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Coming of Age in Paolini's *The Inheritance Cycle*

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Zásady pro vypracování

Závěrečná diplomová práce se bude zabývat žánrem fantasy, konkrétně tetralogií *Odkaz dračích jezdců* (*The Inheritance Cycle*) Christophera Paoliniho. V úvodní části diplomant stručně nastíní historický a literární kontext tématu a vysvětlí základní pojmy, s nimiž bude pracovat (children's literature, young adult fantasy, bildungsroman, metamorphosis, apod.) a tetralogii do tohoto kontextu zasadí. Dále pojedná o prolínání žánru fantasy a bildungsrománu a ukáže je na zvoleném díle. Jádrem práce bude analýza motivů dospívání (prvků bildungsrománu) v Paoliniho *Odkazu dračích jezdců* a finální metamorfózy protagonisty. V analýze diplomant rovněž zohlední literární aspekty děl a zhodnotí jejich efektivitu vzhledem k tematické rovině. Analýzy bude dokládat ukázkami z tetralogie a opře je o relevantní sekundární zdroje. V závěru své analýzy shrne a tetralogii zhodnotí z hlediska zvolené tematiky a literárních prostředků k tématům a motivům využitých. Vyjádří se rovněž ke kritické recepci díla.

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Annotation

This diploma thesis analyses the first two books from *The Inheritance Cycle* by Christopher Paolini regarding coming of age and class position of the main protagonist, Eragon. The first part of the work will explain and introduce to the reader the literary context of fantasy, young adult fantasy, metamorphosis, bildungsroman, and class criticism. The second part will be concerned with analysing the books from the viewpoint of Eragon's maturation and changes in his position in society.

Key words

Fantasy, Eragon, Paolini, bildungsroman, coming of age, maturation, Eldest, Roran, Saphira, young adult fantasy, class, class criticism, Marxist criticism

Název

Dospívání v Paoliniho *Odkazu dračích jezdců*

Anotace

Tato diplomová práce analyzuje první dvě knihy ze série *Odkaz dračích jezdců* od Christophera Paoliniho z pohledu dospívání a pozice ve společnosti hlavní postavy Eragona. První část práce vysvětlí a popíše literární kontext fantasy, fantasy pro mládež, metamorfózy, bildungsromanu a kritiky třídního systému. V druhé části práce analyzuje vybraná díla z pohledu Eragonova dospívání a změny pozice ve společnosti.

Klíčová slova

Fantasy, Eragon, Paolini, dospívání, Eldest, Roran, Safira, fantasy pro mládež, třídy, třídní kritika

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Introduction

Christopher Paolini wrote the first book in *The Inheritance Cycle*, *Eragon*, when he was only fifteen years old. The book and the series have, consequently, become instant bestseller in the genre of fantasy. The series is centred around Eragon, a fifteen years old farmer, who is thrust into a world of adventures with his dragon, Saphira. As he experiences war, magic, love, politics, art, loss of loved ones, and new races, he learns much about the world he lives in and himself as well. The reader of this series can well see how Eragon and Saphira develop their character and how they change under the influence of their surroundings. It is easy for the reader to see many important life lessons, which can then be transferred into their life; the reader can develop with Eragon.

The first two books, *Eragon* and *Eldest*, were chosen because of the Blood-Oath celebration, which is an event taking place at the end of the second book. This celebration is a magical ritual which transforms Eragon physically, marking his adulthood and maturation. Even though Eragon's development continues well beyond *Eldest*, the most significant changes in his character take place in *Eragon* and *Eldest*, while allowing for a thorough inspection in the scope of this thesis.

The thesis focuses on the Eragon's coming of age, depicted gradually in many different areas and aspects. It will attempt to give detail and analysis of Saphira's and Eragon's development and progression, outlining the causes, influences, and effects. Likewise, it will also look at how Eragon's position and social standing is depicted and how it changes as he is transformed from a poor farm boy to the only hope for freedom in the world of Alagaësia. The work will also look at how Eragon's class and position in society changes as he matures and progresses with his journey seeing it as inseparable part of coming of age.

In the first part of the thesis the history of fantasy will be outlined together with the explanation of important terms and literary methods. These will be supported with examples from the books. The second part will include in-depth analysis of coming of age and class depiction in the books, offering citations from the series. Each section will summarize the most important development and aspects. At the end of the thesis, there will be a conclusion compiling the findings.

Finally, the conclusion will provide findings on Eragon's overall development of character and status.

1. Bildungsroman and its Literary Context

Tobias Boes claims that the introduction of the term “Bildungsroman” occurred in 1870 when the German philosopher and sociologist Wilhelm Dilthey used it in his biography of Friedrich Schleiermacher. He goes on to explain that the term gained more traction with his 1906 study *Poetry and Experience*. The English language was the first occurrence of Bildungsroman in 1910, when it was found in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, with the definition stating that the term described a novel that “has as its main theme the formative years or spiritual education of one person.”¹

The author also talks about the important reference on the British novel of formation; Jerome Hamilton Buckley’s *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding* from 1974. Boes cites Buckley’s definition of a Bildungsroman as being a “novel that portrays all but two or three of a set list of characteristics, among them childhood, the conflict of generations, provinciality, the larger society, self-education, alienation, ordeal by love, the search for a vocation and a working philosophy.”² This definition shall be the main definition used in this thesis.

Almost all of these themes can be easily found in *The Inheritance Cycle*, as will be shown. During his adventure, Eragon is torn into multiple directions and is forced to undergo significant development in order to be able to withstand all the challenges in his path; challenges, which far exceed those of a common person. Due to the book being of the fantasy genre, Paolini was able to emphasize Eragon’s life lessons. He is not only required to mature and improve himself to the point of being adult, but also exceed this state by becoming a leader, a magician, and a warrior; something a regular person might never have to come into contact with, but something a young reader may find appealing and beneficial for their own development as they then can more clearly see the lessons they need to learn.

Furthermore, Boes talks about the difference in the English use of the word “Bildungsroman” and the German use. In his view, in Germany it is much more restrictive and

¹ Boes, Tobias, “Modernist Studies and the Bildungsroman: A Historical Survey of Critical Trends,” *Literature Compass* 3, no 2. (24 February 2006).

² Boes, “Modernist Studies.”

stems directly from Dilthey's work with literature labelled as Bildungsroman representing a specific aesthetic ideology. According to Boes, Dilthey saw the genre as "the poetic expression of the Enlightenment concept of *Bildung*."³ Moreover, Boes claims that Dilthey saw the character development as being "observed in the life of the individual: each of the stages has his own intrinsic value and is at the same time the basis for a higher stage."⁴

This sequence of stages of development is clearly visible in *The Inheritance Cycle*. As the books progress up until the point of the metamorphosis, Eragon is changing and developing in many ways; however, each stage of his development creates a base for the next. For instance, at first Eragon is unwilling to fight or even kill, nevertheless, as his journey and adventure progresses, he is forced into conflict, teaching him that the use of force is dangerous but also necessary. This creates the base for him commanding an army of the Varden, over time taking on more and more responsibilities and more powerful enemies, both in capabilities and numbers.

The same can be seen in Roran, albeit Roran seems to be much more at ease with violence and such necessities, which is possibly the consequence of him being older than Eragon and the fact that the love of his life is in danger. Roran has his eyes set on creating a family with his soon-to-be wife, Katrina, therefore his motivation to fight and lead is much greater than Eragon's. Both of these characters are forced into their new position, but each of them has a different starting position in the story and they each need to create their own place in the world due to their old ones slowly disappearing and becoming intangible.

In addition to Dilthey, Tobias Boes also talks about the Romantic critic Karl Morgenstern, who introduced the term Bildungsroman much earlier than Dilthey did; in 1819. Morgenstern gave two lectures on the topic but gained little to no traction. Boes says that Morgenstern's designation was forgotten and put aside due to the fact that the genre in the nineteenth century was dying, and only owing to Dilthey the genre was artificially revived and started to thrive.

³ Boes, "Modernist Studies."

⁴ Boes, "Modernist Studies."

As Marc Redfield opens his chapter *The Phantom Bildungsroman*, he points out that only few literary terms and genres have enjoyed such success as bildungsroman.⁵ He goes on to say that the appeal to a particular “I” and the subjectivity of a community is clear. One can also look at bildungsroman from the viewpoint of pedagogy, he says; it combines the education of a person and the aesthetics of a text in that it is impressively subjective and aspiring.

However, there is more to unravel, Redfield continues to claim. In his opinion, the fact that bildungsroman has been made a part of formal and informal education and a well-used literary tool does not originate from the aestheticism of a hero simply growing and reaching their goals; but rather the play of meanings and ideas that are put into them.⁶

The description of what a bildungsroman novel is centred about seems easy at fist; as Karl Morgenstern explains, it can refer to a novel focusing on the development or coming of age of a young hero mostly in the word of adults.⁷ However, with the genre constantly evolving, it may become problematic to have a simple definition as that. For one, how is it measured if a protagonist has truly matured? Redfield offers the opinion that trying to describe the genre itself might prove useless for the more one studies it, the blurrier it can become.⁸ Perhaps it would be best to leave it up to the authors of each given literary piece to decide when the character in question can be considered “mature” or not.

Jan Bernstein asks an important question: “Can there be a *roman* without the *Bildung*?”⁹ He is referring to the fact that, as Redfield explains, “Bildung” stands for “formation” or “education.” Bernstein continues to claim that it is a “unifying form of the classical novel,

⁵ Redfield, Marc. *Phantom Formations: Aesthetic Ideology and the “Bildungsroman”* New York: Cornell University Press, 1996), 38–62.

⁶ Redfield, *Phantom Formation*, 38-62.

⁷ Morgenstern, Karl, and Tobias Boes, “On the Nature of the ‘Bildungsroman.’” *PMLA* 124, no. 2 (2009): 647–59.

⁸ Redfield, *Phantom Formation*, 38–62.

⁹ Bernstein, Jay, “Melancholy as Form: Towards an Archaeology of Modernism.” in *The New Aestheticism*, ed. John J Joughin, Simon Malpas. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 167–190.

paralleling the ambitions and trajectory of secularising modernity, chartered the formation, education, quest and achievement of identity and worldliness of its bourgeois heroes and heroines.” This is seconded by Maria Nikolajeva, who claims that “fantasy rarely ends in marriage and enthronement; in contemporary philosophical and ethical fantasy it is usually a matter of spiritual maturation.”¹⁰

One can get the sense of adventure and thrill the reader may receive from such a novel and that each novel dealing with a development of any kind can be educational and beneficial to the reader.

It is this sense of adventure and thrill while also seeing and imitating the main protagonist’s progress that makes Paolini’s *The Inheritance Cycle* saga a bildungsroman; the saga starts with Eragon being a mere teenager who is forcibly put onto a path full of difficult choices and conflicts. This path leaves him no choice but to abandon his previous, safe life and step out into the world where he needs to take on numerous responsibilities. The reader can easily apply Eragon’s story and various lesson on their own life, growing and maturing with him.

The books also place an enormous emphasis on Eragon’s unpreparedness during his adventures, especially at their beginnings. The protagonist is neither ready, nor does he want to fight the all-mighty king; at first, he simply wants to carry out his revenge on those responsible for the destruction of his previous life seeing no other way forward. However, as he discovers more of the world he has lived in but has never truly gotten to know, he begins to realize the importance of his role. He sees that even he, a poor farmer, can truly make a difference, albeit his fate is affected by the fact that he was chosen to be a Dragon Rider.

Nonetheless, he meets a number of people of various backgrounds, social classes, races, or opinion, and he needs to make a sense of it, just as it is in the real world. When one looks behind the events of the books, they can clearly see their application to the world outside them.

Nevertheless, there seems to a limit to the power of bildungsroman, as Redfield hints. In his view, with the effect of scholarship, bildungsroman seems to be losing its influence, but

¹⁰ Maria Nikolajeva, “Fairy Tale and Fantasy: From Archaic to Postmodern,” *Marvels & Tales* 17, No. 1 (2003): 140.

it is not to be overlooked. It may serve as one of the first literary pieces a young reader could come into contact and fall in love with. It may shape their character and give them a sense of wonder and ideals; however simple it may look to a more advanced reader's eye.

2. Metamorphosis as a Literary Device

According to Kai Mikkonen, metamorphosis is a relatively modern phenomenon in literature.¹¹ She claims that the first conceptualizations of literary examples of metamorphosis were undertaken in the late 1930s by Gaston Bachelard, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Roman Jakobson. As Mikkonen elaborates, it might be due to the fact that earlier in literature it was not easy to imagine a protagonist physically changing into another form or being, while today it is not as unrealistic or even exotic.

Nevertheless, the author points out that there were cases in the literature of the past where a certain kind of transformation of a character occurred, i.e., Lot's wife in Homer's Circe episode and King Nebuchadnezzar's punishment of turning him into a bird of prey.¹² In these cases, there was a direct link between the metamorphosis and the acts of the character.

It needs to be said that this change might also happen psychologically, as stated by Marion Gymnich and Alexandre Segão Costa.¹³ They draw an important link between the physical and psychological development of a character who went through a metamorphosis. Their explanation suggests that the character may change physically, while still maintaining their state of mind. However, it is important to mention that these characters can still experience a change in their mentality.

As is apparent in *The Inheritance Cycle* and seems to be in accordance with Gymnich and Costa, the act of metamorphosis is carried out by supernatural beings, even though there were attempts at making it seem more scientifically plausible. This can be clearly seen in the book when the metamorphosis actually takes place. Eragon is brought into the kingdom of the

¹¹ Mikkonen, Kai. "Theories of Metamorphosis: From Metatrophe to Textual Revision." *Style* 30, no. 2 (1996): 309–340.

¹² Mikkonen, "Theories of Metamorphosis," 309–340.

¹³ Gymnich, Marion, and Alexandre Segão Costa. "Of Humans, Pigs, Fish, and Apes: The Literary Motif of Human-Animal Metamorphosis and Its Multiple Functions in Contemporary Fiction." *L'Esprit Créateur* 46, no. 2 (2006): 68–88.

elves, Du Weldenvarden. Near the end of the second book, the Elves perform the Blood-Oath Celebration, at the end of which Eragon's physical form undergoes significant changes.

The transformation consists of the Elves casting a spell on Eragon which causes his old battle-wounds to heal, his whole body becomes more elf-like and so do his magical skills, mentality, and body strength. Eragon does not become an elf, but he is also no longer just a human, but rather a combination of the two.

It is possible to see this as a plot device, allowing Eragon to quickly gain strength and heal his wounds in order to be more capable in his war against the evil king. However, Paolini's decision makes a lot more sense when explained in the book, according to which this ceremony served to more closely connect dragons and their Riders. It is this connection between Eragon and Saphira that allows for Eragon to so drastically change, just as Saphira did after being she hatched.

The metamorphosis also saw Eragon maturing mentally. While Eragon's mental maturity will be discussed more in detail further, it is important to note that the Blood-Oath-Celebration helped immensely. One could say that it opened Eragon's mind and allowed him to think more as an elf and less than a human. This means, in essence, that Eragon can, due to the prolonged lifespan, see life and important events not as life-defining, but as only parts of what he is about to experience, meaning he is now able to see everything from a much different perspective to humans.

What is different from *The Inheritance Cycle* are the circumstances of the metamorphosis. Gymnich and Costa say that it is typically carried out as a form of punishment, resulting in one losing control over their body and sometimes even one's emotions. In addition, the authors mention more uses of metamorphosis; it may be used to criticizing gender roles, self-definitions, concepts of nature or industrialization, dependence of man on the environment, etc.¹⁴

On the contrary, in the book this celebration is carried out as a gift, a natural part of the progression of a connection between a Rider and his dragon. Eragon and Saphira value this gift

¹⁴ Gymnich, Marion, and Alexandre Segão Costa. "Of Humans," 68–88.

immensely and intend to use it against the king Galbatorix. Eragon at all times honours this connection and the two care for each other immensely, even if he at certain points does not realize how deep and powerful it is, nor the exact point where it was created. Paolini put a lot of stress on the moment that the mark was burned into Eragon's palm upon touching newly born Saphira, however, this event alone is not enough. The reader might notice that over time, Eragon became incredibly tied to his dragon and so did she. Nevertheless, the nature of the bond itself is not clearly explained, it is only presented as being normal between a Rider and their dragon.

However, when Eragon and Saphira take part in the Blood-Oath Celebration, something changes both on the inside and the outside of them. They both became much stronger with Eragon, as has been said, physically changing his features. They acquire an even deeper bond and combined with the training from another fellow Rider and his dragon, who are too old for standing their ground against the Empire, the bond between them grows even more powerful.

Clearly, Eragon's trust and devotion to Saphira was forced by the events happening around him, although they were not misplaced. Saphira, on the other hand, was much more aware of her choice and its consequences. The Celebration allowed them both to become more than they could have ever been, should they have to fight the war completely separately. In a sense, Eragon becoming a kind of a human-elf allowed him to transcend his physical limitations.

Furthermore, it is not clear whether previous riders were able to undergo the changes that Eragon could. At the beginning of the story, Eragon talks to Brom about the effect of being connected to a dragon; Brom says:

You forget that the dragons were magical—they affected everything around them in strange ways. The Riders were closest to them and experienced this the most. The most common side effect was an extended life. Our king has lived long enough to make that apparent, but most people attribute it to his own magical abilities. There were also other, less noticeable changes. All the Riders were stronger of body, keener of mind, and truer of sight than normal men. Along with this, a

human Rider would slowly acquire pointed ears, though they were never as prominent as an elf's.¹⁵

Puzzled by this, Eragon thinks: "How else will this dragon change my life? Not only has it gotten inside my head, but it's altering my body as well!"¹⁶ This is a clear foreshadowing of things to come, but it also shows that the kind of transformation that Eragon undertakes is rare. Ajihad solidifies this when he says: "...throughout history all the Riders have been either elven or human, with the majority being elven. There has never been a dwarf Rider,"¹⁷ indicating that there never was a mixed-race Rider such as Eragon. This might suggest that Eragon was granted the rarest and most unique gift which the Elves could have given him; and, consequently, the rebels against the Empire for Eragon could become much stronger than king Galbatorix himself.

The Celebration also had one more effect; by transforming Eragon into a being half-human and half-elven, he became a sort of intermediary between the two races. When Ajihad talks about Saphira's egg, an interesting information is put forward:

"Because of Galbatorix's betrayals, the elves were reluctant to let any of the Varden handle the egg for fear that the dragon inside would hatch for a human with similar instabilities. It was a challenging situation, as both sides wanted the Rider for their own. The dwarves only aggravated the problem by arguing obstinately with both the elves and us whenever they had the chance.

Tensions escalated, and before long, threats were made that were later regretted. It was then that Brom suggested a compromise that allowed all sides to save face.¹⁸

What the leader of the Varden is talking about, is the distrust between the races. Even though they are all allies, each of the races is attempting to gain an advantage over the others; in this case, having one of their people as the new Rider. This would give them much more power and a significantly better position in the struggle for Alagaësia. Therefore, with Eragon becoming half-human and half-elven, the two races can form a much stronger alliance.

¹⁵ Paolini, Christopher, *Eragon* (London: Corgi Books, 2005), 55.

¹⁶ Paolini, *Eragon*, 55.

¹⁷ Paolini, *Eragon*, 381.

¹⁸ Paolini, *Eragon*, 381.

Obviously, there is the matter of the dwarves, who did not gain anything from this situation; however, they are eager to improve their positions in other ways.

3. Marxist Literary Criticism of Class

Following the criticism and ideology of Karl Marx, many authors criticized the effect of one's class and its portrayal in various works of art, including literature, as Stanley Edgar Hyman discusses.¹⁹ Even though Marx himself was not much concerned with literature directly, he acknowledged its sphere of influence due to how well-read he was, Hyman claims. At the same time, in Hyman's opinion, Marx does not suggest "a too simple correspondence between art and social relations."²⁰

Marx's ideology, as Joshua Muravchik reports, criticizes the roles and effects of classes and capitalism in a capitalistic society.²¹ Furthermore, the struggles between the working class and the ruling class is of high concern. It seems to be Marx's opinion that such tensions will lead to revolutionary communism resulting in the working classes seizing control of the economy.

Therefore, it seems that Marx's main concern was the real-world application of capitalism and the class system, which he saw as unsustainable and unstable. This is supported by Terry Eagleton, who adds that Marx was aware of the importance of literature given by his background in philosophical texts.²² However, his own works did not deal with literature and art much, as they were more oriented on the actual applications of the class system.

Nonetheless, Hyman names several authors, such as Brandes, Taine, or De Sanctis, who applied the criticism of classes depicted in various works. From Hyman's analysis it seems that for these authors, it was not only the social class of the author that mattered, but also the social classes in their works and their portrayals, influencing the story and, possibly, the reader.²³

¹⁹ Stanley Edgar Hyman, "The Marxist Criticism of Literature," *The Antioch Review*, no. 4, Winter (1947), 545–548.

²⁰ Hyman, "The Marxist Criticism," 548.

²¹ Joshua Muravchik, "Marxism," *Foreign Policy*, no. 133 (November–December 2002): 1–3.

²² Eagleton, Terry. *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 1–3.

²³ Hyman, "The Marxist Criticism," 551–552.

Meyer Howard Abrams states that the Marxist criticism is mainly concerned with the social class of the author and how it influenced their work.²⁴ This seems to be the original idea behind the criticism. Nevertheless, Abrams also offers another, more modern view. He cites Georg Lukács' opinion that the criticism can be also applied to the portrayal of classes itself in the text and how it affects the characters in it. Such approach is what this thesis is attempting to analyse by looking at the way Eragon's position changes as he develops, meets new cultures and races, and leaves his mark on the world around him. Lukács further says that each work creates its own fictional world which reflects the real world in various ways and sometimes extremes. This is also true of Paolini's world of Alagaësia, in which the world seems to reflect the social structure of the real-world Middle Ages, but making it more complex with the introduction of typical fantastical aspects, such as dragons, various races, and magic.

Murfin Ross and Supryia M. Ray support this view, albeit their definition is stricter; in their opinion Marxist criticism sees literary texts as "the product of work and whose practitioners emphasize the role of class and ideology in reflecting, propagating, and even challenging the prevailing social order."²⁵ The approach suggests that the literary works in question also put pressure on the real-world social order and attempts to change it. This does not seem to be very relevant to *The Inheritance Saga*, as the series appears to be more concerned with the position of an individual among various social groups, rather than the society as a whole.

Marxism was criticised by many; Jonathan D. Moreno and R. Scott Frey name John Dewey as one of the critics of the ideology.²⁶ The authors describe Dewey's initial interest in and hope for Marxism which later eroded to the point of him becoming completely anti-Marxist. Among the reasons, the "communist exploitation of the weaknesses of the workers' prophet" stands out the most, as opposed to capitalists exploiting the workers. Moreno and Frey also talk

²⁴ Mayer H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (Fort Worth, Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1999), 147–149.

²⁵ Murfin Ross, Supryia M. Ray, *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*. (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997), 244.

²⁶ Jonathan D. Moreno, R. Scott Frey, "Dewey's Critique of Marxism," *The Sociological Quarterly*, no. 1 (Spring 1985): 32

of Dewey's disillusionment with "morality disguised as science,"²⁷ which seems to resonate with others as well.

Robert V. Andelson talks of Nicolas Berdyaev, another critique, who, for example, agreed with Marx's negative view that the life-process of society is "based on the process of material production,"²⁸ could not come to terms with the Marxist doctrine of man, being in conflict with his view of man being the image of God. Berdyaev, Andelson continues, regarded this approach as being woefully outdated.

The way contemporary Marxist criticism operates remains largely unchanged, although it has gotten somewhat more complex, as demonstrated by Barbara Foley.²⁹ She explains that examining literary texts through the with the ideology in mind, Marxist critics use various tools and approaches, i.e. analysing the particular rhetoric used in a text, or how exactly the text reinforces the traditional structure of the society. She names, for example, defining and finding dehistoricization, which is portraying a specific phenomena without the historical context, instead of portraying it as a product of certain historical aspects or influences. In much the same way, Marxist critics, Foley claims, look for naturalization, which attempts to depict certain phenomena as being natural and out of human sphere of influence. It would appear, however, that such phenomena are scarce in *The Inheritance Cycle*, and as such they will not be analysed in this thesis. Instead, the general portrayal of classes, and mainly Eragon's, will be examined and talked about.

²⁷ Moreno, Frey, "Dewey's Critique," 30

²⁸ Robert V. Andelson, "Nicolas Berdyaev's Critique of Marxism," *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, no. 3 (July 1962): 275–276.

²⁹ Foley, Barbara, *Marxist Literary Criticism Today* (London: Pluto Press), 125–128.

4. Historical and Literary Context of Fantasy

Dieter Petzold discusses the definition of fantasy; he states that there are many various definitions and that many authors tend to use the term “fantasy” or “fantastical” in a different meaning from the others.³⁰ Furthermore, he argues that fantasy “cannot be defined exclusively in terms of subject matter, form, or function.” It would seem that to Petzold fantasy is an extensive genre enveloping many sub-genres which need to be individually pointed out and explored further.

S. C. Fredericks talks of more definitions of fantasy, which he sees as problematic; he mentions Todorov’s view that “fantastic is grounded in an ambivalence as to whether the narrative world presented to the reader is a natural or super-natural one.”³¹ Moreover, Fredericks talks of Irwin’s definition claiming that a text being fantastic refers to the injection of any “antireal” material into the narrative while not actually being a literary genre on its own. There is also the definition from Manlove: “a fantasy is: a fiction evoking wonder and containing a substantial and irreducible element of the supernatural with which the mortal characters in the story or the readers become on at least partly familiar terms.”³²

While these definitions do seem to describe what a fantasy text might include, one could also easily say that they are very general and that most works of fiction could be classified as fantasy. Therefore, for the purposes of this paper, the definition of fantasy which shall be used is the one by John Grant and John Clute:

A fantasy text is a self-coherent narrative which, when set in our reality, tells a story which is impossible in the world as we perceive it; when set in an otherworld or secondary world, that otherworld will be impossible, but stories set there will be possible in the otherworld’s terms. An associated point, hinted at here, is that at the core of fantasy is a story. Even the most surrealist of fantasies tells a tale.³³

³⁰ Dieter Petzold, “Fantasy Fiction and Related Genres,” *Modern Fiction Studies* 32, No. 1 (1986): 12–13.

³¹ Fredericks, S. C. “Problems of Fantasy,” *Science Fiction Studies* 5, No. 1 (1978), 33–35.

³² Fredericks, “Problems,” 35.

³³ John Clute, John Grant, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (London: Orbit, 1999), viii.

Petzold also emphasizes how subjective and time-bound fantasy literature is. To explain, he argues that a text aiming to be classified as fantastical needs to make a conscious departure from realism of a given era or a time period. Therefore, the work and the author need to be aware of what is considered realistic or expected around them and then intentionally differentiate the story from that.³⁴

Maria Nikolajeva talks of the close relationships between fairy tales and fantasy as she believes the two genres to be quite closely related, even if with different origins. She sees the roots of fairy tales in “archaic society and archaic thought,”³⁵ Moreover, she mentions Homer, Ovid, and Apuleus as possible ancient authors of fantasy; however, fantasy as a genre, she believes, became established as a proper genre roughly in Romanticism.

Another important difference between fairy tales and fantasy, Nikolajeva explains, is the fact that fairy tales in general aim to preserve the story as closely as possible to the original one, even if telling the tale imposes changes on it. This is in contrast to fantasy, which is, in her view, a deliberate and intentional creation of the story in order to fit specific purposes. Those might be instructive, such as bildungsroman, religious, philosophical, social, entertaining, etc. Nikolajeva also makes it clear that the fantasy genre borrows heavily from other genres.³⁶

The author names E. T. A. Hoffmann’s *The Nutcracker* as the first work classifiable as fantasy by most scholars due to it matching most definitions of fantasy, mainly the one talking about fantasy being an unrealistic prose.³⁷ This is supported by Emer O’Sullivan, who adds that soon, “the tradition of fantasy reached new height in the mid-nineteenth-century England with the works of George MacDonald and Lew Carroll and, somewhat later, E. Nesbit.”³⁸

Nikolajeva shares this view of Carroll, Kingsley, and MacDonald as the authors responsible for the creation of the tradition of fantasy in Britain during the nineteenth century.

³⁴ Petzold, “Fantasy,” 16.

³⁵ Nikolajeva, “Fairy Tale,” 138.

³⁶ Nikolajeva, “Fairy Tale,” 139.

³⁷ Nikolajeva, “Fairy Tale,” 139.

³⁸ O’Sullivan, Emer, “Comparative Children’s Literature,” *PMLA* 126, No. 1 (January 2011): 193.

Later, Edith Nesbit helped push the genre into new directions by using i.e., the idea of time-shifting etc., clearly inspired by the scientific advances and science-fiction genre.³⁹

Charlotte BURCHER, Neil Hollands, Andrew Smith, Barry Trott, and Jessica Zellers are of the opinion that when a contemporary reader thinks of a fantasy fiction book, they often think of what is called epic high fantasy, which are stories often based on Norse or Celtic mythology, featuring elaborate worlds, huge and varied casts of characters, many quests, and extensive use of magic.⁴⁰ *Eragon* is the prime example of such a book, as in it we can easily find fictitious language, diverse and complex mythology, and the huge world of Alagaësia.

Brian Attebery expands on the difference of epic fantasy from regular fantasy; in his opinion, the main contrast is in scale: “an epic thinks globally: its protagonist is the world.”⁴¹ To him, it seems, epic fantasy consists of smaller stories intertwined and inserted into one huge story concerning the entire world that the characters live in, while non-epic fantasy might only be concerned with a small portion of the world and a small portion of the overall story.

Furthermore, Butcher, Hollands, Smith, Trott, and Zellers mention the early writers who had an enormous impact on the epic fantasy: E. R. Eddison, David Eddings, and J.R.R. Tolkien,⁴² all of whom were the main sources of inspiration for Christopher Paolini, as described in his biography on his website.⁴³ These authors, they continue, were the true pioneers of the fantasy genre for they gave the genre its profound magnificence and epic proportions which catch the eye of many young readers longing for adventures bigger than life itself.

It is Humphrey Carpenter’s opinion that only after 1900 fantasy started being productive in the USA as well with the works such as *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by Baum.⁴⁴ Moreover, Carpenter believes that most of the earlier works were mainly imitative of their British

³⁹ Nikolajeva, “Fairy Tale,” 139.

⁴⁰ Burcher, Charlotte, Neil Hollands, Andrew Smith, Barry Trott, Jessica Zellers. “Core Collections in Genre Studies: Fantasy Fiction 101,” *Reference & User Services Quarterly* 48, No. 3 (2009): 227.

⁴¹ Attebery, Brian. “Introduction: Epic Fantasy,” *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 29, No. 1 (2018): 1–2.

⁴² Burcher, Charlotte, “Core Collections,” 227.

⁴³ “Christopher Paolini,” Biographies, Paolini. <https://www.paolini.net/biographies/christopher-paolini-full/>

⁴⁴ Carpenter, Humphrey. *Secret Gardens: The Golden Age of Children’s Literature*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1985), 16–17.

counterparts and that it was not until after the Vietnam war that American authors started producing true fantasy novels.

The Golden Age of the English-language fantasy started, according to Nikolajeva, in the 1950s by authors such as C. S. Lewis, Philippa Pearce, Lucy M. Boston, Mary Norton, and Alan Garter, all of whom gave the genre much higher sophistication and important improvements. It is possible that, as Nikolajeva mentions, due to the disturbing events happening in the world at the time and to the scientific advances, fantasy became an important escape genre of literature for the masses. There seems to have been a shift in what was perceived as untouchable even by magic, i.e. the non-linear progression of time. The author makes an important remark; “if fairy tales, displaced as they are, reflect archaic thought, fantasy seems to reflect the postmodern human being’s split and ambivalent picture of the universe.”⁴⁵

Shaun F. D. Hughes discusses J. R. R. Tolkien’s role during these times and his effect on the whole fantasy genre. He argues that while Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* was criticised by some authors, it had a profound effect on the genre lasting until the present day.⁴⁶ He adds that no matter the criticism, it was his works which diverted the direction of the genre and enchanted so many readers. Tom Shippey even called Tolkien the “author of the century” believing that the approach and complexity of Tolkien’s works are unparalleled and distinctive.⁴⁷ It is this complexity and epicness Paolini has tried to replicate in his *The Inheritance Cycle*.

⁴⁵ Nikolajeva, “Fairy Tale,” 140.

⁴⁶ Hughes F. D., Shaun. “Introduction: Postmodern Tolkien.” *Modern Fiction Studies* 50, No. 4 (2004), 807–812.

⁴⁷ Shippey, Tom. *J. R. R. Tolkien: The Author of The Century* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2000), 1–2.

5. Young Adult Fantasy

The first occurrences of Young Adult Fantasy can be found in many myths, traditional folk tales, and fairy tales, as Pamela S. Gates explains. She claims that the first literary fantasies for both children and young adults emerged in the nineteenth century owing to Hans Christian Andersen and Lewis Carroll. Gates adds that these were influenced mainly by the fairy tales collected by Charles Perrault, the Brothers Grimm, and others.⁴⁸

Nikolajeva extends the brief overview of children's fantasy. She makes an important note that the genre could only emerge once childhood was acknowledged as a separate and formative period in human life. Nikolajeva also makes an interesting remark; she claims that in children's literature handbooks fantasy is often mixed or treated together with literary fairy tales or even as modern fairy tales,⁴⁹ which she sees as misleading.

In her view, the first generally acknowledged fantasy directly aimed at children was E. T. A. Hoffmann's *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King* from 1816, mainly due to the fact that many of the toys in the story are the characters. Nevertheless, she goes on to explain that the main protagonist, the little girl, is not as important in the story, unlike the Nutcracker. The reader can find in *The Nutcracker* many themes which are beyond a child's comprehension, such as philosophical and ethical aspects.⁵⁰

Moreover, Nikolajeva talks of Carlo Collodi's *The Adventures of Pinocchio* from 1881, widely known for its main character of the living puppet, Pinocchio. It can be said that the story's morals and lessons are somewhat easier to see; those are meant to develop the sense for education and socialization of the young reader, Nikolajeva says.⁵¹

The author also mentions several other works that must not be left out; among those is Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), Charles Kingsley's *Water Babies* (1863), and George MacDonald's *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872) and *The Princess and the Curdie*

⁴⁸ Gates S., Pamela, *Fantasy Literature for Children and Adults* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press Inc, 2006), 2.

⁴⁹ Nikolajeva, Maria. "The Development of Children's Fantasy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*, ed. Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 50.

⁵⁰ Nikolajeva, Maria. "The Development," , 50.

(1883). Nikolajeva views Kingley's and MacDonald's stories as traditionally Romantic while denounces Carroll's writing for using the child "as an object for spiteful and intricate adult games."⁵²

David Sandner adds to this by quoting Oscar Wilde in that his fairy tales were "meant partly for children, and partly for those who have kept the child-like faculties of wonder and joy," He also quotes George MacDonald, who wrote "not for children, but for the childlike, whether five, or fifty, or seventy-five."⁵³ There is a visible shift in the overall approach that stories for children's were no longer dull, unimaginative, straight-forward, and only meant to entertain children; beginning with these books and authors, the stories became much more complex, developed, and aimed at a wider audience.

Young adults, not only children, were able to enjoy the stories full of mysteries and fantastical features. Their authors were clearly aware of the effect their works could have on their readers and they seized this opportunity to give them more than they expected. It is possible that they also saw the chance for introducing these readers into reading in general, especially into reading truly complex texts. This could be why today this subgenre is so important and prominent.

Many readers who are at the beginning of their reading lives might begin with such a genre as the young adult fantasy. These can be seen as the first somewhat serious books that a young reader might come into contact with. Al Muller and C.W. Sullivan III explain why; this genre is what they call "initiation literature."⁵⁴ What they mean is that the characters and mainly protagonists of these books are often young and rarely adolescent, who are then thrust into a world of adventure in which they must abandon their innocent way of life and instead embrace the responsibilities and possibilities adult life has to offer.

⁵² Nikolajeva, Maria. "The Development," 51.

⁵³ Sandner, David. *The Fantastic Sublime: Romanticism and Transcendence in Nineteenth-century Children's Fantasy Literature*, (London: Greenwood Press, 1996), 3-4.

⁵⁴ Muller, Al, and C. W. Sullivan. "Young Adult Literature: Science Fiction and Fantasy Series Books." *The English Journal* 69, no. 7 (1980): 71-74.

Moreover, as Muller and Sullivan continue, these novels also simply offer a good story. These books offer action, suspense, danger, romance, mythical creatures, heroic acts, comedy, and many more aspects which young readers are drawn to and enjoy. One can also easily see them as a form of escapism as the readers are enveloped in magical worlds full of interesting characters and creatures. The fact that most of these books exist in a series, as is the case with Paolini's *The Inheritance Cycle*, further promotes their popularity as these series accompany young readers through many years of their early lives.

Pamela S. Gates ponders into what makes fantasy so attractive to children and young adults; in her view, fantasy literature is a very personal matter, and its definition is subjective to every single one of us. She adds, that "fantasy is imaginative fiction that allows us to explore major life mysteries without being limited by size, time, or space. More specifically, fantasy literature, like all other forms of myth, springs from the human need to understand the struggle of good versus evil."⁵⁵ Her view shows that young people may enjoy fantasy due to the fact that it can be easily interpreted by them; they can imagine things no one else would be able to, and they can be the heroes of those stories, which can be of significant importance to them. We are each the hero of our story, yet it may be difficult to see it that way, especially during childhood and early adulthood.

Gates also talks about the psychological side of fantasy. She mentions C. S. Lewis who wrote *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* based on an image he had been carrying in his head for a number of years; this image in his mind became the basis for the epic story he later wrote about. As Gates says: "indeed, it is no exaggeration to state that to be human is to fantasize."⁵⁶ She expands on it by saying even this imagination can have its limit; it may even become a burden if one begins to live in their fantasies rather than the real life. Nonetheless, the author praises this genre of literature for its positive properties; among them the possibilities for escape and coping. These two areas can be seen as the main purposes of fantasy literature and, possibly, also science-fiction, which this thesis is not concerned with, but with which fantasy shares certain aspects and purposes.

⁵⁵ Gates, *Fantasy Literature*, 1.

⁵⁶ Gates, *Fantasy Literature*, 2.

Jack Zipes attempts to further explain the appeal of fantasy to young readers.⁵⁷ He relates fantasy as a genre and fantasy as an opposite to reality; he believes that the two are intertwined. In his view, it is natural for everyone, not just children and young adults, to make sense of the world through fantasy. Zipes goes as far as to mention that religion is a kind of fantasy as well. It is this way of imaging things, visions, ideas which helps us to grasp, explain, comment on, or even alter the reality. One might even say that the reality is fantasy as long as it is not explained by reason.

Zipes further explains that all artwork involves fantasy, no matter the actual genre of it. He says that every artwork must have at least some fantastical components and that how they are incorporated into the work of art is crucial. It is also important to note what is externally expected of the artwork to contain. Zipes comments that a lot of the material called fantasy is predictable and very conventional because of the lack of critical reflection and self-reflection, only appealing to the market and the audience. Indeed, most of the fantasy works also deal with political, social, religious, and other aspects of the real world and the reader can be easily overwhelmed by such literature.

⁵⁷ Zipes, Jack. "Why Fantasy Matters Too Much." *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 43, no. 2 (2009): 77–91.

6. Eragon's Coming of Age in *Eragon* and *Eldest*

The first book in the series introduces the reader to the character of Eragon as well as his family and the town of Carvahall, which is set in the north-west of Alagaësia. The land is ruled by the evil King Galbatorix and there are many stories of the so-called Dragon Riders, who were mighty warriors once in the services of good. Nonetheless, such warriors have been eradicated by the king, except for Oromir, who will be revealed later in the series, and now all that remains is the Empire under the rule of Galbatorix, the land of the elves, hidden in the Du Weldenvarden forests of the north, the dwarven kingdom in the south in the Beor mountains, the Varden, a rebel group fighting against the king, and Urgals, a race of troll-like creatures.

The story begins on a small farm in Carvahall, a tiny village in the northwest part of Alagaësia. Garrow, Eragon's uncle, to whom the farm they live and work on belongs, is a hardworking old man full of pride. He takes good care of Eragon, gives him a home and a way to earn his living. The farm, which is located a fair distance from the village, is not a friendly place but to Eragon, it is more than enough to make him happy. Even if Eragon is only fifteen years old, he is more than capable of labour.

Garrow at first seems to be a simple man, but he is noble and honourable. He despises people feeling sorry for him due to his economic situation. He does not want charity or help of any kind, unless absolutely necessary. It is this quality that Eragon seems to have adopted from him, even though not as stubbornly. During the second chapter of the book, after Eragon finds Saphira's egg and intends to trade it for some meat from Sloan, the blacksmith of the village, Horst, offers to pay for the meat in exchange for Eragon working for him. "[Eragon] was glad that there was a way for him to pay Horst. His uncle would never accept charity."⁵⁸

The fact that the distance of the farm to the town requires several hours of travelling also points out to him being a man who appreciates aloneness and peace. Eragon, on the other hand, frequently offers himself to be the middleman for Garrow's errands so that he can see other people, talk to them, and enjoy himself; something Garrow is not so fond of.

⁵⁸ Paolini, *Eragon*, 15.

Roran, even though he is Eragon's cousin, is as close as a brother to him. The two share a strong bond and tell each other the most intimate aspects of their life, except for a few instances which will be talked about later. He is two years older than the book's protagonist and much more experienced. Roran's mindset differs slightly from his cousin's, however; he is more set on starting a family with his girlfriend, Katrina, whom he plans to marry. He is not to be confused for a less of a warrior, though. As the plot progresses, Roran shows not only bravery, but also sacrifice.

Roran proves both of these qualities early on; the first opportunity appears when he wants the hand of his lover, Katrina, due to the fact that her father is Sloan, the town's butcher known for being very proud, ruthless, and against anything related to Garrow, Eragon, or Roran himself. Sloan does not scare him; instead, Roran employs all of his wits to secure a future for him and Katrina. He accepts a hard job in order to obtain the money necessary for the prospect of family.

The new job also requires him to move away from the farm. He must leave Garrow, Eragon, and even Katrina, even if not for long, which causes him distress, but he firmly believes in himself and his plan. Eragon sees him as a paragon for these qualities and employs the lessons later in his adventure. When Roran announces his departure from the farm, Garrow gives both him and Eragon some very important advice, which can later be seen used by Eragon during his travels:

"I have words for both of you. It's time I said them, as you are entering the world. Heed them and they will serve you well." He bent his gaze sternly on them. "First, let no one rule your mind or body. Take special care that your thoughts remain unfettered. One may be a free man and yet be bound tighter than a slave. Give men your ear but not your heart. Show respect for those in power but don't follow them blindly. Judge with logic and reason, but comment not."

"Consider none your superior, whatever your rank or position in life. Treat them fairly or they will seek revenge. Be careful with your money. Hold fast to your beliefs and others will listen." He continued at a slower pace, "Of the affairs or love... my only advice is to be honest. That's your most powerful tool to unlock a heart or gain

forgiveness. That is all I have to say.” He seemed slightly self-conscious of his speech.⁵⁹

While it may not be immediately obvious to Eragon, all of this advice would soon come to fruition, first of all the matter of sheltering his thoughts. Even though he does not realize it immediately, the later connection between his and Saphira’s mind is already both a blessing and a curse. This matter will be discussed further in the thesis, but it plays a role even early in the story, when Roran informs him of his departure, leaving Eragon frustrated and worried:

The next few days were trying. Eragon’s temper was frayed. Except for curtly answering direct questions, he spoke with no one. [...] It was almost a week before he realized that distance had grown between Roran and him. When they spoke, the words did not come easily and their conversations were uncomfortable.

Saphira was a balm for Eragon’s frustration. He could talk freely with her; his emotions were completely open to her mind, and she understood him better than anyone else. [...] Soon she understood everything he said and frequently commented on it.⁶⁰

Clearly, the bond between Eragon and Saphira is growing ever stronger, especially the connection between their minds. Eragon does not hide anything from her and neither does Saphira. Later in the book, the reader can see Eragon struggle with his mind being invaded by other people, i.e. in the part where Eragon and Murtagh meet the Varden and Eragon is put to the test, where one of the Varden scours his mind painfully: “It was like sitting still while his fingernails were extracted with rusty tongs. His entire body was rigid, jaw locked tightly. Heat radiated from his skin, and a line of sweat rolled down his neck. He was acutely aware of each second as the long minutes crept by.”⁶¹

From this encounter, Eragon learned how weak his mind is. There were instances of him communicating with or probing other people’s minds, but he never encountered such brute force. This experience has become the basis for the training of his mind, since he would need to be able to resist even more brutal attacks on his mind, which does happen later in the books.

⁵⁹ Paolini, *Eragon*, 64.

⁶⁰ Paolini, *Eragon*, 61.

⁶¹ Paolini, *Eragon*, 383.

During this test, Saphira aided him in protecting valuable memories or information, such as concealing the fact, that Murtagh is the son of Morzan one of the corrupted Dragon Riders. It is obvious that Saphira's is much stronger than Eragon's, however, she never misuses this power. She does, however, not hide her opinions and views on various things, even if Eragon does not wish to hear them. It seems that in this sense, Eragon is letting her guide him unwillingly. Nevertheless, this does not appear to be a negative influence on him.

Moreover, Saphira also shows the power to temporarily transfer Eragon's consciousness into her body, as seen in a scene where she lets Eragon look through her eyes and experience flight from her perspective:

Her mind tugged at his, pulling him away from his body. Eragon fought for a moment, then surrendered control. His vision blurred, and he found himself looking through Saphira's eyes. Everything was distorted: colors had weird, exotic tints; blues were more prominent now, while greens and reds were subdued. Eragon tried to turn his head and body but could not. He felt like a ghost who had slipped out of the ether. [...] When they were high above the ground, she looked back at Eragon. He saw himself as she did, hanging on to her with a blank look. He could feel her body strain against the air, using updrafts to rise. All her muscles were like his own. He felt her tail swinging through the air like a giant rudder to correct her course. [...] ⁶²

Paolini further emphasized this event, making the reader focus on the strength of Eragon's and Saphira's bond: "Their connection grew stronger until there was no distinction between their identities. They clasped their wings together and dived straight down, like a spear thrown from on high. [...] The air rushed past their face. Their tail whipped in the air, and their joined minds reveled in the experience."⁶³

During this flight Eragon was literally given a chance to see the world from a completely different perspective. Since Paolini says in the book that dragons are an ancient race, extremely wise and noble, and that "things happen around them, mysterious things which are not possible anywhere else."⁶⁴ Brom also adds that "Even though Riders worked with dragons for centuries,

⁶² Paolini, *Eragon*, 162.

⁶³ Paolini, *Eragon*, 162–163.

⁶⁴ Paolini, *Eragon*, 103.

never completely understood their abilities. Some say that even the dragons don't even know the full extent of their own powers."⁶⁵

While Roran is preparing to leave, forcing Eragon to come to terms with it, Eragon realizes that his eyes are not set or settling down as much as Roran's. At the beginning of the first book, he is quite fond of the honest life of a working farmer and such a life seems to suit him well, even though he does have some aspirations to be doing better. When he finds the dragon egg, which he believes to simply be a beautiful stone, he immediately thinks of his uncle and how it could improve their situation if they could sell it. Eragon puts the needs of his family before his own; he wants to buy food, in no way does he intend to rebel against the king of his country, even if he does not like him, much like the rest of people.

However, when Safira hatches, this all changes. Not only does Eragon finally understand what the stone truly was, he also stands in front of a huge decision; to either tell or not of the dragon. He fears that letting anyone know of Safira would only put the people around him in danger. This can be seen as a major mistake, as Eragon is simply not ready to both raise a dragon and defend his family without outside help.

Brom, the town's storyteller, comes into play here. He is wise and experienced, and unbeknownst to Eragon, a former Dragon Rider whose dragon had been slain by king Galbatorix. As the reader later learns, he is also Eragon's father, secretly living close to Eragon so that he can protect him. As the two characters embark on their journey, Brom becomes Eragon's teacher of not only fighting, but also culture, history, and the world in general. The protagonist learns many important lessons and qualities, allowing him to carry out the fight against Galbatorix.

Nevertheless, as the story unfolds, Eragon is thrust into a frenzy of mixed feelings and reactions. When the king's guard, Raz'zac, attack because of their learning about Safira, Garrow and Eragon are both wounded; Garrow does not recover and dies a few days after the attack, but Eragon gets better quite quickly; likely the consequence of him becoming a Dragon

⁶⁵ Paolini, *Eragon*, 103.

Rider,⁶⁶ which improved the physical attributes of his body, but his mind is, apart from being able to telepathically communicate with Safira, yet unchanged.

It is here where one can see Eragon as inexperienced, stubborn, naive farm boy, as is evident during and after the attack. Eragon begins to blame himself and regret his actions. It is his naivety that he can keep a dragon a secret that had brought doom upon his uncle. After realizing this mistake, he panics and attempts to throw himself at the Raz'zac, intending to take revenge. He is, however, stopped by Brom, and agrees to join him and escape from Carvahall.

Eragon is forced to trust Brom, even though he has little evidence that it is safe to do so. This is the beginning of his path to becoming a Dragon Rider not only physically, but mentally as well. Such a warrior needs to be collected and calm, which Eragon is far from. Over the first part of the journey, Eragon is slowly taught sword fighting; however, his mind is racing everywhere. Eragon is desperately trying to keep up with Brom, both in strength, speed, and his thoughts, but he is unable to do so, as Brom is not only much more experience, but also much more knowledgeable. Brom shows that he is capable of using magic, even though he tries to hide it. But Eragon is sharp enough to catch it and over time learns some magic himself.

However, he does not seem to ready, even physically. With each attempt, he wastes much of his energy and with very little effect. He becomes worried that even if he should find the Raz'zac, he would not be able to stand against them. This worry combined with his naivety later results in him almost killing himself when he and Brom come under attack by a group of Urgals in a seemingly deserted town of Yazuac. Eragon manages to defend himself using magic, but his foolishness causes him great injuries and almost kills him.

Nevertheless, although Eragon does not seem to mature fast enough, he grows physically much stronger than he used to be. He is no longer a capable farm hand; he is slowly transitioning into a warrior, albeit the fact that he is too young and undeveloped to truly become one. Through numerous mock fights with Brom the reader learns that Eragon is becoming stronger, faster, trickier. Nonetheless, when facing a real danger, such as a capable enemy

⁶⁶ Dragon Riders are in the book spelled with capital first letters.

Eragon had not yet met, he strives to prove himself and get his revenge, even though it results in him endangering himself and others.

In the passage the reader can see Eragon's and Saphira's eagerness in fighting from their short talk:

We are becoming more powerful, Eragon, both of us. Soon no one will be able to stand in our way. Yes, but which way should we choose? Whichever we want, she said smugly, settling down for the night.^{67 68}

One could say that Eragon is too passionate about revenge; even when his life is threatened, he does not stop at attempting to hurt those he sees as enemies. Brom does his best to instruct Eragon and teach him not only how to better handle magic and fighting, but also how not to lose his temper and control his emotions. Nonetheless, Eragon seems to simply not be ready for such mature thinking and behaving.

Another clear example of this is when another group of Urgals, this time in bigger numbers and better equipped, finds him in a forest. Eragon puts almost all of his energy into slaying most of them, but even though he is much stronger than he was in Yazuac, he still exhausts himself. The consequence of this is that he passes out leaving survivors, out of whom a few manage to escape and warn the Raz'zac. Brom scolds him, for Eragon due to his lack of experience and wit put his own life in danger while causing severe problems for the group:

"I stopped the Urgals from catching you," said Eragon, a pit forming in his stomach.

"Yes," growled Brom, "but that piece of magic nearly killed you! You've been sleeping for two days. There were twelve Urgals. *Twelve!* But that didn't stop you from trying to throw them all the way to Teirm, did it? What were you thinking? [...] I've spent the last two days trying to track them down. Even with Saphira, three escaped!"⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Paolini, *Eragon*, 142.

⁶⁸ In the book, Paolini differentiated the communication between Eragon and Saphira, who use their minds to directly talk to each other, with italics.

⁶⁹ Paolini, *Eragon*, 236.

Eragon clearly regrets his decision and tries to argue that he wanted to stop them, not kill them, displaying a sense for the value of living things but also showing misunderstanding of his mission. He seems to be torn between fighting and accepting difficult decisions:

“I didn’t want to kill them,” said Eragon, feeling very small.

“It wasn’t a problem in Yazuac.”

“There was no choice then, and I couldn’t control the magic. This time it just seemed... extreme.”⁷⁰

The fact that Eragon realizes the shift in his attitude and approach speaks volumes on his maturation. Even though he still has troubles seeing Urgals as more than enemies, he does not wish to needlessly cause unnecessary bloodshed.

It also seems that the main protagonist starts to finally evaluate his actions more than before. In a scene where Eragon enters the house of Angela, a fortune teller, he seems much more cautious and distrusting. In her shop he meets Solembum, a werecat who can communicate with Eragon in the same way Saphira can. While this does show that Eragon is more capable and gifted than most others, Solembum does not hide from him the fact that he is much more experienced and wiser than Eragon, who seems to take their conversation to heart. Also, Angela tries to read Eragon’s future, which seems very dim, full of death and hardships.

While Eragon would have laughed at such a prophecy before, he is deeply concerned with what Angela tells him. He now knows and believes that there are powers beyond his comprehension which are not to be trifled with. It is this part of the first book that the reader can see a certain development of Eragon’s character for the first time. It is with no doubt that Eragon starts to truly recognize beings and people of true power, not only in strength, but also in knowledge and magic.

When Eragon meets with Angela again, this time in Tronjheim, the city of the Varden within Farthen Dûr, he is overwhelmed with emotions due to him realizing that Angela’s prophecy of a death in Eragon’s close circle was the passing of Brom. However, he is much

⁷⁰ Paolini, *Eragon*, 236.

more developed by then and realizes it is unfair to be cross with Angela, who had had no way of knowing the exact circumstances of this death. Nevertheless, Eragon is not fond of Angela's opinion about him: "Brom was cursed in a way. It was his wyrd⁷¹ to fail at all of his tasks except for one, although through no fault of his own. He was chosen as a Rider, but his dragon was killed. He loved a woman, but it was his affection that was her undoing. And he was chosen, I assume, to guard and train you, but in the end, he failed at that as well. The only thing he succeeded at was killing Morzan,⁷² and a better deed he could not have done."⁷³

It is arguable if Brom really failed at guarding and training Eragon. He himself is torn at his situation and story after a woman forced him to give his blessings to her child:

"What have I become? I'm only in the first year of manhood, yet I've consulted with the leader of the Varden, am pursued by Galbatorix, and have travelled with Morzan's son -and now blessings are sought from me? What wisdom can I give people that they haven't already learned? What feats can I achieve that an army couldn't do better? It's insanity! I should be back at Carvahall with Roran."

To his doubts, Saphira takes a while to think and then responds:

"A hatchling, that is what you are A hatchling struggling into the world. I may be younger than you in years, but I am ancient in my thoughts. Do not worry about these things. Find peace in where and what you are. People often know what must be done. All you need to do is show them the way – that is wisdom. As for feats, no army could have given the blessing you did."⁷⁴

Eragon is obviously confused and lost in his thoughts; he wishes to be stronger and wiser, for he does not feel like he has done enough, all the while being somewhat scared of his future:

⁷¹ According to The Free Dictionary, „Wyrd“ can be understood as another term of „fate“ or „destiny“, usually one that is still untangling. *WordNet 3.0, Farlex clipart collection*. S.v. "Wyrd." Retrieved March 19, 2022, from <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/Wyrd>

⁷² Morzan, in the book, was one of the Dragon Riders who turned evil and aided Galbatorix in illegally seizing the throne.

⁷³ Paolini, *Eragon*, 435.

⁷⁴ Paolini, *Eragon*, 430.

“But it was nothing,” he protested. “A trifle.”

“No, it wasn’t. What you saw was the beginning of another story, another legend. Do you think that child will ever be content being a tavern keeper or a farmer when her brow is dragon-marked and your words hang over her? You underestimate our power and that of fate.”⁷⁵

He is visibly overwhelmed with emotions and doubts. He desires to fulfil all his duties as a Rider, help all the folk around him, but he does not seem to be quite ready to take on all the responsibility. Even though by this time it has been several months from his departure from Carvahall, it still has not been enough time for him to fully come to terms with all his tasks. His path is yet to be decided, mostly by him, but he does not feel to be in control:

Eragon bowed his head. “It’s overwhelming, I feel as if I am living in an illusion, a dream where all things are possible. Amazing things do happen, I know, but always to someone else, always in some far-away place and time. But I found your egg, was tutored by a Rider, and dueled a Shade – those can’t be the actions of a farm boy I am, or was. Something is changing me.”⁷⁶

In the part Eragon is evaluating his journey so far. It is the first time he remembers how far he is from his old life, how much it has changed, what he now is. He has yet to understand his true goal, or better yet, he still needs to decide and set it. Saphira is there to aid him in saying that he is not an ordinary boy:

“It is you wyrd that shapes you,” said Saphira. “Every age needs an icon – perhaps that lot has fallen to you. Farm boys are not named for the first Dragon Rider without cause. Your namesake was the beginning, and now you are the continuation. Or the end.

[...] “But if all is foreordained, do our choices mean anything? Or must we just learn to accept our fate?”

“I chose you from within my egg. You have been given a chance most would die for. Are you unhappy with that? Clear your head of such thoughts. They cannot be answered and will make you no happier.”⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Paolini, *Eragon*, 430.

⁷⁶ Paolini, *Eragon*, 430.

⁷⁷ Paolini, *Eragon*, 430.

Here Eragon, and hopefully the reader as well, learns several important lessons; the first being that no person is insignificant, everyone can become the hero, or the legend, of a story. Many young readers may struggle with their role in life, be it particularly in school, work, family, or anything else. Eragon has learned that no matter his previous position and status, he has the potential to become someone to celebrate and aspire to, just as any reader can.

It is also important to note the turning point of Eragon being asked to bless the child. Even though Eragon worded the blessing incorrectly, causing the child to later suffer, it appears that not only his name but his deeds are seen and valued by many; likewise, the trust in him seems to grow. Eragon has obviously become much more than the farm boy he used to be and he is starting to realize as much. This is indicated by Eragon replying to Safira's advice on avoiding his doubtful thoughts: "'True,' he said glumly, 'all the same they continue to bounce around in my skull.'" ⁷⁸ Even Saphira admits that "Things have been... unsettled...ever since Brom died. It has made me... uneasy." ⁷⁹ This hints that not only Eragon, but also Saphira has noticed a change in themselves and their environment.

It is perhaps caused by the sudden change of pace caused by Eragon's arrival in Tronjheim that Eragon has some time to ponder such questions. Nevertheless, Eragon's more complete realization of his predicament is important: he is no longer fighting it as much as he was, instead, he accepts it and wonders how to best and most efficiently improve himself so that he can truly make a change in the world.

Another important lesson is that life has unexpected surprises and twists in store for each of us. Eragon had not wished to become a Dragon Rider; he had not even properly known who they were, but when he became one, he was forced to come to terms with it, which was and still is not an easy feat. However, one, just as Eragon, must endure and continue on their journey in order to see it through.

This is also connected to Eragon's acceptance of all the events that have befallen him; he finally gained enough strength and courage to take on all of these challenges and is prepared to push through, no matter the cost. As will be seen later, these costs will not be easy for him

⁷⁸ Paolini, Eragon, 430.

⁷⁹ Paolini, Eragon, 430.

to overcome, but Eragon is visibly much stronger, as evidenced by the loss of Brom. Both Eragon and Saphira grieve, but since they need to press on, they quite quickly overcome it and do their best to grow from the experience.

The final lesson one can deduct is that there is no use in lamenting fate too much. While it may be important to a person to learn why their life is the way it is, there is barely any use in worrying about it. While it may be possible to change it or improve it, stressing out over unalterable matters, such as Brom's death and intentions for Eragon, is simply detrimental to Eragon's mental state. He can no longer change what has happened, nor can he know what lies in store for him, even if Angela gave him his prophecy. Eragon can only face the events of his life and grow, albeit painfully, or all of those events will have been in vain.

Eragon's stay in Tronjheim marks a major turning-point in his life. He is not only changed on the outside, becoming much stronger and able to fight, but also on the inside. He is given important tasks and also much more responsibility and pressure is put on him, both by common people and by various high-ranking individuals.

The common people of the Varden begin to look up to him in ways he never thought possible. For the first time ever, other people bow to him, even though he feels he does not deserve it and does not know how to respond. He is, however, ready to fulfil all that is asked from him. Ajihad even speaks of this:

“Also, despite your protests, the people here have certain expectations of you. They are going to bring you their problems, no matter how petty, and demand that you solve them.” Ajihad leaned forward, his voice deadly serious.

Clearly, Ajihad is aware that Eragon did not choose his position or task; he was chosen by Saphira. Nonetheless, he places great emphasis on the fact that his life has changed drastically and no matter his opinion, his life is no longer only his own. Furthermore, he talks of family matters and feuds that people will come to him with. It is obvious that even though people do not know him personally, his position itself is enough for them to seek his assistance and advice. As such, this power and influence come with requirements:

“You must be kind and wise with them all, for they put their trust in you. Don’t speak flippantly or without thought, because your words will have impact far beyond what you intend.”

Ajihad leaned back, his eyes hooded. “The burden of leadership is being responsible for the well-being of the people in your charge. I have dealt with it from the day I was chosen to head the Varden, and now you must as well. Be careful. I won’t tolerate injustice under my command. Don’t worry about your youth and inexperience; they will pass soon enough.”⁸⁰

The ruler is attempting to prepare Eragon for his duties as Dragon Rider. This scene is likely the turning point for Eragon, as he is openly stated what the Varden expect from him, at least in part, and mainly by the common people. Even though here Ajihad does not speak of military or political power, he makes it very clear that Eragon’s overall position in the society has changed drastically and that he needs to mature quickly in order to be up to the task. Ajihad is aware that Eragon is not fully ready; he is, however, aware of the gravity of the situation.

The reader might see this scene as somewhat irrelevant and too fictitious. However, it could also be understood differently; a young adult may, during their coming of age, come into a situation like that, albeit without dragons or magic power. Yet, they could find themselves in a situation where they need to mature much more quickly than they anticipated or than what would otherwise be considered normal. Therefore, just like Eragon, the reader may need to adapt to their situation and rise up to the challenge, and, just as Ajihad suggests, these issues may be overcome in a short amount of time, if need be.

Roran’s storyline sees similar development of the character’s maturity. While he is older and more mature overall, it is not until he is forced to defend Carvahall from the aftermath of Eragon’s departure that he needs to make some incredibly important and difficult decisions.

When Eragon leaves, Roran is informed by a letter from Brom that he needs to be cautious and that he should leave as soon as possible. However, Roran does not believe Brom and instead chooses to stay. The Ra’Zac and numerous soldiers come to Carvahall to look for Roran and to extract information from him about Eragon. At first Roran escapes from the village and makes shelter in the forests. However, after a few days, an accidental killing takes place; a

⁸⁰ Paolini, *Eragon*, 415.

soldier gets drunk and mistakenly kills a villager. Roran and the other villagers come up with a plan to drive the invaders from Carvahall. While doing so, they kill three of the soldiers and the soldiers kill ten villagers. Roran and the rest of Carvahall are put in a difficult situation – they can either fight, essentially, the whole of the Empire, and likely die, or turn Roran in and be sold as slaves for their rebellion.

During one night in the forests, a fire erupts in the village. It seems that the soldiers intentionally set several houses on fire. He feels as if he is responsible not only for the accidental killing of the villager, but also for these fires:

Roran cursed and tore his hair, tears streaming down his face. This was why mishandling fire was a hanging offense in Carvahall. Was it an accident? Was it the soldiers? Are the Ra'zac punishing the villagers for shielding me?... Am I somehow responsible for this?

Fisk's house joined the conflagration next. Aghast, Roran could only avert his face, hating himself for his cowardice.⁸¹

It does not take long for Roran and the villagers helping him to take up arms to fight back the invaders. Roran feels that it is duty to do so, even if he never intended to harm anyone, let alone kill.

Earlier in the book, Roran was reluctant to ask her father, Sloan, for her hand in marriage:

From the moment he began to court her, an unspoken assumption that they would marry had existed between them. There had been no need to discuss his intentions; they were as plain as the day was long, and so her question unsettled him. It also felt improper to address the issue in such an open manner when he was not ready to tender an offer. It was his place to make the overtures—first to Sloan and then to Katrina—not hers. Still, he had to deal with her concern now that it had been expressed. “Katrina... I cannot approach your father as I had planned. He would laugh at me, and rightly so. We have to wait. Once I have a place for us to live and I've collected my first harvest, then he will listen to me.”⁸²

⁸¹ Paolini, *Eldest*, 88.

⁸² Paolini, *Eldest*, 56–57.

This changes drastically as the battle for Carvahall progresses. After Roran arrives in the village to discuss the plan of the attack, he meets with Katrina and makes an important decision not to delay their marriage:

“Katrina... I have to speak with you as soon as we’re finished.” She smiled uncertainly, but with a spark of hope. “You were right; it was foolish of me to delay. Every moment we spend together is precious, and I have no desire to squander what time we have when a whim of fate could tear us apart.”⁸³

It is obvious that Roran is becoming to realize the gravity of the situation. When he was first pressed by Katrina to make a choice, he refused to go against the traditions. Now, it seems that to him, these issues are no longer valid; instead, it is his desire and love for her which are the most important factors to him. They long to be together until their deaths. However, following the first attack on the soldiers, Roran realizes that such fate might await him sooner than he thought, and he makes the final decision, which he would not have dared to make otherwise:

“What is wrong, Roran?”

A bark of humorless laughter escaped him. “What’s wrong? The world is wrong; it’s as askew as a picture frame knocked on its side.” He jammed his fist against his gut. “And I am wrong. Every time I allow myself to relax, I see the soldiers bleeding under my hammer. Men I killed, Katrina. And their eyes... their eyes ! They knew they were about to die and that they could nothing do about it.” [...] They knew... I knew... and I still had to do it. It couldn’t—” Words failed him as he felt hot tears roll down his cheeks.

[...] He wept for Garrow and Eragon; he wept for Parr, Quimby, and the other dead; he wept for himself; and he wept for the fate of Carvahall. He sobbed until his emotions ebbed and left him as dry and hollow as an old barley husk.⁸⁴

Clearly, Roran is experiencing sorrow and grief from having to kill several men. He was not ready for such a task, but he was forced to take it. In this scene he opens himself completely to Katrina; there is no more use in hiding his feelings, nor for her or for the whole situation. He does not care anymore for her father’s approval, he is willing to violate the traditions and

⁸³ Paolini, *Eldest*, 94.

⁸⁴ Paolini, *Eldest*, 132.

customs for he realizes that these do not matter any longer, especially if Roran might not be able to live to see the next day. Therefore, he arrives at the conclusion that the only thing that matters, is Katrina's acceptance and approval:

Forcing himself to take a long breath, Roran looked at Katrina and noticed her own tears. He brushed them away with his thumb, like diamonds in the night. "Katrina... my love." He said it again, tasting the words: "My love. I have naught to give you but my love. Still... I must ask. Will you marry me?"

In the dim lantern light, he saw pure joy and wonder leap across her face. Then she hesitated and troubled doubt appeared. It was wrong for him to ask, or for her to accept, without Sloan's permission. But Roran no longer cared; he had to know now if he and Katrina would spend their lives together.

Then, softly: "Yes, Roran, I will."⁸⁵

The importance of Katrina's acceptance cannot be overstated. To Roran, it becomes the reason to fight and win. He finally has the family he longed for and which he is ready to fight until the very end:

Despite the weather, Roran soared and exulted with his joy at Katrina's acceptance. They were engaged! In his mind, it was as if a missing piece of the world had dropped into place, as if he had been granted the confidence of an invulnerable warrior. What did the soldiers matter, or the Ra'zac, or the Empire itself, before love such as theirs? They were nothing but tinder to the blaze.

[...]

For all his new bliss, however, his mind was entirely focused on what had become the most important conundrum of his existence: how to assure that Katrina would survive Galbatorix's wrath. He had thought of nothing else since waking.⁸⁶

Roran has found a true meaning to his life and to his fight as well. This is what later separated him and Eragon; Eragon has not yet found a mate as Roran did, and the two have completely different causes for fighting Galbatorix, even if the two become very strong and

⁸⁵ Paolini, *Eldest*, 132.

⁸⁶ Paolini, *Eldest*, 133.

close allies later. The proposal and acceptance also mark a turning-point in his character; before it, he was afraid of Sloan, fearing his wrath and disapproval. He no longer fears any of that. He is ready to tell him of their decision and to deliver on it even if Sloan does not approve of it. The reader might also see that Roran hopes to gain people's approval and favour by leading them in these battles, and later in the war against the king, and securing himself and Katrina a safe life.

Meanwhile, Eragon is still somewhat searching for his purpose and reasons to fight. While he does carry out much more fighting than Roran, especially during the battle for Farthen Dûr, the most crucial moments and decisions occur during his stay in Du Weldenvarden, the home of elves. There, Eragon meets Oromis and Glaedr, the only Rider and the only dragon who had survived Galbatorix's genocide. The two become Eragon's and Saphira's mentors, teaching them the invaluable skills of fighting, magic, and flight, but most of all, they push the main duo into maturity in almost every way.

One of the most important lessons the two learn is the skill of sharing information. While Eragon and Saphira openly share many things and have the insight into each other's consciousness and unconsciousness, their mental link is not as wide and deep as it should be:

“After all the two of you have done together, I would think that you had learned the most basic lesson of being Shur'tugal⁸⁷: Share everything with your partner. Would you cut off your right arm? Would you fly with only one wing? Never. Then why would you ignore the bond that links you? By doing so, you reject your greatest gift and your advantage over any single opponent. Nor should you just talk to each other with your minds, but rather mingle your consciousnesses until you act and think as one”⁸⁸

The connection between a Rider and their dragon is the most important and most treasured aspect of their relationship. After all, it was the loss of his dragon that drove Galbatorix mad, as explained by Brom: “Tragically, during the fight a stray arrow pierced his dragon's heart. Without the arts to save her, she died in his arms. Then were the seeds of madness planted.”⁸⁹ There were many cases in which either Saphira or Eragon was wounded

⁸⁷ “Dragon Rider” in the ancient language of Alagaësia

⁸⁸ Paolini, *Eldest*, 296–297.

⁸⁹ Paolini, *Eragon*, 37.

and the other felt it as if they were wounded themselves, for example when Eragon broke his wrist while Saphira was leagues away hunting:

He felt his right wrist crack as he hit the ground. Pain lanced up his arm. A steady stream of curses came out from behind his clenched teeth as he tried not to howl. Half blind with pain, he curled on the ground, cradling his arm. *Eragon!* came Saphira's alarmed cry. *What happened?*

Broke my wrist... did something stupid... fell.

I'm coming, said Saphira.

No—I can make it back. Don't... come. Trees too close for... wings.

She sent him a brief image of her tearing the forest apart to get at him, then said, *Hurry.*⁹⁰

It is clear that their connection is strong already, however, it is so far mostly based on instinct and reflexes. Oromis is attempting to teach them how to broaden the connection so that their minds essentially become one. This can be seen as a parallel to inter-human relationships, especially between partners or parents. A ready can see how important it is to share and care for such a connection with those around him and mainly that one person or a few people they choose to keep by their side.

Over time, as they train, their connection deepens significantly, being able to share their learned lessons without issues, albeit still necessarily intentionally:

As they had that morning, Oromis and Glaedr asked a number of questions to ensure that Eragon and Saphira had paid attention to each other's lessons. They had not always, but by cooperating and sharing information between themselves, they were able to answer all of the questions.⁹¹

Eragon is slowly learning how to truly open himself. He guards his privacy and his feelings closely for he was not used to being so close to anyone and the connection between

⁹⁰ Paolini, *Eragon*, 215.

⁹¹ Paolini, *Eldest*, 359.

him and Saphira came unexpectedly and suddenly. Yet, he does cherish it in many ways, but simply is not experienced in the matter sufficiently. However, in *Du Weldenvarden*, he is forced to change that; and that he does. Nevertheless, there are still matters in which he is obstinate, such as when discussing the nature of Urgals.

He and Oromis discuss the evilness of various people and other important characters. Eragon talks of Galbatorix, who, he believes, does not think of himself as evil or wrong. He mentions Durza, who “wasn’t evil himself, but the spirits that controlled him were.”⁹² Yet, when talking about Urgals, he says:

“When I think of death, I see an Urgal’s face. They’re worse than beasts. The things they have done...” He shook his head, unable to continue.

“Eragon, what kind of opinion would you form of humans if all you knew of them were the actions of your warriors on the field of battle?”

“That’s not...” He took a deep breath. “It’s different. Urgals deserve to be wiped out, every last one of them.”

“Even their females and children? The ones who haven’t harmed you and likely never will? The innocents? Would you kill them and condemn an entire race to the void?”

“They wouldn’t spare us, given the chance.”⁹³

Anger and revenge are controlling Eragon’s mind in this passage. He cannot perceive Urgals as anything other than beasts and unworthy of mercy. Even though he met the dwarves, who were not immediately friendly to him, he was able to connect with them and gains good relations with them, even joining one of their clans. But he is simply unable to change his opinion about Urgals. It is obvious that during the exchange with Oromis, he is blinded and full of thirst for revenge. This is a crucial conversation due to the fact that Urgals are enslaved by Galbatorix and Oromis foreshadows an important event in the series:

“What do you actually know of Urgals?”

⁹² Paolini, *Eldest*, 374.

⁹³ Paolini, *Eldest*, 374–375.

“I know their strengths, weaknesses, and how to kill them. It’s all I need to know.”

“Why do they hate and fight humans, though? What about their history and legends, or the way in which they live?”

“Does it matter?”

Oromis sighed. “Just remember,” he said gently, “that at a certain point, your enemies may have to become your allies. Such is the nature of life.”⁹⁴

Eragon’s ignorance stems from his inexperience with other races, save for his fights with Urgals. Each time he has met them, they were enemies to him, even if at one attempt they tried to communicate with him. The incident occurred when he was still travelling with Brom; at the time, Eragon did not want to hear their “lies” and so he initiated an offensive. Later, he met with the aftermath of Urgals’ doings; each time he saw death and sorrow. This is in contrast to what he has seen from the other races; every one of them has shown him mostly hospitality, but also works of art, culture, and history. Urgals, however, remain wild beasts made only for war to him.

Another aspect in which Eragon has progressed but still has much to learn is the topic of love and romantic relationships. It was already mentioned that compared to Roran, Eragon has essentially no desire to pursue a romance with anyone. That, however, changes with Arya. He becomes fond of her during his adventures, acknowledging her beauty. At the beginning of them knowing each other, Arya is in a coma induced by poison. Eragon manages to communicate with her through magic and saves her life, transporting her to the Varden and waking and healing her.

It is not until Eragon’s lessons with Oromis that he truly unmask his feeling for her. He is only slightly aware of his affection towards her; the true extent of his feelings comes to the light of day when he is asked by Oromis to produce a fairth, a kind of painting done with magic and one’s mind. Arya and Orrik were present during him producing a fairth, which influenced Eragon:

⁹⁴ Paolini, *Eldest*, 375.

Even so, he could not concentrate on the pine needles and sap; Arya tugged at him like a lodestone, drawing his attention back to her whenever he thought of something else.

At last he realized that it was futile for him to resist the attraction. He composed an image of her in his head—which took but a heartbeat, since he knew her features better than his own—and voiced the spell in the ancient language, pouring all of his adoration, love, and fear of her into the currents of fey magic.

The result left him speechless.

The fairth depicted Arya's head and shoulders against a dark, indistinct background. She was bathed in firelight on her right side and gazed out at the viewer with knowing eyes, appearing not just as she was but as he thought of her: mysterious, exotic, and the most beautiful woman he had ever seen.⁹⁵

He allows his feelings to surface completely, without and kind of filtering or hiding. Eragon is shocked himself at how strong his affection is and how he sees Arya. It is obvious that he feels much more strongly about her than before; a few weeks and months ago he confided to Saphira about him liking her and Saphira noticed this herself, but during the trip to Du Weldenvarden Eragon's feelings grew exponentially, showing his maturation even in this regard. For the first time in the series, Eragon even considers the possibility of committing himself to a mate; he argues with Saphira that a relationship with Arya could be possible, even if he is, compared to her age, a child.

Eventually, Eragon realizes, with the help of Saphira and Oromis, that an apology is necessary. However, he is unable to find her, realizing she is avoiding him on purpose. He acknowledges and understand the premise; she is an elven princess, an ambassador for the Varden, and a highly valued member of the elven society. She has served all three races for decades and centuries, guarding Saphira's egg and fighting Galbatorix. Eragon, on the other hand, is a young, human Dragon Rider, on whom the fate of Alagaësia rests. The two are expected to work together, but their differences are far too great and their positions in the world are much too incompatible, that a romantic relationship would be a risk of endangering the most

⁹⁵ Paolini, *Eldest*, 385–386.

important task of all: “You must understand, Eragon, that slaying Galbatorix is more important than any one person. Nothing else matters.”⁹⁶

Their relationship could prove far too dangerous for the task at hand. Eragon, realizing the gravity of the situation, manages to find Arya and apologize. He is successful and Arya accepts it, however, she confirms Eragon’s speculations: “Our friendship shall endure, Eragon. As for us spending time together...” [...] “Perhaps. However, we shall have to wait and see what the future brings, for I am busy and can promise nothing.”⁹⁷ After this, Eragon returns to his studies, embracing his feelings but keeping them hidden until the Blood-Oath celebration.

When the event comes, it, arguably, marks the most important turning point of the series; he is given a gift no one else had ever been given. The elves cast a spell that transforms Eragon’s body from human to elven. His scar caused by Durza is healed, his face and characteristics are much more smoothed, angled while his body is more rugged, prominent, rigid. He realizes that he is no longer human, but also not an elf; he appears to possess the agility and fairness of an elf but also the ruggedness of a human. He concludes: “I have become what I was meant to be.”⁹⁸

The metamorphosis serves as the point of no return for Eragon. His past as a human farmer is essentially wiped. All the marks that showed his origins and past deeds were removed; he is now prepared to begin fulfilling his destiny. He is given tools to carry out the task, he becomes a proper Dragon Rider, as his transition to a more elf-like creature is now complete. Before the Blood-Oath celebration Eragon knew that the connection with Saphira was changing him; however, the event fully transforms him, possibly even beyond what was originally going to happen. Given his acceptance as a member of the dwarf clan Dûrgrimst Ingeitum, his human roots, even if now hidden, and now his elf-like body, he truly becomes the representative for all three races in the world of Alagaësia. It is this event that truly marks him as a matured adult, even if he still has many more tribulations and challenges in his future.

⁹⁶ Paolini, *Eldest*, 388.

⁹⁷ Paolini, *Eldest*, 435.

⁹⁸ Paolini, *Eldest*, 471.

Eragon's new abilities are put to the test almost immediately. First, he notices his sense to be much more accurate and sensitive:

Eragon floated in a state of heightened awareness, his senses thrumming with the multitude of new sights, sounds, smells, and feelings that assailed him. He could see in darkness that would have blinded him before. He could touch a leaf and, by touch alone, count the individual hairs that grew upon it. He could identify the odors wafting about him as well as a wolf or a dragon. And he could hear the patter of mice in the underbrush and the noise a flake of bark makes as it falls to earth; the beating of his heart was as a drum to him⁹⁹

He now possesses the abilities of the elves to connect with his surrounding and feeling the environment around him; no longer is he oblivious to it. Essentially, he becomes connected to Alagaësia itself; he can truly connect to the nature surrounding him. Eragon also gains new insight into his own feeling and body, albeit he needs time to get accustomed to it. First, however, he is overwhelmed by the amount of feelings and emotions.

He once again tries to woo Arya, no longer ashamed of his intentions and feeling. Arya rejects him again and in the process she makes it clear that even friendship cannot exist between them until Eragon has mastered his feelings. However, even if Eragon is heartbroken, he now stands by everything he has shown:

He had meant every word he said to Arya—even if normally he would not have revealed so much of himself. Her rejection cut Eragon to the quick. Freed of the enchantments that had clouded his mind, he was forced to admit that she was probably right, that the difference between their ages was too great to overcome. It was a difficult thing for him to accept, and once he had, the knowledge only increased his anguish.¹⁰⁰

Eragon seems to be free from his previous sense of guilt; he realizes that his relationship with Arya has been greatly hurt, but he is determined to make his feelings clear and visible for he knows, that it would pain him even more to keep them hidden and suppressed. In this regard, he matches Roran, who also showed his feelings towards Katrina even if it meant that the couple could be seen as outcasts and violators of age-long traditions. For Roran, nothing else mattered

⁹⁹ Paolini, *Eldest*, 472.

¹⁰⁰ Paolini, *Eldest*, 530.

but Katrina, and he made it clear to everyone, even her father, who subsequently took away Katrina's dowry. In much the same way, Eragon has made a choice not to suppress his affection and instead let it grow.

The Blood-Oath celebration marks the symbolic turning point in Eragon's life from which there is no going back. It is this moment that he can be considered developed and adult even though there is still much more for him to learn and master in the rest of the series. The reader was able to witness the transformation from the farmer Eragon had been into the warrior, ambassador, and politician he is now. While he was selfish before, putting the needs of his family and other around him first, he is now able to navigate his way through the maze of various problems the world around him has. He is no longer indifferent to them and begins to deeply care about the well-being of every creature and the people of Alagaësia as a whole.

Eragon also opens his heart to love and companionship. Before his adventures he was not willing to share his feelings and issues with almost anyone. This has changed drastically; he is now searching for a true mate whom, he believes, he found in Arya. The fact that he does his best to court her and gain her love is the sign of his emotional development; no longer does he strive to simply make a living, but he intends to live with someone to love by his side. There is no doubt that the bond between him and Saphira aided as well; it seems possible that the bond was the first such deep connection with another being.

Eragon's relationship with Saphira likely had the most effect on him. It is easy to say that she is the reason he departs on his adventures, but she is not only the spark, but also his main companion. They care for each other deeper than Eragon was ever able to. At times he is terrified, but he soon learns how valuable trust and belonging are. She seems to represent a role-model for Eragon, but she, too, goes through a significant development.

Saphira, even though wise from the very beginning of her life, also struggles to find her place and purpose in the world. While she appears to be much more experienced than Eragon, she also has her own flaws and issues. She is more successful in overcoming them due to her not being not as impulsive as Eragon; a trait he learns over time.

She, much like Eragon, also begins to open her heart to look for a possible mate, but her situation is noticeably more different from Eragon's; nevertheless, it shows that she, too, is

maturing. Saphira decides to take matters into her own hands, even if she risks much. Nonetheless, she proves to be a loyal and supportive partner for Eragon, doing everything in her power to protect and help him on his journey. However, she also realizes her own needs and wishes and begins to act upon them; she does not wish to be a passive member.

Roran also saw an intricate development of his character. Even though he is older and more experienced than Eragon, he needed to learn valuable lessons about love, responsibility, and fighting, especially when fighting for those he loves. Roran discovers the importance of priorities, of devoting and sacrificing, and of committing oneself to a cause greater than them. He chooses his partner, Katrina, and his fate; he wishes to right Eragon's wrongdoings towards Carvahall and its people; and in the process, he is dedicated to sacrificing anything he has to in order to keep his word both to the villagers and to Katrina. He learns much about his priorities and wishes but also understands, that fate has chosen a difficult path for him; Roran is determined to see his mission through, no matter the cost or difficulty.

7. Eragon's Class Depiction and Development in *Eragon* and *Eldest*

At the beginning of Eragon's heroic story the protagonist is a simple farmer, having to earn his living by working on his uncle's farm. He never gets a pay of his own, instead, he is sometimes given money by Garrow, who then gives him the permission to buy unnecessary things. Eragon lives like so for fifteen years of his life until he is forced to go on the adventure of his lifetime. Through the death of his uncle, the destruction of their farm, and meeting Brom, the storyteller and Eragon's protector and teacher, he uncovers many new truths and the world he lived in for so long and yet has not gotten to know at all. During his travels he meets the poor and the rich, the weak and the powerful. This chapter will aim at analysing these differences and mainly Eragon's journey from being a poor farmer to becoming a wise, noble warrior of the oppressed.

The village of Carvahall, Eragon's birthplace, is depicted as a typical fantastical village. The residents are all hard-working people of humble origins and without money to spare. About once or twice a year the traders arrive to buy and sell various goods otherwise unattainable in this part of the world. That is, for most of the villagers, the closes they ever get to living any kind of a noble life. However, each inhabitant is valued. Every villager has a place in Carvahall that could be hardly taken on by someone else.

Eragon, Garrow, and Roran are somewhat outsiders. Even though the villagers treat them with respect and care, the three do not wish to take advantage of their hospitality so as not to feel obligated or indebted to them, as is apparent in a scene where Garrow talks to Eragon about the boy accepting payment for Eragon's meat from another villager, Horst: "You let him pay for it? I told you before, I won't beg for food. Before you can turn around twice, they'll be sending us used clothes and asking if we'll be able to get through the winter".¹⁰¹

From this exchange one can see the value Garrow puts on self-sufficiency. Although Garrow's story is not too much elaborated on, he is a proud man who cares deeply about his name among

¹⁰¹ Paolini, *Eragon*, 17.

the villagers, even if it should cause him hunger; he would rather not admit such a shortcoming. Instead, he puts a tremendous amount of focus on hard work and fair treatment.

It is obvious that for all the characters their honour, name, and respect are of extreme importance; it is due to those merits that most villagers do not seem bothered by crime and dishonesty. It is not until Eragon visits other towns and cities that he truly experiences struggles between classes. In Carvahall, while there are people who are more or less wealthy than him, they rarely ever prioritize money before what they perceive as important; the community.

The one character that appears to value money more than honesty is Sloan, the butcher. Even when the villagers are terrified of the Raz'zac, who came into the town to search for Eragon, no one, except for Sloan, is willing to cooperate. It is the butcher who informs them of Eragon's possible connections to the mysterious events that took place around Garrow's farm and Carvahall.

It is possible that Sloan's love for profits is fuelled by the motivation to make life better for his family. He seeks to improve his family's position, especially for his daughter, Katrina, who later marries Roran, although the marriage is disapproved by the butcher, causing Katrina to lose her dowry and, therefore, her riches. Sloan is trying to thwart their love because he believes a farm boy is not good enough for her; therefore, one can say that Sloan is trying to break out of the class his family is in.

However, this effort soon turns into a fight for survival; Sloan tells the Raz'zac about Eragon's egg, thus indirectly causing the Garrow's death and Eragon's exposure, but when the story progresses, he is also forced to choose between Katrina and the rest of the village as he is being threatened. His position is very difficult and makes the choice in which he betrays the villagers in order to keep Katrina safe; a deed that does not go unpunished later, when Eragon curses him to live the rest of his life away from Katrina and Roran, securing their safety and newly created family.

Other villagers seem much more interested in the honest way of life. They do not value others based on their wealth, but rather on how truthful and hard-working they are and also on how much their work or deeds benefit the community. In consequence, almost no one is afraid

of work and even though some occupations are valued more than others, what matters the most is whether the person in question does what they can to support themselves and their families.

It seems as if the town is quite isolated from the rest of Alagaësia not only geographically, but also in the distinction of classes. As the reader can later see, the rest of the land seems to be much more layered with different classes of people, especially when other races are introduced. This can be seen in the first major city Eragon visits, Teirm, where Brom and Eragon visit an inn at edge of the city.

There, they noticed that the city consisted of several sections which differed not only in architecture, which was carefully selected for its defensive purposes, but also the various classes of inhabitants. As usual, the deeper one went into the city, the more prosperous it seemed to be, while the edge was described as having gone through difficulties: “There were other, subtler signs of adverse times; no children played in the streets, the people bore hard expressions, and many houses were deserted, with weeds growing from cracks in their stone-covered yards.”

After finding the information of Brom’s merchant friend, Jeod, the duo move to a more central part of the city, where Eragon does not feel appropriate: “Brom and Eragon took their leave and headed to the west side of the city, a nicer section of Teirm. The houses were clean, ornate, and large. The people in the street wore expensive finery and walked with authority. Eragon felt inconspicuous and out of place.”¹⁰² Eragon never had a chance to visit such a place; to his eyes, the inn in Carvahall was the most noble place in the world and he could not imagine a settlement where there is more than one social class, let alone, as will be noted later, royalty.

The city was made rich by trade and as such it attracted many people of various origins, standings, beliefs, and so on. Eragon and Brom stay at Brom’s old friend, Jeod, who is a rather wealthy businessman. When the two are not concerned with their primary mission, Eragon wanders around the city, taking in the atmosphere and meeting the people. Angela, the fortune teller, represents the middle class. While the whole range of her activities stays a mystery, the reader is told that she makes her living off reading people’s fortunes, helping them with herbs and healing, and associated acts.

¹⁰² Paolini, *Eragon*, 178.

Angela might seem mad to a regular traveller, but Eragon notices that she is more complicated than what meets the eye. When she tells him his future, he can sense a strange power, which will become more apparent later in the book, when she joins the Varden in their fight. The reader will also get to realize that Angela's future telling of betrayal, great romance, and Eragon's impossible return to Alagaësia, all come true in time, further signaling that Angela, while not an important citizen for the city, remains a vital source of information and support for Eragon.

Nevertheless, when Eragon arrives in Farthen Dûr, the home of the Varden, Angela rises in importance. No longer is she a strange figure; she becomes much more valued and honoured for her healing and near-magical skills, although she does not use magic. It is also revealed that Angela was aiding Brom and knew him well just as she knew the Varden and their mission to defy Galbatorix. This fact alone, due to the nature of the Varden to be hidden and mysterious, proves that Angela's role is much more intricate. She is even tasked with healing Eragon's wound from a ferocious battle between the Urgals and the Varden; this is extremely important on the grounds that in the battle, Eragon managed to kill Durza, a shade who caused the Varden an enormous amount of suffering, and therefore the Varden started to value Eragon extremely, meaning allowing Angela to take care of him is a sign of tremendous respect.

Going back to Teirm, there is a clear division between the ordinary citizens and the servants of the king. The latter have access to more premium commodities of the city as well as certain services which enable them to carry out tasks for the king. The Raz'zac are the perfect example. They are exempt of having to keep and show records, they are able to obtain forbidden substances necessary for their mission, such as the poison with which they assassinate their enemies, and they can also make use of slaves and even kill them if they require it. They are also allowed to work with any resources the city itself can offer and the citizens are obliged to provide them.

The position of the Raz'zac and other such servants of the Empire, such as the Shades, is very peculiar. They mostly work and operate unseen; however, the citizens of the Empire are bound to provide for them.

The citizens of Teirm are much more limited in what they can do. Not only are they required to keep and present records, but they are also taxed and must be loyal to the king and

his servants at all times, no matter the work required. There also exists a certain kind of censorship in the Empire; this is best visible at the beginning of the first book, where Brom tells the tale of the Dragon Rider in the pubs in Carvahall:

With the completion of the story, Brom shuffled away with the troubadours. Eragon thought he saw a tear shining on his cheek. People murmured quietly to each other as they departed. Garrow said to Eragon and Roran, “Consider yourselves fortunate. I have heard this tale only twice in my life. If the Empire knew that Brom had recited it, he would not live to see a new month.”

It is obvious that Galbatorix is ruling his subjects with power and control. He does not want the people to feel their true capabilities and potential; he fears them for he knows his rule is not just nor desired. This is most likely the reason why Galbatorix sides with Urgals, a race of brutish orcs, in a desperate attempt to rid Alagaësia of the Varden and everyone else who opposes him as Ajihad, the leader of the Varden, explains:

The news of the Urgals’ alliance with the Empire is extremely serious. If Galbatorix is gathering an Urgal army to destroy us, the Varden will be hard pressed to survive, even though many of us are protected here in Farthen Dûr. That a Rider, even one as evil as Galbatorix, would consider a pact with such monsters is indeed proof of madness. I shudder to think of what he promised them in return for their fickle loyalty.¹⁰³

Based on this, the Urgals seem to actually be more valuable to Galbatorix than his ordinary citizens; they are easier to rule, and the king does not need to justify killing or other horrifying acts to them; they are an efficient tool, whereas the people of the Empire are not as easily controllable; Galbatorix has to suppress and control them more carefully and delicately and even then, as is apparent from Brom’s storytelling, they tend to distrust and only forcefully follow the ruler.

In contrast, the Varden seem to have much better intentions. They are directly opposing the Empire and its bloody rule. However, they are not strong enough to fight against Galbatorix directly; instead, they are forced to remain in the hiding at the edge of Alagaësia and are completely dependent on supplies from their allies. Therefore, the city of Farthen Dûr is

¹⁰³ Paolini, *Eragon*, 380.

essentially isolated and free of the influence of the Empire. The people there are much more equal – they still have a king, Ajihad, and all of them are citizens, similarly to the Empire.

There is where the differences start. Although the Varden are made up of humans, dwarves, and an elf, Arya, there are no direct hostilities among them. While there are minor rivalries, every citizen is an ally to the next one; without such alliance they would have fallen a long time ago.

Ajihad together with the dwarven king Hrothgar rule firmly, but fairly. There is a strict law in place exercised by their subordinates, although it becomes rather uncertain so as to what law applies to whom. Nevertheless, the importance of the law is most clearly visible after a passage in which Orik, a dwarven officer of the Varden army, saves Eragon, Saphira and Murtagh by preliminarily exposing the Varden army and therefore saving the group from the Urgals chasing them. Orik is brought before Ajihad to answer for his subordination:

“Your actions were honorable, but you did defy a direct order from your commander. The penalty for that has always been death.” Orik’s back stiffened. “You can’t kill him for that! He was only helping me,” cried Eragon. “It isn’t your place to interfere,” said Ajihad sternly. “Orik broke the law and must suffer the consequences.”¹⁰⁴

It is clear that law is no laughing matter among the Varden. Even though Eragon’s word for Orik saves him from being executed, he is still stripped of many privileges and his rank. Yet, Orik makes use of the fact that he is a dwarf and as such he is also under Hrothgar’s rule and, therefore, he is still somewhat free of Ajihad’s judgement:

Eragon looked at Orik. “I’m sorry that you’re in trouble because of me,” he apologized.

“Don’t bother yourself,” grunted Orik, tugging on his beard. “Ajihad gave me what I wanted.”

[...] “What do you mean?” said Eragon. “You can’t train or fight, and you’re stuck guarding me. How can that be what you wanted?”

¹⁰⁴ Paolini, *Eragon*, 390.

The dwarf eyed him quietly. “Ajihad is a good leader. He understands how to keep the law yet remain just. I have been punished by his command, but I’m also one of Hrothgar’s subjects. Under his rule, I’m still free to do what I wish.”

Eragon realized it would be unwise to forget Orik’s dual loyalty and the split nature of power within Tronjheim.

“Ajihad just placed you in a powerful position, didn’t he?” Orik chuckled deeply. “That he did.” [...] Ajihad’s a tricky one, he is.¹⁰⁵

As also apparent the quote from the first book, the power struggles are no simple matter. Orik’s loyalty to Hrothgar and Tronjheim allows him to circumvent Ajihad’s punishment to a certain degree, which is what Ajihad knows. Clearly, the Varden are not without their own little games of power.

The Twins mentioned are a pair of magicians who do not hide their disapproval of certain other members of the Varden, especially Eragon. They enjoy many privileges unavailable to the regular citizens, such as access to Ajihad’s study and being his advisors, therefore having great power among the Varden.

Eragon’s, Saphira’s, and Murtagh’s positions while in Tronjheim are completely different. Ever since joining the Varden, they have existed in a class of their own. While Eragon had always been a poor farm boy who was only focused on earning a living, he is in that position no more. When he talks to Orik about getting new clothes, he asks: “Is there somewhere I could bathe first? I haven’t been able to wash off the grime of the road for a long time. Also, my shirt is blood-stained and torn, and it stinks. I’d like to replace it but, I don’t have any money to buy one. Is there a way I could work for one?”¹⁰⁶ to which Orik replies:

“Do you seek to insult Hrothgar’s hospitality, Eragon?” demanded Orik. “As long as you are in Tronjheim, you won’t have to buy a thing. You’ll pay for it in other ways – Ajihad and Hrothgar will see to that. Come. I’ll show you where to wash, then fetch you a shirt.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Paolini, *Eragon*, 392.

¹⁰⁶ Paolini, *Eragon*, 426.

¹⁰⁷ Paolini, *Eragon*, 426.

It is at this stage that the reader is able to notice the sudden shift in Eragon's class. As long as he is with the Varden, he will be above the need for money. He does not seem to realize it immediately, for he still considers himself a guest, but the Varden value him up to the point where they provide him with food and any other necessity, as visible in a part where Orik is providing Eragon and Saphira with accommodation and food:

“Fresh meat and pure mountain water await you up there,” he told Saphira. [...]

“I thought we were going to go together, I don't want to be separated,” protested Eragon.

Orik turned to him. “Rider Eragon, I will do everything to accommodate you, but it would be best if Saphira waits in the dragonhold while you eat. The tunnels to the banquet halls aren't large enough for her to accompany us.”

“Why can't you just bring me food in the hold?”

“Because,” said Orik with a guarded expression, “the food is prepared down here, and it is a long way to the top. If you wish, a servant could be sent up to the hold with a meal for you. It will take some time, but you could eat with Saphira then.”

He actually means it, Eragon thought, astonished that they would do so much for him.¹⁰⁸

While it is clear that Eragon and Saphira are of high value to the Varden, it is uncertain if their attempts at making them comfortable and safe are altruistic; when Eragon first arrived in Tronjheim, he and Saphira were paraded in front of a huge audience:

Then Eragon saw the crowd. He had been so engrossed by the sights that he had failed to notice a dense sea of people clustered around the tunnel's entrance. They lined the cobblestone pathway—dwarves and humans packed together like trees in a thicket. There were hundreds... thousands of them. Every eye, every face was focused on Eragon. And every one of them was silent.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Paolini, *Eragon*, 422–423.

¹⁰⁹ Paolini, *Eragon*, 398.

The Varden show them to the people in order to illustrate that a Dragon Rider has really been found and that he is an ally, even though this scene happens shortly after Eragon's arrival and the whole situation seems premature; Eragon has yet to see Ajihad, the ruler of the Varden, so the Varden cannot be sure of his assistance. Nevertheless, as we learn from this passage, it might simply serve as a morale booster for the people of Tronjheim:

Eragon gripped the base of one of Saphira's neck spikes. He saw children in dirty smocks, hardy men with scarred knuckles, women in homespun dresses, and stout, weathered dwarves who fingered their beards. All of them bore the same taut expression—that of an injured animal when a predator is nearby and escape is impossible.¹¹⁰

It is apparent that these are the common people of the Varden, who had endured much hardship and struggle. Therefore, such a parade of a very powerful ally, whom they see in Eragon, serves as a powerful tool. The people quite possibly even expect Eragon to lead them and considering the threat of the Empire, having him and his dragon leading them could prove fatal to their enemies.

However, not all members of the Varden were satisfied with Eragon; the dwarves were, possibly, annoyed that the new Rider was human: "Dwarves greatly outnumbered humans... and many of them glared at him resentfully. Some even turned their backs and walked away with stony faces."¹¹¹ As was already mentioned, there never was a dwarven Rider, meaning this was possibly the last chance the dwarves have had for a Rider of their own.

During a talk with Ajihad, it is revealed that Ajihad somewhat expects Eragon's alliance, but that it also cannot be guaranteed:

A moody silence settled over them like a foreboding thunderhead. Then Ajihad stated, "You are an enigma, Eragon, a quandary that no one knows how to solve. Everyone knows what the Varden want—or the Urgals, or even Galbatorix—but no one knows what you want. And that makes you dangerous, especially to Galbatorix. He fears you because he doesn't know what you will do next."

¹¹⁰ Paolini, *Eragon*, 398.

¹¹¹ Paolini, *Eragon*, 399.

“Do the Varden fear me?” asked Eragon quietly.

“No,” said Ajihad carefully. “We are hopeful. But if that hope proves false, then yes, we will be afraid.” Eragon looked down. “You must understand the unusual nature of your position. There are factions who want you to serve their interests and no one else’s. The moment you entered Farthen Dûr, their influence and power began tugging on you.” “Including yours?” asked Eragon. Ajihad chuckled, though his eyes were sharp. “Including mine.”¹¹²

It is apparent that while the common folk of the Varden are somewhat certain of Eragon’s help, Ajihad, being wiser and much more foresighted, is aware that any kind of pressure on Eragon could prove fatal to the alliance between him and the Varden. This is the first hint at the power struggles within the Varden and how each of the factions desires to gain an advantage and influence on Eragon.

Eragon’s undecidedness is not only concern to the Varden, but to Galbatorix as well, evidenced by Brom’s earlier statement:

“The king cannot afford to have a Rider roaming around that he does not control. Galbatorix is the only known Rider alive besides yourself, but he would like another one under his command. Before he tries to kill you or Roran, he will offer you the chance to serve him. Unfortunately, if he ever gets close enough to make that proposition, it will be far too late for you to refuse and still live.”

“You call that some good!”

“It’s all that’s protecting Roran. As long as the king doesn’t know which side you’ve chosen, he won’t risk alienating you by harming your cousin. Keep that firmly in mind. The Ra’zac killed Garrow, but I think it was an ill-considered decision on their part. From what I know of Galbatorix, he would not have approved it unless he gained something from it.”

“And how will I be able to deny the king’s wishes when he is threatening me with death?” asked Eragon sharply.

Brom sighed. He went to his nightstand and dipped his fingers in a basin of rose water. “Galbatorix wants your willing cooperation. Without that, you’re worse than useless to him. So the question

¹¹² Paolini, *Eragon*, 407–408.

becomes, If you are ever faced with this choice, are you willing to die for what you believe in? For that is the only way you will deny him.”¹¹³

Here, Brom’s foreshadowing and message are clear. Brom knows, that Galbatorix desperately needs such a powerful ally, but he also knows that Eragon needs to submit to him willingly. The same applies to the Varden; if they desire Eragon’s willing help, they cannot take it by force and they need to risk by letting Eragon choose. Obviously, they still attempt to influence him and gain his favour, however, they cannot threaten him by force and they need to give him enough freedom and time, even though they themselves do not have much of either.

Murtagh is in a much more difficult position altogether. While he is not immediately recognized as the son of Morzan, one of the Forsworn, a group of Riders who had served Galbatorix and who had killed all the other Riders opposing their unjust rule and practices, he refuses to be subjected to the mental probing required in order to be declared trustworthy:

“My mind is the one sanctuary that has not been stolen from me. Men have tried to breach it before, but I’ve learned to defend it vigorously, for I am only safe with my innermost thoughts. You have asked for the one thing I cannot give, least of all to those two.” He gestured at the Twins. “Do with me what you will, but know this: death will take me before I’ll expose myself to their probing.”¹¹⁴

Murtagh does not desire to be treated as an equal at the cost of his personal freedom and privacy. He, unlike Eragon, does not seek companionship and help from the Varden; he does not feel that he can trust them, and he is sure of their disapproval of him, which is confirmed.

Ajihad realizes who his father was and jails him in order to minimize the risk he sees in him. Due to the fact that Murtagh refused to submit, he is labelled as a criminal and treated as such; he cannot roam freely and no one, except for Ajihad, is allowed to even speak to him. While this is preferable to him, due to him being in a such position for his entire life, he still needs to gain trust of the Varden in other ways, as he does later during the battle of Tronjheim.

¹¹³ Paolini, *Eragon*, 197.

¹¹⁴ Paolini, *Eragon*, 405.

It is not revealed to the reader directly, but when Eragon goes to visit him in his cell after some time had passed, he finds Murtagh living in rather comfortable lodging:

“You thought I was stuck in some rat hole chewing on hardtack,” said Murtagh, rolling upright with a grin. “Actually, I expected the same thing, but Ajihad lets me have all this as long as I don’t cause trouble. And they bring me huge meals, as well as anything I want from the library. If I’m not careful, I’ll turn into a fat scholar.”¹¹⁵

Obviously, Murtagh and Ajihad were able to overcome the fear and distrust of Murtagh’s past and origin. He is still held as prisoner, but his conditions are much more respectable. Nonetheless, Murtagh talks about an important aspect of his stay in Tronjheim:

Eragon laughed, and with a wondering smile seated himself next to Murtagh.

“But aren’t you angry? You’re still a prisoner.”

“Oh, I was at first,” said Murtagh with a shrug. “But the more I thought about it, the more I came to realize that this is really the best place for me. Even if Ajihad gave me my freedom, I would stay in my room most of the time anyway.”

“But why?”

“You know well enough. No one would be at ease around me, knowing my true identity, and there would always be people who wouldn’t limit themselves to harsh looks or words.”

Clearly, Murtagh’s identity has been made known to all of the Varden. He is seen as potentially dangerous not trustworthy, possibly even hostile. At that point, Murtagh knows that even if he were able to roam freely, it might not be a good idea. Therefore, he comes to the terms of his situation and seems to actually like his position, even if it is a low one: “Murtagh stared at the ceiling. ‘You know, I find this imprisonment oddly peaceful. For once in my life I don’t have to be afraid. I know I ought to be... yet something about this place puts me at ease. A good night’s sleep helps, too.’”¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Paolini, *Eragon*, 464.

¹¹⁶ Paolini, *Eragon*, 465.

It is likely that this is the first time in his life where he his complete identity is known and he is still treated with at least some respect; he does not have to fight for his life after being uncovered and he feels that he has a future. Murtagh had spent his whole life on the run and in hiding, so him being able to be himself without the fear for his life must be a welcomed change of pace.

Saphira's position is something completely different from all the others. While Eragon and Murtagh need to stay within certain rules and expectations, at least partly. Saphira is much less influenceable and controllable. She does have her own responsibilities, as noted by Ajihad:

He faced Saphira and spoke to her, his voice swelling in power.

“Do not think that I have forgotten you, O mighty dragon. I have said these things as much for your benefit as for Eragon's. It is even more important that you know them, for to you falls the task of guarding him in these dangerous times. Do not underestimate your might nor falter at his side, because without you he will surely fail.”¹¹⁷

As is apparent, Saphira's main responsibility is Eragon, her rider. Other than that, she seems to be largely unaffected by the trifles of other races. She is extremely wise considering her age, and aware of everything going on around her. Although she hatched just a few months before this moment, she was able to perceive what was going on around her when she was still in the egg, and it seems that she also carries knowledge from her ancestors.

It seems so that Saphira exists in a completely different class from everybody else's and that her position is only limited by her Rider. While she herself does not have too much aspiration to having political influence, she is well aware of its importance; however, she does not exercise any unless it is through Eragon; and even then, it is only concerned with his well-being and position.

Due to the fact that there are barely any direct interactions between Saphira and others, she does not get much direct say in most things. It even seems that most people underestimate her, thinking of her only as Eragon's dragon, for example in the scene where Orick is providing them with accommodation: “Come, lad, I'm sure you're hungry. And we have to get your

¹¹⁷ Paolini, *Eragon*, 416–417.

dragon settled in.’ Saphira hissed. Eragon said, “Her name is Saphira.” Orik made a small bow to her. ‘My apologies, I’ll be sure to remember that.’”¹¹⁸

In the interaction, it is clear that while Orik respects her, he does not treat her as a direct equal. She is simply Eragon’s dragon. While he does make sure to remember it in the future and later shows her much more respect, this section shows how unaware most people and dwarves are about dragons. This gives Saphira the benefit of being somewhat underestimated, therefore allowing her to influence situations where she would be limited otherwise, such as in the scene where the Council of Elders are choosing the new king:

“The five of us have already decided whom to support. There is no doubt among us that it is the right person. But,” he raised a thick finger, “before we reveal who it is, you must give us your word of honor that whether you agree or disagree with us, nothing of our discussion will leave this room.”

Why would they want that? Eragon asked Saphira.

*I don’t know, she said, snorting. It might be a trap.... It’s a gamble you’ll have to take. Remember, though, they haven’t asked me to pledge anything. I can always tell Arya what they say, if needed. Silly of them, forgetting that I’m as intelligent as any human.*¹¹⁹

Therefore, Saphira enjoys a life that is somewhat invisible to most of the Varden while being treated to the finest of food and accommodation, even if the Varden do not fully understand her capabilities and needs. They do, however, understand her connection to Eragon and their combined importance.

It is also important to note the joined position of Eragon and Saphira, not only their individual positions. Together they form possibly the most important pair in all of Alagaësia and the Varden are aware of this very well. No one is allowed to bother them, unless it is a matter of the utmost importance, and they are treated to anything they need with priority. The common people of the Varden are more than welcome to provide them as much, knowing they might be the most important weapon against the king Galbatorix.

¹¹⁸ Paolini, *Eragon*, 420.

¹¹⁹ Paolini, *Eldest*, 15.

Nevertheless, there are still tensions between each individual dwarven clan and the struggle for power is a cause of concern as well. Each group of the Varden, be it dwarves or humans, desires to gain influence and at times even power over Eragon and Saphira, whom they see as a source of great power. Eragon is, at the beginning of the second book, *Eldest*, approached by the Council of Elders, a small group of high-ranking citizens who advise Ajihad. At this point in the story Ajihad had been killed and a new ruler needs to be chosen, which is where the Council of Elders steps in; they want to gain Eragon's support in their choice of the new leader, Nasuada, Ajihad's daughter:

“Ajihad's funeral will be held in two days,” broke in Umérth. “Directly afterward, we plan to appoint Nasuada as our new leader. We have yet to ask her, but she will surely agree. We want you to be present at the appointing—no one, not even Hrothgar, can complain about it then—and to swear fealty to the Varden. That will give back the confidence Ajihad's death has stolen from the people, and prevent anyone from trying to splinter this organization.”

Fealty!

Saphira quickly touched Eragon's mind. *Notice, they don't want you to swear to Nasuada—just to the Varden.*

Yes, and they want to be the ones to appoint Nasuada, which would indicate that the council is more powerful than she. They could have asked Arya or us to appoint her, but that would mean acknowledging whoever did it as above everyone in the Varden. This way, they assert their superiority over Nasuada, gain control over us through fealty, and also get the benefit of having a Rider endorse Nasuada in public.¹²⁰

With Ajihad gone, the Council of Elders may easily gain more power among the Varden by indirectly controlling Nasuada, which seems to be their intention. By also having Eragon's fealty, they would become a very influential group that might be able to rule from the shadows without anyone knowing. However, the members of the Council of Elders themselves have little to no power:

Also, I am a member of this council, which only has power because we support one another. It would be foolish and dangerous for

¹²⁰ Paolini, *Eldest*, 16.

one of us to raise himself above the rest.” The council relaxed as he finished, and Elessari patted Jörmundur on the forearm.

*Ha! exclaimed Saphira. He probably would have taken power if it were possible to force the others to back him. Just look how they eye him. He’s like a wolf in their midst.*¹²¹

The passage shows that in the end, their power comes only from the ruler of the Varden. They appoint Nasuada as the leader, but the people and especially the other high-ranking individuals need to approve her first so that she may become a proper leader of the Varden; it is not possible for her or anyone else usurp the throne simply by slaughtering and claiming as was the case for Galbatorix. It proves Eragon’s high ranking, due to which the Council attempt to use his for their gain. He now represents a mighty political power that cannot be overlooked or underestimated.

Perhaps the peak of Eragon’s standing is when he arrives in Du Weldenvarden, where he is greeted mostly as if he were one of the legendary Dragon Riders. He is given the quarters of Vrael, who had led Dragon Riders until their fall. Eragon, much like in Farthen Dûr, only has to ask to be given whatever he desires, as evidenced when each day, he is given food and clothes by the elves. However, there are voices criticizing Eragon’s presence and contribution, mainly by Vanir, a young elf who openly despises him:

“For eighty years after the fall of the Riders, we held no hope of victory. We survived by hiding ourselves through deceit and magic, which is but a temporary measure, for eventually Galbatorix will be strong enough to march upon us and sweep aside our defenses. Then, long after we had resigned ourselves to our fate, Brom and Jeod rescued Saphira’s egg, and once again a chance existed to defeat the foul usurper. Imagine our joy and celebration. We knew that in order to withstand Galbatorix, the new Rider had to be more powerful than any of his predecessors, more powerful than even Vrael. Yet how was our patience rewarded? With another human like Galbatorix. Worse... a cripple. You doomed us all, Eragon, the instant you touched Saphira’s egg. Do not expect us to welcome your presence.”¹²²

Eragon realizes the position he is in. While on the one hand he is celebrated as a hope and future for the whole of Alagaësia, he is, on the other hand, an inexperienced warrior who

¹²¹ Paolini, Christopher, *Eldest* (London: Corgi Books, 2005), 15.

¹²² Paolini, *Eldest*, 395–396.

is nowhere near enough being sufficiently powerful to defeat the Empire. His position during the series changes drastically and even though in Du Weldenvarden he is at the top of the society, rivalled only by the queen Islanzadí and Oromis, he needs to earn respect and power in order to stay in this position. Some of the elves, like Vanir, realize this and refuse to provide him with the comfort and influence Eragon thinks he possesses.

The protagonist, though, does not allow his position to alter his behaviour too much. There are points where he lets his ego or temper get the better out of him, but he still honours the queen of the elves, Oromis, Glaedr, Arya, and Orík as his superiors who deserve every bit of honour. He speaks to everyone with respect and dignity. All of this shows his humility and honesty, even if his adventure has proven to be a tremendous strain on his relations with others; some adore him, others despise him, both being caused by the fact that he is a Dragon Rider; his deeds are seen and valued, but that title is what the people take into account and care about the most.

Eragon's position changes drastically after the Blood-Oath celebration. Due to his transformation, he now fits much better into the elven society, and even Vamir comes to respect him:

“I beg your pardon for my earlier behavior, Eragon-elda. I thought that you had consigned my race to the void, and out of my fear I acted most shamefully. However, it seems that your race no longer endangers our cause.” In a grudging voice, he added: “You are now worthy of the title Rider.”¹²³

It is important to notice that Vamir stresses out Eragon's race; he is no longer a mere human with human limitations. The elves now accept him as one of his own and treat him accordingly; he is no longer an honourable guest, but a member of their community. He is still required to prove his worth, his race alone is not enough. Nevertheless, because of his transformation, his position improves yet again and he is provided with even more status and importance. It appears that Eragon has completely left behind him the old days of being nothing more than a poor farmer; he was now treated as royalty. While he does appreciate it and approach it humbly, it is evident that he wishes to not only remain in his new position, but also

¹²³ Paolini, *Eldest*, 534.

to extend it; he wishes to deliver on everything he promised and become more influential and powerful in order to bring peace and balance to his world.

Throughout the two books the reader can witness a significant change in both Eragon's and Saphira's positions in the communities of Carvahall and the Varden. Eragon begins his adventures as a poor farm boy and climbs the societal ladder to become a Dragon Rider, which means he is a sorcerer, a warrior, a politician, and a potential leader. Eventually, he becomes a member of a class that is completely separate from any other class; he enjoys many opportunities not even given to kings or queens. However, these privileges are conjoint with responsibilities of the utmost importance. He exists outside the traditional class structure in order to allow him access and options to carry out what no one is able to; defeat the evil king.

Saphira also does not fit into any regular category of citizens or animals. She is much wiser than any other creature and she is completely different physically from the rest of Alagaësia, rivalled only by Glaedr. As such, she, like Eragon, does not conform to any of the classes or categories of Alagaësia. Due to possessing superior strength and abilities of her species, she enjoys many special privileges, especially among the elves who, essentially, worship her. Because of her bond to Eragon, she has important responsibilities but not only to saving the races of humans, elves, and dwarves, but also dragons as she and Glaedr are the only remaining free dragons. Her path to achieving a higher status is different from Eragon's, however. While she did have to prove herself, the mere fact that she is a dragon has quickly helped her get established in Alagaësia. She did not need to overcome as many social issues as Eragon. Nevertheless, only together the two can reach their potential and standing; if separated, their positions would fall quickly.

Conclusion

Eragon and *Eldest* have shown many major changes in Eragon's character and class development, none of which should be taken lightly.

At the beginning of *Eragon*, he is a simple farm boy with no desire for adventure, war, love, the greater good of Alagaësia, or fame. Nevertheless, he is forced into a journey beyond his wildest dreams. Throughout the book he learns the value of trust, honour, and fighting mainly from Brom, Saphira, and Murtagh. The three serve as important guides on his way to manhood, to help him find his position and purpose in the overwhelming complexity of the world he lives in.

However, in the span of several months he learns how to protect those unable to do so themselves, even in advance, the true value of honour, and how to transcend one's selfish needs and desires. Through trial and error, victories and losses, he manages to improve himself and mature up to the point where he becomes the representatives of the three main races of Alagaësia.

His development of character cannot be overstated. Eragon manages to mature in a short amount of time and re-evaluate essentially everything he once believed or stood for, save for the desire for justice, reputation, and other honourable characteristics. He opens his mind and heart to the point of becoming a whole new person, one that is able to rise above almost any senseless conflict in order to serve the greater good. He also gains confidence and faith in himself, while learning to trust others and discovering new ways of cooperation.

Likewise, Eragon's position in the society has changed in many ways, almost always dependent on the surroundings. Throughout the two books, he remains in a position completely outside the regular structures, which takes a toll on his mentally. With each race, he was forced to prove his worth as a Dragon Rider; however, once he did so, he earned such a ranking and a position that he rose above the traditional structures and found his own, unique place. While he is valued tremendously, he is aware of it and makes conscious effort not to consider himself superior to others; instead, he puts emphasis on using his position to help others. Nevertheless, he also makes sure that he is independent and free to do as he will.

In time, he manages to come to terms with his place in the world and succeeds in gaining from it. He starts to enjoy his position, but not to the point of being bitter of evil. Instead, he sees it as a way to make a positive change on many places and people around him. Eragon

continues to improve himself and his position in such a way that shows his importance and allows him to grow even further.

Overall, the two books show an incredible amount of development and changes. Eragon, just as Saphira, goes through many trials which test his capabilities and preparedness for facing life. Given the fact that this is a fantasy saga, the challenges are much greater than what the reader might be forced to take. Nonetheless, they may learn many important life lessons and prove useful in regular life, even if one does not need to slay dragons. *The Inheritance Cycle* saga proves to be a powerful bildungsroman, teaching young adults many valuable lessons, while also being captivating and fun to experience. Paolini succeeded in creating a world full of life but also full of difficult challenges, which allow for growth, just as is the case with the real world. Not only is the series worth a reading for adults, but many children, capable of reading in between the lines, can greatly benefit from doing so, while supporting their imagination and teaching them the ways the world and life run.

Resumé

Diplomová práce se zabývá sérií *Odkaz dračích jezdců* amerického spisovatele Christophera Paoliniho. Protože jde o dílo fantasy žánru, je tento žánr v práci stručně vysvětlen a popsán. Dále lze knihy z této série označit jako bildungsroman, tj. žánr, který pojednává o fyzickém i duchovním dospívání jedince. Takové knihy se často těší zájmu u dětí a dospívajících, přičemž ponaučení si z nich mohou odnést i dospělí. Pojem Bildungsroman je v práci také vysvětlen a popsán, čemuž sekunduje i sekce Young Adult Fantasy, která pojednává o fantasy knihách přímo určených mladšímu publiku, což je i cílové publikum spisovatele Paoliniho.

Paolini se díky svému dílu stal ve svých patnácti letech nejmladším autorem bestselleru na světě. Tato série mu umožnila věnovat se fiktivnímu světu Alagaësie naplno, aby mohl Eragonův příběh předvést svému publiku v celkem čtyřech knihách. V těchto dílech nalezneme bezpočet postav a bohatý svět; Paolini zde čerpal inspiraci například u Tolkiena, jde tedy o tzv. hrdinské fantasy, což je termín, který tato práce též vysvětluje.

V první knize *Eragon* se setkáme se stejnojmenným hrdinou, který náhodou najde, aniž by to tušil, dračí vejce, z něhož se později vyklubou Safira a z Eragona se tak stane Dračí jezdec. Protože Dračí jezdcí tvoří hrozbu pro současného krále Galbatorixe, je Eragon nucen podniknout nebezpečnou výpravu s vesnickým vypravěčem Bromem k rebelům, kteří proti králi bojují. Na této cestě se setká s mnohými přáteli i nepřáteli a nejednou je nucen učinit obtížných rozhodnutí, z nichž některá mají fatální následky. Eragon na takovou cestu není připravený a často dělá chyby, nicméně je odhodlaný bojovat; nejprve z pomsty, posléze za účelem osvobození Alagaësie.

Po cestě je Eragon přinucen k rychlému osvobození se od svých předchozích očekávání a ideálů; rychle poznává, že svět není takový, jaký ho jako chudý farmář znal. Postupem času ztratí Broma ale nalezne Murtagha a Aryu, elfku, do které se později zamiluje. Právě tito spojenci jsou mu velkou oporou a s jejich pomocí se z něj stává dospělý válečník, který překypuje pokorou, oddaností, dobrosrdenstvím, láskou a odhodláním; vlastnostmi, které si od něj může převzít i čtenář.

Krátce po Eragonově odchodu z rodné vesnice Carvahall objeví královi služebníci Eragonova bratrance, Rorana, kterého chtějí dopadnout a využít k nalezení Eragona. Roran je

také nucen učinit těžká rozhodnutí, ta se ale, na rozdíl od Eragona, týkají celé vesnice a jeho životní lásky, Katriny. Roran je starší a zkušenější, nicméně ani on není zcela připraven na to, co ho po cestě čeká. Svého úkolu se včas zhostí s odhodláním a bojuje proti Galbatorixovi statečně, aby ochránil svou vesnici i svou lásku. Protože Eragonovo i Roranovo dobrodružství probíhají ve stejnou dobu ale na odlišných místech, jde o dobré srovnání jejich vývoje. Bratřenci jsou si blízcí, ale ve spoustě oblastech mají odlišný pohled na věc a fungují jako prostředek pro analýzu a srovnání jejich průběžného vývoje.

Právě vývoj těchto dvou postav, primárně pak Eragona, je jádrem této práce. Eragon rapidně dospívá v několika úrovních a aspektech, na což se diplomová práce zaměřuje. Stejně tak se práce zabývá i vývojem postavy ve společnosti této fiktivní země, ve které žijí další rasy jako například trpaslíci nebo elfové. Protože v závěru druhé knihy dojde k Oslavě pokrevní přísahy, metamorfóze, kouzelné fyzické přeměně Eragona, jež vyléčí jeho zranění z boje a přiblíží jeho fyzické vlastnosti na částečně elfí a částečně lidské, je tento bod brán jako symbolické zakončení Eragonova vývoje, kdy ho lze považovat za dospělého. Toto rozpětí dovoluje dostatečně širokou a hlubokou analýzu jeho vývoje.

Hlavní hrdina během své cesty výrazně dospěje. Zprvu mu jde pouze o pomstu svého otce, zavražděného královými zabijáky, a svou frustraci si vybíjí na Urgalech, rase brutálních trollů, kteří slouží Galbatorixovi. Eragon s nich nevidí civilizované bytosti, ale pouze posluhovače a bojovníky. Postupem času, když se setká s ostatními rasami, pochopí, že každá bytost v jeho světě má své místo a stejně tak jeho místo je unikátní a důležité. Dále objeví například důležitost cti a dobrého jména, k čemuž mu pomohou hlavně trpaslíci, z nichž ho jeden rod dokonce přijme jako svého ctěného člena. Později ho elfové naučí lásce a úctě k přírodě díky čemuž se Eragon naučí lépe ovládat magii a také více respektovat své nepřátele. Přestává svět vidět černobíle, místo toho vidí a chápe komplexnost nejrůznějších oblastí, ať už jde o politiku, ve které se angažuje, tak v boji, umění, lásce, přátelství a jiných.

Zároveň s ním se vyvíjí i Roran, který v sobě najde zápal a odhodlání pro ochranu svých nejbližších, a hlavně své budoucí rodiny, která se pro něj stane středobodem jeho světa. Ač zpočátku nerad, přijme svou roli válečníka a vůdce své vesnice, aby byl schopný je ochránit; odolá pokušení utéct a starat se pouze o sebe, místo toho se zaváže bránit své blízké a Katrinu, svou nadcházející ženu. Kvůli svým rozhodnutím se dostane až na dno sociální struktury, ale je odhodlaný tuto pozici změnit, jakmile se mu podaří dostat své svěřence do bezpečí.

Zatímco Eragonův vývoj se soustředí primárně na jeho samotného a jeho roli bojovníka za celou zemi proti zlému králi, Roranova pozice je jiná; jeho úkolem je ochránit svou malou komunitu a posléze pomoci v boji pro Galbatorixovi, ovšem jako součást většího celku. I když Eragon je též zahrnut v tomto celku, jako Dračí jezdec má výsady a povinnosti které se vymykají běžným ustanovením tohoto světa.

Právě fakt, že Eragon je jediným bojeschopným Dračím jezdcem, znamená, že jeho postavení ve společnosti je naprosto unikátní. Má povinnosti a závazky vůči všem rasám Alagaësie, avšak není vázán běžnými zákony. Eragon si je dobře vědom toho, že jeho pozice mu umožňuje užívat si výsad té nejvyšší úrovně; to je však vykoupeno velkou zodpovědností. Očekává se od něj, že porazí zlého krále a bude s pomocí Safiry chránit lid proti nejrůznějším nebezpečím. Na oplátku se mu dostává téměř statusu šlechty; král lidského a trpasličího odboje Ažihad i královna elfů Islanzadí si uvědomují, že jejich autorita nad Eragonem je slabá. Proto je Eragon ve velice zvláštní pozici, kdy v podstatě existuje mimo běžnou strukturu společnosti.

Podobnou pozici a vývoj zažívá i Safira. Jakožto drak je jednou z nejmoudřejších bytostí země, je však také nezkušená a společně s Eragonem prochází zásadním vývojem, který je však odlišný; Safira se učí žít ve světě, který na ní není příliš připraven. V knihách je několik případů, kdy je ostatními postavami podceňována a nebrána příliš v potaz, čehož využívá ke prospěchu svému i Eragonovu. Její pozice ve společnosti je také výjimečná; většina ras k ní chová neuvěřitelný obdiv a pokoru a poskytují jí nadstandartní péči. Ona sama si je svého vývoje a pozice více vědoma než Eragon, a ke konci *Eldesta* prochází zásadními změnami, které značí její tichý vývoj a určitou formu dospělosti. Ovšem, oproti Eragonovi, tyto změny nejsou tak výrazné.

Z této diplomové práce vyplývá, že postava Eragona prošla nejrůznějšími změnami, svědčícími o Eragonově dospělosti a vývoji intelektu. Eragon již není tím prostým, skromným farmářem, ale jde o dospělého bojovníka, který se nebojí otevřít své srdce lásce a je odhodlaný bojovat za ty, kteří to potřebují. Úměrně tomu se změní i jeho status, kdy jde o váženého politika a autoritu, ke které většina obyvatel Alagaësie vzhlíží. Stejně tak Roran získává zkušenosti, vývoj a vážené postavení, i když v menším měřítku a v menší komunitě. Stejně tak Safira si projde změnami, po kterých jde o důležitou součást boje proti Galbatorixovi a záchraně jak země Alagaësie, tak i jejího druhu. Všechny tyto postavy a změny mohou pomoci čtenáři se jeho vlastním rozvojem; ač jsou tyto životní lekce a rady nadsazené a fantastické, je zřejmé, že

většina z nich je přirozenou součástí vývoje každého mladého člověka, a právě *Odkaz dračích jezdců* může svým čtenářům sloužit jako podpora a vzor pro spoustu životních rozhodnutí. Jde tedy skutečně o prospěšný bildungsroman, který nabízí svým čtenářům nejen zábavu a fantastický příběh, ale také osobní rozvoj a cenné životní lekce a rady.

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