

Monsters or Heroes?: The Inner Fight between Good and Evil of *The Lord of the Rings*' Characters

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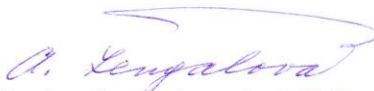
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ABSTRAKT

Práce se zabývá pojetím dobra a zla v díle J.R.R. Tolkiena *Pán prstenů*. V první části jsou nastíněny odkazy na život autora a všeobecné pojetí dobra a zla. Druhá část je věnována analýze vybraných postav, jmenovitě Froda, Gluma, Gandalfa a Sarumana. Práce se rovněž zabývá motivy jednání daných postav a jejich reakcemi a vnitřními boji v situacích, kdy jsou vystaveni pokušení.

Klíčová slova: Frodo, Glum, Sméagol, Gandalf, Saruman, Pán prstenů, hobit, Mordor, Kraj, dobro a zlo, J.R.R. Tolkien

ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses the concept of good and evil in J.R.R. Tolkien's novel *The Lord of the Rings*. The first part deals with bibliographical reflections and concept of good and evil in general. The second part is devoted to analysis of several characters, namely Frodo, Gollum, Gandalf and Saruman. The thesis also examines motifs of character's actions and their reactions and inner fights when facing temptation.

Keywords: Frodo, Gollum, Sméagol, Gandalf, Saruman, The Lord of the Rings, hobbit, Mordor, The Shire, good and evil, J.R.R. Tolkien

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INTRODUCTION

All that is gold does not glitter, not all those who wander are lost.¹

This sentence was written by J.R.R. Tolkien in the trilogy and it fits the whole work perfectly. In *The Lord of the Rings*, there are many characters who want to be “gold” and do not “glitter” as well as those who are not lost even though they seem to be. This work was supposed to be another part of a book written before – *The Hobbit*. The first tale became very popular and the publisher asked Tolkien to write another one. It is interesting that *The Lord of the Rings* was originally supposed to be only one book, but there was not enough paper after the war, so he divided it into three parts.² Tolkien spent ten years working on the novel that made him very famous.

Compared to *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings* does not resemble a tale for children any more. As the story goes on, there is a noticeable difference between these works. The first one is mostly a fairy tale but the trilogy is not such a light hearted story about dragons and adventures, it is much darker. This change in author’s style is necessarily reflected in his characters. Unlike *The Hobbit*, the trilogy offers more complex personalities of characters. Some of them seem to be as good or bad as someone can possibly be. However, as the story continues the reader may observe how they develop. To illustrate this change, I will analyze several characters and their decisions. The analysis focuses on four characters who can be used as an example of victory and failure concerning their reactions when facing temptation, etc. – Frodo and Gandalf, Saruman and Gollum respectively.

This complexity of the work is the reason why I have chosen those books. The aim of this thesis is to find out whether Tolkien’s characters are monsters or heroes. I will be also interested in their inner fights – how the characters deal with temptation and their reasons for choosing one option over others. The result of this research will be an answer to a question whether Tolkien’s characters can be simply divided into good and evil or not.

¹ J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part One: The Fellowship of the Ring* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1973), 193.

² Michael Coren, *Zivot pána prstenu*: J.R.R. Tolkien (Praha: Baronet, 2002), 92.

1 J.R.R. TOLKIEN AND HIS WORLD OF WONDERS

The first chapter of this work serves as an introduction to the topic. The aim is to give an insight in the magical world of Middle-Earth and to introduce the concept of good and evil in general.

Although it may seem that the books are just a fairy tale full of magic and fascinating creatures, it cannot be forgotten to mention that the author created a whole new world. The reader can meet with supernaturality, amazing nature and friendship as well as with darkness, terror and fear there. However, Tolkien did not create just a tale which leads the reader to the very roots of our existence and shows a typical struggle between good and evil. He used, for example, his knowledge of linguistics to invent languages of elves, dwarves, etc. When creating those languages, he could draw from his knowledge of old English, Latin, French, Finnish, Gothic, Old Norwegian, Anglo-Saxon and many others.

As the reader may have noticed, Tolkien was a scholar. He was interested not only in linguistics but also in mythology. There may be noticed analogies with texts coming from northern Europe in the trilogy. There can be found rings that twist their owner's lives in old Iceland epic songs called Eddas. This pattern is also visible in *The Lord of the Rings*, where Gollum, Frodo and many other characters have to struggle with desire represented by the One Ring. Another source of Tolkien's inspiration could be *Beowulf*. This poem, as well as the trilogy, presents a fight of a hero and a monster. In the first case it is Beowulf fighting with Grendel, in the second one it is Sam's fight with Shelob.³

1.1 J.R.R. Tolkien

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien was born in South Africa. Tolkien's mother and her sons moved back to England because of the younger boy's illness. Little John was left with a few memories from this country – one of those could be meeting a huge poisonous spider. This could be his inspiration in *The Lord of the Rings* where a reader meets with Shelob. Surroundings of his new home in England are also said to be reflected in the country of hobbits, the Shire. The family lived near Birmingham where was beautiful countryside and an old mill. Later, as a grown-up man, he missed this place of wonders which was

³ Vincent Ferré, *Tolkien: Na březích Středozeemě* (Praha: Mladá Fronta a.s., 2006), 91, 123.

destroyed by factories, cars and industrialization in general. This protest against technical progress is represented e.g. by Ents and their song when they march to destroy Isengard:⁴

Though Isengard be strong and hard,
As cold as stone as bare as bone.
We go, we go, we go to war
To hew the stone and break the door.⁵

His father died when J.R.R. Tolkien was a little boy. A few years later he lost also his mother. When he was participating in the First World War, his friends were killed there. Those losses are reflected at the very end of the saga, when Frodo, Gandalf and elves sail to The Undying Lands. Those men who died in the war are also important because Tolkien considered them very close friends and he reflected the importance of friendship into his characters. He also noticed that soldiers were able to resist bad conditions and still kept sense of humor. They created corridors and rooms under the ground. This could have inspired him when creating hobbits. It is also important to mention that the most ordinary characters do the most extraordinary deeds in Tolkien's works.⁶ One of the best examples could be Sam and Frodo. If it were not for this hobbit, Frodo would never fulfill the quest. He would not even get to Mount Doom. Sam is the one who loves his master and is willing to follow him wherever he decides to go. He always tries to be there and help Frodo. However, it is essential to mention that the hobbit is not a typical hero. This ordinary person just answers Gandalf's call and takes responsibility for destroying the Ring.

Another autobiographical pattern in this trilogy might be the way of describing Mordor. Tolkien presents it as a devastated country with no hope and joy. This description can refer to England after the war. Contrast to this picture is shown by Lothórien. It seems to be a place where time stood still.⁷ Purity represented by elves and beautiful nature reminds the reader of youth and unspoiled childhood. Elves live, in fact, eternally and death is regarded as a gift. Because of this never ending life, they remember a lot.⁸

⁴ Coren, 20 – 23, 42.

⁵ J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part Two: The Two Towers* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1973), 186.

⁶ Coren, 29, 46 – 47.

⁷ Jane Chance, *Tolkien and the Invention of Myth* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 8, 54.

⁸ William H. Stoddard, "Simbelmyne: Mortality and Memory in Middle-Earth," *The Free Library*, <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Simbelmyne%3A+mortality+and+memory+in+middle-earth.-a0242509664> (accessed October 18, 2011), 155 – 156.

If we try to find a connection between memories and death, the result may be the changes that happened during Tolkien's life. He could have been troubled by destruction of all the natural beauty which was caused by industrialization and death, meaning oblivion, could be his desire.

1.2 Concept of Good and Evil

An interesting thing about *The Lord of the Rings* is the concept of good and evil, more specifically good and evil considering the characters. An important pattern that can be found in this trilogy is a possibility of choice. Characters are repeatedly coming to symbolic crossroads just as everybody does in real life. They have to face temptation and treachery, deal with seemingly hopeless future, choose between easy and right options, etc. Although Tolkien offers forgiveness and redemption, his characters have to face consequences of their previous choices. Frodo returns changed by both his burden and his quest, just as the Ringwrights who might serve as the best example of these consequences. They were originally nine men who accepted Sauron's rings. This act turned them into ghosts who are stuck somewhere between life and death. They have been twisted and enslaved (they rise and fall with their master).⁹

An interesting question in Tolkien's work is whether his characters are predictable – meaning that they can be simply divided into good and evil. What I find particularly interesting is a fact that people, who spent some time on studying this trilogy disagree on this point. Some sources claim that “Tolkien's characters are good or evil, never both”¹⁰ and that there is a strict line between those characteristics. Even though there might be some characters who are clearly good or evil, most of them are somewhere in between.¹¹

Another interesting point is the evil nature of the One Ring because it is an object which corrupts people around it and tears their souls apart. However, there needs to be mentioned, that the Ring itself is not an evil thing. When Elrond says that it is totally evil,

⁹ Ralph C. Wood, "Good & Evil in Middle-Earth," *Christian History* 22, no. 2 (May 2003): 28. *Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost* (accessed October 18, 2011).

¹⁰ Chance, 9.

¹¹ Marjorie Burns, "J.R.R. Tolkien: The British and Norse in Tension," *Pacific Coast Philology*, <http://www.jstor.org/pss/1316804> (accessed February 4, 2012), 49.

he means that it cannot be used for good reasons because it contains Sauron's power. This implies that evil is not the object itself but power in it – power of the Dark Lord.¹²

1.3 Tolkien's Characters and Their Attitude towards Power

Another thing is approach to power. In *The Lord of the Rings*, there seem to be several types of power, e.g. the power of words used by Saruman, when he tries to make king Théoden and Gandalf join him. In fact, at the very end of the story, this is the only power he still has left. Another person who uses this strategy is Gríma Wormtongue. He whispers ill advices to the king and “imprisons” him in his own hall. The second way of presenting power is portrayed via Shelob and, in a way, also Gollum. She (the spider) is a symbol of silent, but deadly danger which leads to death and murder. Gollum is a slightly questionable character. He seems to be weak, but the first impression is deceiving, because he is physically much stronger than a regular hobbit (it is obvious when he attacks Sam) and he is also able to drive others to great danger when plotting with Sméagol. The third, and probably the most supernatural type of evil I would like to mention are Mordor and Sauron. The reader sees only results of the evil actions, not the participants. Mordor is a grey, hopeless and devastated place full of death and despair where people can almost see gloom. Sauron is presented as a huge eye, which observes everything and everyone. It is the only visible part of the Dark Lord of Mordor. Although Sauron, just as Gandalf or Saruman, is a Maiar, he seems to be much more powerful. This impression may be caused by fear resulting from the supernatural way of describing this character.

On the other hand, just as most things, also power has a positive side. An example could be Aragorn, whose power grows through the story. Unlike the previous examples, he uses it well (he is able to heal even those who were hurt by the Lord of Nazgûl). Another character who uses his power well is, again, Gollum. Even though he is murderous, he goes through a short period of time when he uses his knowledge and power to help Frodo and to keep him safe.¹³

¹² Gregory Bassham and Eric Bronson, *Pán prstenu a filozofie* (Praha: Nakladatelství XYZ, 2009), 161.

¹³ Chance, 24.

2 FRODO

Frodo might seem to be the least suitable person to be the ringbearer, the least likely one who may succeed in this goal. He is a character who is always aware of his fears and weaknesses, but he accomplishes more than anyone would hope.¹⁴ At the beginning of the story, there is just a young hobbit celebrating his cousin's birthday. He is scared to death when he learns about the quest for the first time, begging Gandalf to take the Ring and destroy it.¹⁵ It can be seen that Frodo is not a typical hero. This humble young person is not any superhero and he does not have any superhuman abilities. He is quite ordinary and most importantly, he does not ask for being chosen for the errand. Frodo just accepts responsibility given to him by Gandalf and later in Rivendell the acceptance leads to a choice.

It is important to say that hobbits live on the edge, voluntarily isolated from the rest of the world. They do not really interfere into its affairs but it changes when the affairs come to them and, in fact, knock on their door. They are made involved in affairs, in the world which is being changed by Sauron.¹⁶ Although Frodo does not feel like facing any of this, he leaves his home to protect people and the place he loves.¹⁷

2.1 Tom Bombadil and Power of Nature

Frodo, accompanied by Sam, Merry and Pippin, tries to avoid the Black Riders and enters one of the ancient forests. There is an old tree, which captures Merry and Pippin and almost drowns Frodo while they are having a rest. When they are becoming desperate, Tom Bombadil appears to help them, singing a happy song. The theme of a song is important because the newcomer seems to be able to solve problems this way (he sings to the tree and it releases the hobbits). During time the travelers spend at Tom's place, they are told many

¹⁴ Robin Robertson, "Seven Paths of the Hero in Lord of the Rings: The Path of Transcendence," *Psychological Perspectives* 52, no. 3 (December 15, 2009): 351-371, *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 18, 2011), 351.

¹⁵ Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part One: The Fellowship of the Ring*, 55 – 67.

¹⁶ Noreen Hayes and Robert Renshaw, "Of Hobbits: The Lord of the Rings," *Information Site - Periodicals Archive Online*,

<http://pao.chadwyck.co.uk/articles/displayItem.do?QueryType=articles&ResultsID=1349ABB2CD517F749A&filterSequence=0&ItemNumber=1&journalID=7631> (accessed January 31, 2012), 62, 58.

¹⁷ Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part One: The Fellowship of the Ring*, 77 – 78.

stories about nature. This might be an answer to Frodo's doubts and darkness everywhere around him.¹⁸

Once we were a part of nature. Then humans developed consciousness and could not only participate in nature, but could step aside and observe it objectively. Observation led to knowledge, knowledge to power and power is often corrupted.¹⁹

Here can be mentioned that Tolkien describes the pure and not polluted forest as a paradise compared to the realm created by Sauron. *The Lord of the Rings* was published in 1954 and this attitude may reflect the post-industrialized Britain. He stands against manufacture and industrialization, power and modern technologies seem to be corrupted, such as Saruman. In this trilogy, even trees rise against the wizard who is building a mechanized world.²⁰

If this explanation is accepted as truthful, it is not too surprising that Tom Bombadil appears to be someone like a God. He was there even before the nature itself, so he may be seen as natural force shaped into a human body. Another view of this superhumanity is portrayed through myths of the Middle-Earth. This world was created by a song and Tom can be a reminder of the long forgotten times.²¹ Another proof of Tom's superhumanity is his reaction to the Ring. When Frodo shows him the Ring and he slips it on his finger, nothing happens. He does not disappear as all the others do and he is even able to see Frodo when the hobbit is wearing it and is invisible.

Not a long time after leaving the place, the hobbits get into troubles again. Frodo finds out that he is somewhere very dark and sees his friends with a sword across their necks. That is when he thinks of one of Bombadil's songs and starts singing. Tom comes to help them once more. According to all that has been said about Bombadil, there seems to be a connection between nature and a song. As the story grows darker and darker, the hobbits sing less and less. Another time when a song helps them find a way through darkness is when Frodo is arrested by orcs and Sam is looking for him. It is a song that leads him to his master.²²

¹⁸ Robertson, "Seven Paths of the Hero in Lord of the Rings: The Path of Transcendence," 355 – 357.

¹⁹ Ibid., 357.

²⁰ Robert K Elder, "Tolkien truths - Chicago Tribune," *Featured Articles From The Chicago Tribune*, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2003-12-07/news/0312070208_1_tolkien-society-saruman-rings (accessed October 18, 2011).

²¹ Tolkien, J. R. R.. *Silmarillion* 11 - 13

²² Robertson, "Seven Paths of the Hero in Lord of the Rings: The Path of Transcendence," 358 – 359.

2.2 Meeting with Darkness

One night the companions are attacked by the Black Riders and the ringbearer, frightened to death, feels temptation to put the Ring on. Although he tries to resist, he fails and obeys this urge. That is one of the biggest mistakes he makes, because by this act he enters the world of his enemies, who can see him clearly now. Their leader, the Lord of Nazgûl, stabs him with a poisoned sword.²³ Although the wound will never fully heal, it helps Frodo to see the bigger picture because later, when he meets Gollum, he is able to understand him. It is the little part of darkness that lets Frodo pity the creature and spare it. If the hobbit did not carry his own part of darkness, he probably would not accept Sméagol as a guide and the Ring would not be destroyed.²⁴

When the companionship is near Rivendell, the Riders appear again. Frodo refuses to follow them and give the Ring to Sauron. His enemies are splashed by water when they try to follow him.²⁵ Here the reader can think of Tom Bombadill, because elves are considered pure and good, therefore the country and its people are protecting their purity, which would be violated by Sauron's servants. This purity may be a part of a bigger picture of elves. They could be seen as better humans, not touched by corruption. They remain those who live very long, if not even eternally, in compliance with nature.²⁶

In Rivendell, Frodo's wound is healed, although there will always be a part of darkness in him. This burden helps him with Gollum but he lives in both worlds. His life was saved, but everything evil or hurtful seems to recognize him as the important one who should be captured and taken to Sauron. For example, before the company enters the Mines of Moria, a sea creature attacks Frodo, catches his leg with one of its tentacles and pulls the hobbit into water. When Sam frees Frodo and they hide in Moria, the monster at least pulls the door closed and traps them inside. There they are attacked by orcs. Their leader somehow recognizes the hobbit as the important one and tries to kill him too.²⁷

²³ Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part One: The Fellowship of the Ring*, 220 – 221.

²⁴ Robertson, "Seven Paths of the Hero in Lord of the Rings: The Path of Transcendence," 362.

²⁵ Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part One: The Fellowship of the Ring*, 240 – 242.

²⁶ Stoddard, 153 – 154.

²⁷ Robertson, "Seven Paths of the Hero in Lord of the Rings: The Path of Transcendence," 362 – 363.

2.3 Boromir's Failure and Redemption

After looking into Galadriel's mirror in Lothórien and seeing the Eye, Frodo offers the Ring to the lady, admitting that he probably is not strong enough to carry it. Galadriel, who wears one of the three rings given to elves is not resilient to temptation. Fortunately, she is wise enough to see consequences of this option.

In place of the Dark Lord you will set up a queen. And I shall not be dark, but beautiful as the Morning and the Night! Fair as the Sea and the Sun and the Snow upon the mountain! Dreadful as the Storm and the Lightning! Stronger than the foundations of the Earth. All shall love me and despair!²⁸

Although she may long for it, she rejects the Ring and passes the test just as did Gandalf and Aragorn before her and Faramir after her. Lothórien might also remind the reader of the forest where Tom Bombadil lives. It is portrayed as a place where time stood still, or at least passes slower. Just as Bombadil is left alone, also this forest is not available for the forces of evil such as orcs. It may be another place where the ancient times are preserved.²⁹

Galadriel, who sees into people's souls, already knows that Boromir wants the Ring.³⁰ When the company leaves the elves, they come to a place where they have to choose which way they will go now - to Minas Tirith with Boromir or to Mordor. The final decision lies on Frodo, who wants to think about it alone. Boromir, afraid that the final decision has already been made, follows the hobbit and tries to convince him to give him the Ring. However, when Frodo refuses to do so, Boromir becomes mad. He loses his temper and attacks the hobbit. That is when Frodo puts the Ring on and runs away. He feels the eye searching for him. "He heard himself crying out: Never, never! Or was it: Verily I come, I come to you? He could not tell. Then as a flash from some other point of power there came into his mind another thought: Take it off! Take it off! Fool, take it off! Take off the Ring!"³¹ The two powers are perfectly balanced for a moment, then he becomes aware of himself and takes the Ring off his finger.³² Frodo realizes that he is not under its power yet, he still has a choice. Here the reader could ask whether Frodo is already corrupted or

²⁸ Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part One: The Fellowship of the Ring*, 410.

²⁹ Stoddard, 155.

³⁰ Robertson, "Seven Paths of the Hero in Lord of the Rings: The Path of Transcendence," 365 – 366.

³¹ Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part One: The Fellowship of the Ring*, 451.

³² Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part One: The Fellowship of the Ring*, 451.

not. He partially is. Being the ringbearer, he spends a lot of time around the Ring and he also uses it quite a lot compared to its previous owners. Furthermore, the closer to Mount Doom he is, the more torn apart he seems to be. In the end he is not able to destroy the Ring.³³

With Boromir may be seen that the Ring of power is treacherous. Although people and other creatures feel strong enough to master it, in reality it is not so. It is obvious with Gollum and in the end with Frodo that every attempt to use it, even against Sauron, leads necessarily to corruption of the person carrying it. Some people, such as Boromir, get to this situation just by being around it. He who would like to use it would sooner or later become its servant rather than its master, just as Gollum did.³⁴

In *The Lord of the Rings*, the characters are not influenced by destiny, they always have a choice. Even Gollum, who, in fact, lives in dark for centuries still has an alternative option. He really finds a way back, but he fails in the end. Saruman is also given multiple opportunities, just as Boromir. The main difference between the characters is their reaction. Not all of them take the chance.³⁵ Boromir is one of those who do not miss it.

2.4 Frodo and His Destiny

When Frodo meets Gollum, he does not want to kill the creature because he is sorry for him. The hobbit spares Gollum thanks to an advice he was given some time ago: Some of those who live deserve death and some of those who died deserve life. This advice implies that Frodo should not be too eager to deal out death in a name of justice just because he fears for his safety. Though he has a guide who knows darkness quite well, he feels lost now and then. He has never been told which way to go and still he, a little hobbit, is supposed to find a way where the great ones did not go or could not go.³⁶ As will be shown later, the loss of Gandalf makes the other companions decide for themselves. It allows them to develop their skills, grow personally and become wiser.

After saving Gollum's life when they have been caught by Faramir, the creature, feeling deceived, leads the hobbits to Shelob. Frodo is stabbed by her and he seems to be

³³ Basham and Bronson, 39.

³⁴ Hayes and Renshaw, 60, 64.

³⁵ Elder.

³⁶ Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part Two: The Two Towers*, 246, 281.

dead. Sam, terribly sad that his master passed away, takes the Ring in an attempt to complete the quest. After finding out that Frodo is just paralyzed, Sam rescues him using a song. Although singing in the middle of nowhere, in a country destroyed by Sauron and full of his spies, may seem inappropriate, there is still hope. This devastated area can be green and pleasant again one day.³⁷ However, if this day is to come, Frodo has to complete his quest and this proves to be a very difficult task. Unfortunately, the Ring finally gets Frodo under its dominion and the hobbit is not able to fulfill his errand.³⁸ “I have come, but I do not choose now to do what I came to do. I will not do this deed. The Ring is mine!”³⁹ This situation appears to be desperate, but it is important to notice the choice of words. Frodo says “I do not choose”, not “I cannot do”⁴⁰. Even under the dominion of the Ring, he still has a choice just as Gollum did. However, likewise the creature before, Frodo is not able to resist and get rid of his burden. Here can be seen that Frodo’s, Sam’s and Bilbo’s mercy with Gollum saves the whole world, because despite Frodo’s failure, the Ring is destroyed.⁴¹

2.5 The End of Things

Once the quest is completed it is time for the hobbits to go back to the Shire. After fighting for their homes, they also meet Saruman for the last time. The wizard, even in defeat, is satisfied because he destroyed their village. Frodo, who has learned much on his travels, is not willing to let his friends kill the traitor because he thinks that revenge would not solve anything. The ringbearer also refuses killing Gríma Wormtongue who just attacked him. The reason for this decision is that Gríma was great once and although his cure is beyond them, he needs to be spared for there still is hope that he may find it one day. Hearing these words, even Saruman is moved.⁴² “You have grown, Halfling. Yes, you have grown very much. You are wise and cruel. You have robbed my revenge of sweetness and now I must go hence in bitterness in debt to your mercy. I hate it and you.”⁴³

³⁷ Robertson, "Seven Paths of the Hero in Lord of the Rings: The Path of Transcendence," 367 – 368.

³⁸ J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part Three: The Return of the King* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1973), 238 – 239.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 239.

⁴⁰ Elder.

⁴¹ Bassham and Bronson, 157.

⁴² Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part Three: The Return of the King*, 324 – 325.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 325.

Frodo, just as lady Galadriel, is now able to see into people. He is able to see into Saruman and Wormtongue and find out what was once there and what still may be if they wanted to look for it. Saruman, just as Boromir before, does not like being seen this way. However, when Wormtongue is hesitating to follow the wizard, Saruman kicks him. That is the last mistake he makes. Gríma kills the wizard and the villagers, angry as they are, kill also the man.

Even when the ringbearer is finally home and the quest is achieved, it never really ends for him. He has seen too much evil, but more importantly he carried it for a long time. The Ring was destroyed but he remains wounded.⁴⁴ Even on his way back to the Shire, he is in pain and during the time he stays there he seems to be dreaming about the Ring, almost sad that it is gone.⁴⁵ Wounded partially by the blade of the Nazgûl lord, partially by carrying the burden, he is not happy. He has lost the connection with the world of Tom Bombadill, with nature and he cannot be happy until he finds a way back. In fact it could be said that Frodo is more or less in the same situation Gollum was, though Frodo did not get so far in the dark. Lady Arwen offers him her place on a ship to Undying Lands and he accepts. Frodo is heading to a place where he will live forever, though hardly be in peace.⁴⁶

2.6 Biographical Reflection

If we look on his life, it is not too surprising that memories are important for Tolkien. He has lost his mother when he was just a boy and when participating in the World War, he has lost his best friends. Just as Sam, he came back changed and had to find his place in the society. When Frodo, Gandalf and the others aboard, Sam is left there, watching them to go to a place where he cannot follow. Just as Tolkien, he was left behind, not knowing where his friends are. Frodo sails away and the only memory he leaves behind is a book he has written about his adventures. Except for this, there is one more reminder left - a tree which Sam got from lady Galadriel and which becomes the only tree of this kind so far from Lothórien. If the world the story takes place in is magical, once the elves and magicians leave, the survivors exist in a place that is not extraordinary. Once the war is over, they live in a world that is not far from ours.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Robertson, "Seven Paths of the Hero in Lord of the Rings: The Path of Transcendence," 370.

⁴⁵ Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part Three: The Return of the King*, 290.

⁴⁶ Robertson, "Seven Paths of the Hero in Lord of the Rings: The Path of Transcendence," 371.

⁴⁷ Stoddard, 157.

3 SMÉAGOL/GOLLUM

Based on the previous chapter, it is not surprising to include Gollum to this work as a hero. Though he does not seem to correspond with common characteristic of heroes, it cannot be forgotten to mention that he plays quite a big role in the story. Although he is shown rather as a representative of evil, it is not really so. In *The Lord of the Rings*, there are not many characters who are entirely good or evil. An example of pure evil might be Sauron, good are for example elves. The rest of them are more or less both. Sméagol, though changed by power of the Ring is not completely lost, because Tolkien's characters are given multiple opportunities to redeem themselves. Not all of them take the chance.⁴⁸

Sméagol's life changes when he and his friend Déagol go fishing and Déagol finds a ring. Sméagol, feeling terrible desire, asks his friend to give it to him, but he is refused.⁴⁹ There Sméagol makes the first step towards Gollum, because he kills his friend so that he can have the Ring for himself. This pattern is repeated during the whole story because many characters are given the same choice. They are seen through their reactions to the Ring.⁵⁰ Although the temptation is big, they can reject it.

Their reactions and choices have consequences. Gollum does not resist the absolute power presented by this item and he is destroyed by it. Boromir partially fails the test as well, although he wants to use it for good purposes. While the Ring contains Sauron's evil power, it is impossible to use it for good reasons, because sooner or later it would corrupt its bearer. Lady Galadriel is wise enough to refuse it. Sam and Frodo use it to some extent which allows them to avoid the worse consequences of its influence. The difference between those hobbits is visible at the end of the saga. Sam, as well as Galadriel, refuses it while Frodo fails and surrenders to its temptation.⁵¹

The Ring influences Sméagol. When he finds out that it makes him invisible, he starts using it for thieving and uses his knowledge in crooked ways. He starts avoiding others, longs only for company of the Ring and starts making strange sounds like "gollum,

⁴⁸ Burns, 49.

⁴⁹ Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part One: The Fellowship of the Ring*, 58.

⁵⁰ Robertson, Robin. "Seven Paths of the Hero in Lord of the Rings: The Path of Tragic Failure," *Psychological Perspectives* 52, no. 1 (June 2009): 93-110, *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 18, 2011), 93 - 95.

⁵¹ Bassham and Bronson, 27.

gollum”.⁵² His addiction to the Ring is so big that soon it is his only friend. This leads to his exile. When he is wandering all alone, sorry for himself, he tends to look toward dark rather than to light more and more. Light of the sun and later even moonlight becomes unbearable to him. He ends up in the Misty Mountains, hoping to find a dark shelter there.⁵³

3.1 Another Bearer

When Gandalf tells Frodo Sméagol’s story, he says that “he hated it and loved it, as he hated and loved himself. He could not get rid of it, he had no will left in the matter.”⁵⁴ Here can be seen how the Ring influences its bearer. Killing Déagol to get it was the first step to loneliness and very long darkness. A lesson to be taken from this example is that power does not have to result in liberty, it is quite often enslaving.⁵⁵

Bilbo and Gollum meet by chance, because Bilbo gets lost in the Misty Mountains. There he also finds a golden ring and takes it, not knowing what he has really found. By that time, no one would recognize Gollum as a hobbit he once used to be. He eats everything he can kill easily, his skin is grey and he has big eyes that enable him to see in dark. Bilbo would be eaten as well if he did not have the sword Sting. Gollum, seeing that he cannot win by strength, offers him a riddle game. If he wins, he will eat Bilbo. If Bilbo wins, he will show him a way out of the mountains. Considering that hobbits like riddles, it can be seen as an attempt to bring Sméagol back from the dark. However, as the game goes on, Bilbo asks what he has in his pocket and Gollum’s guess is wrong. That is when he becomes suspicious and when he finds out, that he Ring is gone, he attacks Bilbo. The Ring slips on Bilbo’s finger and makes him invisible. It has just chosen another bearer.⁵⁶

The hobbit knows that he could kill Gollum easily, but compassion stays his hand. This is an important moment, because if he had killed Gollum, perhaps no one would have learned about existence of the Ring, the war between Sauron and the west would have been only on a battlefield and Sauron would have won. Even if Sauron or Gandalf learned about

⁵² Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part One: The Fellowship of the Ring*, 58.

⁵³ Robertson, "Seven Paths of the Hero in Lord of the Rings: The Path of Tragic Failure," 95.

⁵⁴ Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part One: The Fellowship of the Ring*, 60.

⁵⁵ Wood.

⁵⁶ J. R. R Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1973), 68 - 83.

its existence, Gollum would not be there to lead Frodo and Sam to Mount Doom and again, Sauron would have won.⁵⁷

There the reader may notice a paradox because it is Sauron who enables Frodo to destroy the Ring and therefore defeats himself. Sauron, being probably the only purely evil character of the trilogy, fails his fight. Just because of not knowing any good, he does not even think about a possibility that the person who carries the Ring does not want to take his place as the ruler of the world. The eye, which is the only visible form of the Dark Lord, is busy elsewhere.⁵⁸ It is staring to distant countries, not to his own. He does not expect that someone would dare to come to his realm. This is one of the reasons why the travelers are able to get there. If he took such option into account, Sauron would focus on protecting Mordor. If he did so, Frodo and Sam would never get there, not even with a guide.⁵⁹ Another problem of power of evil is a fact that it destroys itself. People who are lead by this power do not cooperate with anyone, all their actions are focused on their desires and they do not care about others. At the end of the story, Saruman is killed by his servant just as is Sauron destroyed by Gollum's desire for the Ring. Those who are lead by evil expect their enemies to act in the same way. In case of Saruman and Sauron this proves to be a great weakness.⁶⁰

3.2 Gollum's Chance to Redeem Himself

Gollum, degenerated to desire for the Ring, cannot stand being without his Precious and leaves the caves to start his search for Bilbo. However, he is caught and brought to Sauron to be tortured and questioned. That is when the Dark Lord learns that the Ring has been found. He releases Gollum, knowing that his desire for the item is too strong. If someone finds it, it might be the creature. That is when the task to destroy the Ring that will lead to Sauron's fall, really begins.⁶¹

Gollum's desire for the Ring makes him follow the companionship as Sauron rightly guessed. Even in Lothórien, he is seen when trying to get to the tree where Frodo sleeps.

⁵⁷ Robertson, "Seven Paths of the Hero in Lord of the Rings: The Path of Tragic Failure," 96-98.

⁵⁸ Hayes and Renshaw, 60.

⁵⁹ Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part One: The Fellowship of the Ring*, 299, 302.

⁶⁰ Bassham and Bronson, 266.

⁶¹ Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part One: The Fellowship of the Ring*, 64 – 65.

Later Aragorn says that he has been following them since they left Moria.⁶² Although there is probably no way of proving this theory, it may had been Gollum, not Pippin's carelessness that had brought orcs on them in the Mines of Moria. If it was his treachery, this would be the first point, where can be seen that Gollum is not trustworthy. His only concern is his Precious and he will do everything to get it back. Everything he does, even leading Frodo to Mordor, is a reflection of his desire for the Ring.⁶³

Except for his disgusting food, his inhumanity may be proved by the way he moves. When he reaches Frodo and Sam, he is climbing the cliff head-first down. Gollum reminds of a spider rather than of a hobbit. He is able to find holes to catch no hobbit could use.⁶⁴ Furthermore, his behavior when Sam jumps on him is more animal like. He tries to kill the hobbit by squeezing his throat and biting his shoulder. It may also be noticed that in this situation Gollum seems to be much stronger than a regular hobbit. He would kill Sam if Frodo was not there with his sword Sting. However, Frodo refuses to kill Gollum, maybe because he is touched by the darkness as well and therefore he understands him at least a bit.

Gollum tries to run away while they sleep, which makes Sam tie an elven rope to his leg and the creature starts shrieking in pain.⁶⁵ This reaction may be explained by a claim that he cannot stand anything so pure and connected to elves (who represent the embodiment of light) because he has been turned to dark for too long. Frodo makes him promise to serve the master of the Ring in order to untie him. He agrees and there cannot be forgotten to mention that he calls himself Sméagol, not Gollum. Frodo's kindness and mercy may have shown him a way back to light. He has taken the first step to get rid of Gollum and become Sméagol again. When Sam removes the rope, the reader may notice a change in Gollum's behavior. Now he is friendly, behaves nicely to Frodo and is willing to guide him to Mordor.⁶⁶ Although the creature has turned to light, he does not transform immediately. He keeps eating his food, whatever it may be, and when he is offered lembas, he spits it and acts as if they tried to poison him. He is simply not able to withstand the

⁶² Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part One: The Fellowship of the Ring*, 386 - 387, 430 - 432.

⁶³ Bassham and Bronson, 31.

⁶⁴ Robertson, "Seven Paths of the Hero in Lord of the Rings: The Path of Tragic Failure," 100.

⁶⁵ Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part Two: The Two Towers*, 243 - 248.

⁶⁶ Robertson, "Seven Paths of the Hero in Lord of the Rings: The Path of Tragic Failure," 101-103.

purity of elven bread.⁶⁷ Even though he seems to have found light again, he has gone too far in dark to turn away at once.

3.3 The Guide

Although it may seem strange to choose Gollum as a guide, it is important to say that if Frodo is planning to go to a place as dark as Mordor, he could not ask for a better guide than someone who has been there and knows the dark paths. Even though Sméagol is a character who failed personally, he still can be useful and serve some higher need.⁶⁸ It is not really clear whom he serves, because the master of the Ring might be Frodo as its contemporary owner or Sauron, whom it really belongs. However, Sméagol seems to accept Frodo as the master of the Ring. The situation changes after crossing the Dead Marshes. When a Black Rider flies above them, Sméagol, lying on the ground scared to death, is muttering to himself “Wraiths! Wraiths on wings. The Precious is their master. They see everything, everything... And they tell Him everything. He sees. He knows. Ach, gollum, gollum, gollum!”⁶⁹ This is when his behavior changes again. The Wraith might have reminded him of questioning by Sauron and this leads to awareness that his fear of Sauron is much bigger than his temporal loyalty to Frodo.

Later that night when Sam wakes up, he sees Gollum standing in front of Frodo arguing with himself. Gollum wants to take the Ring, but Sméagol wants to keep his promise to serve his master. Gollum objects that if he takes it, he would be the master and serve no one but himself. Thus he would keep his promise. Sméagol reminds Gollum that Frodo has always been nice to him, he does not want to hurt him. Gollum replies that Frodo is Baggins and they hate all Bagginses. This discussion shows that Sméagol is not totally lost in the dark. However, victory of the “evil” side states that even Frodo’s mercy is not enough to save him. Resolution of this moral dilemma leads to losing his allegiance to Frodo. If he wants to get to the Ring, he needs to get rid of the hobbits.⁷⁰ This dialogue may also illustrate the difficulty of dividing Tolkien’s characters to good and bad. The probably most disputed character is Sméagol, who is (more or less) both.⁷¹ Those two

⁶⁷ Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part Two: The Two Towers*, 254 – 255.

⁶⁸ Robertson, “Seven Paths of the Hero in Lord of the Rings: The Path of Tragic Failure,” 104–105.

⁶⁹ Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part Two: The Two Towers*, 264.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 267 – 268.

⁷¹ Ferré, 33 – 34.

personalities are quite different. Gollum is a slave of the Ring. He cares about nothing else and he would do everything to gain it again whereas Sméagol is the human part of the creature. He is a reflection of the hobbit he once used to be, the one who likes Frodo and does not want to betray him. Sméagol is not yet lost in the dark.⁷²

3.4 Betrayal

When they finally come to the Black Gate of Mordor, it is obvious that they cannot go this way. Gollum, scared by the idea of losing the Ring to Sauron, persuades Frodo that there is another way. He explains how he escaped from Mordor before and he uses “me” and “I”. When this happened in the past, Gollum was at least partially truthful. Whether he is truthful or not, Frodo and Sam do not have any other choice than to follow his lead. However, from now on, they are taking a way that Gollum has chosen to lead them to their deaths. A paradox is that in his attempt to kill the hobbits, he shows them the only possible way they may take to Mount Doom.⁷³ He has chosen Shelob as a murderer of his master because she does not care about the Ring. Once the hobbits are dead, he will have a chance to gain it.

Gollum, who had already met with her in the past has worshiped Shelob for some time. “The darkness of her evil will walked through all the ways of his weariness, beside him, cutting him off from light and from regret”⁷⁴ If his admiration was strong enough, it could be one of the factors that led him to the dark and kept him there. Just before trying to kill the hobbits, the reader can witness the last attempt to bring back the hobbit he once used to be. He sees Frodo and Sam asleep and something moves in him. He cautiously touches Frodo’s knee. In this moment an observer could think that he sees just a very old hobbit, shrunken by age. This is the last moment when Gollum has a chance to redeem himself. On the other hand, if he really found a way back to Sméagol, it would probably ruin Frodo’s errand. It is quite likely that he would never fulfil his quest. This moment of hope is ruined when Sam wakes up, sees Gollum next to Frodo and accuses him of sneaking. That is when the creature reverts to Gollum for the last time to continue with his betrayal.⁷⁵

⁷² Bassham and Bronson, 113.

⁷³ Robertson, "Seven Paths of the Hero in Lord of the Rings: The Path of Tragic Failure," 107-108.

⁷⁴ Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part Two: The Two Towers*, 376.

⁷⁵ Ferré, 34.

3.5 Gollum, the Hero

After leaving them to Shelob, the hobbits meet Gollum once more. They are resting near the volcano when Frodo is attacked by him. “Wicked master! Wicked master cheats us, cheats Sméagol, Gollum. He musn’t go that way. He musn’t hurt Precious. Give it to Sméagol, yess, give it to us! Give it to us!”⁷⁶ However, the hobbit fights with fury and Gollum seems to be weaker than when they met for the first time. An explanation of this situation might be a theory that the hobbits influenced him and weakened the evil that he carries inside. When the fight is over, Frodo goes on and Sam wants to deal with the creature. The hobbit intends to kill Gollum but he cannot do that for some reason. This is probably the last moment when Sam, if he killed the creature, could ruin the quest at its very end. He does not kill Gollum because he partially understands the creature and he feels pity too. The hobbit has carried the Ring for a while and therefore he can guess what pain and desire is consuming Gollum after being in its power for many centuries.⁷⁷ The “something” that prevents Sam from killing can be a claim that he is considered rather a representative of good, whereas Gollum is rather evil. In the whole trilogy, there are several moments when the hobbit has a chance to kill Sméagol but he never does so. Even Bilbo and Frodo could kill him and the younger hobbit is also given a chance to punish Saruman and Gríma at the very end of the story. He does not hurt them. This may be interpreted in a way that evil can be destroyed only by evil, not good. Even though most of the characters are not simply one or another, if any of those hobbits killed their opponent, he could not stand on the rather better side.⁷⁸

Even though it seems that Gollum has run away, he follows Sam into the volcano. When the hobbits finally get there, something unexpected happens. Frodo is overpowered by the Ring and he is not able to destroy it. At the end of this long and difficult journey, he finds out that he cannot finish his errand. Like Gollum, who killed his friend to get the Ring, like Bilbo, who almost attacked Gandalf when he was asked to leave the Ring to Frodo, he is not able to give it up. He puts it on. That is when Gollum jumps on the hobbit and bites off his ring finger. Gollum is enjoying this moment of satisfaction, dancing with

⁷⁶ Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part Three: The Return of the King*, 236.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 237 – 238.

⁷⁸ Hayes and Renshaw, 60.

joy. Unfortunately for him, he steps too far and falls into the volcano. In the end it is Gollum who fulfills the quest.⁷⁹

3.6 The New Era

At the very beginning Gandalf suggested, that Sméagol would play a central role and so he did for both good and evil.⁸⁰ If he was not there to lead Frodo and Sam to Mount Doom, the hobbits would never get there. If it were not for his treachery, they would never come so close to death as they did in Shelob's Lair. Without Gollum's obsession with his Precious, Frodo would have failed and would not be able to finish his errand.

Tolkien shows that a new life or era can be started thanks to death. In this case it does not have to be death itself, but rather an end of something. It is Gollum's involuntary sacrifice that allows the rest of the Middle-Earth to start all over again and build, hopefully, a better world than the one which has fallen with the Dark Lord. Another example could be destruction of the Shire and eventually death of Saruman that gives villagers a chance to renew their homes. Those moments represent the very end of an era full of wizards, magic, elves, etc. The following period which is started by crowning of a new king is the one that belongs to men.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part Three: The Return of the King*, 239 – 240.

⁸⁰ Ferré, 35.

⁸¹ Stoddard, 156.

4 GANDALF AND SARUMAN

The test for a wizard, already the wisest of the wise, is to resist arrogance and serve those less wise.⁸²

This statement is interesting, because the two most powerful wizards of the trilogy prove it to be right. Gandalf the Grey is able to resist temptation and grow in his power and wisdom, not for the power itself, but to be there for those who need his help. Unlike him, Saruman, who longs for power and rule of the world just as Sauron does, becomes easily corrupted.

Gandalf, unlike Saruman, does not need to prove his greatness by displaying it. To the hobbits of the Shire, he is just an old man who does fireworks. Only few people know that he is much more powerful than he shows. His power is displayed when Bilbo refuses to leave the Ring to Frodo. Gandalf suddenly seems to fill the room as he grows much bigger than he regularly is. Tolkien uses this way of showing greatness more often as the story goes on, not only with this wizard, but also with Frodo or Aragorn. However, the first impression might be deceiving because just as Gandalf may look as an old man, the Ring is similar in this way. People expect powerful things and people to look magnificent, but it often does not have to be so.⁸³ The Ring is “the one [Ring] to rule them all”⁸⁴ and still, it does not seem to be extraordinary at first sight.

Saruman sees things differently. He tricks a lesser wizard Radagast to bring Gandalf to Isengard. There he tries to persuade him, that if he joins Saruman, they could change the world. The wizard's arrogance may be seen when Gandalf addresses him as Saruman the White. He replies “I am Saruman the Wise, Saruman the Ring-maker, Saruman of Many Colors.”⁸⁵ When Gandalf refuses to join him, he traps him on the top of Orthanc. Here can be seen that Gandalf is already wiser than his colleague because he understands that if he wants to grow, he needs to make choices. That means by choosing one he has to leave the other option behind. Saruman was considered the head of The Council of Wizards, the

⁸² Robertson, Robin, "Seven Paths of the Hero in Lord of the Rings: The Path of the Wizard," *Psychological Perspectives* 51, no. 1 (June 2008): 119-140, *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 18, 2011), 119.

⁸³ Ferré, 18.

⁸⁴ Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part One: The Fellowship of the Ring*, 55.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 290.

wisest among wise. He does not see that he has become vain and selfish and that he wants everything. That will inevitably lead to him being left with nothing.⁸⁶

4.1 Balrog

When the companionship attempts to cross mountains and they fail, Gandalf decides to go to the Mines of Moria. This is an important choice because Gandalf will have a chance to grow and be reborn. He has to face Balrog there.⁸⁷ It is an evil creature coming from the very beginning of the world. Balrogs were ghosts who joined one of the Gods, the one who turned out to be evil - Melkor (called also Morgoth). However, this ghostly origin of characters is not as rare as it may seem. Wizards, and also Sauron, are originally ghosts, called Maiar, who were embodied in this world.⁸⁸

However, to get back to the fight, Gandalf cracks a bridge to stop the creature and they both fall into depths. This moment is important also for the rest of the characters. They lose their leader and suddenly they have to find a way on their own. This helps them in their development and growth. Even though Gandalf is the most powerful member of the companionship, he sacrifices himself to keep his friends safe. As was said at the beginning of this chapter, wizards should not want to control others. Gandalf is there to help them and lead those who need it. Unlike Saruman, he fulfils his task.⁸⁹ At the end of the story, all the companions are changed and wiser. This may be proved when Frodo deals with Saruman back in the Shire.

There could be also seen an interesting contrast between the companionship and Sauron in the Mines of Moria. Even though Gandalf is lost, the rest of the companionship is able to go on with their quest, contrary to the situation when the Ring is destroyed. When Sauron falls, his whole realm collapses.⁹⁰ This can suggest that strength of Frodo and his friends is in their goal, as well as in mutual respect. Gandalf might be the leader, but there are more characters who are able to do that (Aragorn, Legolas, Gimli,..). They do grieve for their loss but the errand is so important that it forces them to go on and support each other. On the other hand, Sauron does not have anyone who would support him. He is the lord

⁸⁶ Robertson, "Seven Paths of the Hero in Lord of the Rings: The Path of the Wizard," 125 – 126.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 128.

⁸⁸ J. R. R. Tolkien, *Silmarillion* (Praha: Mladá Fronta a.s., 2003), 24.

⁸⁹ Bassham and Bronson, 156.

⁹⁰ Robertson, "Seven Paths of the Hero in Lord of the Rings: The Path of the Wizard," 129, 139.

and all of his followers are only his toys. He uses them to get what he wants, but respect, friendship, etc. do not have any place in his world.

After the fight with Balrog, a part of the companionship meets with Gandalf much later. They are searching for Merry and Pippin when they meet a wizard who is clad all in white. Gimli recognizes Gandalf and remarks that he is all in white now. Gandalf replies: "Yes, I am white now. Indeed I am Saruman, one might almost say. Saruman as he should have been."⁹¹ Here can be seen that when Saruman failed his task and refused being the leader of his order, Gandalf was transformed and took his place as the wise one. However, the important thing is that even though he is transformed, he remained Gandalf. He does not consider himself better than he is. One could say that with greater power comes greater responsibility and wisdom.⁹²

4.2 Gandalf the Wise

When trying to deal with the war, Gandalf and his companions meet the king of Rohan, Théoden. He has been being influenced by his advisor, Gríma Wormtongue, who keeps him in his dark hall. The wizard persuades Théoden to come out and having brought him into light, he helps the king to restore his former strength.

An interesting situation occurs also when the two wizards meet again in Isengard, because here can be seen Gandalf's greatness and also multiple chances for redemption that Tolkien offers to his characters. Gandalf asks Saruman to leave Orthanc, go wherever he wants to go and be free. However, Saruman, who would probably never feel mercy to the defeated one, refuses the offer, not believing Gandalf. Unlike Boromir, the wizard does not take his opportunity to return to his former greatness. Another Saruman's problem is that by trying to have everything and becoming Saruman of Many Colors, he loses the power he used to have as Saruman the White. His only remaining power lies in his enchanting voice, which he uses in an attempt to deceive Théoden, Gandalf and Gimli. Being refused again, he wants to leave. He is stopped by Gandalf's order to stay. The corrupted wizard has to obey, because Gandalf became more powerful. The White wizard breaks Saruman's magical staff, casting him out of the Council of Wizards.⁹³ An important thing to notice is

⁹¹ Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part Two: The Two Towers*, 102.

⁹² Robertson, "Seven Paths of the Hero in Lord of the Rings: The Path of the Wizard," 131 – 132.

⁹³ Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part Two: The Two Towers*, 201 – 208.

that even though the corrupted wizard is defeated, Gandalf does not want to take control of him contrary to Saruman who keeps controlling e.g. Gríma.⁹⁴

4.3 Saruman and Sauron

It may be said that evil, at least partially, is in possessiveness. Sauron wants to control the world, Saruman has the same desire, Gollum wants the Ring since he is addicted to it and Boromir over-estimates his own powers, hoping to use it for good purposes. This is dangerous because even though all of those characters feel strong enough to handle the Ring, they are weak (except for Sauron). Just the fact, that they long for it and consider themselves worthy carrying it shows that they are already corrupted. Other patterns which are represented as evil are desires such as enslavement, domination or control.⁹⁵ That is what those characters, who have chosen evil, want. Both Saruman and Sauron control their armies. Here could be objected that this control of soldiers can be found even in Rohan or Gondor. That is true. However, it must not be forgotten to mention that even though the kings really do that, their soldiers fight for them because they love and honor their lords. On the other hand, those who are commanded by Saruman and Sauron obey only because of fear.

Another interesting thing the reader may notice is the similarity of Sauron's and Saruman's names. This may show that Saruman is Sauron's shadow, someone who may share his attitudes, but still is a weaker copy. Even though those two characters may seem almost similar, there still is a difference. The Dark Lord is presented as the evil itself. His name and actions cause pure fear and darkness. On the other hand Saruman seems to be more human-like. This is implied by his name (*Saruman*) and makes him at least slightly connected with his origin. This may be also considered a way back to his original purpose in this world – helping those in need. Although his original intentions might have been good, he was not able to resist power. The wizard studied his enemy so closely that he became like him.⁹⁶ Though he became corrupted, it is important to notice that he never stopped fighting against Sauron. Saruman wants to use the Ring against the Dark Lord and

⁹⁴ Robertson, "Seven Paths of the Hero in Lord of the Rings: The Path of the Wizard," 134 – 136.

⁹⁵ Burns, 50.

⁹⁶ Ferré, 28 – 29.

take his place as a master of the world. It seems that he has forgotten all the wisdom, he left it behind.⁹⁷

A lot has been said so far, but when Gandalf casts Sauman out of the Council, Pippin asks what he will do with the defeated wizard if they win the war. Gandalf replies that he will do nothing. Again, the reader can witness that Gandalf, unlike Saruman, is not interested in mastery.⁹⁸

4.4 The Very Last Battle

Unlike Théoden, Denethor, the Steward of Gondor, is not able to find strength and return to light. In this case Gandalf is not able to help him. Even though he is one of the most powerful people in the Middle-Earth, the wizard's power also has its limitations just as any other. As well as his son Boromir, Denethor cannot imagine that the Ring could master him. His arrogance made him compete with Sauron and he failed. He did not become enslaved just because of power he used to have. His thinking has been twisted and he does not recognize right and wrong anymore. The Steward even thinks that he has power over his younger son's life and death. He is stopped only thanks to the young hobbit and Gandalf. As the wizard says, Denethor should not rob Faramir of his choice when his death is not sure. It is not his task to deal out death because Faramir's life is not Denethor's to give.⁹⁹

When Gandalf and the kings arrive to the Black Gate for the final battle, Sauron tries to defeat them by a demonstration of strength. He also uses a rider who claims to be "the mouth of Sauron"¹⁰⁰ This messenger shows them Sam's sword and Frodo's coat and offers their lives if they accept Sauron's terms. An important thing to point out here is that just like Denethor wanted to control his son's life and death, the hobbit's lives are not Sauron's to give. Everybody considers Frodo and Sam dead and Gandalf looks old and finally defeated. Now he has to make another choice. As has been already mentioned, the choices that Tolkien's characters are forced to make lie often between the easy and the good one. Gandalf, being the wisest of the wise, chooses the difficult and from his point of view hopeless option. He refuses the rider's conditions even though the armies of the west are

⁹⁷ Bassham and Bronson, 219.

⁹⁸ Robertson, "Seven Paths of the Hero in Lord of the Rings: The Path of the Wizard," 136.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 136 – 138.

¹⁰⁰ Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part Three: The Return of the King*, 171.

outnumbered and he knows that this choice will probably be the last one he makes.¹⁰¹ If we compare this attitude to Saruman, there is a big difference. Gandalf, facing death, still follows his wisdom and allegiance to his friends. Saruman gives up at the very beginning and he even does not try to fight for what is right. He surrenders before the quest to destroy the Ring even starts.

A new power is rising... As the power grows, its proved friends will also grow; and the Wise, such as you and I, may with patience come at last to direct its courses, to control it. We can bide our time, we can keep our thoughts in our hearts, deploring maybe evils done by the way, but approving the high and ultimate purpose: Knowledge, Rule, Order; all the things that we have so far striven in vain to accomplish, hindered rather than helped by our weak or idle friends¹⁰²

In this extract Saruman shows how he turned his back on everything and everyone. Unlike Gandalf, he became interested in mastery and rule. He is not satisfied with power he has and more importantly he considers the weak a burden. Saruman considers himself the one who is suitable for being the ruler and he wants to make others share his ideas and obey him. Likewise the Dark Lord, he longs for mastery.¹⁰³ The wizard seems to be rather like Sauron than Gandalf. He also calls Gandalf his helper but when he is refused, Gandalf becomes just another burden to him. He is simply not interested in those who are of no use to him, those who hinder him and those who are weak. The problem is that he overlooks the fact that he is not able to control the Ring. “There is only one Lord of the Ring, only one who can bend it to his will. And he does not share power.”¹⁰⁴

4.5 Back to the Shire

At the very end of the battle, eagles come to an aid of the kings lead by Gandalf’s friend, Gwaihir the Windlord. Eagles, just as wizards, balrogs, etc. come from the times when the world was being created. They are also ghosts, who helped the gods. Just like Gandalf, Gwaihir is a living memory of the ancient times. While they both are helpers of the gods,

¹⁰¹ Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part Three: The Return of the King*, 172 – 174.

¹⁰² Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part One: The Fellowship of the Ring*, 291.

¹⁰³ Bassham and Bronson, 169.

¹⁰⁴ *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (extended edition), directed by Peter Jackson, New York: New Line Cinema, 2001, 00:19:15.

they cooperate.¹⁰⁵ When the eagles arrive, the Nazgûl flee, Frodo accomplishes his errand and Sauron's realm collapses. With the war being finally over, Gandalf still has things to do. He and some of the eagles go to pick up Frodo and Sam, who are still near the volcano. He does not need them anymore, but he is a friend and unlike Saruman, he does not use them as toys, so he could not let them die there. With this act Gandalf's task is finally over. This may be observed also when the wizard and the hobbits ride back to the Shire and they meet Saruman. He is offered help once more but he refuses it again. One might almost think that he is slightly paranoid because he accuses Galadriel and the rest of the company of hunting for him.¹⁰⁶ As was just said, Gandalf's task is over and the hobbits have to deal with their problems on their own. It is also quite hard to say whether Saruman still believes his twisted ideas or whether he is just too weak to accept defeat and learn from it. Judging from his next steps (ruining the Shire), an answer to this question could be the second option. The attitude he takes may show that Sauron blames others for his failure and he is not able to accept defeat. The solution he finds is revenge.

You thought you had done very well out of it all, and you could now just assemble back and have a nice quiet time in the country. Saruman's home could be all wrecked, and he could be turned out, but no one could touch yours. Oh no! Gandalf would look after your affairs... Not he! When his tools have done their task, he drops them.¹⁰⁷

This extract portrays the change the wizard went through. Starting as the head of The Council of Wizards he wanted more and more, just to end up at the very bottom. However, he again misjudges Gandalf, because he helped his "tools".

It is obvious that there are many differences between those two characters. One of those could be the way they deal with challenges. Saruman tends to keep choosing the easy option, whereas Gandalf takes the more difficult path because he believes that it is right. Saruman pays for his desire for power by losing everything while Gandalf grows and develops his skills.

¹⁰⁵ Tolkien, *Silmarillion*, 30.

¹⁰⁶ Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part Three: The Return of the King*, 282 – 283.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 324.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis was to analyze whether Tolkien's characters are monsters or heroes – if there is a clear borderline between good and evil. In order to answer this question, I analyzed four characters of the trilogy – Gollum, Frodo, Saruman and Gandalf. They were chosen because they seemingly create pairs where one character fails his inner fight and the other one succeeds. Gollum and Frodo both got the One Ring and they both were changed by it. It is obvious that Gollum's life was destroyed by this item, leaving him with no joy left. Frodo was marked by its evil as well, even though he had more will left.

Sméagol's world has shrunk to nothing more than dark caves and consuming desire for "his Precious". No matter how murderous and lost this creature seemed to be, he still could be saved – Sméagol was the good part of him, the hobbit he once used to be. If he had abandoned Gollum, he could have turned back to light and live fully once more. Even though he did so for a while, Sméagol was finally defeated and Gollum stayed in dark. This character was the best example of the unclear border between good and evil in Tolkien's story. He was broken, malicious and dangerous, but he could be faithful and led his master to Mordor. He had a chance for redemption just as the rest of the characters. Gollum, like Boromir, was the one who failed. The surprising fact was that his failure still could (unconsciously) serve good. If Sméagol had found his way back to light, Frodo would have never destroyed the Ring and the world of men would have fallen. Gollum failed personally, but his addiction to the Ring saved the world.

Another great example of unclear distinction between good and evil was Frodo. He seemed to be weak and small – not a likely hero. Tolkien showed his reader that courage could be found in unlikely places and that someone who seemed to be everything but a hero could accomplish more than anyone would hope. On the other hand, the hobbit would not get far if it was not for his companions. There could be found a wizard, an uncrowned king, a dwarf, an elf, etc. Most of those characters were more powerful than the ringbearer, but power was not the important thing in this companionship. All those characters were friends and stayed true to each other no matter what. This was one of the major differences between the companionship and the Dark Lord of Mordor. Power was the only thing which mattered to Sauron and later even to Saruman.

Analyzing the characters, I found out that it was mostly power which corrupted them. The Ring put its "victims" to a test, showing them glorious victories they could accomplish. The only thing they had to do is to stretch their hands and take it. This

situation presented an important moment. Some of them (Sam, Gandalf, Galadriel, etc.) could see that such power would not serve them, in the end they would become its slaves. Some (Sméagol, Saruman, Boromir) could not help themselves. This distinction was difficult with Frodo. He never wanted the One Ring before he got it and he kept fighting with it since it was his own. However, this hobbit did not seem to be strong enough to handle it. Despite his fight for freedom, he failed now and then. The most significant failure was portrayed at the very end of his errand when Frodo was not able to throw his burden into the volcano in order to destroy it. On the other hand, once the Ring was taken away from him, he was able to gain control of his life again and live on contrary to Gollum who just survived.

It is also important to mention that Tolkien presented not only the struggle between good and evil but also a motif of nature and destruction caused by industrialization. Consequently, the story darkened as the hobbits approached Mordor. The reader could also notice a change in the environment. At the very beginning there was a beautiful nature and everybody lived in harmony in the Shire. Mordor, contrary to the Shire, was a gloomy and devastated place where nothing lived. This contrast could result from an industrial revolution in Britain. Tolkien pitied the beauty lost because of factories, trains, etc. This claim may be proved by Saruman and Ents. Nature itself rose against the wizard who turned Isengard into a mechanized fortress in *The Lord of the Rings*. Saruman destroyed a part of an ancient forest without even thinking about it. This natural surrounding was important for Frodo mostly at the end of the story. The Ring was gone, but he remained wounded partially by the blade of the Nazgûl Lord, partially by his burden. If he ever wanted to live in peace, he needed to find a way back to light – back to the nature.

Contrary to Frodo who struggled with desire represented by the One Ring, Saruman failed the test. The wizard, being the wisest of the wise studied the enemy for so long that he became his follower one day. He did not hesitate to betray his fellow wizards as well as the rest of the world. Unlike Saruman, Gandalf followed his duty to the world and remained there to help and aid those in need. Gandalf, in contrast to Saruman was able to resist arrogance and even though being one of the most powerful people in the Middle-Earth, he served those who were less wise. The fallen wizard longed for mastery and power over the world. Fighting against Sauron as well as everybody else, he stayed alone. Moreover, being the white wizard was not good enough for him anymore, so he became Saruman of Many Colors in order to gain more power. It is a paradox that because of

wanting everything, he ended up with nothing. These facts lead to a conclusion that power is often corrupted and it is mostly possessiveness that turns people (or hobbits, etc.) into monsters.

To conclude this thesis, I discovered that there is not a clear borderline between good and evil characters (except for elves and Sauron) in *The Lord of the Rings* because they, just as all of us, have a good and an evil side and they all struggle. Moreover, Tolkien presented an idea that even the smallest person could be the one who does the biggest deeds such as saving the world. It also cannot be said that once someone failed the test represented by the Ring, he was lost forever. Considering the difference between characters who refused and accepted power of the Ring, it is wisdom that makes the difference between good and evil. However, even the wisest and the most powerful characters of the trilogy could not avoid temptation. Nevertheless, they knew consequences of their choices and they were able to resist temptation and deny the Ring. Regarding all the facts, the characters present a valuable proof that it is our choices that show who we really are rather than our abilities.

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APPENDICES

P I Glossary

APPENDIX P I: GLOSSARY

Aragorn – one of Frodo’s companions, later the King of Gondor

Arwen – an elven lady, later Aragorn’s wife, she lives in Rivendell

Balrog – an ancient evil creature

Bilbo Baggins – Frodo’s uncle

Boromir – Denethor’s son and Faramir’s older brother, Frodo’s companion

Déagol – Sméagol’s friend, he found the Ring

Denethor – the Steward of Gondor

Elrond – Arwen’s father, the lord of Rivendell

Ents – trees which can move, speak, etc., very old

Faramir – Boromir’s brother, Denethor’s younger son, later the Steward of Gondor

Frodo Baggins – the ringbearer, Bilbo’s nephew

Galadriel – an elven lady, lives in Lothórien

Gandalf – a wizard, Frodo’s companion

Gimli – a dwarf, Frodo’s companion

Gollum/Sméagol – originally a hobbit, later he is a twisted creature destroyed by the Ring

Gondor – a country ruled (later) by Aragorn

Gríma Wormtongue - Saruman’s servant, Théoden’s advisor

Gwaihir the Windlord – an eagle

Isengard – a fortress where Saruman dwells

Legolas – an elf, Frodo’s companion

Lembas – an elven bread

Lothórien – an elven Forest, Galadriel lives there

Maiar – helpers of the gods (Saruman, Gandalf, Sauron,..)

Melkor/Morgoth – the evil God who corrupted Sauron, Balrogs, etc.

Merry and Pippin – young hobbits, Frodo’s friends and companions

Middle-Earth – name of a world created by Tolkien, the story takes place there

Minas Morgul – a city of the Black Riders

Minas Tirith - a city where Denethor lives, the city of the King

Mordor – a country where Sauron dwells

Moria - mines

Mount Doom – a volcano where Sauron created the Ring, the only place where it can be destroyed

Orthanc – the tower in Isengard where Saruman kept Gandalf prisoner

Precious/The Ring – a ring created by Sauron to rule others – it contains his power

Radagast – a lesser wizard

Rivendell – an elven city

Rohan – a country ruled by Théoden

Sam – Frodo's friend and companion

Saruman – a wizard, originally a head of the Council of Wizards

Sauron/the Dark Lord – Maiar who was corrupted by Melkor, representative of evil

Shelob – a huge ancient spider

Sting – Bilbo's (later Frodo's) sword

The Ringwraiths/Nazgûl/Black Riders – originally nine men who accepted Sauron's rings, Sauron's undead servants

The Shire – a place where Bilbo and Frodo live

Théoden – the king of Rohan

Tom Bombadill – a character who lives in compliance with nature in one of the ancient forests

Undying Lands – a country where elves go to live there forever