

Abstract

This thesis deals with the gender issue and its relationship to the question of good and evil in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Ring* (hereafter *LR*). Fantasy stories usually give the reader opportunities to escape from reality, but in *LR*, the rights to challenge the rules of the real world are reserved mainly to males. Females in *LR* are usually confined to a small region and all their words and deeds are scrutinized and commented on by males.

Gender equality, an important issue in the postmodern world, is never a concern for characters in *LR*. On the contrary, over the generations described in Tolkien's work, it is clear that the females in his story are becoming progressively less powerful. All but one are precluded from the achievement of absolute power and immortality through using the evil but powerful One Ring. Volition for good or evil decides the fate of characters, and only through real choices involving good or evil consequences are characters able to align themselves morally. Females are thus unable to establish virtue through resisting the temptation of the One Ring.