"It is a thing passing strange to me that the
healing hand should also wield the sword":
Aragorn's masculinities in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*

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Abstract

This thesis analyses the masculinities of Aragorn in *The Lord of the Rings*, focusing on two types of masculinity, hegemonic masculinity, and alternative masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity refers to the masculinity that is held in higher regard than other types of masculinity, and is in a position of power in society. Alternative masculinities are the masculinities that fall outside the hegemonic norm, and they often have qualities that are considered feminine. Aragorn's character appears to have both hegemonically and alternatively masculine traits, of which the following were chosen for closer examination: for hegemonically masculine characteristics Aragorn's depiction as a mysterious stranger, him acting as a leader, and him being a warrior were selected, and for alternative masculinity his work as a healer and him in comparison to Boromir were chosen. The analysis was conducted by examining all the passages of text that included descriptions of Aragorn, his actions, or his words, utilizing close reading to ensure attention to details and thorough understanding of the text. The analysis suggests that Aragorn's character has a balance of hegemonic and alternative masculinities, both of which are equally important for him in his journey to become the king of Gondor.

Tiivistelmä

Tämä opinnäytetyö analysoi Aragornin maskuliinisuuksia *Tarussa Sormusten Herrasta*, keskittyen kahteen erityyppiseen maskuliinisuuteen, hegemoniseen maskuliinisuuteen ja alternatiiviseen maskuliinisuuteen. Hegemonisella maskuliinisuudella viitataan maskuliinisuuteen, joka saa osakseen enemmän arvostusta kuin muut maskuliinisuudet, ja joka on valta-asemassa yhteiskunnassa. Alternatiiviset maskuliinisuudet ovat puolestaan niitä maskuliinisuuksia, jotka jäävät hegemonisen normin ulkopuolelle, ja niissä on usein feminiinisenä pidettyjä piirteitä. Aragornin hahmo vaikuttaa omaavan sekä hegemonisesti että alternatiivisesti maskuliinisia piirteitä, joista seuraavat piirteet on valittu tarkempaan tarkasteluun: hegemonisesti maskuliinisista piirteistä Aragornin kuvaus salaperäisenä muukalaisena, hänen toimintansa johtajana ja hänen toimintansa sotilaana, ja alternatiivisen maskuliinisuuden piirteistä hänen työnsä parantajana ja hän verrattuna Boromiriin. Analyysi on tehty tarkastelemalla kaikkia niitä tekstinosia, joissa esiintyy kuvausta Aragornista, hänen toimintaansa tai hänen sanojansa. Analyysissa on hyödynnetty lähilukua sen varmistamiseksi, että yksityiskohtiin on kiinnitetty huomiota, ja että teksti on tullut syvällisesti ymmärretyksi. Analyysin perusteella voidaan päätellä, että Aragornin hahmolla on hegemonisten ja

alternatiivisten maskuliinisuuksien tasapaino, joista molemmat ovat yhtä tärkeitä hänen matkallaan kohti Gondorin kuninkuutta.

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1 Introduction

Despite *The Lord of the Rings* being published over sixty years ago, it remains as one of the staples in the world of fantasy literature for adults. It could even be claimed that *The Lord of the Rings* was the book that created the genre of high fantasy, as before it, fantasy was primarily seen as fairy tales for children. *The Lord of the Rings* is an epic adventure, filled with wars and mighty heroes, most of whom happen to be male. While the female characters in the story have been researched rather extensively, there seems to be less focus on the men. This is why I chose to focus on one important man of the story, Aragorn, and determine what types of masculinities he displays. I examine the notions of hegemonic masculinity and alternative or subordinate masculinities in modern Western culture, and compare them to the behaviours and attributes that Aragorn displays. In order to thoroughly explore his character, I will analyse the words, actions and portrayals of Aragorn. I will begin my thesis by introducing the research material in section 2. Section 3 is dedicated to the theoretical framework and will define my research approach as well as discuss theories about masculinities. In section 4 I will present previous research related to my thesis. Section 5 contains the analysis, which is divided into analysis of Aragorn's hegemonically masculine qualities, followed by his alternatively masculine qualities. Finally, section 6 will provide discussion and conclusion of the thesis.

2 Research material

This section describes the research material. This section also discusses the story of *The Lord of the Rings*, the writing and publishing process, and the version of the books used in this thesis.

2.1 The Lord of the Rings

The Lord of the Rings is a high fantasy novel, often regarded as the first fantasy novel geared towards adult audiences. It is set in Middle-earth – a mythical land with numerous fantasy elements, such as wizards and dragons, Elves and Dwarves. There is also a small, peace-loving people called Hobbits, and *The Lord of the Rings* is the story of one hobbit, Frodo Baggins, going on a quest to destroy a magical ring that gives power to its creator, the evil might of Middle-earth called Sauron. Frodo is accompanied with friends from different peoples of Middle-earth, and together they face various challenges, but eventually manage to destroy the Ring and thus Sauron.

The Lord of the Rings originated as a sequel to Tolkien's 1937 fantasy story, *The Hobbit*, and was nowhere near the epic proportions of the final version of the novel (Carpenter, 1977, pp. 182–186). Like *The Lord of the Rings, The Hobbit* is also set in Middle-earth. However, the genre of *The Hobbit* is entirely different from *The Lord of the Rings*; despite the shared world, *The Hobbit* much more resembles a fairytale for children than high fantasy. Tolkien began drafting the story of *The Lord of the Rings* almost immediately after the publishing of *The Hobbit* in September of 1937, but the work took years to complete (Carpenter, 1977, p. 185). Even in the time of publishing *The Hobbit*, Tolkien had constructed most of the history and mythology of Middle-earth in *The Silmarillion* (Carpenter, 1977, pp.183–184), but not much of the material was present in *The Hobbit*. On the other hand, *The Lord of the Rings* contains significantly more of the mythology and history, which resulted in it becoming much longer and a completely different genre than *The Hobbit* (Carpenter, 1977, pp. 185–204). *The Lord of the Rings* was published in three parts: the first part, *The Fellowship of the Ring* in the summer of 1954, and the following two parts, *The Two Towers* and *The Return of the King*, soon after (Carpenter, 1977, p. 217). The *Lord of the Rings* has numerous editions, of which I am using the version published in 2014, which includes three separate books in which the page numbers continue where the previous book ends.

Aragorn is one of the main characters of *The Lord of the Rings*. He is the descendant of a line of kings of Gondor, but lives in exile because of Sauron attempting to eliminate all of his

kind. He and the rest of his kindred live in the north as Rangers, whose leader Aragorn is. The main responsibility of the Rangers is to secretly protect other people from Sauron and other possible dangers. Aragorn's father is killed by orcs when Aragorn is young, and he is then taken by Elrond of Rivendell to live with the Elves there. When Aragorn is twenty-one years old, Elrond reveals his true identity to him. In Rivendell Aragorn also meets the love of his life, Arwen daughter of Elrond, whom he marries when he becomes the king of Gondor and Arnor. During the course of *The Lord of the Rings* Aragorn is part of the Fellowship who aim to destroy the Ring of Power, and fights in the war against Sauron. He claims his rightful place on the throne of Gondor by demonstrating his power as a healer, which is said to be the sign of the true king's return. He then reclaims the lost kingdom of Arnor as well, and rules the land justly and with compassion.

2.2 J. R. R. Tolkien

This section focuses on the author of *The Lord of the Rings*; it discusses his life, the influences behind *The Lord of the Rings*, and possible factors in Tolkien's life that might have influenced his views on masculinity.

2.2.1 Tolkien's life

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien was born in Bloemfontein, South Africa on 3 January 1892 to his parents Mabel and Arthur (Carpenter, 1977, p. 12). They were both English, but Arthur had moved to South Africa because of business opportunities (Carpenter, 1977, pp. 9–10). Arthur Tolkien was a banker, and the move to South Africa proved fruitful for his career: he became the manager of an important branch, had good income, and was provided a house (Carpenter, 1977, p. 10). This, and Mabel turning 21, made the couple's marriage possible (Carpenter, 1977, p. 10). Mabel and Arthur had been engaged for three years already, but Mabel's father, John Suffield, did not permit an official engagement so early because of Mabel being only 18 years at the time (Carpenter, 1977, pp. 9–10). However, once Mabel became 21, her father allowed her to travel to South Africa and marry Arthur (Carpenter, 1977, p. 10). Despite giving his approval for the marriage, John Suffield never particularly liked Arthur, because he was of German descent, whereas the Suffields had a solid English ancestry (Carpenter, 1977, p. 10).

After Arthur and Mabel were married, they settled in their Bloemfontein home. There they had their first son, Ronald – as most people who knew J. R. R. Tolkien called him – and his little brother Hilary (Carpenter, 1977, pp. 10–12). Arthur and Hilary seemed to flourish in the

South African climate, whereas Mabel and Ronald were not well suited for it (Carpenter, 1977, pp. 11–15). The family planned to go together on a home leave to England, but due to his increasing workload Arthur was not able to participate (Carpenter, 1977, pp. 14–15). Mabel and the boys made their journey to England in April of 1895, without Arthur (Carpenter, 1977, p. 15). While in England, Mabel exchanged letters with Arthur, and after learning that he was in poor health, she scheduled a trip back to South Africa. However, before she could go, she received a telegram informing her of Arthur having suffered a severe haemorrhage. On the next day, 15 February 1896, the news of Arthur's death was delivered (Carpenter, 1977, p. 16). Thus, J. R. R. Tolkien was only 4 years old when he lost his father.

After Arthur's death, Mabel, Ronald, and Hilary remained in England and eventually settled there permanently. In 1904 Mabel suffered lethal complications from her recently diagnosed diabetes, and the Tolkien boys were now without parents (Carpenter, 1977, pp. 29–30). They were left in the care of Father Francis Morgan, a Catholic priest who had become a family friend after Mabel's conversion to Catholicism (Carpenter, 1977, pp. 23–32). In 1916 Tolkien married Edith Bratt (Carpenter, 1977, p. 79), with whom he had 4 children. Tolkien died in 1973, at the age of 81 (Carpenter, 1977, p. 256).

Tolkien had an interest in languages from a young age, and studying at King Edward's provided him with an environment that allowed him to develop his aptitude further (Carpenter, 1977, pp. 33–34). At King Edward's he studied Greek and Latin, as well as became interested in the general principles of language (Carpenter, 1977, p. 34). Tolkien began his studies in Oxford's Exeter College with the Classics, but later switched to English Language and Literature (Carpenter, 1977, pp. 49–63). He was Rawlinson and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon in Oxford for twenty years, after which he became Oxford's Merton Professor of English Language and Literature (Carpenter, 1977, p. 111).

2.2.2 Tolkien and masculinity

In terms of masculinities presented in *The Lord of the Rings*, it is beneficial to examine Tolkien's life experiences and his view on masculinity.

Most of the characters in *The Lord of the Rings* are male, and according to Domínguez Ruiz (2015), there are various opposing views on the reasoning behind this fact: some believe it to be plain misogyny, whereas others regard it as an inevitable result of Tolkien's own background and the source materials he used as inspiration, namely Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian writings (p. 24). Domínguez Ruiz (2015) believes that Tolkien's past

experiences need to be considered when examining his view on masculinity. Homosocial relationships were an integral part of Tolkien's life, as he was raised in a patriarchal, religious society in which women were seen as 'others' and a 'temptation' (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, p. 25). This naturally led Tolkien to spend most of his time with other men, which is reflected in the homosocial structure of *The Lord of the Rings* (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, p. 25). However, Domínguez Ruiz (2015) claims that Tolkien's text does not necessarily reflect the masculinities present in his time, but rather takes a critical approach towards them (p. 24). She proposes that *The Lord of the Rings* foresees the upcoming change and trouble in defining masculinity, as it includes elements of 'crisis of masculinity' – a confusion about what exactly masculinity consists of: "we can see how some values are in "crisis," those that have usually been ascribed to a type of hegemonic masculinity. The relevance of this assertion is that Tolkien seemed to have perceived the end of hypermasculinity, which is what we find in *The Lord of the Rings*" (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, p. 25).

Domínguez Ruiz (2008) further examines Tolkien's life in relation to his view on masculinity and argues that Tolkien's life experience was shaped by three main events: his childhood on the countryside of Northern England, his time in World War I, and his involvement in literary groups (p. 136). At the time of Tolkien's birth, Great Britain's status as an Empire was lost, which resulted in reinforcing male domination in society (Domínguez Ruiz, 2008, p. 136). Gender roles were strict and movement beyond them was impossible for both men and women (Domínguez Ruiz, 2008, p. 136). Women were expected to be gentle and virginal above all else, while men's role was to be stoic, athletic, morally courageous, and sexually pure (Domínguez Ruiz, 2008, p. 136). Due to the strict gender role divide of Tolkien's time, he almost exclusively socialised with other men. During his time as a student Tolkien met his close friends Christopher Wiseman, R. Q. Wilson, and G.B. Smith (Domínguez Ruiz, 2008, p. 137). These young men attended Oxford and Cambridge, the two most traditional English universities, in which no women were not allowed to study (Domínguez Ruiz, 2008, p. 137). The school system at the time "marked the identities of several generations in England, transmitting them Victorian values and ideas based on manliness and loyalty" (Domínguez Ruiz, 2008, p. 137). Yet another form of male bonding with no space for femininity was the Tea Club and Barrovian Society, which Tolkien created with Wiseman, Wilson, and Smith (Domínguez Ruiz, 2008, p. 137). The meetings of the club consisted of various activities, such as rugby and discussions about a wide variety of topics (Domínguez Ruiz, 2008, p. 137). In addition to the homosocial environment of the universities, the First World War was a

major factor in influencing views on masculinity in Tolkien's time (Domínguez Ruiz, 2008, p. 137). Young men fought for their country, and either lost their lives or survived but forever changed by the horrors. Many, including Tolkien, lost their friends in the war; of Tolkien's close friends Wilson and Smith died in the war, and he never stopped mourning them (Domínguez Ruiz, 2008, pp. 137–138). By some the homosociality of the time period was also viewed as homoerotic (Domínguez Ruiz, 2008, p. 138). Due to the closeness of homosocial relationships, they were sometimes mistaken for homosexual relationship, even though more often than not the relationship was entirely platonic (Domínguez Ruiz, 2008, p. 138).

3 Theoretical framework

This section provides information of the approach used in this thesis, and the theories and concepts utilised in the analysis.

3.1 Research approach

The aim of my thesis is to analyse the masculinities of Aragorn in *The Lord of the Rings*, examining both characteristic of traditional hegemonic masculinity and alternative masculinities. First, I will discuss gender, as it is essential to the understanding of masculinity. Second, I will discuss definitions of masculinity, and different types of masculinities, including hegemonic masculinity and alternative or subordinate masculinities. I will provide definitions for hegemonic masculinity, and alternative and subordinate masculinities in modern Western society, and compare them to Aragorn's displays of masculinities. To analyse Aragorn's masculinities, I will take into consideration his words, actions, and the portrayals of him. I will closely analyse each part of the text where the character is present, paying special attention to any indications of masculinity. In my analysis I will utilise close reading, which is a method of literary analysis, defined by Brummett (2019) as "mindful, disciplined reading of an object with a view to deeper understanding of its meanings; often, that understanding is shared with others in the form of a *criticism* or *critical analysis*" (Ch. Being a Reader, Being a Critic).

3.2 Gender

The terms 'sex' and 'gender' are in many cases used interchangeably, but they do not mean the exact same thing (Buchbinder, 2013, p. 24). Sex is a biological term, which only tells if a person is biologically female or male (or intersex, but it is usually not properly recognised in Western culture). Gender, on the other hand, is a significantly more complex concept, and what it consists of is thought to change from culture to culture and time period to time period (Buchbinder, 2013, p. 28). Connell (1995) also emphasises the social and fluid nature of gender: "that gender is not fixed in advance of social interaction, but is constructed in interaction, is an important theme in the modern sociology of gender" (p. 35). This corresponds with Butler's (2004) theory that gender is more alike to a spectrum than a strict binary division (p. 42). Butler (2204) also describes gender as not something one is or has, but rather as something that one performs; gender is the instrument of producing and naturalising masculine and feminine behaviours (p. 42). Essentially, gender consists of "the

behavior and manners, the gestures and attitudes that the culture deems appropriate to each sex" (Buchbinder, 2013, p. 25).

From this can be observed that in modern Western society, gender is seen as an inevitable consequence of sex, caused by hormones, genetics, and reproductive role, for example (Connell, 1995, p. 45). In other words, the physical body is thought to possess the basis for gendered behaviour and attributes (Buchbinder, 2013, p. 24; Connell, 1995, p. 45). However, there are also opposing views, regarding the body as a neutral surface onto which social symbolism is painted, resulting in gender (Connell, 1995, p. 45). Buchbinder compares the relationship between sex and gender to that of raw material and finished product: sex is a physical attribute, but gender is built by socialising a person to acquire characteristics and behaviours associated with their sex (Buchbinder, 2013, pp. 24–25).

Because the modern Western society at large recognises only two sexes, male and female, and believes that gender is a consequence of sex, there are therefore also two genders, man and woman (Buchbinder, 2013, p. 25). Masculinity is usually associated with being a man, and femininity with being a woman (Buchbinder, 2013, p. 25). Despite this common association, it is also possible to separate gender from sex: a man can adopt feminine behaviours and attitudes and vice versa (Buchbinder, 2013, p. 25). However, such practices are often discouraged by marginalising and masking alternative ways of presenting gender, humiliating and ridiculing them, and in some cases even punishing them (Buchbinder, 2013, p. 25). Therefore, Buchbinder (2013) claims, to protect oneself and fit in with society, it is safest to comply to the idea that sex equals gender (p. 25). All in all, when speaking of masculinity and femininity in the context of modern Western world, they are usually associated with the male and female sexes, respectively (Buchbinder, 2013, p. 25).

As previously mentioned, whether gender is believed to be a reflection of sex, or a social construct, it is generally agreed upon that gender is usually affirmed through actions and other external elements, such as one's way of dressing, speaking, and acting: "people convey messages about themselves by dress, jewellery, posture, movement, speech" (Connell, 1987, p. 133). Certain types of behaviours, attributes and characteristics are associated with either masculinity or femininity, i.e., with being a man or a woman. The next section will explore the concept of masculinity in more detail.

3.3 Masculinities

According to Connell (1995), masculinity and femininity "prove remarkably elusive and difficult to define" (p. 3). In modern Western culture masculinity is usually connected to the biological male sex, in one way or another. Connell (1995) suggests that the belief that men and women are different because of biological reasons is deeply rooted in modern Western society:

> …being a man or a woman means enacting a *general* set of expectations which are attached to one's sex – the 'sex role'. In this approach there are always two sex roles in any cultural context, a male one and a female one. Masculinity and femininity are quite easily interpreted as internalized sex roles, the products of social learning or 'socialization' (p.22).

Buchbinder (2013) defines masculinity (and femininity) as follows:

> …the social and cultural expectations of a man and the manner and degree to which he acknowledges and lives up to them we understand as *masculinity*; those applicable to a woman, together with her compliance with them, we think of as *femininity* (p. 25).

This suggests that there are both a masculine and a feminine role; people are categorised into different social roles according to their sex. This is often called 'the sex role theory', which connects one's biological sex to one's social role: there is the female role and the male role, and biological females take on the female role, whereas biological males act according to the male role (Connell, 1987, p. 47). However, the term 'role' implies that there is something else besides the natural biological differences of male and female representatives of the human species. There are social roles, scripted and to be performed by the people of each role, and gender is considered to be produced by socialising women and men into these roles (Connell, 1987, p. 47). Thus, according to sex role theory, gender is a mixture of biological determinism and socialisation (Connell, 1987, pp. 48–49).

According to Connell (1987), it is generally assumed that "there is just one set of traits that characterizes men in general and thus defines masculinity" (p. 167). However, this assumption overlooks the variation within men, which results in variation within masculinity itself (Connell, 1987, p. 170). Furthermore, even in the case of a single person, there can be multiple different masculinities taking place in different situations and times (Buchbinder, 2013; Connell, 1987, 1995). The different masculinities within society are typically divided into three main categories: hegemonic masculinity, subordinate masculinities, and marginalised masculinities (Connell, 1987, 1995). All masculinities that fall outside

hegemonic masculinity are collectively called alternative masculinities (Connell, 1987, 1995).

3.3.1 Hegemonic and alternative masculinities

In any given culture and point in time, there is always one type of masculinity that is more esteemed than others, and this is what is known as hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995, p. 77). Connell (1995) defines hegemonic masculinity as the masculinity which occupies a position of power at any given time. Conversely, the masculinities outside of hegemonic masculinity are called alternative masculinities (Connell, 1987, 1995). It is important to note that the hegemony of a specific masculinity is not attained by brute force alone, but it also includes a social dimension (Connell, 1987, p. 184). Furthermore, hegemonic masculinity "is not a fixed character type, always and everywhere the same. It is, rather, the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations, a position always contestable" (Connell, 1995, p. 76). What constitutes hegemonic masculinity is always changing according to time and culture, but what drives the change is the purpose to sustain the patriarchal order of society, i.e., the dominance of men and subordination of women (Connell, 1995, p. 77). The individuals who most embody hegemonic masculinity do not necessarily hold the most power. Instead, they may be fictional characters, such as superheroes (Connell, 1995, p. 77). On the other hand, those possessing institutional or economic power might not appear hegemonically masculine in their personal lives (Connell, 1995, p. 77). Thus, hegemonic masculinity does not need to be the actual masculinities displayed by men, but can be an ideal to strive towards (Connell, 1987, p. 185). However, some correlation between institutional power and cultural ideal is necessary for the formation of hegemonic masculinity, at least on the collective level (Connell, 1995, p. 77).

As previously noted, the ideal of hegemonic masculinity is mostly operating on a collective level. On the individual level, there are few men who meet all the criteria for hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995, p. 79). Despite this, the hegemonic masculinity holds its place, because even if men do not fulfil the ideal, they benefit from it, as the main purpose of hegemonic masculinity is to sustain the patriarchy and keep women subordinate to men (Connell, 1995, p. 79). Connell (1995) calls this complicit masculinity:

> If a large number of men have some connection with the hegemonic project but do not embody hegemonic masculinity, we need a way of theorizing their specific situation.

> This can be done by recognizing another relationship among groups of men, the relationship of complicity with the hegemonic project. Masculinities constructed in ways that realize the patriarchal dividend, without the tension or risks of being the frontline troops of patriarchy, are complicit in this sense" (p. 79).

Connell (1995) adds that complicit masculinities are not simply a milder version of hegemonic masculinity, but its own category:

> Marriage, fatherhood and community life often involve extensive compromises with women rather than naked domination or an uncontested display of authority. A great many men who draw the patriarchal dividend also respect their wives and mothers, are never violent towards women, do their accustomed share of the housework, bring home the family wage, and can easily convince themselves that feminists must be bra-burning extremists (pp. 79–80).

Thus, complicit masculinities benefit from the hegemonic order of masculinity despite not embodying its characteristics.

Unlike complicit masculinities, subordinate masculinities do not benefit from hegemonic masculinity in any way. Subordinate masculinities, as the name suggests, are forms of masculinity that are seen as inferior in comparison to hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995, p. 78). Usually, the reason for excluding a certain masculinity from the hegemonic sphere is the fact that the said masculinity much resembles femininity (Connell, 1995, pp. 78–79). According to Connell (1995), in modern Westerns society homosexuality is the most important from of subordinate masculinity: "oppression positions homosexual masculinities at the bottom of a gender hierarchy among men" (p. 78). The subordination extends beyond cultural stigmatization, taking form in various material practices. These include political and cultural exclusion, cultural abuse, legal violence, street violence, economic discrimination, and personal boycotts (Connell, 1995, p. 78). In addition to homosexual masculinities, some heterosexual masculinities are also excluded from hegemonic masculinity, typically for too closely resembling femininity (Connell, 1995, p. 79).

The previous masculinities – hegemonic, complicit, and subordinate – work inside the gender order (Connell, 1995, p. 80). Marginalized masculinities, on the other hand, are intertwined with other structures, such as class and race (Connell, 1995, p. 80). For example, middle-class masculinities differ from working-class masculinities, and black masculinities from white masculinities (Connell, 1995, p. 80). Connell (1995) proposes that

marginalization is always relative to the *authorization* of the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant group. Thus, in the United States, particular black athletes may be exemplars for hegemonic masculinity. But the fame and wealth of individual stars has no trickle-down effect; it does not yield social authority to black men generally (p. 81).

Thus, marginalized masculinities do not become included into hegemonic masculinity simply by one or some of the group being seen as hegemonically masculine by the dominant group.

3.3.2 Characteristics and symbols of hegemonic masculinity

In the modern Western society, it is generally assumed that there is one true, fixed masculinity, originating in men's bodies (Connell, 1995, p. 45). The male body produces masculinity either by limiting or driving actions, for example by not taking care of children or being aggressive (Connell, 1995, p. 45). The masculinity of male bodies is enforced by using language full of metaphors of the male body as a machine that is determined to dominate and be aggressive (Connell, 1995, p. 48). On the other hand, there have also been times when masculinity has been separated from the physical realm and more connected to reason and the mind (Armengol, 2013b, p. 1). Although the relationship between masculinity and male body has changed form in the course of history, there has always been some form of a link between the two.

The ideal masculinity in American society, and in the rest of the Western world, has alternated between the roles of a self-made breadwinner and being physically strong and able; when the economy is better, the breadwinner is the ideal, whereas during economically weaker periods physical strength becomes the focus of masculinity (Cuenca, 2013, pp. 49–51). In the 1920s the main theme of masculinity was wholeness; a healthy, functioning (white) body, with sexual prowess, was the epitome of hegemonic masculinity in the 1920s, while dysfunctional or emasculated bodies were marginalised and placed in the realm of subordinate masculinities (Requena-Pelegrí, 2013, p. 19). This understanding of masculinity in the 1920s is based on the masculinity formed in the late eighteenth century, when society underwent a shift in its structure, developing towards its modern bourgeois form (Requena-Pelegrí, 2013, pp. 16–17). It was the time of moving away from "old aristocratic stereotypes" towards associating the body itself with masculinity (Requena-Pelegrí, 2013, p. 17). During this time, "the body itself became the prominent signifier of manliness, with its corresponding moral attributes of strong willpower, moral fortitude, and martial nobility" (Requena-Pelegrí, 2013, p. 17).

On the other hand, in the 1930s masculinity became all about being the breadwinner of the family (Armengol, 2013a, p. 31). Being self-made, and possessing the ability to succeed economically and climb up the social ladder were extremely important to the masculinity of the 1930s (Armengol, 2013a, p. 32). However, the focus of masculinity shifted back to the physicality of the male body when the Depression hit and the marketplace no longer provided a platform for proving one's masculinity (Armengol, 2013a, pp. 33–39). Strong, muscular working-class body became the ideal (Armengol, 2013a, pp. 33–39). A couple of decades later, when the economic situation improved, the ideal masculinity became once again the self-made provider, this time especially in the form of working a corporate job (Cuenca, 2013, pp. 49–51). In this manner the ideal masculinity has alternated, and continues to do so in modern Western society.

In modern Western society one key element of hegemonic masculinity is its heterosexuality and rejection of homosexuality (Connell, 1995, p. 78). Gay men are considered effeminate, and therefore not suitable for the ideal of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995, p. 79). Homosexuality is abandoned from hegemonic masculinity, and often done so in an aggressive manner in the forms of cultural, political, and economic discrimination and even boycotts and legal violence (Connell, 1995, p. 78). Buchbinder (2013) offers an excellent overview of characteristics usually associated with ideal masculinity:

> If asked to define or describe what constitutes a man or masculinity, most people would respond with a list of traits that are likely to include such features as physical size, muscularity, strength, bravery and resourcefulness, fairness, competitiveness, stoicism in the face of adversity and pain, calm composure, and intelligence (but not to excess – the "brainiac," "nerd," or "geek" is not usually thought of in terms of an ideal masculinity). In addition, the "typical" man is expected to be physically active, fond of sports and the outdoors life, attractive and virile, (hetero)sexually active, and competent with mechanical objects. Of course, there are also less positive, even ugly characteristics, such as aggressiveness, violence, and ruthlessness (and we might include here the prejudicial tendency, in a white-dominated culture, to regard race as a determining factor of what constitutes the masculine). However, these are generally constructed in the cultural imagination as distortions or violations of (indeed, deviations from) the more positive aspects of the masculine (p. 89).

Additionally, in modern view of hegemonic masculinity expressing one's emotions is also expected of the ideal man, in contrast with the masculinity of late 19th and 20th centuries, in which showing emotion was not ideal (Buchbinder, 2013, p. 90).

Like Buchbinder (2013), Connell (1987) also recognises the importance of physical abilities when defining the ideal masculinity (pp. 84–85). Sports are taught to boys from a young age to ensure their success in fitting into the parameters of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987, pp. 84–85). Connell (1987) also highlights the change in hegemonic masculinity over the years: whereas before the industrial revolution physical force was the sole most important factor, in modern society intellectual and economic prowess are also crucial building blocks of ideal masculinity (p. 156).

The Bem sex role inventory (Bem, 1974, p. 156) was used to evaluate the masculinity or femininity of a person. The following traits are listed as masculine in the Bem sex role inventory, in alphabetic order:

Table 1. Masculine characteristics in the Bem sex role inventory (Bem, 1974, p. 156).

Acts as a leader	Athletic	Has leadership abilities	Self-reliant
Aggressive	Competitive	Independent	Self-sufficient
Ambitious	Defends own beliefs	Individualistic	Strong personality
Analytical	Dominant	Makes decisions easily	Willing to take a stand
Assertive	Forceful	Masculine	Willing to take risks

In a society in which most power flows to the hegemonically masculine, visible indicators of the hierarchy are needed. The most obvious on is a person's sex (Buchbinder, 2013, p. 74). According to this line of thinking, all people in possession of a penis would be the ones benefitting from the patriarchy and be on the receiving end of the flows of power (Buchbinder, 2013, p. 74). This clear-cut definition is problematic in two major ways: not all those in possession of a penis are regarded as male, either by themselves or by others, and not all men who have a penis have access to the privileges and power that comes with being a man (Buchbinder, 2013, p. 74). Therefore, Buchbinder (2013) claims that a broader understanding of the masculine power configuration is needed:

> Instead of considering the penis as an absolute guarantee of masculine power, therefore, let us think of the actual, fleshy penis as a kind of promissory note to its possessor, or like the lottery ticket that admits the possessor of a penis to the chance of winning millions of dollars, but does not *guarantee* that success. The possession of a penis is simply *a necessary precondition* to the accrual of power under a patriarchal order. Power itself is actually vested elsewhere, in a symbol called *the phallus* (p. 74).

Phallus, which is the Greco-Roman word for penis, should be regarded as "*the abstract representation of male power*, focused and figured as a penis" (Buchbinder, 2013, p. 75). This is because in our culture, the biological difference between is how we make the distinction between male and female (Buchbinder, 2013, p. 75). Every actual penis refers to and is a metaphor for the phallus, which is imagined as permanently erect and extremely large (Buchbinder, 2013, p. 75). The phallus is always greater than any penis because it is erect with power (Buchbinder, 2013, p. 75). The phallus is also an object of desire: it represents all the masculine power one could possibly wield (Buchbinder, 2013, p. 75). However, no person can actually attain the phallus and its power, both because it is only symbolic, and because the very rivalry to attain it is what keeps the patriarchy alive (Buchbinder, 2013, p. 75). Therefore, the phallus is always chased and even promised to people with a penis, but ultimately remains unattainable (Buchbinder, 2013, p. 75).

In order to possess phallic power, one does not need to have a physical penis larger than those of other males (Buchbinder, 2013, p. 75). Instead, phallic power can be expressed by various symbols, such as a powerful position in an organization, indicators of wealth, or the company of attractive women (Buchbinder, 2013, p. 75). A wealthy man with expensive vehicles obviously has economic power, and therefore "access to the symbolic phallus" (Buchbinder, 2013, p. 75). A man who attracts a lot of women is seen to have sex appeal and sexual prowess, and therefore also access to the phallus (Buchbinder, 2013, p. 75). The competitiveness of patriarchal structure is also seen in the way in which possessing phallic power is seen as a competition: a man's masculinity is dependent on other people's perception of the amount of his phallic power (Buchbinder, 2013, p. 79).

4 Previous research

The research on masculinity and the male characters in *The Lord of the Rings* is rather scarce compared to the research conducted on femininity and the female characters – a fact that is also noted by Domínguez Ruiz (2015, p. 24). The focus of her research is on "the most common and different patterns of masculinities performed by some relevant characters in Tolkien's masterpiece" (p. 24). She analyses multiple characters and their masculinities, claiming that traditional hegemonic (hyper)masculinity and alternative masculinities are both present, but hegemonic hypermasculinity is making way to alternative masculinities in *The Lord of the Rings*. Aragorn is among the characters analysed, but unlike in my thesis, the focus is not solely on him. Therefore, in my thesis I am able to examine his character and masculinities in more detail.

According to Domínguez Ruiz (2015), there are two main types of masculinities present in *The Lord of the Rings*: dominant hegemonic masculinity, based on hypermasculine performance, and masculinity that includes many traditionally feminine characteristics. The people of Rohan represent the epic warrior heroes, who display hegemonic masculinity, and the specific characters who are hegemonically masculine include Théoden, Éomer, Boromir, and Denethor (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, p. 26). Examples of alternative masculinities include Aragorn, Faramir, Gandalf, Frodo, and Sam (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, p. 26). Domínguez Ruiz (2015) describes the masculinity of the people of Rohan as follows:

> The introduction of these characters is mainly based on their physical and bodily qualities and prowess, and their close association with their horses helps to highlight their virility and strength. As fearless and death-seeking warriors, the Men of Rohan feel the lust of battle and aspire to die in it, for in doing so, they will achieve glory (p. 26).

Domínguez Ruiz (2015) identifies Éomer as the best representative of this hypermasculine culture, as he is someone who has been surrounded by this culture his whole life and is an excellent warrior (p. 27). Théoden, on the other hand, fails to embody this masculinity by listening to Wormtongue and thus succumbing to Saruman's power (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, p. 27). Only by coming to his senses and taking up his sword – a direct symbol of his (hyper)masculinity – and heading out to battle is he able to regain his masculinity (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, p. 27). When Théoden ultimately dies in battle, Éomer becomes king, and the last representative of hypermasculinity: "in an ancient society that is doomed to

disappear in Middle-earth, Éomer is thus its last hypermasculine representative" (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, p. 28).

Domínguez Ruiz (2015) also mentions Denethor as an example of dominant hegemonic masculinity (p. 28). He does not come from a warrior civilisation like Théoden and Éomer, but from a society in possession of more culture and learning, Gondor (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, p. 28). As the steward of this kingdom that is waiting for its true king of Númenórean descent, Denethor rules Gondor in a way that is in line with dominant hegemonic masculinity:

> Denethor proves to be a ruling steward who is rather authoritarian, dominant, and imposing; he is thus a representative of a type of masculinity that is constructed on the exertion of power over everyone else through oppression and domination. He even exerts this power over his own sons… (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, p. 28).

Similar to Théoden, Denethor fails to be a good ruler, as he becomes dominated by Sauron in his greed to know and control all events by using the *palantír* – which only shows Denethor what Sauron chooses (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, p. 28). Unlike Théoden, Denethor does not redeem himself in the end, but becomes increasingly insane, resulting in an attempt to burn alive his son Faramir together with himself as a desperate last resort (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, p. 28). His loss of control over himself and others is seen as the loss of his hypermasculinity (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, p. 28).

Another representative of hypermasculinity is Denethor's oldest son, Boromir. He is said to be more similar to the warrior people of Rohan than to his own civilisation of Gondor (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, p. 29). His character is built on physical strength and his focus is on succeeding in battles; intellectual endeavours are of no interest to him (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, p. 29). Domínguez Ruiz (2015) states that Boromir's masculinity is based on his superior position in Gondor, and is threatened by the rightful king Aragorn, to whom he is now inferior in rank (p. 29). Boromir sees taking the ring from Frodo as the only way to redeem his superior position – and thus his masculinity – for it would give him power over everyone (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, p. 29). Domínguez Ruiz (2015) notes, that Boromir's motives are in part honourable, as he wishes to save Gondor in the process, but are mostly driven by greed, hunger for glory, and the need to feel superior (p. 29). Unlike his father Denethor, Boromir is able to redeem himself in his final moments, as he recognises Aragorn as his king and submits to him right before he dies (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, p. 29).

According to Domínguez Ruiz (2015), the death of these hypermasculine characters marks the death of hypermasculinity itself in Middle-earth:

> The deaths of Théoden, Denethor and Boromir thus mark the end of the era of hypermasculinity and some of the values it is based on. The War of the Ring means the end of the Third Age and the beginning of the Fourth Age, characterized by the Dominion of Men, so with the end of hypermasculinity, not only can we see the end of a historical period in Middle-earth, but also the end of some of the characteristics that are usually found in a dominant hegemonic masculinity (p. 29).

She deliberates whether this means that there is a crisis of masculinity found in *The Lord of the Rings*. According to her, the term 'crisis of masculinity' in itself is flawed, because it describes masculinity as a singular monolith instead or recognising its multiple, changing forms (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, p. 29). Therefore, she does not regard the death of hypermasculinity as a crisis, but as an evolution from dominant hegemonic masculinity to new types of masculinities (Domínguez Ruiz, p. 29). These new types of masculinities are represented by the characters of Aragorn, Gandalf, Faramir, and the hobbits (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, pp. 29–30).

Domínguez Ruiz (2015) calls the masculinities of these characters 'alternative masculinities' because they stand outside the traditional, hegemonic masculinity (p. 30). She suggests that the pattern of their alternative masculinities is mostly defined by "their will to preserve life and their peaceful attitudes" (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, p. 30). According to her, Tolkien's own horrible experiences of war led him to value peace, which is reflected in his peace-loving characters (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, p. 30). She also notes that Aragorn and Faramir are much more alike than Faramir and Boromir, which suggests, that masculinity is fluid, and is influenced by upbringing and external circumstances (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, p. 30). Faramir and Aragorn have both learned a great deal from Gandalf and in addition to that Aragorn has also spend time with the Elves, learning from them as well (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, p. 30). This has enabled them to gain "the respect for all living creatures and the idea that fighting should be resorted to only in case it is necessary" (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, p. 30). Domínguez Ruiz (2015) regards this as a reflection of Tolkien's own attitudes, as he himself has identified Faramir as the character most like himself (p. 30).

Among the main characters who display alternative masculinities is also Aragorn. While Domínguez Ruiz (2015) covers several of the same elements also examined in my thesis, she does not go into as much detail about the masculinities of Aragorn specifically. Instead, her

focus is on the replacement of hypermasculinity by alternative masculinities in Middle-earth. Domínguez Ruiz analyses Aragorn's alternative masculinities, but does not explore his hegemonically masculine side, which is present in my thesis. Therefore, my thesis is relevant despite sharing a similar topic with Domínguez Ruiz.

According to Domínguez Ruiz (2015), Aragorn has multiple identities: "he is Estel for the Elves, Strider in Bree and his true self, Aragorn, for those that are well aware of his lineage" (p. 30). When he is first introduced to the hobbits, and the reader, he is introduced as Strider, a worn traveller sitting in a dark corner. Only later it is revealed that he is to be the rightful king of Gondor. Before he can claim his role as the king, and marry Arwen, he must reforge his broken sword Narsil and prove that he is able to heal people. Domínguez Ruiz (2015) suggests that the broken sword is a symbol of Aragorn's masculinity: only when the sword is reforged is Aragorn's masculinity also fully complete (p. 30). Although Aragorn experiences some personal failures, like not managing to keep the Fellowship together, he is a charismatic leader, who eventually grows into his role as the king of Gondor (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, p. 31). Despite having his own quests to complete, he also never ceases to care for and protect the hobbits of the Fellowship (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, p. 31). Domínguez Ruiz (2015) sees Aragorn as being far from the hypermasculinity of Éomer, Boromir and Denethor: "he never uses his superiority or authority over others and never tries to dominate the weaker characters, he is never proud or impulsive and even in his worst moments, he never falls into despair" (p. 31).

Domínguez Ruiz (2015) claims that Faramir's masculinity is far closer to that of Aragorn, than it is to the hypermasculinity of his father and brother (pp. 31–32). Despite being a warrior like his brother, Faramir is also interested in intelligence and learning (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, pp. 31–32). Whereas Boromir's masculinity is entirely based on his strength and battle skills, Faramir – despite being a brave and skilful warrior – does not like fighting for the sake of fighting, but sees it a necessary evil to protect what he loves (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, p. 32). Domínguez Ruiz describes Faramir as someone who is "curious and intuitive, he is not impulsive, so he ponders on his decisions carefully and he is so witty that he can infer many things just by reflecting upon the matter" (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, p. 32). The masculinities of Faramir and Aragorn are highly influenced by Gandalf, who is another character displaying alternative masculinities (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, p. 32). Like Aragorn, Gandalf has many identities depending on where he is and whom he meets (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, p. 32). He is a Maia, a powerful angelic being, but only reveals his true power when it

is absolutely necessary (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, p. 32). Most of the time he seems to be nothing more than an old, wise man, leaning on his staff (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, p. 32). Domínguez Ruiz (2015) sees Gandalf's staff as a symbol of his masculinity: "Gandalf's staff, which could be regarded as a phallic symbol, is an extension of his own masculinity and inner strength and which he uses to exert his power" (p. 32). She states that Gandalf is also a father-figure to the hobbits, protecting and guiding them (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, p. 32). He teaches Frodo about the importance of life and not taking it from someone carelessly (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, p. 32). Instead of wishing to dominate the world like Saruman, Gandalf wants to preserve and protect life (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, pp. 32–33).

Thus, Domínguez Ruiz (2015) explains that Aragorn, Faramir and Gandalf are examples of alternative masculinities by displaying characteristics traditionally seen as feminine:

> These characters, Aragorn, Faramir and Gandalf, embrace traits that have traditionally been ascribed as feminine, differentiating thus their type of masculinity from a dominant hegemonic one. They are all good representatives of compassion, honour, duty, wisdom, mercy, justice, and humility. Although heteronormative in essence, they do not represent any of the negative aspects that are usually associated with a dominant hegemonic masculinity – they do not exert their power over others, they do not see the rest of the Fellowship of the Ring as subordinates and do not try to oppress them but, at the same time, they are well aware that if it is necessary to fight, they will not refuse it. Life is above everything else for them (p. 33.).

Therefore, their display of feminine characteristics and the absence of negative traits associated with hegemonic masculinity sets them apart from traditional hegemonic masculinity.

In addition to Domínguez Ruiz (2015), Rawls (1984) and Mitchell (2022) examine masculinities in Tolkien's world. These two studies will be discussed next.

Rawls (1984) notes that there are few female characters in The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings, which makes it difficult to deduce anything about Tolkien's view on women, but in *The Silmarillion* the feminine is strongly present (p. 5). However, Rawls suggests that in Tolkien's world femininity is not reserved for the female sex, and masculinity for the male sex (p. 5). Instead, Tolkien recognises the difference between sex and gender:

> From the opening pages of The Silmarillion, it is clear that Tolkien believes that gender and sex are not one and the same; and that gender, or Masculine and Feminine, is a condition of the universe which goes deeper, higher and wider than sex, mere male and female and the necessities

of reproduction. Through The Silmarillion runs this theme: in Arda and in the Heavens, the Feminine and the Masculine are present; when they are in equilibrium and in harmony, there is Good, but Evil is the result of an insufficiency or a disharmony of the attributes of one or the other of the genders (Rawls, 1984, p. 5).

Masculinity and Femininity appear thus to be energies or essences, tied to the equilibrium of Good and Evil in the World, intended to complement each other (Rawls, 1984, p. 5). It is not expected or even desirable that a person should exhibit only characteristics associated with their sex, but a complete person has a balance of the Feminine and the Masculine:

> The Macho Man, with his paucity of finer feeling and his neglect of thought in favor of action, is not admired in Middle-earth or Valinor. Neither is the Total Woman, with her wiles and dependence on males. Those beings in Arda who are able to achieve good either embody both Feminine and Masculine within themselves or have access to the nature of the other gender, usually in the form of a spouse, a sibling, or a mentor (Rawls, 1984, p. 5).

Rawls (1984) has analysed the characters of Middle-earth and Valinor, and compiled into a chart the feminine and masculine characteristics present in Tolkien's world, Arda:

Table 2. Masculine and feminine characteristics in Tolkien's world according to Rawls (1984).

FEMININE	MASCULINE
(understanding)	(power)
Positive	
love	law
counsel	action
intuition (insight and foresight)*	reason
mercy and compassion	justice
Forms of Creativity	
song, dance, healing, weaving	fine arts, crafts, technology
Negative	
impotence	rashness
passivity	aggression
consumptive or devouring	self-aggrandizing

Understanding is the prime feminine characteristic, while the prime masculine one is power Rawls, 1984, p. 6). These form the basis of the other feminine and masculine traits (Rawls, 1984, p. 6).

According to Rawls (1984), this interplay of femininity and masculinity is also present in the character arc of Aragorn: "in order to prove his fitness to reign, Aragorn must display characteristics feminine and masculine—the feminine power of healing, the masculine skill of wise and just rule" (p. 6). From the previously presented theory it can be deduced, that Aragorn is good because in him the feminine and masculine are in balance.

Mitchell (2022) also comments on Aragorn's masculinities, noting that Aragorn is "a successful man in *The Return of the King* who displays both masculine and feminine gender attributes" (p. 6). According to Mitchell (2022), Aragorn's initial identity as a Ranger includes both masculine and feminine traits: Rangers kill the servants of the enemy, which is considered masculine, but their ultimate objective is to protect the people around them, which can be seen as a feminine quality (pp. 6–7). Aragorn's journey to becoming the King of Gondor also includes both masculine and feminine elements. Aragorn is assertive and kingly while commanding the army of the dead, both of which are masculine attributes (Mitchell, 2022, p. 7). On the other hand, he is also a healer, who heals Éowyn, Faramir, and Merry in the Houses of Healing, which is associated with femininity (Mitchell, 2022, p. 7). Despite Aragorn displaying feminine characteristics himself, Mitchell (2022) suggests that he is displeased with Éowyn wanting to venture outside the traditional female role (pp. 3–5). According to Mitchell (2022), Aragorn – together with Éomer and Théoden – is imposing the traditional female role upon Éowyn (p. 4). He "attempts to diminish Eowyn's critical accomplishment and place her back into the female gender role" by comparing her to a beautiful, but frosted, flower (Mitchell, 2022, p. 4). Mitchell (2022) argues that this indicates Tolkien's world having a double standard:

> Women are referred to as icy or cold when they do not show emotion, typically when receiving attention from a male. With this, Aragorn attempts to diminish Eowyn's critical accomplishment and place her back into the female gender role. It is important to consider that in this moment while Aragorn is trying to push Eowyn back into strict female gender roles, he is simultaneously acting out a female role as a male. He is in a healing position during this criticism, which is considered to be a feminine trait, further showing that Tolkien embraces femininity for men, but not masculinity for women.

Only when Eowyn discards her masculine attributes and fully embraces her feminine roles is she finally considered to be healed (pp. 4–5).

In other words, in Tolkien's world men can display feminine traits, but women's masculinity is not allowed.

Madill (2008) discusses the different ways in which "masculinity in *The Lord of the Rings* can be read and understood" by focusing especially on the language used in the text (p. 44). According to Madill (2008), *The Lord of the Rings* does not necessarily critique hegemonic masculinity, but can encourage discussion about "its various messages about masculinity" (p. 44). She notes the important part friendships play in *The Lord of the Rings*, and argues that while many of the friendships might seem traditionally masculine, they contain elements that are outside of the hegemonic masculine norm (Madill, 2008, p. 45). One example of this is the friendship between Frodo and Sam. According to Madill (2008), the relationship between Frodo and Sam can seem like a traditional male friendship at fist – a dangerous journey through tough terrain and multiple enemies – but on closer inspection their friendship goes deeper than that because it contains affectionate and emotional elements that are not typically considered a part of a traditional male friendship (p. 45). Sam expresses his affection for Frodo on multiple occasions. When Frodo tries to leave the Fellowship and complete the quest of destroying the ring alone, Sam guesses his plan and follows him because he cannot bear the thought of Frodo going alone (Madill, 2008, p. 45). Sam also shows physical affection for Frodo by kissing his forehead when they are in the Orc tower, and later kissing his hand in an attempt to lift his spirits when they are at the end of their quest (Madill, 2008, p. 45). Sam's affection for Frodo is similar to a parent's relationship to a child "which suggests a love beyond that of a traditional male friendship" (Madill, 2008, p. 45). This affection shows that the friendship between males can be more than merely protecting a friend from harm (Madill, 2008, p. 45). In addition, the friendships between Legolas and Gimli, Merry and Pippin, and Aragorn and Boromir encourage the exploration of multiple different masculinities, and opens the discussion to valuing other kinds of masculinity besides hegemonic (Madill, 2008, p. 45). Madill (2008) also suggests that the feminine qualities of the male characters mentioned above are juxtaposed with masculine qualities in the female characters of the story (p. 46).

According to Null (n.d.) *The Hobbit* film trilogy encourages discussion about challenging traditional notions of male gender roles and hegemonic masculinity in fantasy works (p. 3).

She also agrees that research on male gender roles and ideal masculinity portrayed in the media is scarce:

> …the notion of male gender roles and the typical characteristics associated with the definition of a male hero in fantastical works is overlooked, despite the progressive critiques in relation to female portrayals. This in turn has allowed for hegemonic masculine ideals to persist in forms of fantasy media with little to no dispute or alternating presentations, reinforcing toxic traits that contribute to detrimental beliefs on how men perceive themselves and other people (Null, n.d., p. 2).

The hegemonic masculinity in fantasy is rarely researched as its own phenomenon, but is rather included in research that focuses on how it affects female characters (Null, n.d., p. 4).

Null (n.d.) questions the role of fantasy works in the construction of hegemonic masculinity in society: "if fantasy productions parallel the structures and institutions that are conducted in everyday lives, then how can the presentations affect how audience's make sense of their roles in society and what the ideal model embodies" (p. 3). Fantasy as a genre has a tradition of being produced by and for white men (Null, n.d., p. 9). This tradition continues today, as most fantasy works are still produced with the white male gaze in mind (Null, n.d., p. 7). This means that men are invited to place themselves in the role of the protagonist, and in this way are taught to emulate the hegemonic masculinity that the heroes display (Null, n.d., p. 7). However, women are also avid fantasy consumers, despite the lack of female characters (Null, n.d., p. 7). Null (n.d.) claims that this is an example of women being allowed to consume media for males, whereas for men it is not accepted to consume female media because of the rejection of femininity being an integral part of hegemonic masculinity (p. 7). She claims that within the fantasy genre, there is a lack of male characters who display feminine features, which causes the consumers of fantasy to mirror the heroes and their hypermasculinity (Null, n.d., p. 4). Femininity is seen as a weakness, and as a threat to the male-dominant order of the world (Null, n.d., p. 4). Thus, masculinity in male characters often leads to the oppression of women and femininity, whereas female characters are often portrayed as hypermasculine to validate them as protagonists (Null, n.d., pp. 4–5).

Domínguez Ruiz (2008) also studies masculinity in Tolkien's work, focusing on three main areas: masculinity and gender, Tolkien's life and his time in World War I, and the characteristics of each race in Middle-Earth. Domínguez Ruiz (2008) refers to Butler's theory that gender is not what you are but what you do (p. 135). Each person's experiences in society are different, which is why the masculinity or femininity of each person also varies

(Domínguez Ruiz, 2008, p. 136). Even though the categories of male and female can be seen as primitive, they nonetheless exist even in modern Western culture (Domínguez Ruiz, 2008, p. 136). Certain attributes are associated with, and certain behaviours expected from men and women (Domínguez Ruiz, 2008, p. 136). Domínguez Ruiz (2008) quotes Goddard as she lists logical, rational, aggressive, exploitative, strategic, independent, and competitive as masculine traits associated with males, and intuitive, emotional, submissive, empathic, spontaneous, nurturing, and co-operative as feminine traits associated with females (Domínguez Ruiz, 2008, p. 136). However, no person is completely masculine or completely feminine, and there are men who have feminine attributes and women who have masculine ones, which makes the rigid rules of gender a social construct (Domínguez Ruiz, 2008, p. 136). The rules of gender change according to time period and location, which is why Domínguez Ruiz (2008) finds it important to examine the society at Tolkien's time (p. 136) – more of which was covered in section 2.2. Domínguez Ruiz (2008) also acknowledges the different masculinities present in different peoples of Middle-earth. The people of Rohan resemble the early medieval Anglo-Saxon idea of masculinity: a patriarchal heroic society, in which masculinity is primarily determined through one's battle prowess and great deeds in war and on other dangerous missions (Domínguez Ruiz, 2008, pp.138–139). The Dwarves of Middle-earth share a similar type of masculinity for they are "stout-hearted and strong warriors" alike to the men of Rohan (Domínguez Ruiz, 2008, p. 139).

On the other hand, Gondor's patterns of masculinity are different to Rohan and the Dwarves. Domínguez Ruiz (2008) suggests that "Gondor's warriors seem to belong to a feudal society of the later Middle Ages, whose main goal is not recognition and praise in war but the defence of a clear ideal" (p. 139). The difference in masculinities between Rohan and Gondor is best demonstrated through the differences between Boromir and Faramir (Domínguez Ruiz, 2008, p. 139). Despite being brothers and growing up together, their patterns of masculinity are vastly different. Boromir is much closer to the hypermasculine warrior hero of Rohan than the masculinity of Gondor, whereas Faramir is an excellent example of Gondor's masculinity (Domínguez Ruiz, 2008, p. 139). For Faramir, war is not a goal in itself, but a sometimes-necessary means of defending something important (Domínguez Ruiz, 2008, pp. 139–140). Compared to the hypermasculine Boromir, Faramir can appear more feminine due to his thoughtfulness (Domínguez Ruiz, 2008, p. 140). Aragorn's masculinity is similar to Faramir's: "Aragorn, the future king of Gondor, shares with Faramir this

thoughtfulness and spiritual concept of war as the only means to save his people, so different from the epic hero" (Domínguez Ruiz, 2008, p. 140).

Domínguez Ruiz (2008) also analyses the masculinities of Elves and hobbits. Tolkien's Elves are influenced by Celtic texts, as well as Tolkien's personal religious views concerning death and immortality (Domínguez Ruiz, 2008, p. 140). Domínguez Ruiz (2008) describes the Elves as follows:

> Tolkien introduces Elves as ageless and spiritual creatures, similar to angels, with hardly any reference to their sex; they share similar attitudes regardless their biological sex and are all presented as androgynous beings without what Western society has categorized as feminine nurturing characteristics for females and masculine strong attitudes for males. Thus, their roles in their society are not fixed: female Elves can fight (Galadriel) and male Elves can heal (Glorfindel) (p. 141).

This description is also true for Gandalf, who shares this mixture of spirituality and warrior-like qualities (Domínguez Ruiz, 2008, p. 141). According to Domínguez Ruiz (2008), the hobbits "are clearly a reflection of Tolkien's own time and friends and the Shire is a true image of Sarehole, the place where Tolkien spent some of his happiest times in his childhood" (p. 141). The hobbits are ordinary and relatable, who – like Tolkien himself – enjoy the simple pleasures of life, such as smoking tobacco, spending time in nature, and being in the company of friends (Domínguez Ruiz, 2008, p. 141). The experiences of the four hobbits of the Fellowship reflect the experiences of Tolkien and his friends in WWI, forming similar strong bonds of comradeship and being forever shaped by their journey (Domínguez Ruiz, 2008, p. 141).

5 Analysis

The masculinities of Aragorn are an interesting topic to analyse, as he seems to be simultaneously a hypermasculine warrior hero and an alternatively masculine healer. Both of these sides of him are essential to his character, and his role as the King of Gondor. Without his prowess in battle, he probably would not survive the wars – at least if he intended to gain the respect and reverence of his future subjects. However, it is his healing hand that ultimately proves the legitimacy of his claim to the throne. In numerous situations Aragorn's hegemonically masculine and alternatively masculine, or feminine, attributes are juxtaposed, forming an interesting contrast and balance of the two. While Aragorn's masculinities have been studied by Domínguez Ruiz, in her writing Aragorn is one character among several others to be studied, thus not allowing for an analysis as detailed as is the aim of this thesis. It must be noted that although femininity and alternative masculinity are not completely interchangeable, I will often treat them as such in the context of this thesis, as alternative masculinity is a term coined after the publishing of some of the research, and also because alternatively masculine traits are usually traits that are traditionally considered feminine.

5.1 Aragorn's hegemonically masculine traits

Aragorn has many things in common with the characters who Domínguez Ruiz (2015) lists as the representatives of hypermasculinity, Éomer, Théoden, Boromir, and Denethor. Much like the introduction of these characters, Aragorn's introduction to the story is also heavily focused on his physical abilities and willingness to face danger by journeying in the wilderness. As the story progresses, Aragorn is revealed to be a skilled warrior, fearless and valiant in battle. He wields his sword, Andúril, with an energy that instils fear in the heart of his enemies, and he is extremely efficient in combat. He also demonstrates excellent leadership abilities as he first leads the hobbits from Bree to Rivendell, and then later on becomes the leader of the Fellowship of the Rings after Gandalf falls in Moria.

5.1.1 Aragorn as the mysterious stranger

This section analyses Aragorn's introduction to the story and his depiction as Strider the mysterious stranger.

Aragorn makes his first appearance in the story, when he is at the inn called Prancing Pony in Bree, where the hobbits are also staying on their way of bringing the Ring to safety in Rivendell. Aragorn is first introduced as Strider, a worn, mysterious traveller, who sits alone

in a corner. The depiction of him is alike to that of a dark, tall, and mysterious stranger in a romance novel (Tolkien, 1994a):

> Suddenly Frodo noticed that a strange-looking weather-beaten man, sitting in the shadows near the wall, was also listening intently to the hobbit-talk. 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; but the gleam of his eyes could be seen as he watched the hobbits (p. 153).

The image painted of him on this occasion is hegemonically masculine: he is interesting to look at but rugged and worn instead of being too beautiful. He bears the obvious signs of being in the wilderness, thus seeming like a man who knows how to take care of himself and others. These are all signs of a strong, chivalrous hero – the like of which are also seen in the medieval literature that inspired Tolkien (Domínguez Ruiz, 2008, 2015). Aragorn's weather-beaten appearance suggests that he has spent and spends extended times in the wilderness, exploring or surviving. In other words, his life seems to consist of going on strenuous and potentially dangerous errands. All this is considered very masculine, as it involves risk taking, physical strength, and venturing outside the domestic sphere. The only mention of his potential beauty, or rather the lack of it, is that he looks strange, and that his clothes are dirty and worn.

Shortly after Aragorn's physical appearance is discussed again. Aragorn himself mentions that he believes his looks are against him, which is why it might be difficult for the hobbits to trust him upon first meeting him (Tolkien, 1994a, p. 167). Because of Gandalf's letter that encourages the hobbits to trust his friend Aragorn, Pippin trusts that Aragorn is who he says he is, and excuses his unattractive looks by Aragorn's life as a wandering traveller: "…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 ditches" (Tolkien, 1994a, p. 167). For men and masculinity, outer appearance is not seen as important, and the emphasis is on the actions of the individual. If he is competent, his looks do not matter. Attention to beauty and physical appearance is usually viewed as a feminine trait because femininity is associated with the body (Buchbinder, 2013, p.7). In Aragorn's case here, his unattractiveness is not seen as a flaw, and the focus is on what his appearance and clothing might reveal about his actions. His worn appearance indicates that he is a skilled traveller, who is not afraid of danger and can

survive in the wilderness, and these hegemonically masculine traits are what is seen as most important about him. The dark cloak, hidden face, and gleaming eyes create a mysterious air around him; he appears to be deep in thought while closely watching the hobbits. As the mind is associated with hegemonic masculinity, this too adds to the hegemonically masculine image of Aragorn upon his first introduction.

While staying at the inn, Frodo proceeds to ask the innkeeper, Mr. Butterbur, about Aragorn, the innkeeper tells Frodo that Aragorn, at this point only known as Strider, is one of the wandering people called Rangers, and that he disappears and appears at random times, and does not talk much but when he does, he has strange tales to tell (Tolkien, 1994a, p. 153). Mr. Butterbur also draws attention to Aragorn's physical abilities: "[He] Goes about at a great pace on his long shanks" (Tolkien, 1994a, p. 153). In addition, Aragorn's intelligence, and knowledge about things unknown to the average person are highlighted: Mr. Butterbur mentions that Aragorn never tells anyone about the reason of his travels, and after Mr. Butterbur's explanation of Aragorn to Frodo, Aragorn seems to know what they have been discussing (Tolkien, 1994a, p. 153). He also knows about Frodo and his quest, as he warns Frodo about Pippin being on the verge of divulging sensitive information to the people at the inn, and later criticises Frodo for putting on the Ring while falling off the table while performing a song (Tolkien, 1994a, pp. 153–157). In fact, when Frodo falls off the table with the Ring on, and does not know what to do, his instinct is to crawl towards Aragorn. This suggests that Aragorn is a reliable protector and advisor – someone who feels safe in times of trouble. Because of his character, Frodo is drawn to him, and eventually trusts him without proof of his good intentions. The physical prowess, superior intelligence, and reliability in face of danger, that Aragorn displays here, and what Frodo is drawn to, are features of hegemonic masculinity, which suggests that Aragorn's masculinity is primarily hegemonic at this point of the story.

When Aragorn has a private chat with the hobbits at the Prancing Pony after Frodo's accident with the Ring, he seems knowledgeable and eager to join the hobbits on their dangerous quest. He is aware of the Ringwraiths chasing Frodo, and he knows their movements well (Tolkien, 1994a, pp. 160–161). In exchange for his information, he wants to be taken along for the quest to destroy the Ring (Tolkien, 1994a, p. 160). Thus, he is again presented as a hegemonically masculine character who is intelligent and does not shy away from danger, and wants to protect the hobbits. He automatically assumes a leading role: he tells the hobbits what he wants them to do and makes plans in case the Ringwraiths come to attack them. He

even directly states that without him the hobbits have no hope of survival: "you will never get to Rivendell now on your own, and to trust me is your only chance" (Tolkien, 1994a, p. 163). He is extremely confident in his leadership abilities and his ability to move in the wilderness. Overall, his approach to Frodo's plight and the quest is rational and analytical rather than empathetic and emotional, which enforces his thus far hegemonically masculine image. He does not spare the hobbits' feelings by choosing to ignore the scary facts; instead, he uses those facts as a reason for the hobbits to let him lead them: "perhaps I know more about these pursuers than you do. You fear them, but you do not fear them enough, yet. Tomorrow, you will have to escape, if you can. Strider can take you by paths that are seldom trodden. Will you have him?" (Tolkien, 1994a, p. 162).

In addition to knowing about and being eager to face the danger of Frodo's quest, Aragorn himself appears dangerous and intimidating when talking to the hobbits. While Aragorn seems to have gained the trust of the other hobbits, Sam remains doubtful. Here a glimpse of Aragorn's true power is revealed, and he is genuinely frightening the hobbits (Tolkien, 1994a):

> '… If I had killed the real Strider, I could kill you. And I should have killed you
> already without so much talk. If I was after the Ring, I could have it – NOW!'
>
> He stood up, and seemed suddenly to grow taller. In his eyes gleamed a light, keen
> and commanding. Throwing back his cloak, he laid his hand on the hilt of a sword that had hung
> concealed by his side. They did not dare to move (p. 168).

Aragorn appears strong and assertive, even extremely dangerous, both physically and mentally. Tall posture indicates more physical strength, which is an important part of hegemonic masculinity. His eyes appear commanding, which is also a trait associated with hegemonic masculinity. As is the sword, which can be seen as a phallus symbol, indicating that he is a skilled warrior, and could in fact kill the hobbits if he wanted to. He clearly instigates fear in the hobbits. However, the hobbits trust him and accept him as the leader of their company on their way from the Prancing Pony to Rivendell.

This concludes Aragorn's introduction to the story and the first impression of him. His masculinity at this point is extremely hegemonic and he seems like the traditional hypermasculine hero, who is tough, brave, resourceful, and protective of people close to him.

5.1.2 Aragorn as a leader

This section examines Aragorn as a leader, as his leadership ability is one of the two major aspects of his hegemonic masculinity.

After the hobbits accept Aragorn's help on their quest, Aragorn is quick to take control of the situation. When Merry informs the hobbits and Aragorn that the Ringwraiths are near the Prancing Pony, Aragorn approaches the situation calmly and logically. He quickly comes up with the plan to keep the hobbits away from their rooms and the hobbits do as he says without any problems. As they wait for the night to pass, Aragorn is sitting still but also alert, observing the situation (Tolkien, 1994a, p. 173). A while later in the story, as the company is on their way to Rivendell, Aragorn is again described as "standing silent and watchful" (Tolkien, 1994a, p. 179). He appears to be a stoic and rational leader even in hectic situations, being in control of himself and the course of action because of his tactical skills and confidence in his abilities. He trusts he can take the hobbits to Rivendell safely because of his experience in travelling in the wilderness. This is apparent when Pippin reminisces on their short cut gone wrong, and Strider replies with full assurance of his ability to move through any terrain: "my cuts, short or long, don't go wrong" (Tolkien, 1994a, p. 177). He has ultimate confidence in his own competence and abilities, which is a hegemonically masculine trait.

On their way to Rivendell, Aragorn and the hobbits aim to stop at a hill called Weathertop to get a better view of their surroundings. While on Weathertop, the company is feels that they are being observed by several Ringwraiths who are hunting Frodo and the Ring. Aragorn knows the best way to protect the group is to make a fire, and he makes sure to reassure the scared Frodo that there is still hope in the situation because the "riders do not love [fire], and fear those who wield it. Fire is our friend in the wilderness" (Tolkien, 1994a, p. 185). Besides the Ringwraiths, the hobbits are also extremely concerned about having enough food. Aragorn reassures them that this is not something to worry about, as he can sustain them even in the wild: "there is food in the wild,' said Strider; 'berry, root, and herb; and I have some skill as a hunter at need. You need not be afraid of starving before winter comes" (Tolkien, 1994a, p. 186). Here Aragorn demonstrates his knowledge of surviving in the wild as well as his ability to act as a leader to the hobbits. He knows what is important to them, and understands that it is an important part of leadership to keep the people in his company as positive and hopeful as possible. When the company's fears eventually come true and the

Ringwraiths attack them, Aragorn defends the hobbits while they themselves are indisposed due to fear, demonstrating that he is a courageous leader who puts his life in danger to protect his company.

After Frodo's injury at the attack on Weathertop, the company is forced to decide about whether to stay at Weathertop and wait for Gandalf, or to leave as quickly as possible to save Frodo. Aragorn shows no hesitation in making the decision to leave and save Frodo, even though it might be dangerous to go because of the Ringwraiths possibly waiting for them nearby (Tolkien, 1994a, p. 194). However, on their journey they see a river in the distance that they will have to cross on their way to Rivendell, but Aragorn has not made any plans to cross it. Instead, he trusts his ability to improvise when the time comes for crossing the river: "… I have not yet thought how we shall cross that water. One river at a time! We shall be fortunate indeed if we do not find the Last Bridge held against us" (Tolkien, 1994a, p. 195). This demonstrates both his ability to make decisions and to improvise when needed, as well as his knowledge of possible dangers ahead and the lack of fear in the face of danger. Despite Aragorn not having a clear plan yet, and inevitable danger looming ahead, the hobbits seem to trust Aragorn's leadership without complaints.

When the company goes through troll terrain on their way to Rivendell, Aragorn shows that he can not only lead the hobbits through danger and calm their fears and concerns, but also lighten the mood with jokes. The hobbits are scared to travel through troll country, and when Pippin spots the figures of the three trolls that turned to stone on Bilbo's journey with the dwarves in *The Hobbit*, all but Aragorn are increasingly terrified. Aragorn diffuses the terror by reminding the hobbits that trolls do not tolerate sunlight (Tolkien, 1994a):

> 'You are forgetting not only your family history, but all you ever knew about trolls,' said Strider. 'It is broad daylight with a bright sun, and yet you come back trying to scare me with a tale of live trolls waiting for us in this glade! In any case you might have noticed that one of them has an old bird's nest behind his ear. That would be a most unusual ornament for a live troll!'
>
> They all laughed. Frodo felt his spirits reviving… (p. 201).

Aragorn remains rational in an unexpected situation, and jokes about the trolls to lift the spirits of his company. Making jokes is exactly how hobbits deal with a serious, uncomfortable situation, and Aragorn doing the same shows that he is familiar with the ways of his company and knows how to lead them in a manner specifically tailored to them.

Aragorn's next significant leadership moment comes after the Fellowship emerges from the mines of Moria. Gandalf fell fighting the balrog, and Aragorn must now assume the role of the leader. Despite his own sorrow, he remains composed and urges the Fellowship to carry on: "he turned to the Company. 'We must do without hope,' he said. 'At least we may yet be avenged. Let us gird ourselves and weep no more! Come! We have a long road, and much to do" (Tolkien, 1994a, p. 324). He discourages the Company to dream of Lothlórien on their way there, because it is still far away, and instead focuses on keeping up the fast pace (Tolkien, 1994a, p. 326). In this situation Aragorn is stoic and focuses solely on the task of traveling fast, almost like a soldier on a mission. He even momentarily forgets that the Company must eat, and that the hobbits are smaller and therefore struggle to keep up. However, he corrects his mistake as soon as he notices it.

5.1.3 Aragorn as a warrior

In addition to his abilities to act as a leader, Aragorn also proves that he is skilled in battle.

Aragorn's prowess in battle can be first observed in Moria when the Company is attacked by Orcs. They are confined to a room with the Orcs right on their tails, and the situation seems quite hopeless, but Aragorn does not despair. Instead, he is ready to face the Orcs in close combat: "we will make them fear the Chamber of Mazarbul!' he said grimly, feeling the edge of his sword, Andúril" (Tolkien, 1994a, p. 316). He does not betray any emotion, certainly not fear. When the Orcs arrive and attack the Fellowship, Aragorn slays many of them, and one of his kills is explicitly described as follows: "but even as the orc flung down the truncheon and swept out his scimitar, Andúril came down upon his helm. There was a flash like flame and the helm burst asunder. The orc fell with cloven head" (Tolkien, 1994a, p. 317). Aragorn can thus be aggressive and violent when the situation requires it. He is also incredibly brave, as he is willing to fight the balrog alongside Gandalf, even though it is an enemy too powerful for him.

Aragorn also occasionally desires battle. When he is heading to Helm's Deep with the people of Rohan and the Orcs are after them, he wishes that they could fight them then and there, instead of escaping them: "would that day was here and we might ride upon them like a storm out of the mountains!' said Aragorn. 'It grieves me to fly before them" (Tolkien, 1994b, p. 518). When the Orcs attack Helm's Deep, Aragorn is eager to fight alongside Éomer (Tolkien, 1994b):

> 'Come!' said Aragorn. 'This is the hour when we draw swords together!'… Together

Éomer and Aragorn sprang through the door, their men close behind. The two swords
flashed from the sheath as one.

'Gúthwinë!' cried Éomer. 'Gúthwinë for the Mark!'

'Andúril!' cried Aragorn. 'Andúril for the Dúnedain!'

Charging from the side, they hurled themselves upon the wild men. Andúril rose
and fell, gleaming with white fire. A shout went up from wall and tower: 'Andúril! Andúril goes to
war!

The Blade that was Broken shines again!' (p. 521).

Here Aragorn resembles the hypermasculine warriors who measure their masculinity by their
battle prowess. If his sword, Andúril, is viewed as a phallus symbol, he is reclaiming his
masculinity here by going to war with the sword for the first time after it has been reforged.
Aragorn is a skilled warrior, and among the last ones to still have energy in the battle of
Helm's Deep (Tolkien, 1994b):

The men of Rohan grew weary. All their arrows were spent, and every shaft was
shot; their swords were notched, and their shields were riven. Three times Aragorn and Éomer
rallied them, and three times Andúril flamed in a desperate charge that drove the enemy from the
wall (p. 523).

There seems to be no doubt that Aragorn is skilled in battle and a good leader. Andúril
appears to be an important instrument of his battle skills. It is described to evoke fear in
Aragorn's opponents when he is defending Helm's Deep: "in his hand still Andúril gleamed,
and the terror of the sword for a while held back the enemy…" (Tolkien, 1994b, p. 525).
Even in more uneventful moments of the battle the swords of Aragorn and Éomer are
mentioned: "Éomer and Aragorn leant wearily on their swords" (Tolkien, 1994b, p. 524).
They seem to have a great importance in highlighting the military prowess of the two men,
thus equating Aragorn with the hegemonically masculine Éomer. Aragorn himself also
expresses his fondness of Andúril when asked to leave weapons outside upon going to meet
king Théoden in his halls (Tolkien, 1994b):

Aragorn stood a while hesitating. 'It is not my will,' he said, 'to put aside my sword
or to deliver Andúril to the hand of any other man.'

'It is the will of Théoden,' said Háma.

'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.'

'This is the house of Théoden, not of Aragorn, even were he King of Gondor in the

seat of Denethor,' said Háma…

… [Aragorn says:] '… I would do as the master of the house bade me, were this
only a woodman's cot, if I bore now any sword but Andúril.'

'Whatever its name may be,' said Háma, here you shall lay it…'

… Slowly Aragorn unbuckled his belt and himself set his sword upright against the
Wall. 'Here I set it,' he said; 'but I command you not to touch it, nor to permit any
other to lay hand on it. In this elvish sheath dwells the Blade that was Broken and
has been made again. Telchar first wrought it in the deeps of time. Death shall come
to any man that draws Elendil's sword save Elendil's heir' (pp. 499–500).

Aragorn is extremely attached to Andúril, and does not wish anyone else to even touch it.
Aragorn is assertive in giving Háma the instructions, and again uses his noble birth as a way
of gaining respect from others.

Outside the great battles in the war between Sauron and the Free Peoples of Middle-earth,
Aragorn demonstrates his warrior identity in other ways. During the pursuit for the orcs who
took Merry and Pippin, Aragorn, Gimli, and Legolas cross paths with the Riders of Rohan.
The riders, with the lead of Éomer, question the three remaining members of the Fellowship.
Aragorn describes himself as someone who serves no man, but pursues servants of Sauron
"into whatever land they may go" (Tolkien, 1994b, p. 423). To Éomer's doubt about his
choice to hunt the pack of orcs on foot with only three people he answers (Tolkien, 1994b):

… I do not hunt them in this fashion out of choice. The Orcs whom we pursued took
captive two of my friends. In such need a man that has no horse will go on foot, and
he will not ask for leave to follow the trail. Nor will he count the heads of the enemy
save with a sword. I am not weaponless.'

Aragorn threw back his cloak. The elven-sheath glittered as he grasped it, and
the bright blade of Andúril shone like a sudden flame as he swept it out. 'Elendil!' he
cried. 'I am Aragorn, son of Arathorn, and am called Elessar, the Elfstone, Dúnadan,
the heir of Isildur Elendil's son of Gondor. Here is the Sword that was broken and is forged again!
Will you aid me or thwart me? Choose swiftly!' (p. 423).

Aragorn demonstrates his bravery and battle prowess by challenging Éomer and drawing his
sword. He also commands respect by listing all his titles in order to show that he is of noble
birth and known by many people by multiple different names. Even Aragorn's appearance
reflects his royalty, which makes Éomer look at him in awe and causes him to treat Aragorn
with more respect moving forward.

5.2 Aragorn's alternatively masculine traits

This section describes the alternatively masculine aspects of Aragorn's character.

5.2.1 Aragorn as a healer

Despite being an esteemed warrior and used to treading the wilderness on dangerous errands, Aragorn is also a healer – peace-loving and focused on preserving life. As the story progresses, Aragorn' ability to heal becomes increasingly more prevalent. It is also the attribute that legitimises his position as the king of Gondor and Arnor because of an old prophesy talking about a king with the hands of a healer.

The first display of Aragorn's alternative masculinity in the form of healing takes place on Weathertop, as Aragorn is leading the hobbits to Rivendell. The Ringwraiths attack the company, and one of them manages to wound Frodo. Aragorn takes care of Frodo like a nurse, and finds *athelas* to ease his pain. Here Aragorn shows tenderness and care that are typically associated with femininity, and his thus far built image as a hegemonically masculine fantasy hero starts to develop more nuance by displaying alternatively masculine traits such as healing powers and the will to sustain and renew life.

After the Fellowship emerge from Moria without Gandalf, Aragorn takes the lead and marches with incredible speed, momentarily forgetting that Frodo and Sam are injured and cannot keep up with such pace. When he realises his mistake, he shows deep concern about the well-being of the hobbits, suggesting that Boromir and he should carry them the rest of the way until they can stop. When they take a break Aragorn first examines Sam's wound, gives him *athelas* and instructs him to wash the wound with *athelas*-infused water. Then Aragorn turns his attention to Frodo, insisting that he must examine the injury despite Frodo's reassurance that he is unharmed. Aragorn treats Frodo's injuries successfully (Tolkien, 1994a):

> Aragorn bathed the hurts with water in which *athelas* was steeped. …Soon Frodo
> felt the pain leave him, and his breath grew easy: though he was stiff and sore to the touch for
> many days. Aragorn bound some soft pads of cloth at his side (p. 327).

Aragorn is the one to treat the injured while the other members of the Fellowship are occupied with different tasks.

Aragorn's healing abilities are revealed further when Merry, Éowyn, and Faramir are in the Houses of Healing in Minas Tirith – Merry and Éowyn after being wounded in battle and

Faramir after his father attempted to burn him alive. Aragorn sees that Faramir is closest to dying, and tends to him first. He asks for *athelas*, but the people working at the Houses of Healing do not have it in their storage because they are not aware of its healing qualities. This demonstrates that Aragorn has superior knowledge of healing among the Men of Middle-earth. While *athelas* is being gathered, Aragorn begins healing Faramir. While he examines Faramir's condition, he recognises that not only physical injuries alone, but the combination of physical and mental stress is the reason for his critical condition. Aragorn's approach to healing is thus more holistic and encompasses the whole being of a person, rather than only the apparent physical aspect. He also appears to have some magical healing abilities, beyond the knowledge of merely using herbs with healing qualities (Tolkien, 1994c):

> Now Aragorn knelt beside Faramir, and held a hand upon his brow. And those that watched felt that some great struggle was going on. For Aragorn's face grew grey with weariness; and ever and anon he called the name of Faramir, but each time more faintly to their hearing, as if Aragorn himself was removed from them, and walked afar in some dark vale, calling for one that was lost (p. 847).

While Aragorn is calling Faramir out of death's door, the *athelas* arrives, and Aragorn uses it to awaken Faramir, as well as to lift the moods of the onlookers.

After Aragorn tends to Faramir, he moves onto taking care of Éowyn. Similar to how he treats Faramir, he also takes into consideration both Éowyn's physical and mental aspects while treating her injuries. In addition to the obvious physical injuries, Aragorn is aware of Éowyn's unhappiness with her life, and also of his own impact on her. Even before she meets Aragorn, Éowyn is not happy with her position as a shieldmaiden, but wishes to be a warrior who accomplishes great deeds in battle. Falling in love with Aragorn only makes her more eager to gain valour in battle, and adds to her desperation. Aragorn understands Éowyn's feelings, and understands that even if she can recover physically, her full recovery depends on her mental side (Tolkien, 1994c):

> '…Éomer, I say to you that she loves you more truly than me; for you she loves and knows; but in me she loves only a shadow and a thought: a hope of glory and great deeds, and lands far from the fields of Rohan.
> 'I have, maybe, the power to heal her body, and to recall her from the dark valley. But to what she will awake: hope, or forgetfulness, or despair, I do not know. And if to despair, then she will die, unless other healing comes which I cannot bring…' (p. 849).

Aragorn shows deep understanding of the mental condition of Éowyn, and is wise enough to understand that he cannot help her recovery on that front due to his own – although unwilling – contribution to her unhappiness. Like while healing Faramir, Aragorn also appears to possibly have supernatural powers when he calls for Éowyn to awaken. When he feels life returning to her, he places Éowyn's hand in Éomer's, so that her brother is the first person she sees when she wakes up. In this way her attachment to Aragorn will not grow, and the truer love that she feels for Éomer might encourage her to recover.

Merry is the last but not least of the three patients Aragorn treats in the Houses of Healing. Like with Faramir and Éowyn, Aragorn also considers both the physical and mental condition of Merry. He consoles the scared Pippin, and tells him not to worry because Merry has a strong spirit (Tolkien, 1994c):

> 'Do not be afraid,' said Aragorn. 'I came in time, and I have called him back. He is
> Weary now, and he has taken a hurt like the Lady Éowyn, daring to smite that deadly
> thing. But these evils can be amended, so strong and gay a spirit is in him. His grief he will not
> forget; but it will not darken his heart, it will teach him wisdom.'
>   Then Aragorn laid his hand on Merry's head, and passing his hand gently through
> the brown curls, he touched the eyelids, and called him by name. And when the
> fragrance of *athelas* stole through the room, like the scent of orchards, and of heather in the
> sunshine full of bees, suddenly Merry awoke… (pp. 850–851).

Aragorn shows that he is a skilled healer, and treats his patients gently and thoughtfully.

5.2.2 Aragorn as opposed to Boromir

Aragorn and Boromir are similar in many ways: they are both men, from Gondor, in high positions, and skilled warriors. Yet they have major differences in their masculinities and values. Boromir is hegemonically masculine in all aspects of his character, and comparing Aragorn to him helps highlight Aragorn's alternative masculinity.

In the Council of Elrond Boromir is proud and assertive. When Elrond tells the council what happened after the Ring was taken from Sauron, and mentions that the legacy of Númenor has dwindled, Boromir is quick to interject that Gondor is still strong. He boasts about the great deeds they have done to fight the power of Sauron (Tolkien, 1994a):

> 'Believe not that in the land of Gondor the blood of Númenor is spent, nor all its
> Pride and dignity forgotten. By our valour the wild folk of the East are still
> restrained, and the terror of Morgul kept at bay; and thus alone are peace and freedom maintained

in the lands behind us… still we fight on, holding all the west shores of Anduin; and those who shelter behind us give us praise, if ever they hear our name: much praise but little help. Only from Rohan now will any men ride to us when we call (p. 239).

Boromir is proud of the fact that Gondor can protect other lands, and wants others to know about their valour. He thinks that there are not many who are as valiant as the warriors of Gondor, except for the ones of Rohan. Boromir also highlights the dangers and difficulties he has endured on his way to Rivendell: "in this evil hour I have come on an errand over many dangerous leagues to Elrond: a hundred and ten days I have journeyed all alone…" (Tolkien, 1994a, p. 239). He asserts himself to the other participants of the council, ensuring that they all know how brave and strong Gondor, and he himself, are. It is clear that Boromir values the hegemonically masculine traits of being a strong warrior and defines himself primarily through his battle prowess.

However, Boromir is not in Rivendell to "seek allies in war" (Tolkien, 1994a, p. 238), but to learn the meaning of a dream his brother Faramir has seen many times, and even Boromir himself once. In the dream Boromir hears the following words (Tolkien, 1994c):

Seek for the Sword that was broken:
   In Imladris it dwells;
There shall be counsels taken
   Stronger than Morgul-spells.
There shall be shown a token
   That Doom is near at hand,
For Isildur's Bane shall waken,
   And the Halfling forth shall stand (p.240).

Boromir does not understand the meaning of these words, and neither does anyone else in Minas Tirith, which is why they are turning to Elrond who is known for his wisdom. Boromir reveals that he does not know much of old lore, and is not particularly interested in it either, because there are others who he can turn to if needed. According to Domínguez Ruiz (2008; 2015), this lack of interest in knowledge is a hegemonically masculine trait, as opposed to investing oneself in old lore and wisdom instead of relying only on one's physical abilities, which is seen as alternatively masculine. When Boromir expresses his need for answers, Aragorn stands up, puts his sword on the table, and tells Boromir that he will soon understand. Aragorn thus expresses his knowledge of old lore, and therefore seems more alternatively masculine when contrasted with Boromir.

When Aragorn replies to Boromir's need for answers, Boromir is surprised. He is suspicious of Aragorn, and does not hesitate to challenge him: "and who are you, and what have you to do with Minas Tirith?' asked Boromir, looking in wonder at the lean face of the Ranger and his weather-stained cloak" (Tolkien, 1994a, p. 240). It is not explicitly expressed as to why exactly Boromir is surprised that it is Aragorn who answers his question, but Aragorn appearing to be a 'mere' Ranger and knowledgeable of lore is one option. He might be taken aback by the fact that a person seemingly lower in rank dares to claim to be able to provide answers to him. Boromir seems distrustful of Aragorn because of his demure appearance at the council. However, Aragorn does not answer Boromir with matching assertiveness, but says nothing to defend himself. Instead, it is Elrond who informs Boromir about Aragorn's true identity as the heir of Elendil. Boromir remains doubtful, and questions the value of a broken sword. When Aragorn explains that it is the Sword of Elendil, and asks if Boromir would like for the heirs of Elendil to return to Gondor, Boromir expresses his apprehension (Tolkien, 1994a):

> 'I was not sent to beg any boon, but to seek only the meaning of a riddle,' answered Boromir proudly. 'Yet we are hard pressed, and the Sword of Elendil would be a help beyond our hope – if such a thing could indeed return out of the shadows of the past.' He looked again at Aragorn, and doubt was in his eyes (p. 241).

Again, Aragorn himself does not defend himself, but this time Bilbo cannot contain his irritation about his friend being treated with disrespect. He defends Aragorn by reciting *All That Is Gold Does Not Glitter* – the poem that Bilbo himself wrote about Aragorn's path in life. However, Aragorn shows no signs of being annoyed, and instead of acting aggressive against Boromir, he shows him kindness and understanding (Tolkien, 1994a):

> Aragorn smiled at [Bilbo]; then he turned to Boromir again. 'For my part I forgive your doubt,' he said. 'Little do I resemble the figures of Elendil and Isildur as the stand carven in their majesty in the halls of Denethor. I am but the heir of Isildur, not Isildur himself...' (p. 243).

Aragorn does not appear offended by Boromir's doubt, but is understanding of him. He strives towards peace and harmony even in conversation, and does not go along with what can even be seen as provocative manner of speaking by Boromir.

Aragorn does, however, answer Boromir's claim about only Gondor being strong and defending the people of the land (Tolkien, 1994a):

'…And this I will say to you, Boromir, ere I end. Lonely men are we, Rangers of the wild, hunters – but hunters ever of the servants of the enemy; for they are found in many places, not in Mordor only.

'If Gondor, Boromir, has been a stalwart tower, we have played another part. Many evil things there are that your strong walls and bright swords do not stay. You know little of the lands beyond your bounds. Peace and freedom, do you say? The North would have known them little but for us. Fear would have destroyed them. But when dark things come from the houseless hills, or creep from sunless woods, they fly from us. What roads would any dare to tread, what safety would there be in quiet lands, or in the homes of simple men at night, if the Dúnedain were asleep, or were all gone into the grave?

'And yet less thanks have we than you. Travellers scowl at us, and countrymen give us scornful Names. "Strider" I am to one fat man who lives within a day's march of foes that would freeze his heart, or lay his little town in ruin, if he were not guarded ceaselessly. Yet we would not have it otherwise. If simple folk are free from care and fear, simple they will be, and we must be secret to keep them so. That has been the task of my kindred, while the years have lengthened and the grass has grown…' (p. 242).

Aragorn informs Boromir that the Rangers do just as much, if not more to protect the people as Gondor does, but without the glory and the praise. Thus, the work the Rangers do – fighting enemies and protecting the people around them, even if in secret – fits the hegemonically masculine ideals of having courage and battle skills. What is different between Aragorn and Boromir is the fact that Aragorn is content with the fact that the deeds of the Rangers remain unknown and receive no praise or glory, because peace and the preservation of life is what matters to him the most.

This difference between Aragorn's and Boromir's approaches to fighting the enemy is further illustrated when the Fellowship of the Ring begins their journey from Rivendell towards Mordor (Tolkien, 1994a):

The Company took little gear of war, for their hope was in secrecy not in battle. Aragorn had Andúril but no other weapon, and he went forth clad only in rusty green and brown, as a Ranger of the wilderness. Boromir had a long sword, in fashion like Andúril but of less lineage, and he bore also a shield and his war-horn.

'Loud and clear it sounds in the valleys of the hills,' he said, 'and then let all the foes of Gondor Flee!' Putting it to his lips he blew a blast and the echoes leapt from rock to rock, and all that heard that voice in Rivendell sprang to their feet.

'Slow should you be to wind that horn again, Boromir,' said Elrond, 'until you stand once more on the borders of your land, and dire need is on you.'

'Maybe,' said Boromir. 'But always I have let my horn cry at setting forth, and though thereafter we may walk in the shadows, I will not go forth as a thief in the night' (p. 272).

Here Aragorn looks like Strider the Ranger again, in clothes appropriate for wilderness and this time carrying his beloved sword. In other words, outwardly he appears hegemonically masculine in a rugged, austere way. Boromir's appearance, on the other hand, is a more regal, embellished version of hegemonic masculinity. However, the difference is yet again in their attitudes towards the task. Aragorn has no issue with going in secrecy and drawing as little attention to him and the company as possible because he understands it is essential for the success of their quest, and for preserving the lives of the Fellowship. Boromir, however, is not comfortable with that; he not only wants to look like a warrior, but also wants everyone to know that he is coming, and fear him – even if it puts the Company and their mission in danger. Thus, despite often appearing and acting hegemonically masculine, Aragorn is also capable of displaying alternatively masculine traits, that Boromir is entirely missing.

6 Discussion and conclusion

The aim of my thesis was to analyse the different masculinities displayed by Aragorn, with particular focus on the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity and alternative masculinities. While the alternatively masculine traits of Aragorn have been studied, there seems to be little discussion about his hegemonically masculine traits. Upon examining the various descriptions, words, and actions of Aragorn, it can be concluded that he is a complex character in terms of masculinity, and displays both hegemonically masculine and alternatively masculine traits. First, I analysed Aragorn's displays of hegemonic masculinity, focusing on three main areas: Aragorn's introduction to the story as a mysterious stranger, him as a leader, and him as a warrior. I followed that with an analysis focusing on his alternative masculinity, divided into two parts: Aragorn as a healer, and Aragorn as opposed to Boromir. It is interesting to note that while Aragorn is known only as Strider, and it is not yet known that he is of noble birth and will become king, his characteristics are mostly hegemonically masculine. His physical abilities, such as being tough enough to survive in the wilderness, are highlighted, as well as his ability to take control of a situation and to be threatening. It is only later in the story, when his full identity is revealed, that he begins to display the most alternatively masculine traits.

When Aragorn is first introduced to the story, his masculinity appears to be hegemonic; as demonstrated by his weather-beaten appearance and the stories of him told by the inn keeper, he is someone who lives independently, spending a lot of time in the wilderness where he takes risks and faces dangerous situations. Aragorn is also intelligent and knowledgeable about things that are going on in Middle-earth. As a future king, it is to be expected to be aware of the political developments of Middle-earth, but in the beginning of the story, neither the hobbits or the reader are aware of his high status. He appears to be only a random stranger, with extraordinary insight of the Ring and the quest of the four hobbits. In addition, 'assertive,' 'acts as a leader,' and 'makes decisions easily' are all listed in the Bem sex role inventory (1974, p. 156) as masculine characteristics, and Aragorn seems to display all of these attributes. He insists that he should lead the hobbits on their quest, and naturally takes control of the situation when the Black Riders are after the hobbits. He manages to convince the hobbits to trust him and easily comes up with a plan to protect them.

He officially becomes the leader of the hobbits when they leave Bree and begin their journey to Rivendell. While being in a leadership position, he demonstrates many additional

hegemonically masculine traits: he is stoic and rational, in control of the situation, and confident in himself. He makes decisions and acts with no hesitation, operating almost like a soldier. However, he also knows how to consider the emotional side of his company. He reassures the hobbits when they are scared, and shows enough emotional intelligence to know when to make a joke to lighten the mood. These are signs of good leadership, which in general is considered a masculine trait. However, on a more detailed level as individual actions, sensing the emotions of the people he is leading, and knowing how to respond to them, leans more towards what is usually seen as feminine. This juxtaposition of Aragorn's masculine and feminine traits is an excellent example of his character, which is both hegemonically and alternatively masculine.

An important characteristic of hegemonic masculinity is a man's skill in battle. Aragorn has excellent warrior skills, and he is brave in every battle situation. This is a trait that Aragorn shares with the hegemonically masculine Rohirrim and Boromir, who despite of being from Gondor, is more similar to the men of Rohan in his masculinity. As Domínguez Ruiz (2015) explains, the men of Rohan are the hypermasculine warriors, whose masculinity is determined by their physical strength, especially on the battlefield (p. 26). In many ways Aragorn is extremely similar to their type of masculinity: he does not cower from the enemy, but is often in the front lines leading other soldiers to war, and occasionally he even desires battle. On the battlefield he is fierce and efficient, killing countless soldiers of the enemy.

Accompanying him is always his beloved sword, Andúril, which can be interpreted to be his phallus symbol. The broken sword in the beginning of the story is often seen as a representative of Aragorn's masculinity, which is also incomplete at that point. Only when he fully claims his identity as the heir to the throne of Gondor, orders the sword to be reforged, and uses it in battle for the first time, is his masculinity fully complete. This type of masculinity that is directly connected with his sword and its use in battle is textbook hegemonic hypermasculinity. However, what is interesting and deviates from the typical hegemonically hypermasculine warrior image, is how the sword is sometimes associated with traditionally feminine elements in addition to its masculine connotations. The sword is decorated with both sun and the moon, as well as is described as shining the light of both (Tolkien, 1994a, p. 269). Sun is typically associated with masculinity, and the moon with femininity. In addition, Galadriel gives Aragorn a sheath for Andúril that has floral decorations (Tolkien, 1994a, p. 365). The combination of such a masculine object as a sword with the more feminine-coded elements is interesting and even unusual in a hypermasculine

warrior hero context. This emphasises Aragorn's complexity as both a hegemonically masculine and alternatively masculine character.

Aragorn appears to combine both types of hegemonical masculinity discussed by Armengol (2013a), Cuenca (2013), and Requena-Pelegrí (2013): the physically strong and able man, and the intelligent breadwinner type. The physical strength and martial competence are easy to see: he weathers long stays in the wilderness, carries a sword, and fights the enemy. The self-made provider is more complex. In a literal sense, Aragorn might not be a breadwinner, as he certainly does not work a corporate job and climb the economic and social ladder by being successful in making money. However, his journey from being a weather-beaten wanderer and a 'mere' Ranger to becoming a king and uniting the lost kingdom of Arnor with Gondor can be seen as a major climb up the social and economic ladder. His heritage helps him by providing him a chance to aim for the crown, but only by his own merits of healing people and acquiring Arnor does he manage to win people over and become a loved ruler, providing peace and prosperity for his realm and its surroundings.

In addition to hegemonically masculine characteristics, Aragorn displays various characteristics of alternative masculinity, one major one of which is him being a healer. His healing skills also play a crucial part in his success to become the king of Gondor. Thus, his alternative masculinity is equally important as is his hegemonic masculinity. As mentioned before, Aragorn's alternatively masculine characteristics have been more extensively researched as his hegemonically masculine ones. Aragorn displays a lot of the same characteristics as the hypermasculine rulers Théoden and Denethor, both of whom fail as leaders according to Domínguez Ruiz (2015). What sets Aragorn apart and enables him to become a successful king is the fact that his hypermasculine traits are complimented by his alternatively masculine ones. Despite acting in hypermasculine ways, such as being assertive, assuming a leadership position, and being skilled in battle, Aragorn's core values are alternatively masculine; his ultimate goals are to protect and preserve life, and to create a nurturing and peaceful environment for his subjects. This appreciation of peace and only using war as a last resort means to protect the things dear to him make him a better leader that Théoden, who first falls victim to Wormtongue's advice and then desires to gain glory on the battlefield, or Denethor, who uses his position to oppress and dominate others (Domínguez Ruiz, 2015, p. 28).

The complexity of Aragorn's masculinity is highlighted when comparing Aragorn to Boromir. They share several hypermasculine traits, such as being skilled in battle. However, Boromir is the typical hypermasculine hero, who determines his masculinity through physical strength and battle prowess alone, whereas Aragorn's hypermasculine characteristics are complemented by his alternatively masculine ones. It is interesting to note that had Aragorn not emerged to claim the crown of Gondor, Boromir would have been the one to rule Gondor as a Steward. Although he would arguably have been a better ruler than his father Denethor, his rule would have likely been based on hypermasculine values. Gondor might have survived for a while longer, and perhaps attained some glory in war, but only Aragorn – guided by his alternatively masculine values – is able to make Gondor prosper. Like Rawls (1984) suggests, Aragorn is a good ruler because he has a balance of masculine and feminine characteristics.

In conclusion, Aragorn's masculinities are complex and multifaceted, with both hegemonically hypermasculine characteristics and alternatively masculine – often viewed as feminine – characteristics. His rugged appearance in the beginning of the story, as well as his leadership and battle skills make him in some ways similar to the hypermasculine warriors of Rohan and to Boromir, who shares the values of the Rohirrim when it comes to masculinity. However, Aragorn also has significant alternatively masculine traits in combination with the hegemonically masculine ones. Being a healer is usually considered a feminine trait, and to Aragorn it is a major part of his journey to the throne of Gondor. Additionally, despite being skilled in battle, Aragorn does not see war as a destination, an opportunity to gain glory, but as a means to a more peaceful life. Thus, Aragorn has a balance of hegemonically masculine and alternatively masculine traits, and this harmonious combination is the key to his success.

Although the masculinities of Aragorn have been previously researched with similar findings to this thesis, the analysis of this thesis focuses more on the details of Aragorn's character, discussing specific passages of text. In addition, I have focused also on his hegemonically masculine traits, discussing them in as much detail as his alternatively masculine traits. *The Lord of the Rings* is written in times when society had a rigid structure for gender expression, and in that light Tolkien's writings have more variety in gender roles than was customary at the society he lived in. It is an interesting topic, but as the aim of this thesis was elsewhere, another study would need to be conducted to explore the relationship between Tolkien's writings and the society during his time. Likewise, the gender ambiguity and the seeming lack of gender roles of the Elves as a race provides another interesting topic of research.

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