombre muy mayor, casi ciego, que parece incluso haber perdido por completo el dominio sobre su propia voluntad y se ve manejado por su consejero. Con estas características, Théoden parece haber perdido algunos de los atributos que se asocian con la hipermasculinidad de los Rohirrim y que parece también estar relacionado con su avanzada edad. Tras su primera descripción, el lector percibe a un hombre sin fuerza, ni física ni mental, ya que si relacionamos la hipermasculinidad con el vigor de los Rohirrim, Théoden ya no lo tiene.

El patrón de masculinidad de Théoden está también por tanto intrínsecamente relacionado con su poder, del cual ha sido desprovisto, por lo que sólo al recuperarlo podrá acercarse a quien era antes. La única posibilidad que tiene Théoden de volver a recuperar parte de su verdadera identidad y actuar en consecuencia, como descendiente de sus ancestros, es gracias a Gandalf, que consigue liberarle de las garras de Saruman. Cuando Théoden comienza a tomar conciencia del conjuro del que ha sido víctima y recupera su espada, comenzamos a ser testigos de cómo recupera poco a poco su poder y con ello la masculinidad que había perdido al convertirse en la marioneta del mago de Isengard. De nuevo en sus plenas facultades, el rey se da cuenta de sus errores y de su inacción durante el período en que ha sido manipulado por Gríma, ya que sus tierras han sufrido gravemente las consecuencias de haber visto sometida su voluntad, lo cual aprovechó Saruman para invadir de forma progresiva el reino de Rohan.

De nuevo volvemos a ver en Théoden en la batalla de Helm's Deep a un guerrero representante del código heroico de las antiguas gestas épicas; en esta batalla lidera a sus hombres contra los orcos que ha enviado Saruman. Es en *El Retorno del Rey* donde Théoden se muestra en todo su esplendor, sobre todo en la batalla de los Campos del Pelennor. Está decidido a redimirse de sus errores del pasado y así se enfrenta a sus enemigos en el campo de batalla. Finalmente, con su muerte, luchando, consigue alcanzar la gloria tan ansiada, tan importante para esta sociedad guerrera.

El otro representante de Rohan que analizo es Éomer. En cierta forma se puede decir que el análisis textual de este personaje es más sencillo comparado con el de su señor y tío carnal, Théoden. Éomer es un claro ejemplo de hipermasculinidad en Rohan: es un guerrero fiel a su rey, fuerte, impulsivo, orgulloso, y que encuentra en la batalla su más alto grado de expresión. A pesar de tener un sentido de la lealtad inquebrantable, no duda en dar permiso a Aragorn, Gimli y Legolas para acercarse a Edoras, a pesar de la expresa prohibición al respecto, ya que se ha dado cuenta de que el consejero de su tío y rey coarta cada vez más su voluntad, hecho que está reportando resultados muy negativos para Rohan. Es sobre todo cuando el texto le introduce como Tercer Mariscal junto a sus hombres que asistimos a una presentación de Éomer en toda su estatura, con su actitud impulsiva y parte de la fiereza nómada con la que le describe Shippey.

En sus interacciones con el resto de personajes, como por ejemplo en su encuentro con Aragorn, no podemos olvidar que Éomer representa parte de la masculinidad hegemónica de Tierra Media que intenta ejercer cierto poder sobre los demás y que se presenta como el modelo que los habitantes de esa sociedad se supone que deben seguir. El hecho de que la hipermasculinidad esté también relacionada con la represión de emociones no es contradictoria en el caso de Éomer, el cual no duda en declarar que sigue a Aragorn porque le quiere, en él admira a un líder, y no duda en ayudarlo a conseguir sus objetivos.

Curiosamente, como ya he comentado antes, este patrón también está representado por Denethor, el último Senescal Regente de Gondor, y su primogénito, Boromir. Boromir es, al igual que Éomer, un perfecto representante de hipermasculinidad en Tierra Media. De hecho, incluso el propio Éomer llega a afirmar que Boromir comparte tantas características con ellos que perfectamente podría ser un Rohirrim. El lector conoce por primera vez al heredero de Denethor en el Consejo de Elrond, del cual saldrá la Comunidad del Anillo con el objetivo de destruir el Anillo de Sauron. Al igual que Éomer, basa su masculinidad en su fortaleza y su poder, en su excelencia como guerrero y su atracción hacia el peligro. Igualmente, es un personaje caracterizado por su orgullo y su superioridad con respecto a algunos personajes.

Es un personaje que sin duda tiene diversos momentos de claridad y oscuridad según avanza la historia. Esto se debe principalmente a que progresivamente se va sintiendo más atraído hacia el Anillo Único, puesto que ve en él una gran oportunidad

para salvar a su pueblo. Sin embargo, decide acatar la decisión tomada en el Consejo de Elrond de destruirlo, sin llegar a abandonar nunca su interés inicial en usarlo a favor de su gente. Su propio orgullo incluso le hace dudar de Aragorn en un primer momento; con la llegada del nuevo rey de Gondor, ve sin duda peligrar la posición de cierto poder que ha ostentado hasta ahora.

El exceso de orgullo que tiene y que Tolkien criticó en su ensayo sobre el concepto anglosajón de *Ofermod*, es un claro exponente para comprender a este personaje. Se puede de hecho afirmar que no sólo quiere hacerse con el Anillo de Sauron para ayudar a su gente, sino que aparte de conseguir esto, no hay duda de que le llevaría a alcanzar la gloria, tan importante para los guerreros de sagas épicas. Finalmente, Boromir acaba siendo un claro ejemplo de falibilidad, ya que le es imposible resistir la tentación del Anillo e intenta quitárselo a Frodo. Su excesivo orgullo acaba cobrándose un precio muy alto, puesto que él se veía más que preparado para utilizar el Anillo, contra lo que le había advertido Elrond.

Al igual que en el caso de Théoden, este guerrero consigue redimirse de sus errores tras enfrentarse a unos orcos al intentar proteger a Merry y Pippin en Amon Hen. En este auto-sacrificio alcanza la gloria que tanto ansiaba y termina teniendo una “buena muerte”, en términos heroicos. Su final incluso puede ser comparado con la confesión de un cristiano, ya que le confiesa a Aragorn en su lecho de muerte sus últimas acciones contra Frodo.

Podemos decir que el declive de Denethor se acentúa en el momento en que se entera de la muerte de su hijo favorito, Boromir, el cual representaba para él todo lo que debe ser un guerrero. El personaje de Denethor guarda algunos contrastes muy interesantes con Théoden, ya que al igual que el rey de Rohan fue víctima de la maldad de Saruman, Denethor ve cómo Sauron juega con su mente a través del *palantír*, un objeto que le hace ver lo que ocurre más allá de su reino. El exceso de curiosidad, de orgullo, de ambición y de sabiduría, le lleva a utilizar esta piedra, que está ligada directamente con Sauron, y que él cree capaz de poder dominar.

En un principio Denethor también es representante de un tipo de masculinidad hegemónica en Tierra Media basada en la dominación de otros hombres y mujeres, y en el caso del Senescal de Gondor, este hecho está incluso acentuado. Autoritario,

impositivo, altivo, orgulloso, y despectivo con respecto a los consejos que le da Gandalf, vemos cómo Denethor comienza a perder poco a poco su hipermasculinidad, prácticamente a la vez que comienza a perder el dominio sobre su propia mente. Sauron, conocedor de quién hay al otro lado del *palantír*, somete su mente a ver sólo lo que él dispone, de forma incluso que hace perder a Denethor el juicio sobre lo que es verdad y lo que no. Asimismo, el hecho de que comience a perder su equilibrio mental es también un signo de que está perdiendo poder sobre sí mismo, lo cual incluso le hace envejecer de forma prematura y perder parte de la fortaleza que debería tener como descendiente de numenoreanos.

Su autoritarismo y su exceso de control incluso sobre sus propios hijos, sobre todo con Faramir, con el que mantiene una relación ciertamente distante y al que ve incapaz de sustituir a su primogénito, terminan haciéndole pagar un alto precio, resultado que se ve incluso incrementado por intentar acceder a más conocimiento de forma muy peligrosa. De modo similar, la muerte de Boromir le hace caer de forma progresiva en un estado de desesperación: ha intentado mantener el control en todo momento pero le ha sido imposible mantener vivo a su hijo, y lo que es más, en su propio delirio, cree que Faramir también ha muerto.

Denethor no quiere dejarse someter ante nadie, y creyendo que Sauron está ganando la guerra y que su linaje ha llegado a su final, decide poner fin a su vida en vez de intentar luchar hasta el final. Es sin duda un personaje trágico que termina dejándose llevar por su exceso de orgullo, por su *ofermod*, y que no logra redimirse, como sí hace su hijo mayor al final, ya que acaba dejándose llevar por la desesperación y la cobardía, pensando que el final de su linaje ha llegado.

Un modelo completamente distinto al representado por Théoden, Éomer, Boromir y Denethor es el que representan, curiosamente, otros dos hombres de Gondor, Aragorn y Faramir, junto con el mago Gandalf, analizados en el capítulo 4. La principal diferencia es la actitud que tienen estos personajes ante la guerra, diametralmente distinta a la de los personajes analizados anteriormente. Una de las principales razones que nos encontramos por las cuales Faramir y Aragorn desarrollan un tipo de masculinidad parecida es porque han tenido como mentor a Gandalf, que les ha inculcado ciertas enseñanzas basadas en la protección de la vida ante todo.

El personaje de Gandalf es un Maia, uno de los seres más poderosos en Tierra Media ya que pertenece a la orden de cinco magos conocidos como Istari, y se nos presenta como un mago con muchas facetas. Sólo unos pocos conocen su verdadera identidad, lo cual le hace pasar ciertamente desapercibido para los hobbits, que simplemente le ven como el mago encargado de los fuegos artificiales. Lo que destaca sobre todo de él es el hecho de que es un gran protector de la vida en Tierra Media, y así se lo inculca a varios personajes como Frodo. David Day identificó a Gandalf como mentor, guía espiritual y consejero sobre la guerra de Aragorn, y estos son fundamentalmente los tres aspectos que analizamos de este personaje.

El personaje de Gandalf se acerca al arquetipo junguiano del Viejo Sabio, en parte debido a su descripción de hombre mayor, y también debido a la gran sabiduría de la que está dotado. Uno de los personajes en los que parece haberse inspirado Tolkien es en Odín, según Marjorie Burns, aunque es también inevitable asociarle con el Merlín del Rey Arturo. A pesar de presentarse como un ser anciano, mientras es Gandalf el Gris, sólo se duda de su fortaleza en algunos momentos en los que se ve que parece flaquear, como en Moria, pero tras su resurrección, Gandalf el Blanco se nos muestra como el personaje más poderoso de Tierra Media. Vuelve de Moria incluso más poderoso que Saruman.

Es ante todo una figura paternal que se encarga de orientar a Frodo, a Aragorn y a Faramir en los diversos viajes personales que emprenden los tres. A pesar de ser tan poderoso, los Valar, que son los seres que le han enviado, le han prohibido expresamente enfrentarse a Sauron de forma directa, lo cual incrementa su papel de mentor en Tierra Media, ya que su rol se debe centrar en aunar a todos los Pueblos Libres contra el poder del Señor Oscuro. Como mentor y consejero, consigue salvar a Théoden de las garras de Saruman, y aunque intenta ayudar a Denethor igualmente, sin conseguirlo, sí que consigue finalmente salvar a su hijo Faramir de morir en una pira funeraria.

Sobre todo muestra su lado más humano y paternal con los hobbits, con los que tiene una relación especial. Con ellos se muestra sobre todo protector, ya que, conocedor de la inocencia de esta raza, quiere protegerles de todo mal, aunque también es consciente de que gracias a la fortaleza que tienen, acabarán ocupando un lugar muy importante en la destrucción del Anillo Único. Una de sus principales enseñanzas es que

la vida es algo preciado y no se debe juzgar a la ligera sobre quién merece vivir y quién no, una lección que le reportará a Frodo grandes beneficios. Su masculinidad, por tanto, no está unida a la violencia ni a ninguna intención de ejercer su superioridad o poder sobre los demás. Al contrario, siempre defiende la importancia de la vida y el concepto de guerra justa.

Uno de los personajes, aparte de Frodo, en los que más influye esta lección, es en Faramir, el hijo pequeño de Denethor. Cuando le vemos al principio en los bosques de Ithilien, la imagen literaria más inmediata con la que le asociamos puede ser la de Robin Hood. Uno más entre sus hombres, lo cual demuestra que a pesar de ser capitán de Gondor no ejerce de forma imperativa y dominante su poder sobre los demás, Faramir también representa un tipo de masculinidad opuesta a la de su hermano. Esto se debe a varios factores: Gandalf explica que en él corre casi pura la sangre de Oesternesse, y también recibe lecciones del mago. Podemos por tanto identificarle con un oficial que es a su vez un erudito, que se ha preocupado en formarse y conocer la historia de su tierra y de su gente.

De Faramir no podemos olvidar en su análisis de masculinidad que su padre siempre declara abiertamente su claro favoritismo por su hermano. Aunque el texto y los apéndices nos dicen que ambos hermanos cosechan éxitos parecidos en el campo de batalla y poseen una fortaleza similar, el hecho de que no consigue satisfacer a su padre en nada de lo que hace le lleva incluso a ofrecerse voluntario en una misión suicida que su padre no impide, conector del más que probable desenlace de la misma. Si comprendemos que la representación de masculinidad de un personaje se encuentra, al igual que en la vida diaria, influenciado por variables como su educación, su contexto histórico y social y su interacción con otros personajes, no podemos sino señalar que todos estos son fundamentales para entender el modelo de masculinidad que Tolkien ha construido para Faramir.

El segundo hijo de Denethor es un erudito que comprende perfectamente que la guerra es un medio horroroso de obtener un fin, no obstante, si es la única forma de hacerlo, no se puede obviar. Faramir ve más allá de lo superficial y tiene un gran sentido de la intuición, que es el que finalmente le hará dejar que Frodo continúe su viaje. El mismo Tolkien aseveró que si a algún personaje se parecía, ese era Faramir, ya que ambos son conocedores de las horribles consecuencias de la guerra. Faramir representa

por tanto un héroe moderno puesto que su naturaleza y educación le hacen ser reflexivo y no impulsivo, como su hermano. Croft incluso considera que es un personaje más atractivo y más fácil de emular para el lector del siglo XXI. Si consideramos que la hipermasculinidad representa patrones de antiguos códigos heroicos, la masculinidad de Aragorn y Faramir es, por el contrario, un tipo nuevo de masculinidad en Tierra Media.

Aragorn también comparte ciertas características con el que será su futuro Senescal, y una de ellas es que ambos se presentan como líderes carismáticos a los que siguen otros personajes. Ninguno de ellos, y tampoco Gandalf, intentan imponer su voluntad sobre los demás, sino que representan un tipo de liderazgo más colaborativo, más fraternal y más solidario. Introducen lo que será un nuevo tipo de masculinidad hegemónica en la Cuarta Edad de Tierra Media y que no se basará en la dominación de ninguna raza sino en el respeto y la colaboración mutua, aunando así atributos que no se entienden únicamente como masculinos sino también femeninos.

La aproximación que hacemos al personaje de Aragorn es desde diversas perspectivas ya que es esencial entender su comportamiento como el Montaraz Trancos, su papel de líder en la Comunidad del Anillo, antes y después de la muerte de Gandalf, y finalmente, como el rey que ha permanecido escondido hasta que llega el momento de reclamar el trono de Gondor. Su crianza en Rivendell, el hecho de que desde pequeño tiene una estrecha relación con los elfos, su relación con Gandalf que es su mentor, etc., son algunas de las características más importantes y que contribuirán al desarrollo de su masculinidad durante sus primeras décadas de vida. De los elfos aprende su amor por la naturaleza y todos los seres vivos, y de Gandalf el respeto por la vida, entre otras cosas. Juega con la ventaja de que pasa desapercibido por su aspecto externo de montaraz, lo que le permitirá dar a conocer su verdadera identidad a quien él quiera y cuando él decida, como se ve en el caso de los hobbits y en su encuentro con Éomer. De esta forma, Aragorn se nos presenta con diversas capas que se van destapando conforme avanza la historia y que nos dejan ver diversas facetas de este Héroe Mimético Superior.

Aunque jamás duda de su linaje y de que su destino es reclamar finalmente el trono de Gondor, sí que nos encontramos en ocasiones con un personaje que tiene dudas ante las decisiones tomadas y que trata de hacer lo más conveniente para todos. Los últimos capítulos nos darán las últimas pinceladas de este futuro rey, desarrollando su dote como sanador, que evidencia que es el legítimo rey de Gondor. De forma similar,

el lector es testigo de la fortaleza interior de este personaje cuando rechaza el Anillo Único al ofrecérselo Frodo, demostrando así que no tiene el mismo *ofermod* que Boromir.

Aragorn comparte con Faramir su carácter reflexivo ya que comprende la falibilidad de la raza de los hombres y nunca actúa de forma impulsiva. Es un líder diplomático que comprende la importancia del momento por el que está atravesando Tierra Media, donde la vida tal y como la entienden, se encuentra en manos de un pequeño hobbit cuya misión es destruir el Anillo de poder. Aragorn entiende que su destino se haya por tanto ligado al de Frodo, y no duda en ayudarlo en todo lo que puede, acompañándole en la Comunidad del Anillo. No obstante, Aragorn es consciente de que su destino también se haya junto a su gente, por eso no duda en prometerle a Boromir antes de morir éste que irá a Minas Tirith a ayudar a Gondor.

El capítulo 5 se centra en el tercer modelo analizado en esta tesis y que se corresponde al representado por los hobbits, que aunque se hayan encuadrados en un mismo modelo, acaban representando distintos patrones cuando vuelven a casa tras la Guerra del Anillo. Pero antes de llegar ahí tienen que pasar por una serie de experiencias, que son las que se analizan en este apartado, ya que serán fundamentales en su crecimiento como héroes. Debido a que cuando dejan la Comarca, Merry, Pippin, Frodo y Sam tienen masculinidades que no se encuentran del todo formadas, es difícil definir las con un nombre determinado. Debido al hecho de que finalmente su aventura en Tierra Media y su evolución como héroes es paralela a la evolución de sus masculinidades, he considerado que este modelo se puede denominar como permeable, entendiendo de esta forma que están abiertos a cualquier tipo de influencia que puedan recibir tras su interacción con otros personajes y su aprendizaje a lo largo de su misión con la Comunidad del Anillo y hasta que éste es destruido.

Sí que somos conscientes como lectores de algunas de las características más representativas de estos personajes y que los aproximan a los habitantes de la Inglaterra rural de la infancia de Tolkien, no en vano en alguna ocasión el escritor reconoció que de hecho la Comarca se parece al condado de Warwickshire donde pasó algunos de sus primeros años. De hecho, cuando les conocemos por primera vez, los hobbits están tan ligados a la tierra, a su hogar, y a todos los placeres mundanos como la comida, por ejemplo, que incluso se podría decir que desempeñan un tipo de masculinidad que se

puede considerar “doméstica”. Amantes del buen comer y el fumar en pipa, de carácter afable y alegre, los hobbits llevan una existencia del todo pacífica hasta que Frodo se ve obligado a dejar su casa para llevar hasta Rivendell el Anillo Único. Incluso dentro de la propia Comarca hay hobbits de distintos tipos, y esto también se ve trasladado a los cuatro hobbits protagonistas de esta novela. Si bien para crear sus otros personajes Tolkien tomó prestadas algunas características o situaciones de la literatura mitológica nórdica o épica, por ejemplo, para los hobbits parece ser que la influencia más inmediata fue la de su propia vida, puesto que ellos son la creación más auténtica de todas las razas (Carretero González 1996). Aunque en un principio no son grandes aventureros por regla general, sí existen algunos hobbits de algunas ramas genealógicas, como por ejemplo, los Bolsón, por cuyas venas sí que corre cierta curiosidad por la aventura y por lo que hay más allá de las fronteras de Hobbiton.

La amistad y los lazos de unión que existen entre los hobbits son fundamentales a la hora de analizar estos personajes. Aunque también representan las clases sociales tan características de la sociedad inglesa de la época de Tolkien, como podemos ver con las diferencias existentes entre Sam y el resto de los hobbits, las relaciones que entre ellos se establecen llegan a ser tan estrechas que en el caso de Sam y Frodo llegan a trascender la relación entre un empleado y su empleador.

Lo que más llama la atención es la inocencia con la que parten de Hobbiton, la cual incluso ha llevado a algunos expertos en Tolkien a compararles con algunos de los soldados que se alistaron para participar en la Primera Guerra Mundial, tal y como hizo el propio autor. La guerra les lleva a vivir experiencias que nunca habrían imaginado en su pacífica tierra natal. Podemos ver cómo ofrecen su mejor imagen cuando están juntos, sin embargo, debido a diversas circunstancias, Merry acaba convirtiéndose en escudero del rey Théoden en Rohan y Pippin en Guardia de la Ciudadela al servicio de Denethor en Gondor, mientras Sam y Frodo continúan su viaje hacia el Monte del Destino.

A pesar de que en un principio la mayoría de personajes que les rodean les ven prácticamente como a niños debido a su estatura, Merry y Pippin acabarán demostrando su valía en el campo de batalla, el primero en los Campos del Pelennor, y el segundo en la Batalla del Morannon. Terminan adquiriendo por tanto algunos de los atributos heroicos típicos que poseen los personajes con los que interactúan en las sociedades de

Rohan y Gondor. Aunque no terminan representando el mismo tipo de hipermasculinidad que sus habitantes, sí acaban convirtiéndose en el arquetipo del Guerrero que analizaron Gillette y Moore. Enérgicos, dispuestos a luchar si es necesario, ambos vuelven a la Comarca como dos hobbits con masculinidades completamente desarrolladas, hecho que se puede ver claramente cuando ven cómo su hogar ha sido sitiado y no dudan en tomar la iniciativa para expulsar a los responsables. Ven en la violencia contra los hombres comandados por Saruman la única forma de expulsarles, y para ello, no dudan en animar al resto de habitantes de la Comarca a que usen las armas contra estos rufianes. Alcanzan finalmente un determinado estatus como Héroes Miméticos Inferiores, con los que es fácil para el lector sentirse identificado.

La evolución de Sam y Frodo es un tanto distinta a la de los otros dos hobbits, precisamente porque las situaciones que han de vivir no son las mismas, y los personajes con los que interactúan a lo largo de su viaje hacia la destrucción del Anillo no son los mismos tampoco. Los principales enemigos contra los que tienen que luchar Frodo y su sirviente no son físicos: han de enfrentarse a las mismas vicisitudes que algunos soldados en la Batalla del Somme, por ejemplo, a la falta de sueño, el hambre, la desorientación, y la desesperación, que son algunos de sus peores obstáculos.

Durante el viaje que realizan hacia el Monte del Destino, destaca sobre todo la especial unión que hay entre ellos, con Sam siempre ocupándose de su señor, cuidando por su bienestar no sólo físico sino también mental ya que intenta animarle, por lo que física y psicológicamente es una gran ayuda para Frodo. De esta forma el texto resalta algunas de las características de Sam que tradicionalmente se han asociado a lo femenino. Si bien en un principio le vemos sobre todo como el jardinero de Frodo, que intenta siempre respetar las normas de etiqueta dirigiéndose a él como “señor”, lo cierto es que estas se disuelven en cierta forma para dar lugar a una gran relación de amistad en el libro. Aunque en un principio se nos presenta como un hobbit un tanto rústico y provinciano, lo cierto es que detrás de esa fachada se esconde un hobbit de gran fortaleza, positivo y optimista, que incluso cuando cree que Frodo está muerto, consigue vencer a la desesperación y decide continuar con la misión de destruir al Anillo. Se enfrenta sin dudar a Shelob y posteriormente a varios orcos para recuperar a su señor, se convierte sin duda en un héroe totalmente inesperado.

La masculinidad de Sam se ve permeada por su interacción con los elfos, en concreto con Galadriel, y por el amor que siente por su señor y que le hace incluso enfrentarse y luchar contra sus enemigos. Vemos en Sam por tanto parte del Guerrero que veíamos en Pippin y Merry; sin embargo, es su papel como encargado de reconstruir la Comarca y preservarla el que más destaca. Se acerca finalmente así al arquetipo del Mago, una especie de chamán y sanador de la tierra, aproximándose así incluso a Gandalf, que es otro de los personajes encargados de la preservación de Tierra Media. Su evolución está claramente marcada por su curiosidad, su interés por conocer a los elfos, sus ansias de aprender, y su gran actitud de sacrificio por Frodo. Al igual que Merry y Pippin acaba convirtiéndose en héroe de forma un tanto inesperada. De hecho, Dickerson y Evans le llaman el héroe de la reconstrucción de la Comarca, su sanador.

El sobrino heredero de Bilbo Bolsón, Frodo, es el personaje encargado de realizar la tarea más difícil en *The Lord of the Rings*: destruir el Anillo Único, cuya atracción comienza ya a sentir poco después de dejar su hogar camino a Rivendell. La lucha de Frodo es la más dura de todas, ya que debe luchar contra el Anillo mismo, por lo que su sufrimiento es más interno, puesto que se convierte en su obsesión. En su viaje hacia el Monte del Destino, Frodo tiene la posibilidad de conocer a Faramir y también de poner en práctica la enseñanza de Gandalf: en varias ocasiones perdona la vida a Gollum, entendiendo también el sufrimiento por el que Gollum ha tenido que pasar todos estos años en que ha portado el Anillo. Nadie más que él comprende lo que ha vivido esta pobre criatura, por lo que es incapaz de hacerle daño ya que en cierta forma se ve reflejado en él. Sólo al final comprenderá cuál es la consecuencia vital de haber sentido pena por Gollum y haber sido misericordioso perdonándole la vida: su misericordia será la responsable de que finalmente se destruya el Anillo Único.

Frodo es sin duda un Héroe Mimético Inferior con el que es sencillo sentirse identificado, sentir pena por todo el sufrimiento que experimenta, y sobre todo, al final, ya que consigue salvar el mundo de las garras de Sauron, pero no para él, por lo que su sacrificio es máximo. De su relación con Gandalf y Faramir aprende que la vida es lo más importante que hay, hasta tal punto que cuando vuelve a la Comarca, Frodo se ha convertido en un pacifista, y su patrón permeable de masculinidad no sólo ha adquirido

atributos de los ya vistos en Faramir o el Mago, sino que va incluso más allá y se mantiene al margen de cualquier lucha, alejado de cualquier forma de violencia.

Algunos estudiosos de Tolkien como Garth, Shippey o Croft, ven en Frodo un ejemplo claro de soldado con desorden postraumático, o como se conocía en la época de las guerras mundiales, vuelve a casa padeciendo la neurosis de la guerra. Y no sólo eso, ya que al volver a Hobbiton, nadie alaba lo que ha hecho por el mundo, lo cual es un shock para los cuatro hobbits. Después de todo lo que han hecho, vuelven a casa y nadie les recibe como se merecen, es lo que Shippey llama la desilusión del veterano que regresa a casa (2001).

Una de los análisis más interesantes sobre las relaciones de los hobbits de los últimos años es también uno de los más controvertidos para algunos expertos en Tolkien; es la relectura de la novela desde el punto de vista de los estudios *queer*, en los que se centra el capítulo 6. No se puede llevar a cabo un estudio sobre la obra de Tolkien desde el punto de vista de los estudios de género sin analizar algunas de estas lecturas. Una de las más comunes se encuadra dentro del género de ficción *Slash*, que intenta realzar la sensualidad de algunas relaciones entre personajes del mismo sexo. Aunque no se centra únicamente en ofrecer una relectura de índole sexual sobre estas relaciones, sí que abundan las páginas web en las que los fans de la obra dejan volar su imaginación y reescriben (e incluso ilustran gráficamente) algunas escenas entre personajes como Frodo y Sam o Legolas y Gimli, interpretándolas como relaciones homosexuales.

Uno de los temas también más estudiados acerca de la novela encuadrado dentro de estos estudios *queer* es la presencia de homoerotismo en las relaciones de algunos personajes. En mi tesis intento explicar la diferencia que existe principalmente entre los términos homosocialidad, homofilia y homoerotismo, entendiendo por el primero las relaciones establecidas entre personas del mismo sexo, por homofilia la predilección por este tipo de amistades, que incluso puede derivar en momentos de una cercana intimidad y expresiones de cariño sin llegar a ser sexuales, y por último el homoerotismo, entendido como un tipo de homofilia que puede llegar a estar caracterizada por una cierta intimidad física con personas del mismo sexo, llegando incluso a mantener encuentros sexuales.

Si nos centramos en realizar un análisis textual de la novela, teniendo en cuenta la biografía de Tolkien y los momentos que ya hemos explicado, como su experiencia en la Primera Guerra Mundial o sus relaciones de amistad casi exclusivamente con otros hombres a lo largo de su vida, podemos ver cómo las amistades entre los hobbits se encuentran encuadradas dentro de la homofilia y las relaciones con el resto de miembros de la Comunidad del Anillo son homosociales. Debido a la casi ausencia de mujeres en la novela, este tipo de relaciones son prácticamente obligatorias ya que a quien tienen fundamentalmente más cercanos para establecer relaciones amistosas son otros personajes del mismo sexo. La amistad de los hobbits se basa en términos como el respeto, el afecto, la confianza, la humildad y la generosidad, y con el resto de los personajes son igualmente relaciones basadas en el respeto y la admiración.

Si bien es cierto que la línea que delimita a veces una relación como homosocial u homoerótica es un tanto subjetiva y se basa en la interpretación de una escena, sin ser exactamente lo que nos ofrece el escritor en el texto, es entonces comprensible que algunos episodios entre Sam y Frodo, basados en la cercana intimidad que les caracteriza conforme se acercan al final, y sus gestos físicos de cariño y atención, sobre todo de Sam a Frodo, hayan sido releídos como la expresión entre dos personajes homosexuales. Aunque lo que persigue el género Slash es contrarrestar la heteronormatividad casi obligatoria de algunos textos ofreciendo lecturas alternativas pero igualmente plausibles, no podemos olvidar la importancia del análisis biográfico del autor en este caso. De esta forma, aunque ciertas escenas entre estos dos hobbits puedan ser interpretadas como homoeróticas, no vienen sino a reflejar algunos de los momentos vividos en las trincheras en los que algunos soldados eran partícipes de una cierta intimidad, que en ocasiones se traducían en relaciones homosexuales y otras veces no. Sin pretender negar la existencia de este tipo de intimidad en la Primera Guerra Mundial, Fussell comenta que la mayoría de las relaciones eran castas e incluso habla de una homosexualidad temporal en ocasiones (2000), como he intentado demostrar en el caso de los hobbits.

Los estudios *queer* ofrecen una reinterpretación muy interesante y original sobre el texto de Tolkien, pero considerando sus acérrimas convicciones religiosas y sus propias relaciones personales con otros hombres, el texto parece estar más bien lleno de ejemplos de homofilia y homosocialidad que de homoerotismo, pero no puedo negar

que algunas escenas sí pueden ser interpretadas como homoeróticas. Como algunos expertos han dejado ver, Tolkien simplemente se sentía más a gusto escribiendo sobre relaciones entre hombres ya que era lo que él mismo había experimentado; sin duda, como escritor de romances probablemente no habría triunfado. De forma similar, trasladaba el tipo de relaciones que se encontraba en los textos que admiraba como *Beowulf*, del que era gran conocedor, a su propia obra.

Finalmente, el último capítulo de mi tesis se centra en un concepto introducido por Judith/Jack Halberstam, el de la masculinidad femenina, sin hombres. Si bien al principio tras la publicación de *The Lord of the Rings* surgieron numerosas voces que juzgaron al autor de misógino y reprocharon la escasez de mujeres en su obra, es precisamente una de ellas la que más ha sido analizada de la obra de Tolkien en los estudios de género. Halberstam explica en su investigación el hecho de que la masculinidad puede encontrarse perfectamente en mujeres, al igual que la feminidad en hombres. Este argumento defiende sin duda el carácter de constructo social del género y pretende contrarrestar la presentación binaria y restrictiva del mismo – la masculinidad y la feminidad existen de forma independiente a la biología de la persona.

En el caso de Éowyn, este personaje aparece con dos roles claramente delimitados: uno de ellos es el que su sociedad le impone y que le impide cumplir su sueño de luchar al igual que el resto de los Rohirrim, el otro es el ella termina adoptando para poder luchar. Como *Lady of Rohan*, hace ver a Aragorn, y a la vez al lector, que su mayor temor es tener que vivir en una jaula dorada. Ella quiere ser libre para poder actuar como una doncella guerrera independiente, similar a las doncellas escuderas de las sagas escandinavas. El análisis de este personaje guarda varias similitudes por tanto con otras guerreras nórdicas como Freya, ambas asociadas al oro, la guerra y la belleza. Es igualmente heredera de algunos roles de mujeres germánicas como Wealhtheow, por ejemplo en su papel diplomático al ofrecer una copa para brindar al rey y a otros guerreros como Aragorn. A pesar de que Tolkien le concede un rol importante dentro de su sociedad, ella es incapaz de reconocerlo y sólo quiere tener la libertad de poder actuar como su hermano Éomer y ser libre para acudir al campo de batalla.

Con el objetivo de poder tomar parte en la guerra, y también influenciada por el amor no correspondido de Aragorn y que le hace rozar la desesperación, decide

disfrazarse como uno más de los Rohirrim, ocultando así su verdadera identidad. Al travestirse, abraza el tipo de masculinidad de los hombres de Rohan, que será lo que le permita asumir una actitud guerrera y abandonar la posición que ella concibe como pasiva para adquirir una posición más activa y dominante. En la batalla de los Campos del Pelennor consigue finalmente ofrecer una imagen de perfecta asimilación de masculinidad y feminidad, una imagen un tanto andrógina, principalmente al quitarse el casco de su armadura, cuando le deja ver al Señor de los Nazgûl que en realidad es una mujer travestida de hombre, y por tanto puede hacer frente a la profecía que dice que ningún hombre le puede matar. Para Éowyn, este es un momento fundamental en su trayectoria como doncella guerrera, alcanzando lo que ella tanto ansiaba, al igual que los Rohirrim, la gloria en el campo de batalla. Sin embargo, Tolkien no le concede en el texto principal el elogio que se merece Éowyn ya que sólo recibe cierta alabanza en los apéndices.

La curación de Éowyn de sus heridas tiene lugar en las Casas de Curación de Minas Tirith, donde conoce a Faramir. El alcance de estas heridas trasciende lo físico, como indica Aragorn. En su proceso de sanación, intercambia varias conversaciones y momentos con Faramir, de forma que gradualmente el futuro Senescal de Gondor se enamora de ella, y finalmente, ella de él. La evolución del personaje de Éowyn es tal que decide finalmente dejar atrás su pasado como doncella guerrera y comenzar una vida nueva junto a Faramir. El hecho de que deja atrás la hipermasculinidad de los Rohirrim para abrazar las características de personajes como Faramir, Aragorn y Gandalf, que se centran más en la vida que en la muerte, es altamente significativo. Aunque este hecho se ha criticado en algunos artículos ya que se considera que Tolkien devuelve a Éowyn su rol inicial pasivo, en realidad le está concediendo un rol muy importante, parecido al de Faramir, el de sanadora. Tras una época de desesperación y tristeza, decide que la vida tiene más importancia que la muerte, por lo que renace y adopta un rol más acorde con la Cuarta Edad de la Tierra Media. Tolkien le da importancia así a atributos positivos, más bien femeninos, como el rechazo de la violencia a favor de la paz (Benvenuto 2006).

En mi tesis, tomo como partida el análisis de todos estos personajes y los distintos patrones de masculinidad que Tolkien crea para ellos y los comparo con los de los personajes de la adaptación cinematográfica de Peter Jackson después del análisis de

cada personaje en la novela. Considero muy interesante ver cómo Jackson los reinterpreta para un público totalmente distinto al que recibió por primera vez la novela en los años cincuenta, e incluso el uso de un medio totalmente distinto como es el audiovisual también influye en la reinterpretación del director de Nueva Zelanda y sus guionistas Fran Walsh y Philippa Boyens.

En la adaptación de Jackson nos encontramos por tanto con diversas variaciones y recreaciones de personajes que les distinguen, en mayor o menor medida, de los personajes de la novela. En primer lugar, la hipermasculinidad que hemos visto representada por personajes como Théoden, Denethor, Éomer y Boromir, aparece en parte adaptada o disminuida en el caso de Théoden. Al introducir a un rey y guerrero al que prácticamente tiene que convencer Aragorn para que luche, Jackson nos presenta a un personaje que, incluso tras haber sido “curado” por Gandalf, no recupera del todo la masculinidad que había perdido al coartar su voluntad Gríma. Nos encontramos por tanto con un monarca que pretende evitar la lucha con el fin de proteger a su gente; comprende que ya se han perdido bastantes vidas como para volver a pedirle a sus hombres que vuelvan a la batalla. Sin embargo, al verse asediados en el Abismo de Helm, Aragorn le convence de que han de luchar hasta el final, por lo que acaba siguiendo el consejo de Aragorn. El hecho de que Jackson reinterprete a Théoden nos acerca a un rey más humano y menos centrado en obtener la gloria en el campo de batalla, un rey consciente de las consecuencias horribles de la guerra y que intenta proteger a su gente de estas.

El personaje de Éomer no parece estar del todo desarrollado en la pantalla, o al menos no tal y como lo está en el libro, pero sí responde a una imagen hipermasculina de un Rohirrim a través de una serie de primeros planos en los que podemos ver al heredero de Théoden como un guerrero fiero, fuerte y que incluso se siente superior a personajes como Merry, afirmando que debido a su debilidad, no tiene cabida en el campo de batalla. Algo similar ocurre con Boromir, cuya hipermasculinidad en la pantalla también es similar a la del libro. Sin embargo, Jackson introduce para él algunas leves variaciones que presentan al personaje con un lado humano muy desarrollado, como se puede ver en su relación con los hobbits antes de Moria y tras la muerte de Gandalf. Igualmente, en la última escena de Boromir con Aragorn, en la que Boromir se arrepiente de haber intentado robar el Anillo a Frodo, el hecho de que

finalmente termine aceptando a Aragorn como su rey a pesar de su reticencia inicial, consigue aproximar el personaje al espectador, hacerlo más humano, a la vez que vemos cómo se redime de sus errores.

Dentro del modelo de hipermasculinidad, la interpretación de Jackson del personaje de Denethor es sin duda una de las más llamativas desde un punto de vista visual de la película. Con este personaje, Jackson decide analizar en la pantalla la relación que mantiene con sus hijos, con su claro favoritismo por Boromir. De forma similar, desarrolla al máximo el delirio de este personaje, explicado en la novela por su uso del *palantír*, y aquí un poco dejado a la libre interpretación del espectador. En esta relación de poder y superioridad con respecto a sus hijos, Jackson nos muestra un Faramir que intenta hacer cualquier cosa por complacer a su padre, y en una de sus escenas juntos, vemos cómo comienza a delirar al enviar a su hijo menor a una misión suicida tras ver la aparición de su hijo muerto. A pesar de las variaciones en el personaje, Jackson consigue crear para él un tipo de masculinidad hegemónica parecido al de la novela, basado en el autoritarismo del Senescal, su afán de controlarlo todo y a todos, y su miedo a perder el poder que ha ostentado hasta entonces, y que ve peligrar con la aparición de Aragorn.

Jackson consigue en general humanizar a todos los héroes de Tierra Media, adaptándolos y en cierta forma, rebajándolos, a Héroes Miméticos Inferiores. Este es el caso, por ejemplo, de Aragorn. Al presentarnos a un hombre que en cierta forma duda de la fortaleza de su linaje y es por tanto reacio a abrazar su destino como futuro rey de Gondor, el director está reinterpretando a este personaje, convirtiéndole en un personaje más poliédrico. Beatty incluso sugiere que el personaje está reescrito con el fin de reflejar un tipo de masculinidad contemporánea (2006). En las películas nos encontramos con un Aragorn inseguro y que carga con el peso de ser un descendiente de Isildur, lo cual le hace dudar de su verdadera fortaleza. La razón por la cual Jackson nos presenta esta interpretación de Aragorn es porque quería crear un personaje más complejo, y para el cual acaba incluso presentando varios primeros planos que aúnan la parte más humana del personaje con su lado de guerrero.

En este sentido, el director y los guionistas también decidieron incorporar un elemento que le diera más tensión dramática al argumento original de Tolkien, que consistió en desarrollar la relación entre Aragorn y Arwen. De esta forma, introducen a

una Arwen que anima a Aragorn a abrazar su destino y aceptar quién es, cosa que no sucede en la novela. Terminan creando así un nuevo tipo de héroe, más posmoderno, con sus errores y sus dudas, y aunque se puede seguir comparando con el tipo nuevo de masculinidad que será característico en la Cuarta Edad de Tierra Media y claramente diferenciado del de Denethor o Théoden, hay ciertos aspectos de él que Jackson no termina de desarrollar, como su papel de sanador, y que también sirven para diferenciarle de cómo le crea Tolkien.

En lo concerniente al papel de Faramir, considero que Jackson no sólo lo reinterpreta con respecto al de Tolkien sino que lo crea prácticamente nuevo. Desarrolla en él un tipo de masculinidad basada en la gran influencia que su padre ejerce sobre él, e incluso le presenta como un ser corruptible, ya que llega a intentar llevar a Frodo y Sam ante su padre para demostrarle su valía, lo cual es totalmente opuesto a lo que sucede en la novela. Faramir representa al soldado que comprende que la guerra sólo debe tener lugar bajo unas razones muy justificadas, por lo que al crear Tolkien a uno de los personajes más modernos de la novela con respecto a su forma de pensar, el hecho de que Jackson le cambie tanto sólo responde a un interés cinematográfico de incrementar la tensión dramática en ciertos momentos de la película. De todas formas, Jackson no olvida, en su reinterpretación del personaje, dotarle de una actitud ciertamente a favor de la vida, como lo hace Tolkien. Igualmente, el director respeta el tipo de masculinidad con el que aparece en la novela, un modelo nuevo en Tierra Media, distinto a la masculinidad hegemónica autoritaria de su padre hasta el momento, a favor de un tipo más colaborativo y fraternal, menos impositivo.

Con Gandalf, Jackson hace algo muy parecido como ya hemos visto con Aragorn y Faramir, ya que le reinterpreta como un Héroe Mimético Inferior, con el que es más fácil sentirse identificado. Al hacer a un mago más “mortal” y desarrollar el actor su lado más humano y ordinario, consiguen presentarnos a un personaje claramente humanizado. Jackson explota sin duda su imagen paternal (y su sentido del humor) con los hobbits, a través de primeros planos en los que les vemos juntos, y otros en los que vemos a Gandalf triste o sufriendo al ver que Frodo se ofrece voluntario para destruir el Anillo.

En ambos textos, el narrativo y el cinematográfico, vemos a un Gandalf que actúa como guía y mentor del resto de personajes de la Comunidad del Anillo, y que por

tanto es fiel al arquetipo del Viejo Sabio. Tras su resurrección, sin embargo, Jackson desarrolla la faceta guerrera de Gandalf, y le vemos en varias ocasiones luchando, uniendo por tanto su imagen a la de un fiero guerrero. Sin embargo, al intentar hacer de él un personaje más realista, el director se centra en su lado más humano, que en ocasiones se traduce en algunas escenas cómicas, sobre todo con los hobbits.

Con respecto a estos personajes, el director les presenta con las características que tienen cuando aparecen al principio de la novela: amantes del buen comer y de fumar, son personajes alegres y de naturaleza bondadosa, pero exagera mucho más su inmadurez en el caso de Merry y Pippin, por ejemplo. Al igual que en la novela, en las películas sus masculinidades siguen un proceso de evolución que no tiene las mismas consecuencias. Si bien en la novela, cuando vuelven a Hobbiton son claros ejemplos de cómo sus masculinidades han fluctuado y se han visto influenciadas por sus experiencias y el resto de personajes con los que han tenido trato, en la película Jackson no desarrolla tanto a Merry y Pippin como ejemplos del arquetipo del Guerrero. Aunque es cierto que sí que luchan, el hecho de volver a una Comarca donde no ha habido aparentemente ninguna intrusión, no permite que el director desarrolle ese arquetipo en ellos. De igual forma, tampoco vemos a un Sam que se encarga de reconstruir la Comarca ni un Frodo pacifista que rehúye cualquier tipo de lucha. El director se ha centrado en desarrollar sobre todo su vena cómica, y en el caso de Sam y Frodo, llega incluso a romper momentáneamente la relación entre los dos hobbits, lo cual jamás habría sucedido con los personajes del libro. No podemos decir por tanto que lleve a la pantalla el mismo carácter permeable de las masculinidades de los hobbits en la novela, ya que al omitir ciertos capítulos de la novela, la evolución de los hobbits es distinta.

Con respecto a la representación de Éowyn en la gran pantalla, el director y los guionistas deciden desarrollar algo más la relación entre la dama de Rohan y Aragorn, e incluso llegan a jugar con la idea de que Aragorn siente algo por ella. Con respecto a su carácter de doncella guerrera, hay una pequeña variación en comparación con la Éowyn de la novela, ya que no terminan de desarrollar la necesidad que tiene Éowyn de travestirse de hombre y adoptar una identidad distinta; en ningún momento se nos informa de que se convierte en Dernhelm. En cualquier caso, sí que respeta Jackson el hecho de que anhela obtener la gloria en el campo de batalla y teme permanecer toda la vida enjaulada.

Debido a la dificultad de mostrar a un Dernhelm que sólo Merry reconoce como Éowyn, Jackson finalmente enfatiza menos su masculinidad femenina en la pantalla, y la presenta simplemente como una mujer guerrera, sin pararse mucho a explicar cómo se ha visto obligada a adoptar la identidad de un hombre. Sí hay algo, por el contrario, que Jackson consigue con respecto a este personaje y a diferencia de la novela, y es que finalmente Théoden es testigo de la lucha de Éowyn, que consigue acabar con el Señor de los Nazgûl, de forma que consigue recibir el elogio de su tío antes de morir.

Al igual que con los hobbits, Jackson omite el final que Tolkien le depara a Éowyn en la novela, no nos explica cómo decide finalmente abrazar un código heroico superior que pretende defender la vida sobre todas las cosas, alejándose así de la violencia que había adquirido al representar la hipermasculinidad de los Rohirrim. Este es quizás uno de los principales fallos de la interpretación de Jackson, dejar el destino de varios personajes un poco en el aire.

A pesar de no haber analizado el personaje de Arwen en la novela, ya que prácticamente pasa desapercibido y sólo se sabe de él en referencia a Aragorn, Jackson y sus guionistas ofrecen una interpretación totalmente distinta de la hija de Elrond. En un principio incluso tenían como intención darle más prominencia en la película a sus dotes guerreras, siempre con la intención de atraer a un público más amplio, pero finalmente acabaron descartándolo tras leer algunas críticas negativas en unos foros en Internet. A pesar de esto, sí desarrollan en cierta forma una parte masculina del personaje de Arwen al sustituir a Glorfindel y presentarla a ella como un jinete veloz y habilidoso que consigue librar a Frodo de los Jinetes Negros.

Tras ofrecer al espectador esta masculinidad femenina momentánea en Arwen, sin embargo vuelve a ofrecernos su parte más pasiva en el resto de las películas, hasta que finalmente Jackson acaba dándole un final feliz. Lo interesante de su reinterpretación es que no se queda en la pasividad con la que aparece en la novela, sino que, al igual que Éowyn, Jackson nos ofrece una imagen bastante contemporánea de ambas mujeres como enérgicas y dueñas de su destino, y que engloban características tanto femeninas como masculinas.

Tras analizar la construcción de masculinidades y la reconstrucción que hace Jackson en su adaptación cinematográfica, lo que demuestra esta tesis es sin duda el

carácter fluctuante de la masculinidad dentro de la obra de Tolkien y cómo es necesario hacer una reinterpretación de las masculinidades de la novela para el cine.

Las sociedades patriarcales de Rohan y Gondor, caracterizadas por un patrón de masculinidad hetenormativa basada en el alarde de virtudes consideradas como varoniles, la competitividad y la consecución de la gloria en el campo de batalla, son un claro ejemplo de cómo la masculinidad se ha asociado, incluso en la literatura de las sagas épicas, a la violencia. Tolkien no hace sino expresar esta asociación en los Rohirrim, uniendo de esta forma la hipermasculinidad a la muerte. Se demuestra también así que este patrón está al final de sus días con sus máximos mandatarios al final de la Tercera Edad, Théoden y Denethor. El hecho de que ambos se presenten incluso mayores de lo que aparentan debido al dominio al que les tienen sometidos Saruman y Sauron, no es sino un símbolo de su pérdida de poder, y de fortaleza física y mental. Nos encontramos por tanto ante un tipo de masculinidad que se muestra obsoleta, y esto lo demuestra el hecho de que de los cuatro representantes principales de la hipermasculinidad en Tierra Media, sólo sobrevive uno, Éomer.

El nuevo patrón de masculinidad que preponderará en la Cuarta Edad de Tierra Media es el representado por Aragorn y Faramir. Es un modelo que se diferencia de su antecesor porque, sobre todo, se desliga de la violencia y se muestra respetuoso ante toda forma de vida, se aproxima por tanto a la vida en vez de a la muerte, como sí hace la hipermasculinidad. Estos personajes no comparten con Boromir o Éomer el mismo concepto sobre la guerra, que es lo que les reportará la gloria, sino que entienden que la guerra sólo debe tener lugar en casos muy justificados. Esto contrasta con la imagen estereotipada del guerrero amante de la lucha que en ocasiones las sagas épicas nos han mostrado. Por consiguiente, Aragorn y Faramir se parecen más a la interpretación del héroe que apareció con el resurgimiento de la literatura artúrica, que unieron el ideal de caballero artúrico a algunas virtudes cristianas (Fendler 2003). Vemos así por ejemplo la importancia que tiene la misericordia para Gandalf y sus discípulos, los cuales van a la batalla sólo porque tienen un objetivo concreto, entre ellos salvar a Tierra Media de Sauron.

Estos tres personajes representantes del modelo de masculinidad considerado como nuevo en Tierra Media responden por tanto a un nuevo tipo de héroe tolkieniano más en consonancia con el pensamiento ético y religioso del autor (Carretero González

1996). Shippey incluso añade que la intención de Tolkien es crear héroes nuevos que son capaces de una gran valentía, pero que son radicalmente distintos a otros como Éomer o Boromir (2003). No hay duda de su masculinidad en ningún momento, simplemente son representantes de un modelo nuevo que pretende incorporar los atributos más positivos de la feminidad y la masculinidad.

Los hobbits son también un ejemplo claro del carácter fluido y cambiante de la masculinidad, ya que dejan la Comarca prácticamente siendo jóvenes cuya masculinidad está en proceso de formación, de forma que es permeable y fácilmente influenciable por las interacciones y situaciones que tendrán que vivir a lo largo de su aventura. De esta forma, Pippin y Merry se convierten en el arquetipo del Guerrero, Sam en el sanador de la Comarca, y Frodo en un pacifista. El capítulo de “El Saneamiento de la Comarca” es simplemente indispensable para comprender cómo las masculinidades de estos hobbits han evolucionado desde que se marcharon al principio de la trama. Los tipos de masculinidades que Tolkien construye para ellos al final están basados en la amistad, la lealtad, la humildad y la sencillez; no se basan en la ambición o la manipulación, por lo que tienen tintes parecidos al tipo de masculinidades de Aragorn, Faramir y Gandalf, sobre todo en el caso de Sam y Frodo. Representan por tanto un tipo de masculinidad más moderna, más en consonancia con la que se desarrolló en el período entreguerras a principios del siglo XX.

En cierta forma podemos incluso concluir que la hipermasculinidad se halla en crisis en la Tercera Edad de Tierra Media, y vendrá a ser sustituida por unos patrones más modernos y nuevos, que son los representados por personajes como Aragorn y los hobbits. Igualmente el análisis del personaje de Éowyn consigue demostrar cómo es posible la masculinidad sin hombres.

Jackson consigue adaptar y reinterpretar todas las masculinidades del libro para la audiencia del siglo XXI, consigue hacerlas más increíbles, de forma que acerca las posturas de los personajes de Tolkien a la sociedad actual. El hecho de que les humaniza nos puede hacer verles como héroes posmodernos, con sus errores y sus virtudes, y sus masculinidades son por tanto más fáciles de comprender por los espectadores. De esta forma, consigue reinterpretar las características femeninas y masculinas de estos personajes, que sufren pena, dolor, dudas, miedo, y que a la vez son fuertes, comprensivos y cariñosos. Son por tanto masculinidades que se asemejan menos a las

literarias de textos épicos como las que nos encontramos en la novela, y más a las actuales.

Llama bastante la atención el hecho de que ya en los años cincuenta, que fue cuando se publicó la novela, Tolkien hiciera referencia a masculinidades distintas a la preponderante y hegemónica de su época. Esto nos hace ver cómo el propio escritor era consciente de la variada existencia de distintas masculinidades.

El análisis de la obra de Tolkien y la reconstrucción de Jackson pone más que nunca de actualidad los estudios de las masculinidades, abriendo por tanto un gran campo que ofrece una interesante aproximación a obras literarias de cualquier época, susceptibles de ser analizadas desde este punto de vista.

La doctoranda Beatriz Domínguez Ruiz y la directora de la tesis Margarita Carretero González garantizamos, al firmar esta tesis doctoral, que el trabajo ha sido realizado por la doctoranda bajo la dirección de la directora de la tesis y hasta donde nuestro conocimiento alcanza, en la realización del trabajo, se han respetado los derechos de otros/as autores/as a ser citados, cuando se han utilizado sus resultados o publicaciones.

<Granada> <9 de noviembre de 2015>

Directora de la Tesis

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Margarita Carretero González', written in a cursive style.

Fdo.: Margarita Carretero González

Doctoranda

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Beatriz Domínguez Ruiz', written in a cursive style with the name 'Beatriz' clearly visible.

Fdo.: Beatriz Domínguez Ruiz