

Thesis Abstract – English

The thesis aimed to identify changes in the character of the hero and the villain and to determine the socio cultural factors which influence them (religion, feminism, globalization and capitalism), with specific focus on the trends which merge distinctive qualities of heroes and villains and reduce their differences to a point where the reader's sympathies shift from the hero to the villain or until they are indistinguishable from each other. The hypothesis was that moral relativism, whose popularity expanded during globalization, was the most significant factor in the current merging qualities of heroes and villains.

Due to the great number of factors, the focus was mainly on the analysis of influences present in the twenty first century, and only briefly outlined their historical evolution. The primary focus was on modern cross over fantasy (mainly high fantasy) with stress on the main characters, analyzing the changes in their description, qualities and the way their behavior is portrayed, while attempting to explore the respective sociological reasons behind them.

The first chapter provided definitions of the term fantasy and characterized the hero and the villain, reaching the conclusion that these terms are continually evolving and, in the era of modern fantasy, became too broad to be useful in characterizing characters. The second chapter gave a brief evolution from Beowulf until Victorian literature. The evolution of the hero and the villain throughout history of fantasy literature was present to show some of the lasting trends as well as the changing aspects of the characters contrasted against the society of the respective work's time. The third chapter analyzed these trends and the way they are realized using examples from modern cross over fantasy. The research showed that the shift from Christianity towards atheism had a strong influence on the connection of heroes and villain with 'good' and 'bad' qualities and that feminism had mainly a superficial effect on heroines.

That ended the purely theoretical part of the thesis as the fourth chapter examined the public's awareness of these trends and their own preferences to the composition of the hero, or the villain. This part was mainly determined by the information from the previous chapter and my own research based quantitative [questionnaire] and qualitative [focus group] methods. The purpose of this part was to test the examined influences, supporting the conclusion that religion has a large effect on the character of heroes and villains but showed

stronger inclination towards feminism in female readers than was expected. The data was then analyzed and showed support of the hypothesis. The fifth chapter followed as the conclusion, summarizing and evaluating the thesis.