HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

Hugvísindasvið

The Nature of Evil in *The Silmarillion*

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Maí 2013

Háskóli Íslands

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Enska

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Ritgerð til BA í Ensku

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Maí 2013

Abstract

The topic of the nature of evil in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* has gained widespread popularity in recent decades and has been widely described by scholars. However concerning *The Silmarillion* the literature and criticism are limited and selective. Additionally, most of Tolkien's critics assume that the image of evil is alike in those three works. Yet, the narrative structure of *The Silmarillion* introduces a different image of evil from the image of evil presented in other works. Moreover this image is in contradiction with Tolkien's view of evil and good in which good is absolute and evil is just its absence, the shadow of good. Evil in *The Silmarillion* is a more powerful and more progenitive force than good; it spreads itself very quickly in a shape of darkness and corrupts everything around. Hope and good luck turn into despair and sadness and even good intentions almost always turn out badly.

In order to understand the contradiction between Tolkien's own beliefs about evil and the image of evil in *The Silmarillion*, it is necessary to examine Tolkien's views of evil and compare them with the position of Tolkien's critics on his views of good and evil. Next, the role of evil in the creation of the world will be considered and its part in the shaping of Middle-Earth. Darkness, Melkor and their servants represent evil in Tolkien's fiction therefore it is important to discuss their origin, nature and active role in the war with good. Finally, examples of the different presentation of evil between *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion* will be introduced.

It seems like the nature of evil in *The Silmarillion* is more powerful, complicated and complex than in other works of Tolkien. Therefore, it can be argued that evil in Tolkien's *The Silmarillion* is absolute and a more powerful force than good.

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1. Introduction

The Silmarillion is the work of Tolkien's heart, which explores a wide field of philosophical and theological themes including one of the most researched topics of the ages: the nature of good and evil. Tolkien's view of the nature of good and evil was shaped in the first place by Catholic theology, rather than Norse, Celtic and Greek mythology, though these too had a great influence on his world view. In *The Silmarillion* Tolkien presented good and evil in all their complex nature, as forces that steer and control the world, in opposition to each other yet inseparable. But *The Silmarillion*, more than anything else, is the story of the struggle between light and darkness, where light symbolises good whereas darkness symbolises evil; moreover these symbolic powers are also a metaphor for divine order versus rebellion, for creativity versus destruction. Tolkien view of evil and good was based on a conviction that good is absolute but not evil. He stated that evil is a shadow not a substance and "...can and does arise from an apparently good root" (Tolkien, *Letters* 146) However, as one begins reading *The Silmarillion* one experiences evil getting stronger and more powerful, once it starts destroying sources of light. Consequently, evil is the stronger force, it is like a "Being" that takes the shape of darkness and easily corrupts good but good never redeems evil. Also, it cannot go unnoticed that feelings of despair and blackness are stronger than hope and light; light does not shine brightly, it is dim and shadowy. It seems like Tolkien's world of fiction was a calque of his own experiences from the wars time and despite his intention to create a magical, divine and pure world for Elves, it becomes eventually a world where evil is very much at home. Therefore, it can be argue that in Tolkien's *The Silmarillion* evil is an absolute and dominant force despite his statement that there is no absolute evil.

In this essay Section 2 "Literature Review" will introduce and discuss Tolkien's thoughts about evil and the position of Tolkien critics on his views of good and evil. Section 3 "The nature of evil in *The Silmarillion*" is divided into three subsections. In 3.1 "The role of evil in the creation of the world" it will be argued that evil was present before the creation of the world and was the cause of the rebellion of Melkor, indeed that it took an active role in a the shaping of Middle-Earth. In the subsection 3.2 the nature of the Darkness will be discussed and the creatures that are associated with it. Finally, in the subsection 3.3 works - *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings*- will be examined in order to compare similarities and differences in the image of evil.

2. Literature review. Tolkien and his critics views on evil.

Tolkien states that in his fiction there is no such thing as absolute evil and in comments on W.H. Auden's review of *The Return of the King* he wrote:

> I do not think that at any rate any 'rational being' is wholly evil. Satan fell. In my myth Morgoth fell before Creation of the physical world. In my story Sauron represents as near an approach to the wholly evil as is possible. (Tolkien, *Letters* 243)

The problem with this statement is that Tolkien on many occasions proclaimed that there are purely evil characters in his fiction, i.e. Trolls, Orcs, Ungoliant and Shelob. This contradiction in Tolkien's view was and is still widely debate by many scholars and in this section I shall address some of these scholarly concerns. First, I shall present and discuss opinions about the nature and character of Trolls and Orcs. The character of Ungoliant and Schelob will be considered in the section 3.2, "Darkness and its servants", where I shall argue that they are a creation of darkness and they are "evil thing[s] in spider form" (Donovan 120).

In the letter to Peter Hastings, Tolkien admitted that his trolls do not "show any sign of good" (Tolkien, *Letters* 191) despite his opinion that nothing is created evil. In addition, he wrote that trolls do not have souls, because not everything is under the will of God. Their origin is explained in the Lord of the Rings by Treebeard : "Maybe you have heard of Trolls? They are mighty strong. But Trolls are only counterfeits, made by the Enemy in the Great Darkness, in mockery of Ents, as Orcs were of Elves " (Tolkien, *The Lord* 486). Moreover trolls have a strong relationship with darkness, which protects them; the light is kills them by turning trolls into stones. The other race that is also strongly associated with darkness is Orcs. Kocher, in his book *Master of Middle-earth* reports that W.H Auden, Tolkien's friend and one of his early defenders, expresses discomfort at his portrayal of orcs as by nature a wholly evil race (69). Interestingly, Orcs in origin were Elves captured by Melkor and "... by slow arts were corrupted and enslaved; and thus did Melkor breed the hideous race of the Orcs in envy and mockery of the Elves ..." (Tolkien, *Silmarillion*, 47). Once beautiful and good, corrupted Elves inherit attributes of the character of their new master, losing goodness inside them. The light was turned into darkness. Shippey wrote that" several readers had pointed out that if evil could not create, was only good perverted, then presumably the orcs had been by nature good and might in some way be saved" (Shippey, *The Road* 265). However, never in Tolkien's story are any orcs redeemed, moreover in *The Silmarillion* readers cannot find evidence for any sign of goodness in Orcs because they are only identified as evil. The evil nature of Orcs and the fact that they were Elves before corruption troubled Tolkien:

> Christopher Tolkien has edited a series of Tolkien's essays and notes on the Orcs, dating from the late 1950s up to the late 1960s, in which Tolkien's views wavered between different 'solutions' for the Orcs: sticking to his original idea of the Orcs as corrupted Elves, changing to Orcs as corrupted forms of Men or even corruptions of fallen Maia in one version. He even considered the possibility of the Orcs as automata created by Sauron with only echoic speech like parrots. (Fimi 155)

The image of divine beings as Elves turned into evil horrors was also inconsistent with Tolkien's Christian world-view. In this section I shall argue that the symbolic structure of Tolkien's fiction is more associated with a Manichaen philosophy of good and evil and opposing forces than a Boethian one, in the orthodox Catholic view, whatever his own conscious intentions may have been.

 As we mentioned above Tolkien thought that absolute evil does not exist, moreover that all evil in his fiction has roots in a good. These views were based on the old opinion formulated in the six century by a Roman senator Boethius, who stated that, there is no such a thing as evil. "What people identify as evil is only the absence of good [God] "(Shippey, *J.R.R Tolkien* 130). Therefore evil is caused by human sin, weakness and alienation from God. The problem with this statement is that in *The Silmarillion* evil is real and it is a powerful force, equal to goodness. Moreover evil is very complex and it is rather an outer force that was not created or arose from the original sin. If the evil were nothingness then the transformation of Melkor would never happen. He was a divine spirits created by the omniscient, gracious and good god Ilúvatar, yet he chose to turn his face from good and follow the darkness. What caused his rebellion against Ilúvatar? The answer could be a weakness of character or influence of the outer force. Let us assume that Melkor was a spirit of a weak character and emotions such as jealousy, envy and anger took control of him and led into a path of sin. But if Melkor was an offspring of Ilúvatar's thought's does that mean that creation of Ilúvatar which Melkor was part of was imperfect? If that would be an answer we would have to assume also that Melkor's vulnerability towards evil came from Ilúatar and he indeed create evil. This is statement that Tolkien would have thought of as blasphemous and would stay in contradiction with Boethian theory which posits that evil was not created but arose from sin. I believe that this explanation is not acceptable because in *The Silmarillion* we cannot find references that would make the reader think of Ilúvatar as an imperfect and mistake-prone god. But Melkor's desire for Darkness had to come from somewhere. Tolkien wrote that sub-creative powers given to Ainur were limited and cannot be used to making things for yourself: anyone who will break this 'supreme ban' is destined to fail, just like Melkor (Tolkien, *Letters*

195). This explanation is limited and does not answer the question why Melkor desires more power where other Ainur[1] accepted their limitations. The claim that might provide the answer is the influence of an outer force, Darkness. In order to investigate this theory it is important to consider the creation of Ainur and the world by Ilúvatar.

When the creation of the Ainur was accomplished and they were filled with the Imperishable Flame by Ilúvatar they joined him in singing and "... and a sound arose of endless interchanging melodies woven in harmony that passed beyond hearing into the depths and into the heights, and the places of the dwelling of Ilúvatar were filled to overflowing, and the music and the echo of the music went out into the Void, and it was not void" (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 3). From this fragment we learnt that at the beginning of everything there was Void, where Ilúvatar and Ainur dwelt. Melkor often isolates himself from other Ainur and walks alone into the Void, there was something there that allures and calls him. In the Void there were still places that were not filled with the divine music. Here, Melkor's thoughts about increasing his own power and the glory were shaped. Therefore, "He had gone often alone into the void places seeking the Imperishable Flame; for desire grew hot within him to bring into Being things of his own ..." (4). Clearly, it was more than just free will (sustained by the Imperishable Flame) that shaped Melkor's thoughts about being a creator of his own and finishing the process of creation. In the shadowy places far from the sight of Ilúvatar, Melkor creates his own music that reflects all his desires. What Melkor is not aware of is the presence of darkness in his thoughts and also music. Darkness was always present in the Void but never introduced to the Ainur until it manifests itself in the process of the creation of Ëa (the world). When darkness is incorporated into the mighty music it produces disharmony that not only introduces new themes but also draws the beauty of the harmony in Ilúvatar's themes. While the mighty theme progress "... the discord of Melkor rose in uproar and connected with it, and again there was a war of sound more violent than before, until many of the Ainur were dismayed and sang no longer, and Melkor had the mastery " (p.5). His discord became so strong that could compete with the music of Ainur. At this point Melkor's discord is the manifestation of evil in the creation of the world. This indicates also that evil was an external force, present before the world was created waiting for a chance to manifests its power. It "infected" Melkor and Melkor becomes evil external to the Ainur and the new created world. Flieger writes concerning Tolkien's darkness:

> Light and dark are contending forces in Tolkien's fiction, but the emotional weight is on the dark side. The presence and power of the dark are among the most effective

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[1] except Aulë who also desires more power yet he regrets his 'rebellion' and after all accepts the limitations.

elements in his mythology, for his vision of the light rides on the dark as sound rides on the silence, as spoken words ride on the pauses between them. (4-5)

At this point it is important to examine the concept of the equality of goodness and evil. The theory that proclaims the equality of good and evil as absolute powers has its origin in Manichaen philosophy. According to this, the world is a battlefield between Good and Evil. Both powers are "... equal and opposite- so that, one might say, there is no real difference between them, and it is a matter of chance which side one happens to choose" (Shippey, *J.R.R. Tolkien* 134) As Shippey points out, Tolkien did not have much tolerance for Manichaeanism, especially for the concept of the interdependence good and evil. "Tolkien was a more orthodox Christian than Lewis, and less tolerant of anything like heresy" (134). However, throughout almost all *The Silmarillion* there is a constant need for the creation of light, because Darkness is destroying all its sources, e.g., the Two Lamps of Arda, Two Trees in Valinor. Therefore, with every destruction of light the awareness of darkness is unarguably getting stronger. Darkness is taking possession of places where light once dominated. The vision of what is light and darkness comes into life along with the understanding of evil and good and Arda and Middle-Earth became the battlefield for light/good and darkness/evil. From this we can draw the conclusion that despite Tolkien's view of evil and good strongly associated with Boethius philosophy, the narration of *The Silamrillion* is rather influenced by the Manichaeism. Let us now turn to the discussion about what are most significant aspects of evil in Tolkien's fiction, i.e. how evil works and what kind of weaknesses in good, evil uses to corrupt characters. Auden in his essay "The Quest Hero" shares Tolkien's view that Good triumphs over Evil, because is more powerful (46) and states that primary weakness of Tolkien's evil is a lack of imagination; "while Good can imagine what it would be like to be Evil, Evil cannot imagine what it would be like to be Good" (47). A problem with this observation is that, that in *The Silmarillion* a reader can find evidence of evil understanding the good and how uses this knowledge to fight with it.

Melkor and Sauron are the best examples of evil characters which understand the weaknesses of good, because before they became evil they were divine spirits created by a mighty and good god Ilúvatar. In addition, Melkor was acquainted with the plans of Ilúvatar for the world and for his Children. Therefore he prepared the army of spies which observed every move of the Ainur/Valar[2] and waited for the coming of Ilúvatar's Children. When the Children of Ilúvatar awoke and entered into the world, Arda and the Middle-Earth were

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[2] 'Those with power': the name that was given to those Ainur who decided to enter and guard Arda (the earth).

already poisoned by Melkor's ill will. Melkor also send spies to learn about feelings of the newcomers. He was able to imagine himself in their position; the vulnerable, good creatures that just entered new world and met powerful gods (Ainur); he used this knowledge to spread lies and fear among them. Elves, which let the fear and doubts overcome them, were drawn into the darkness and turn into orcs. The armies of Men and Elves fighting against Melkor often cannot resist the power of his lies and malice and they turn against each other:

> Great was the triumph of Morgoth, and his design was accomplished in a manner after his own heart; for Men took the lives of Men, and betrayed the Eldar [Elves], and fear and hatred were aroused among those that should have been united against him. From that day the hearts of the Elves were estranged from Men.... (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 231)

Therefore, it could be argued that Evil is a commanding and very active power in its war with good. In addition, Evil makes use of the hidden knowledge denied to the forces of good and "... has a tactical advantage because it has the initiative and can attack when and where it chooses" (Scheps 48). The hidden knowledge is Magic and as Tolkien explained, in the hands of Elves magic is Art, used to produce beauty. The enemy, on the other hand, uses magic to expand his dominion and increase his power. Tolkien equated Magic with machines and devices that exist to destroy the beauty of the world (Tolkien, *Letters* 146). Evil in *The Silmarillion* is in some ways omniscient: it knows what Men fear most and what is the greatest weakness of the Elves.

 Iluvatar's gift to Men was mortality but most of them were afraid to die. They wanted to be immortal like the Elves. So, Sauron lures Men with the vision of the immortality and he is willing to fulfil their wish only if they serve him. Nine Kings of Men accepted his offer and they became immortal. But darkness inside them turned them into phantoms, called Nazgûl who feed upon the fear of their victims. Moreover, they "work for the most part not physically but psychologically, paralysing the will, disarming resistance" (Shippey, *J.R.R. Tolkien* 125). It is interesting that Melkor uses his power in the same way as the Nazgûl: his darkness also paralyses the resistance and will of his enemies. He is also a master of a manipulation and uses every opportunity to spread lies among his enemies in order to divide them. Auden wrote that "... all alliances of Evil with Evil are necessarily unstable and untrustworthy since, by definition, Evil loves only itself and its alliances are based on fear or hope of profit, not attraction" (48). Again, Auden's argument does not apply to the narration of *The Silmarillion*, where all alliances of Melkor were successful: his orcs are devoted to him; Sauron is loyal to him despite his desire for power and lordship. Unlike Melkor's alliances, Men's can only be

described as "unstable and untrustworthy", because the smallest disagreement causes schism in the group.

Where the gift to Man was mortality, Elves were gifted with the immortality and love for beautiful things. But love for beauty became their weakness, bringing upon some of them doom, e.g., Fëanor and Thingol. "Elves such as Thingol and Fëanor unknowingly turn toward dark in vain pursuit of the light, never aware of when or how they have gone wrong" (Flieger 139). Their possessiveness and obsession for Silmarils can only be compared with Melkor's and with Sauron's towards the Ring. Moreover, they want to lock them in an isolated place, so no one have access to them. This behaviour is just like Gollum's in Lord of the Rings who wants "to lock" himself in the mountain along with his "precious ring." Such similarities between the two works could lead to the belief that these two works are interdependent and indivisible from each other. Interestingly, most of Tolkien's critics seem to share this conviction: therefore they assume that the image of evil is alike in both books. However, I believe that *The Silmarillion* should be treated as a separate and independent works and so I argue that evil in *The Silmarillion* is quite different from evil in Tolkien's better known work.

3. The nature of evil in The Silmarillion

3.1. The role of evil in the creation of the world.

Our discussion about the nature of evil begins by considering the role of evil in the creation of the world. Creation according to the Book of Genesis[3] is a relatively direct process where everything happens through God´s decree and Joseph Pearce observes that "Tolkien's own version of the Creation in *The Silmarillion* bears a remarkable similarity to the Creation story in the book of Genesis" (84). However, in Tolkien's Ainulindalë this creation process has a much more elaborate explanation. Tolkien's history of the "Beginning" starts with the creation by Eru/Ilúvatar of the divine spirits, called Ainur. Next, God- Ilúvatar introduced to the Ainur themes of music which fill up the emptiness of the Void. The only source of light in the primary matter of the Void is the Imperishable Flame which seems to be an image of the aboriginal creative force. Ilúvatar blessed the Ainur with the Imperishable Flame to begin the process of creation: "Of the theme that I have declared to you, I will now that ye make in harmony together a Great Music. And since I have kindled you with the Flame Imperishable,

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[3] The Book of Genesis is the first book of the Christian Old Testament.

ye shall show forth your powers in adoring this theme, each with his own thought and devices, if he will" (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 3).

Tolkien chose music to be a medium of his creation myth[4] because it can change and evolve with the simple shift of tone. The Ainur are the singers and Ilúvatar is conductor or a bard like in Kalavela[5] where he sung with the accompaniment of a group. Kalavela poetry was sacred, magical and "the same song was never sung twice" (Lönnrot xxiv). In *The Silmarillion* the mighty theme of Ilúvatar is unique and never repeats itself twice: the rhythm and tone changes when Ilúvatar introduces some new thought or idea. The Ainur are interpreters of his music but he is the bard who controls the theme.

> So when a bard performed, his listeners knew the story already: the interest lay in how he would do it this time- a sophisticated (or 'decadent') approach not unlike comparing interpretations of a piece of music. (Lönnrot xxviii)

Ilûvatar is the original creator of the world whereas the Ainur, sub-creators, have only the initiative within "the secondary reality", i.e. the world that already existed. Melkor, one of the Ainur, aspires to be like the bard/Ilúvatar and so he incorporates his own tones to the mighty theme causing chains of changes in Ilúvatar's music:

> Some of these thoughts he [Melkor] now wove into his music, and straightway discord arose about him, and many that sang nigh him grew despondent, and their thought was disturbed and their music faltered; but some began to attune their music to his rather than to the thought which they had at first. (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 4)

Melkor's discord spreads quickly ('straightaway') and demolishes the established harmony: his music is like a "sea of turbulent sound", a "raging storm" and "dark waters", yet Ilúvatar does not attempt any actions against Melkor until:

> The other [Melkor's music] had now achieved unity of its own; but it was loud and vain, and endlessly repeated; and it had little harmony, but rather a clamorous unison as of many trumpets braying upon a few notes. And it essayed to drown the other music by the violence of its voice, but it seemed that its most triumphant notes were taken by the other [Ilúvatar's music] and woven into its own solemn pattern. (5)

At this point Ilúvatar raised his hand and the music stopped. He reprimanded Melkor saying that only from his theme could the world be created; next he gave Melkor and the Ainur a vision of a world sustained and waiting for development and the Ainurs' role in this creation is

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[4] Where in the Book of Genesis (the first book of the Christian Old Testament) it is the Word.
[5] Kalavela is a collection of old Karelian poems about ancient times of Finnish people.

to "embellish" the earth. Here the Ainur are the artists, sub-creators, developing not creating the theme introduced to them by Ilúvatar. The vision revealed also that this new world will be home for the Children of Ilúvatar, i.e. Elves and Men, in whose creation the Ainur will take no part. Melkor feels ashamed of his actions but does not regret them. Moreover his anger and lust for power is growing and he starts behaving like Ilúvatar himself; moreover he desires to have control over his own "creations". It is interesting that Ilúvatar simply reprimanded Melkor instead of casting him away. It is also a significant moment in the story because, first ,Melkor's dissonance becomes a part of mighty theme that helps him later construct things of his own; second Melkor learned that despite his treason he was not punished or demoted (just humiliated); and third, Melkor's anger and jealousy grow even further until he is transformed into an evil spirit. The fact that Ilúvatar accepted Melkor's discord emphasises the differences between Tolkien's mythology and the Christian one. Whereas the Christian God did not accept and forgive the rebellion of Lucifer and expelled him from the angelic order, Ilúvatar accepted Melkor's discord and considered it as a part of creation. The presence of this discord allows one to appreciate the harmony more and to add new characteristics to things that already exist, e.g., water can manifest as ice, mist, or snow. In Christian mythology "evil is the result of human disobedience and is allowed to exist in order to create free will" (Shippey, *J.R.R. Tolkien* 179). In *The Silmarillion* through Melkor evil is incorporated into the world and when the races of Men and Elves enter Middle- Earth evil is already there. Tolkien wrote: "In this Myth the rebellion of created free-will precedes creation of the 'World' (Eä); and Eä has in it, subcreatively introduced, evil, rebellions, discordant elements of its own nature already when the *Let it Be* was spoken" (Tolkien, *Letters* 286). Thereby all creatures are exposed to evil and they may "go bad" or be corrupt, e.g., Elves may turn into Orcs, Valar inhabiting the World could make mistakes or err, like Aulë (287). Aulë desired to see Children of Ilúvatar and he became impatient and "tried to anticipate the will of the Creator" (287).

In the chapter Of Aule and Yavana, Tolkien in some manner "repeated" Melkor's story that is about pursuing power, of creation with Aulë as a lead character. Aulë was one of the mightiest and most powerful of the Ainur and also very capable in arts since "he is a smith and master of all crafts, and he delights in works of skill, however small, as much as in the mighty building of old" (Tolkien, *Silmarillion*, 17-18). In secrecy, Aulë made the dwarfs, but Ilúvatar knew what he done and asked him: "Why hast thou done this? Why dost thou attempt a thing which thou knowest is beyond thy power and thy authority?" (37) According to this passage only Ilúvatar has the power of creation new things: the Ainur are gifted in many skills

and talents but they are only the subcreators. They do not have power to make a new form and new material. They can only recreate things or make things from material that already exists. Aulë wishes to take subcreation to its limits and create something pure and independent from Ilúvatar. Yet, his intentions are different from Melkor's who wish to be called Lord, have subjects and servants and rule everything. Aulë does not desire lordship, his reason for attempting to commit an act of creation is: "I desired things other than I am, to love and to teach them, so that they too might perceive the beauty of Eä, which thou hast caused to be. For it seemed to me that there is a great room in Arda for many things that might rejoice in it, yet it is for the most part empty still, and dumb" (37-38). From this, it would seem that the purpose of creation is to fill the empty spaces and Aulë is eager to quicken this process. Nevertheless he is aware of his mistake and was ashamed for what he done. He asked Ilúvatar for mercy and Ilûvatar forgives Aulë just as he tolerates Melkor for creating the discord. However, Melkor did not ask for mercy and never promised to stop his "rebellion". Let us turn to the discussion about the causes of Melkor's rebellion, beginning with the comparison of the biblical rebellion of Lucifer and Melkor's.

Evil in the Bible is associated with Lucifer whose rebellion was caused by his pride and desire to be like God himself. "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God:" (King James Bible, Book of Isaiah 14:13), "I will be like the most High" (Isaiah 14:14). Melkor's rebellion had similar bases: he was proud and desired to be the god of creation, like Ilúvatar. But what causes Lucifer's and Melkor's desires? The answer could be free will. In the Bible no scripture declares clearly that angels have free will; similarly Tolkien never explicitly stated that free will was gifted to Ainur, in the letter to Mr Hastings he wrote:

> ... He [Eru] gave special 'sub-creative' powers to certain of His highest created beings: that is a guarantee that what they devised and made should be given to the reality of Creation. Of course within limits, and of course subject to certain commands and prohibitions. (Tolkien, *Letters* 195)

Although we can assume that the Ainur were gifted by some of degree of free will with the assumption that they cannot be prime-creators. Ilúvatar blessed the Ainur with the free will by kindling them with the Imperishable Flame. Free will enabled them to interpret Ilúvatar's theme but also ignited their desires to create their own music/things. Tolkien described the Ainur as independent, rational, wilful spirits gifted with their own "thoughts and devices" (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 3). They have different personalities and talents which are used to expand the Ilúvatar music theme and beautify his creations. Nevertheless, the relationship of Ilúvatar and the Ainur is different from the Christian God's with his angels; the Ainur at the

same time are united with Ilúvatar and are separated from him: they are created by him but they are also sub-creators. Christian angels are protectors of the Earth and God's messengers: the Ainur are protectors but not messengers; they are artists. They use their talents and skills to prepare the world for the coming of the Children of Ilúvatar. The Children of Ilúvatar are the object of special love of the Ainur and Ilúvatar himself. "These are the *First-born*, the Elves; and the *Followers,* Men." (Tolkien, *Letters* 147)

Melkor was the greatest of all the Ainur: "To Melkor among the Ainur had been given the greatest gifts of power and knowledge, and he had a share in all the gifts of his brethren" (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 4). Yet only he desired to increase his power, therefore he desperately sought the Imperishable Fire, the aboriginal creative force. The Imperishable Fire allows Ilúvatar to summon into "Being"[6] things that are independent from him and based upon newly–created material. The term "Being" is clearly associated with the Light whereas the presence of the darkness is unnoticed**.** In a few paragraphs, I shall argue that Darkness was present in the Void before the creation. Furthermore I shall present the evidences that some of "evil creatures" were not the "work of Melkor" but were descents of Darkness. According to *The Silmarillion*, there was no awareness of the existence of Darkness among the Ainur until Ilúvatar introduced the music to the Ainur: "... Ilúvatar made visible the song of the Ainur, and they beheld it as a light in the darkness" (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 15). It indicates that darkness was introduced through the revelation of light. It is intriguing to note that Tolkien's intention was to portray the light as a prime power from which darkness was separated. At the same time, however, the narrative of *The Silmarillion* indicates that darkness did exist; the Ainur were simply not aware of its presence: "... and it seems to them that in that moment they perceived a new thing, Darkness, which they had not known before except in thought" (9). This contradiction indicates that Tolkien needed in his story powers that will represent the opposite of the light to fulfil his myth of creation. What is more, in Tolkien's description of the creation of Arda, darkness takes active part: these two opposites work hand in hand to create some kind of balance: like ying and yang, one cannot exist without another. As a result of this, Melkor's "bitter cold", "fire without restraint" and frost working in Arda destroying things but at the same time create from ashes new matters, such as: snow, rain, clouds, and mist.

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[6] The term Being is capitalized by Tolkien several times throughout Ainulindalë to indicate that the act of creation has been fulfilled.

3.2. Darkness and its servants

The need for light is fundamental to the story because it seems that darkness dominates the Light through all the text of *The Silmarillion*. The nature of light is very different from darkness: it does not spread naturally; the stars and moon does not shine brightly enough therefore light has to have objects that it can shine through, e.g., lamps, tree, jewels (Silmarils). Darkness, however, seems to be superior, it spreads naturally and easily takes over regions of Arda where the light is strong. Furthermore Darkness in *The Silmarillion* is described as a Being:

> The Light failed; but the Darkness that followed was more than loss of light. In that hour was made a Darkness that seemed not lack but a thing with being of its own: for it was indeed made by malice out of Light, and it had power to pierce the eye, and to enter heart and mind, and strangle the very will. (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 80)

The real kingdom of Darkness is places such as mountains, forests, voids, and desert. There its servants live, old monsters that entered to Arda along with the Ainur. One of the greatest of them all is Ungoliant who lives in the dark region where the darkness was "deepest and thickest"; she "... took a shape as spider of monstrous form ..." and "... sucked up all light that she could find ..." (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 77). From this fragment we can see that the relationship of Ungoliant with the darkness is special; she is living in it and makes from it: spider webs, a cloak: "A cloak of darkness she wove about them ..." (77), and "black clouds". She sucked up light wherever she finds and turns into the threads of the spider webs. It is interesting, that when Tolkien describes darkness around Ungoliant he almost always refers to it as "her darkness". She is more familiar with darkness, because it seems that she descends from it directly: "The Elder knew not whence she [Ungoliant] came; but some have said that in ages long before she descended from the darkness that lies about Arda, ..." (76). Later, the offspring of Ungoliant, spiders will rule all dark places along with the monsters "... that were born in the long dark before the Sun ..." (192). Here we have evidence that some creatures where born long before Melkor starts recruiting his servants. This is significant, because it indicates that Tolkien's view on evil is not consistent. According to him, Melkor is "the father" of all evil and monsters that touch Arda, yet the text of *The Silmarillion* suggests that this is not always the case, as we have seen in the example above.

Melkor recruited Ungoliant to his army but "... she had disowned her Master, desiring to be mistress of her own lust, taking all things to herself to feed her emptiness; ..." (76). It is clear that darkness corrupts its victims are obsessed with lust of power. Ungoliant's lust and

hunger for things are so unrestrained that even Melkor is afraid of her. Comparing Ungoliant to Melkor reveals that she is more dangerous: she is a purely evil, remorseless killer; where Melkor is able in some situation to feel shame.

> But Ungoliant sucked it up, and going then from Tree to Tree she set her bleak beak to their wounds, til they were drained; and the poison of Death that was in her went into their tissues and withered them, root, branch, and leaf; and they died. And she still thirsted, and going to the Wells of Varda she drank them dry; but Ungoliant belched forth black vapours as she drank, and swelled to a shape so vast and hideous that Melkor was afraid (80).

Ungoliant "... needs light; she craves it more fiercely than Melkor, or Fëanor, or any other creature in Tolkien's world" (Flieger 112) and ingested light is turned into its opposite: the darkness that comes from Ungoliant. As Flieger points out "...Ungoliant at this point and for this purpose is further evidence of Tolkien's continuing concern with the theme of light perverted" (112). This is right, but we cannot forget that Ungoliant is a child of Darkness and only because of that she is able to ingest and corrupt light. Flieger wrote: "Those with darker motives who try to take it [Silmaril] wrongfully, such as Morgoth, the wolf Carcharoth, and the sons of Fëanor, will be scorched by its light" (142). The problem with this argument is that Ungoliant is capable of holding and keeping the light inside her; she swallowed the Silmarils and does not feel any pain unlike Melkor who is not able to keep them in his hand "... they [the Simarils] had begun burn him, and his hand was clenched in pain; but he would not open it" (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 85). Interestingly, Tolkien did not endow Shelob, the daughter of Ungoliant, with the ability of corrupting the light. For instance in the *Lord of the Rings*, when Frodo uses the Phial of Galadriel (where the light of Eärendil's Silmaril is captured) to fend off the attacks of Shelob, she is driven away by its light. Therefore she lives in dark places feeding on flesh of any creature that she is able to catch. In *Tolkien The Medievalist* Donovan comparing Shelob to the Grendel's mother (Beowulf) and Hrímgerth[7], as she states all of them have monstrous sizes, horrified appearance and evil nature (120). Furthermore, she implies that Grandel's mother was a prototype for Tolkien's Shelob.

It is worth mentioning that main evil characters – Melkor and Sauron – change their appearance from beautiful to horrifying, because of evil that is inside them. Ungoliant, the female evil character is an interesting case, because her original appearance is unknown to anyone until she decides to take a form of the monstrous spider. Tolkien wrote about

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[7] A giantess from *Helgi Lays* in Poetic Edda; she can change her shape, often appeared as a mare.

Ungoliant that she is "the primeval devourer of light that in the spider form assisted the Dark Power, but ultimately quarrelled with him" (Tolkien, *Letters* 180). As was mentioned above, Melkor and Sauron, before they became associated with evil, were beautiful, divine spirits without shape. After the Children of Ilúvatar were introduced to Ainur, the Ainur took physical shape in order to enter Arda. When Melkor " saw what was done", "His envy grew then the greater within him; and he also took visible form but because of his mood and the malice that burned in him that form was dark and terrible" (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 11). His head is attired in ice and crowned with smoke and fire; his eyes pierce with a deadly cold. He enters Arda with a "power and majesty greater than any other of the Valar "thus his anger, darkness and vindictiveness made him so powerful that he immediately starts a war with the Ainur for dominion of Arda. The power and loftiness of Melkor attracted many spirits that wanted to serve him and those who did not want to join him he corrupted with lies and gifts. Among them were spirits called Balrogs, who were of the same order as the Ainur but of less degree. However, their nature was demonic; they were "primeval spirits of destroying fire", "demons of terror" who eventually became chief servants of Melkor. But the most loyal, powerful and terrible servant of Melkor was Sauron, also from the Maia order, who just like Melkor desires for a power. He became chief captain and servant of evil, who later gain the ability to change his shape into wolf, serpent, or even vampire.

Along with darkness, fire is used by Sauron and Melkor to corrupt and destroy Arda. The fire in *The Simarillion* is more often presented as a force that destroys lives, burns and dries land, rather than source of warm and light. With the fire and darkness Melkor corrupted the Children of Ilúvatar, Elves. As Tolkien wrote: "... [orcs] would be Morgoth's [Melkor's] greatest Sins, abuses of his highest privilege, and would be creatures begotten of Sin, and naturally bad" (*Letters* 195). From this we can assume that in Tolkien world none of the creatures are entirely good, since even mighty Elves surrendered to darkness. Also, it seems like all evil characters are more powerful than good one. Interestingly, the depiction of evil characters in *The Lord of the Rings* is different from the image in *The Silmarillion*. Orcs and trolls seem to be less brutal and powerful; Sauron is bodiless and he lost ability to change the shape of his body. Additionally, evil in the Lord of the Rings is much more conventional and in line with Tolkien's view of evil. Therefore it is important to examine the differences and similarities in the image of evil in these two works.

3.3 The differences and similarities in the image of evil in The Silmarillion and The Lord of the Rings.

"For all that has been said, *The Simarillion* can never be anything other than hard to read." (Shippey, *J.R.R. Tolkien* 261) The whole story is much more complex than *Lord of the Rings*. The relationships between characters, their names often presented in many languages (of Elves and Men and Dwarves) might be confusing and difficult to remember for any reader. The language of *The Silmarillion* is archaic and exalted; irony, sadness and melancholy dominate humour and romance. Love is difficult to sustain or win for almost all characters: e.g. Beren has to steal Silmarills from the hands of Melkor in order to get permission from Lúthien's father to marry her. It seems like all creatures in *The Silmarillion* are doomed to failure and disaster. The word "doom" and "fate" are used frequently "... and with a complexity which determines the tone of several of its component stories" (Shippey, *The Road* 288). Unlike in *The Silmarillion*, in the Lord of the Rings, "luck", "opportunity" and "chance" are forces that guide events and have influence on the decisions of the characters. All living creatures have the chance to choose: resist the Shadow/Sauron or work for him. In *The Silmarillion* the fate of many characters is already preordained, they cannot change their future even if they want to prevent what is unavoidable. For example, the fate of Húrin's family is predestined by Melkor. Húrin, of the race of Men fiercely fighting Melkor's army of orcs, was captured by Melkor who cursed his family "... and a doom upon them of darkness and sorrow[8]" (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 233). Next, Melkor stood beside him and said:

> Sit now there; and look out upon the lands where evil and despair shall come upon those whom thou lovest. Thou hast dared to mock me, and to question the power of Melkor, Master of the fates of Arda. Therefore with my eyes thou shalt see, and with my ears thou shalt hear; and never shalt thou move from this palace until all is fulfilled unto its bitter end. (233)

In this fragment Tolkien's Christianity manifests itself through Melkor's character whose proclamations are similar to those about Satan from Bible; he is named there "prince of this world" (King James Bible, Book of John 12:31), "the prince of the power of the air" (Book of Ephesians 2:2) and "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4). Melkor is also acting like his biblical prototype, lying, torturing and forcing Húrin to watch how his vision is being fulfilled. Húrin refuses to believe this vision, yet he is watching as his son is trying to keep his

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[8] In earlier versions of *The Silmarillion* the phrase was: 'a doom of dread, of death and horror'. It is clearly that Tolkien changed this phrase to highlight the importance of the darkness in his fiction.

way straight and avoid a bitter fate but somehow is only rushing himself into the darkness. But what is the root of this tragedy? One could say that Túrin brings his trouble on himself by repeating again and again the same mistakes: killing the wrong people, making the wrong choices. Another explanation is that Melkor indeed had power over the fate of Húrin's family. As he explained to Húrin, he is "Master of the fates of Arda" and everyone who wants to question his power will be doomed and punished. Moreover, in the Unfinished Tales, Melkor proclaims also that "The shadow of my purposes lies upon Arda, and all that is in it bends slowly and surely to my will" (qtd. in Shippey*, J.R.R. Tolkien 252*). It is clear that this explanation is more convincing than that Túrin brings his troubles on himself. Here Melkor's power, as manifested at the beginning of the world and incorporated in its creation causing all evil in Arda, works through human wills, bringing bad luck and doom upon them.

In *The Lord of the Rings* it seems that Sauron does not have the power to change the fate of the characters; he rather observes events and reacts when things are not going according to his plans. Sauron is not acting directly; he rules through his servants to whom he sends the orders from the tower in Mordor: "... the will of Sauron operating at a distance, stirring up evil forces, literally animating the Ringwraiths and even the orcs;" (136). He does not have the stature of "prince of this world" like Melkor has in *The Silmarillion*, despite that he is called Dark Lord, Enemy and Shadow. Sauron is simply a general moving his troops. His most valuable servants Ringwraiths/Nazgúl are the ghosts, "undead" shadows without a body, yet "just the same they can wield weapons, ride horses, be pierced by blades or swept away by flood" (Shippey*, The Road* 168). It is interesting that Tolkien created the characters which represents a "nothingness" and shadows and gave them power and control. Tom Shippey states that the source of Tolkien's "evil as a shadow" was Beowulf, lines 705-7. The line that attracted Tolkien's attention was: "It was known to man that the demon-enemy could not draw them under the shadow ..." (*The Road* 167). The phrase "draw them under the shadow" is significant, it may describe action of pulling someone into the darkness, "also 'going we know not where', dying and being handed over for ever to the powers of evil" (167). In the essay *Beowulf: The Monster and the Critics* Tolkien not only explores his views about evil and shadow but also associated it with the darkness which described as "- a shelter for all death-shadow' '(35). In the same essay a reader can find Tolkien's description of monsters: "So the old monsters became images of the evil spirit or spirits, or rather the evil spirits entered into the monsters and took visible shape ..." (22). This description perfectly describes Sauron and Melkor's evil nature.

Clearly, in *The Silmarillion* Darkness is the evil power that dominates Arda and Middle-Earth whereas in *The Lord of the Rings* the shadow represents evil. Darkness is like "Being"; the reader has the impression that is alive and almost touchable; it is spreads quickly infecting everything around. Here evil is turning even good intentions to evil outcomes. For instance, Fëanor created Silmarils with the intention of preserving the light of the Trees of Valinor but his possessiveness and obsession caused the fall of his family and division among tribes of Elves. Unlike in *The Silmarillion*, in *The Lord of the Rings* evil deeds turned often into good ends. The greedy possessiveness of the Ring is leading to good, for example Gollum's addiction to the Ring is so strong that he tracks Frodo to Mount Doom and when he sees him with it, shouting: "The Ring is mine!" (Tolkien, *The Lord* 945) he loses control and in his madness he falls with the Ring into the Fire of Doom, thereby fullfiling Frodo's duty.

Shadows in *Lord of the Rings* are represented by characters and the Ring, they are perceived as part of them but not as a separate and independent force. Shadow is just greyness where darkness is blackness; evil in the Lord of the Rings is powerful but not horrifying and omnipresent as in *The Silmarillion*.

4. Conclusion

Despite the fact that *The Silmarillion* is not easy to read because of the language, the diversity of subjects and names, and the variety of styles such, many readers recognize it as a "masterpiece" of fantasy literature. Moreover, they perceive it as a manifesto of Tolkien's imaginative and creative vision, illustrating his literary agenda. The topics of *The Silmarillion* refer to the Christian and pagan mythology, yet Tolkien presented them in a new light, exploring their complexity and give them new meanings.

The nature and source of evil is central to the plot of *The Silmarillion.* According to Tolkien's view of evil, it is possessive, clinging to external things and most importantly desiring power. Evil cannot create it can only twist and corrupt things but it wishes to be a creator on its own, to be a God. To fulfil its desires evil is ready to initiate the rebellion against God's law. What is more, evil can arise from the root of good because only good exists and evil is just the lack of goodness. Good is absolute and will always triumph over the labours of evil. However, these views are often questioned because once a reader start reading *The Silmarillion* his experience of evil and good is different from what Tolkien proclaimed. Flieger wrote:

> No careful reader of Tolkien's fiction can fail to be aware of the polarities that give it
> form and tension. His work is built on contrasts – between hope and despair, between
> good and evil, between enlightenment and ignorance- and these contrasts are embodied
> in the polarities of light and dark that are the creative outgrowth of his contrary moods,
> the "antitheses" of his nature. (2)

The Silmarillion itself is the best example of Tolkien's antitheses. He claimed that evil cannot create and not exist until it is "invented or discovered" because is not absolute. This Boethian concept of good and evil that strongly influenced Tolkien's views may suit *The Lord of the Rings* but does not suit *The Silmarillion*. The symbolic and narrative structure of this work supports a more Manichean philosophy in which evil does exist and it is not absence; it is equal and at the same time opposite to good. Indeed, evil in *The Silmarillion* is more powerful than good, corrupts and infects everything around despite Tolkien's statement that good is the mightier power. Good intentions turn bad and good objects bring only tragedy. Tolkien on many occasions stated that evil cannot create it can only corrupts; he believed that no creature as a whole is created evil. (Tolkien, *Letters* 243) Yet, in the story there are creatures that are purely evil by nature – Ungoliant, Shelob, Trolls and Orcs. They live in the darkness; it is their weapon and protector. Moreover, Darkness and Melkor have the power to change the fate of good characters by bringing bad luck and doom upon them. In *The Lord of the Ring* evil is also powerful but it does not control the fate of the characters. Luck and chance are forces that help good to win against evil whereas in *The Silmarillion* despair, sadness, and doom dominate and only the intervention of higher spirits finally overcome evil. At last good triumphed over evil, Melkor and Sauron fall but in Tolkin's fiction there is no certainty that this triumph is final.

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