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DISCREPANCIES AND RESEMBLANCES IN THE REFLECTIONS OF EVIL NATURE IN
J.R.R. TOLKIEN'S *THE LORD OF THE RINGS* AND *THE SILMARILLION*

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the discrepancies and a resemblance in the reflections of evil in the works of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion*. In these novels, individual have different power of the spirit and can find here the fairytale archetypes and the military culture. The perspective of evil nature in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* has gained widespread popularity in recent decades and has been widely described by the readers. However, relating to *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. The manipulations of the trope of violence, we can also identify a number of changes in character and their cultural customs. In these two novels few women characters are existed with emotional dimension, and mostly isolated and idealized, but in the battle they fight against evil and get remarkable victory to the nation.

Key Words: Discrepancy, Resemblance, Evil, Reflections, Fairytale archetype, Good and Evil nature, Narrative structure, Violence, Shadow, Cultural customs, and Emotional.

Evil in *The Silmarillion* is a more powerful and more pro-genitive 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*, which 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. And

then, the role of evil in the creation of the world will be considered and its part in the shaping of Middle-Earth. Darkness of 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.

"For all that has been said, *The Silmarillion* can never be anything other than hard to read." (TATC p 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, 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 humor 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 Luthien's father to marry her. It seems like all creatures in *The Silmarillion* are doomed to failure and disaster. The words 'doom' and 'fate' are used frequently and with a complexity which determines the tone of several of its component stories. Unlike in *The Silmarillion*, and *The Lord of the Rings*, 'luck', 'opportunity' and 'chance' are forces that guide events and have influence on the decisions of the characters.

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 Hurin's family is predestined by Melkor. Hurin, 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" (TS p 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" (KJB Book of John 12:31), "the prince of the power of the air" (KJB Book of Ephesians 2:2) and "the god of this world" (KJB Corinthians 4:4). Melkor is also acting like his biblical prototype, lying, torturing and forcing Hurin to watch how his vision is being fulfilled. Hurin refuses to believe this vision, yet he is watching as his son is trying to keep his 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 Turin 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 Hurin's family. As he explained to Hurin, he is master of the fates of Arda and everyone who wants to question his power will be doomed and punished.

It is clear that this explanation is more convincing than that Turin 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" (FOTR p136). 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 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" (TRME p168). It is interesting that Tolkien created the characters which represents a nothingness and shadows and gave them power and control. Tom Shippey, the writer 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 ..." (TRME p 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" (MAC p35). 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 ..." (MAC p 22). This description perfectly describes Sauron and Melkor's evil nature.

Noticeably, 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 spreads quickly infecting everything around. Here, the 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!" (ROTK p 945) he loses control and in his madness he falls with the Ring into the Fire of Doom, thereby fulfilling 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*.

Tolkien's imaginative and creative vision is 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 fulfill 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 servants of evil.

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" (LJRR p 243). Yet, in the story there are creatures that are purely evil by nature like 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 is 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 Tolkien's fiction there is no certainty that this triumph is final.

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