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**THE FALL NARRATIVE: AN ECOCRITICAL AND
THEOLOGICAL APPROACH TO J.R.R. TOLKIEN'S
MIDDLE-EARTH COSMOLOGY**

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Not: Tez Savunma Jürisi isimlerinin yer aldığı bu sayfa kapaktan hemen sonra gelecek şekilde ve imzasız olarak konulmalıdır

Özet

İnsan kaynaklı çevresel sorunların ortaya çıkmasını müteakip, edebi eserleri değerlendirme ve yorumlama aracı olarak ekoeleştiri, edebi ve akademik çevrelerde büyük bir popülerite kazanmıştır. Bu teori, edebi metinlerdeki insan-doğa ilişkisi sorunsalını deşifre etmekle kalmayıp, Tolkien'in yazınında örtülü biçimde örneklendirildiği gibi, çevresel sorunları teşhis etmekte ve bunlara çözümler sunmaktadır. İngiliz emperyalizminin ve sanayileşmesinin zirve döneminde yaşayan J.R.R. Tolkien, basit ve doğal yaşam şekline dönüşü savunan muhafazakâr bir akademisyen ve edebiyat insanıydı. Yaşadığı dönemin teknoloji çılgınlığına ve endüstriyel kirlenmesine ek olarak iki dünya savaşının yıkım ve dehşetine tanık olmuştu. Ayrıca mensubu olduğu Katolik inancının da hayatı ve edebi yazını üzerindeki etkisi yalın ancak güçlü olmuştur. Dindar annesi ve onun ölümü üzerine yasal vasilikliğini üstlenen Katolik vaiz Tolkien'in ilerideki kurgusal yaratımını şekillendiren iki önemli Hristiyan şahsiyet olmuşlardır. Böylece bu tezin amacı Tolkien'in Orta Dünya kozmolojisinin ekoeleştirel ve dinbilimsel bir perspektiften analizini yapmaktır. Bu çalışmanın ağırlık merkezini oluşturan İncil'deki çöküş hikâyesi, ekolojik ve ruhani bir çöküşü tasvir eden Tolkien'in kozmolojisiyle mukayese edilmiştir. Çalışmanın ikinci kısmında, ışık ve karanlık gibi bazı ikincil ekolojik kavramlar, Doğa-Kültür diyalektiği bağlamında incelenmiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Ekoeleştiri, Orta Dünya, İnsan Merkezilik, Eko Merkezilik, Doğa-Kültür ayrımı, Yüzüklerin Efendisi, Hobbit, Silmarillion, J.R.R. Tolkien

Abstract

Following the emergence of human-oriented ecological problems, ecocriticism as a theory has gained widespread popularity among literary and academic circles to assess and interpret literary works. The theory not only deciphers problematic human-nature relationship beneath literary texts but it also aims to diagnose environmental issues and offer possible solutions which is implicitly epitomized in Tolkien's writing. Having lived at the height of British imperialism and industrialism, J.R.R. Tolkien was a conservatist scholar and literary figure who strongly believed in the necessity of returning to the ecological and simpler ways of living. In addition to the technological frenzy and industrial pollution of the era, he also witnessed the horror and destruction of both world wars in his lifetime. Moreover, the effect of Catholicism on his personal life and literary creation was a subtle yet strong one. His pious mother and the Catholic priest who became his legal guardian after her death were two important Christian figures shaping his later fictional creation. The objective of this thesis, therefore, is to analyse Tolkien's Middle-earth cosmology through an ecocritical and theological lens. Constituting the centre of gravity in this study, the biblical Fall Narrative is compared and contrasted to Tolkien's cosmology which depicts an ecological and spiritual fall. In the second part of the study minor ecological themes like light and darkness are studied through Nature-Culture dichotomy.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, Middle-earth, Anthropocentrism, Ecocentrism, Nature-Culture dichotomy, The Lord of the Rings, The Hobbit, The Silmarillion, J.R.R. Tolkien

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASLE	Association for the Study of Literature and Environment
ISLE	Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment
e.g.	exempli gratia
etc.	et cetera
J.R.R. Tolkien	John Ronald Reuel Tolkien
<i>LR</i>	<i>The Lord of the Rings</i>
ME	Middle-earth
NIV	New International Version
<i>RK</i>	<i>The Return of the King</i>
TCBS	Tea Club and Barrovian Society
<i>FR</i>	<i>The Fellowship of the Ring</i>
<i>TT</i>	<i>The Two Towers</i>
WLA	Western Literature Association

INTRODUCTION

One of the most read writers of our time, John Ronald Reuel Tolkien is appreciated by many for his depiction of rich world-building, detailed languages, and the theme of friendship. His influence on the fantasy genre is profound, with many contemporary writers and filmmakers citing him as a major inspiration. As the inventor of the fantasy genre, Tolkien influenced fellow Inklings writer C. S. Lewis' Narnia series and other fantasy writers emerged in the second half of the 20th century. His influence is apparent in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series and Ursula K. Le Guin's *Earthsea* Cycle in terms of their narrative style (Tailor, 2023).

Both *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* have been adapted into numerous films, television series, and video games. Although Tolkien (2013) stated that he regarded *LR* as 'unsuitable for dramatization' (p. 190), the movies of the trilogy proved quite successful and has earned \$2 Billion to their producers (OnlineMBA.com, 2021). The sales of his most popular books *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy and the prequel *The Hobbit* have reached 150 million copies worldwide. Zaleski & Zaleski (2015) writes, '...if we consider its sales figures (estimates of worldwide sales run from one hundred and fifty to two hundred million), it's clear that Tolkien has a secure place in the pantheon of popular culture' (p.15). C. Kilby (1976) comments on the magnitude of Tolkien as a cultural icon in the introduction part of his book *Tolkien & The Silmarillion*: 'I felt that Tolkien was like an iceberg, something to be reckoned with above water in both its brilliance and mass and yet with much more below the surface' (p. 4). The iceberg metaphor is well suited to appreciate the traits of a multi-dimensional personality like Tolkien as he was a scholar, a devout Catholic and a linguist as well as being a best-selling author. Indeed, Tolkien's corpus was a product of his diverse areas of expertise and there has always been much more to dig in his artistic creation. One of the reasons for this diversity is that Tolkien made use of literary influences ranging from sacred texts of Judeo-Christian theology to Northern European mythologies while creating his mythopoeia (Rosebury, 2003). This multifaceted character of his works partly explains their popularity and enable critics to

interpret his works within a wide spectrum. As a spectacular performance, the popular movie series produced by Australian director Peter Jackson emphasized the heroic and epic aspect of 'The Legendarium', winning 17 Oscars out of 28 nominations in 2002 (Sarkisian, 2024).

However, the deeper ecological structure is often neglected as this thesis aims to bring this aspect of Tolkien's works to the foreground and fill the gap in the literature. As Tolkien's environmental concerns are rooted in his Catholicism, an interdisciplinary approach is employed, merging his religious and ecological perspectives in a melting pot. The main research problem of this study is to detect whether Tolkien uses the Biblical Fall Narrative to explain the constant decline in human-nature relationship.

Answering this question necessitates the analysis and interpretation of any textual parallelism between the Bible and Tolkien's Middle-earth cosmology. Therefore, sections from The Old and New Testament that narrate The Fall Story are covered within the scope of this study. Alongside the Bible, this study covers three major works of Tolkien, namely *The Hobbit* (1937), *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55) and *The Silmarillion* which was published posthumously by his son Christopher Tolkien in 1977. *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy is connected to each other with a sequel-prequel type of relationship while *The Silmarillion* stands as a historical background for the whole of Middle-earth in the chronological sense. As *The Silmarillion* narrates the creation stories of Middle-earth from the early ages of ME, an analogy is established between *The Silmarillion* and especially Genesis section of the Bible. However, this study concentrates exclusively on the ecocritical analysis of *The Lord of the Rings* which depicts the events, characters and themes that pass in the Third Age and geographically in the western parts of Middle-earth. In addition to this, works of some Tolkien scholars and the articles mentioned in the literature review section are also used in the ecocritical analysis of Tolkien's writing.

The first chapter provides the theoretical outline by first introducing the reader to an overview of ecocritical literary theory, its historical evolution and its key scholars. Some key elements like, humanism and human-culture division which are vital to the

analysis of The Legendarium are introduced. Again, in this section, anthropocentrism from Christian vantage point is given special emphasis. In the literature review section, information about the theory and previous scholarship is analysed along with a brief account of Tolkien's works which are the subject of this study.

Biography section presents Tolkien as the founding father of fantasy genre. Also, the literary influences that shaped Tolkien's writing is discussed. The other important sections in his life to be analysed are WW1 and his Catholicism which are crucial to evaluate his corpus.

The second chapter is where the theory is applied to the literary text. The fall narrative brings an interdisciplinary approach to Tolkien's works with a particular emphasis on both his ecological and religious perspective. The physical and environmental decline and deterioration in human condition on our planet is studied through the comparison between the Biblical Paradise Lost story with Tolkien's legendarium.

Under this subtitle is also given 'The Representation of Nature' part which deals with the animistic description of nature in Tolkien's mythology. By giving character and animistic traits to the natural entities in his cosmos, Tolkien both adds depth to the mythological side of his narrative and also provides insights to the moral aspect of his writing.

The corrupting nature of the Ring also has a great deal to do with the eschatological views of Christianity, therefore contributes directly to the concept of fall. The author's similar apocalyptic visions remind the reader of industrialization, armament race and high-tech gadgetry which are the outcomes of an anthropocentric attitude in Tolkien's narrative. Tolkien associates the One Ring with the themes of mechanization and oppression but also with the sinning nature of humanity which brings degradation both physically and spiritually. Therefore, the Ring is given a big space in this study and analysed under the third chapter separately on its own.

Nature-Culture divide has many connotations and implications in The Legendarium such as the forging of the Rings of Power. Immune lifestyle of Hobbits is given to epitomize the Nature side of the narrative, while tyrannic characters like Sauron and Saruman represent Culture with their technological and industrial aspirations. Last chapter deals with the analysis of the findings. The conclusion section summarizes briefly the general outline of the thesis.

Through an ecocritical analysis of J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth cosmology, it is hypothesized that the concept of fall within the narrative reminds humanity that we should remember our steward role. It also illustrates both the ecological consequences of transgression and the potential for redemption through stewardship and harmony with nature. This problem is of course directly related to the androcentrism (anthropocentrism) vs. ecocentrism and nature-culture binary. Through close examination of his texts, supplemented by ecocritical theory and interdisciplinary connection with Christian theology, this study underlines Tolkien's enduring significance not only as a storyteller but also as an intellectual who is deeply concerned with ecological issues. By employing an ecocritical lens, this thesis examines how theme of fall, both in its ecological and moral dimensions, shapes the narrative structure, character development, and underlying environmental philosophy of Tolkien's legendarium. By emphasizing the textual parallels between Christian scripture and Tolkien's legendarium, this research aims to reveal the deep intertextual relationship that exists between religion and literature.

CHAPTER 1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1. ECOCRITICAL LITERARY THEORY

As a work of art, literature always narrates the story of human from the viewpoint of the author and can be considered as an act of sub creation. The beauty of literature is related to its potential to reflect human nature over the course of time. Ups and downs, the good times and disasters have naturally become the subject matter of literature though it is no more than a fictional endeavour. By use of repeatedly occurring themes, literary works are significant in the way they point to the ultimate destination we are heading as inhabitants on this planet. Although the literary works do not primarily aim to convey messages, literature functions as a mirror that helps the reader to observe his/her true self. By so doing, literature at times reminds us where we are in relation to other beings in ecosystem.

One such scene depicted by Tolkien in *RK* (1955) is exceptionally important with its message to humanity in this sense: ‘...he *stepped too far*, toppled, wavered for a moment on the brink, and then with a shriek he fell’ (p. 1237) (emphasis added). In this scene, creature Gollum bites off the Ring from Frodo on the edge of the chasm yet takes a step too far and falls into the pit of fire. Tolkien punishes his character for crossing the border both literally and metaphorically: Gollum dares to play a role too big for him by possessing the One Ring which is the embodiment of coercion and oppression. In a way, the character who steps ‘too far’ is not Gollum but humankind in the general sense with its insatiable greed and domineering attitude toward non-human beings. What Tolkien is critique of about modern age in his works is the notorious anthropocentric viewpoint that leads humanity to its ‘downfall’.

As a theory to interpret natural phenomena in literary works, ecocriticism emerged in the second half of the 20th. Century following the rising sensibility in the ecological awareness. Although the term ‘Ecocriticism’ and the theory itself is new, the germ began

to take shape early in the 18th century as a response to heavy positivism of the Neo-Classic era. The concerns for the deterioration and exploitation of the earth have found reflection in the literary works of writers starting as early as in the Romantic period (Brown, 1977). Jonathan Bate's *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* explores the intersection of Romantic literature, particularly the poetry of William Wordsworth which marks this early environmental thought. Published in 1991, the book examines how Wordsworth's poetry reflects and contributes to the ecological consciousness, making the case that the Romantic era was foundational in the development of modern environmentalism.

It was American scholar William Rueckert who first used the term 'Ecocriticism' in the essay titled 'Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism', which was published in 1978. Rueckert's essay is considered to be a milestone in the way that it has cemented Ecocriticism as an academic discipline. In this pioneering essay, Rueckert explores the relationship between literature and ecology, emphasizing the need to apply ecological principles to literary analysis. He points to the growing environmental crisis of the 1970s, stressing that literature can help create ecological awareness and responsibility. He believes that literature has the power to shape how people perceive the environment, and that literary criticism can help diagnose environmental issues. Another pioneer of the field, Cheryll Glotfelty (1996) gives a brief yet significant definition for the theory: 'Simply defined, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment' (Glotfelty & Fromm, p. 18). Her 1996 essay 'Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis' co-authored with Harold Fromm in *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, is often deemed as a ground-breaking text for ecocriticism. She advocates for the establishment of ecocriticism as a legitimate field of literary criticism tracing 'nature writing' back to writers like Henry David Thoreau and Rachel Carson. Glotfelty argues how environmental problems gradually gained attention and how ecocriticism developed within a historical context. She is one of the scholars who underlines the interdisciplinary aspect of the theory: Her work exemplifies diverse

disciplines that contribute to ecocritical discourse in order to reach out for a deeper understanding of how literature reflects and shapes eco-consciousness. To sum up, 'Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis' is a call to action for literary circles to engage more deeply with ecological issues, making the case for ecocriticism as a necessary response to the environmental threat of the modern world.

Scott Slovic's 1992 work, *Seeking Awareness in American Nature Writing: Henry Thoreau, Annie Dillard, Edward Abbey, Wendell Berry, Barry Lopez*, is a critical evaluation of American nature writing, focusing on how these authors cultivate environmental awareness through their literary works. Slovic examines the ways in which these writers voice their experiences with the natural world, offering readers deeper insights into both the environment and their own perceptions of it. Slovic's central focus is on the idea of 'awareness' in nature writing—how authors engage with their environment and how they convey this heightened perception to their readers. He investigates how each writer employs a different form of ecological consciousness, encouraging readers to become more sensitive to the natural world. He delves into the works of five significant American nature writers: Henry David Thoreau, Annie Dillard, Edward Abbey, Wendell Berry, and Barry Lopez. He analyses how each of these writers approaches the idea of ecological awareness in their work. Slovic discusses Thoreau's practice of close observation and reflection in *Walden*, which serves as a model for how to live in better harmony with nature. In Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, Slovic highlights her focus on the tiny details of the natural world and her philosophical meditations on existence, which is connected with eco-consciousness. In Abbey's *Desert Solitaire*, Slovic emphasizes the rugged beauty of the desert and the importance of solitude in forming a deeper connection with the land. Through Berry's agrarian essays and fiction, Slovic discusses how Berry's sense of place and commitment to sustainable living reflect a profound awareness of the interconnectedness of human and eco-system. Slovic examines Lopez's *Arctic Dreams* and other works, where Lopez's detailed definitions of the Arctic and his respectful engagement with indigenous cultures illustrate a profound

awareness of the environment and its inhabitants. Slovic's work is, too, interdisciplinary, drawing on literary criticism, environmental philosophy, and psychology to understand how these nature writers inspire readers to develop a deeper ecological awareness. He examines not just the content of these works but also the techniques these authors develop to convey their experiences and insights. Through close readings of Thoreau, Dillard, Abbey, Berry, and Lopez, Slovic demonstrates how literature can deepen notion of the natural world and encourage a more respectful relationship with the environment.

Karl Kroeber's *Ecological Literary Criticism: Romantic Imagining and the Biology of Mind* (1994) is an influential work that closes the gap between literature and science, particularly focusing on how Romantic literature can be understood through ecological frameworks. Kroeber's approach integrates insights from literary criticism, ecology, and cognitive science, offering a unique perspective on how Romantic literature, especially poetry, contributes to an ecological understanding of the human mind and its relationship to the natural world.

Reading the Earth: New Directions in the Study of Literature and Environment (1998) is an edited collection of essays that explores various approaches to literary criticism through an environmental lens. Edited by Michael P. Branch, Rochelle Johnson, Daniel Patterson, and Scott Slovic, the book is a valuable contribution to the field of ecocriticism, which examines the relationship between literature and the natural world. The essays in this collection reflect the diversity and interdisciplinary nature of ecocriticism, offering new perspectives on how literature contributes to environmental understanding.

Stewart Udall's *The Quiet Crisis*, published in 1963, is a significant book in the way it addresses the growing environmental problems facing both the United States and the world. Udall, who was the U.S. Secretary of the Interior under Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson, uses this book to raise awareness about the global and profound environmental degradation, which he refers to as the 'quiet crisis'. *The Quiet Crisis* is a

pivotal work which played a significant role in raising public awareness about environmental issues and laid the groundwork for the environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The book's call for conservation and responsible stewardship remains relevant today, as the challenges of environmental degradation continue to be of utmost concern.

Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* (1949) is a collection of essays that reflect Leopold's deep connection to the natural world and his belief in the importance of developing a land ethic—a philosophy that promotes a responsible relationship between people and the land they inhabit. *A Sand County Almanac* is not just a reflection on nature, but a call to action for a more ethical and sustainable relationship with the environment. Through his eloquent writing style, Aldo Leopold encourages readers to see themselves as part of a larger ecological community and to take responsibility for the well-being of the land.

'The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movements: A Summary' (1973) by Arne Naess is a ground-breaking work that distinguishes between two approaches to environmentalism—shallow and deep ecology. While shallow ecology focuses on addressing environmental issues within the existing human-centered framework, deep ecology calls for a more profound shift in values and perspectives, advocating for a holistic, ecocentric approach that recognizes the intrinsic value of all life forms. Naess's deep ecology has had a significant influence on environmental thought, inspiring a movement that seeks to fundamentally change the way humans relate to the natural world.

Anthropocentrism [human centeredness] is one of the key concepts of ecocriticism to pinpoint the origin of environmental problems. It can be summarized as the notion that only human beings have intrinsic value therefore have the right to control and benefit from all other things (Boslaugh, 2024). Mankind's master position owes much to the Judeo-Christian scripture: 'God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him' (Genesis 1:27). Human centered outlook was thus strengthened by Christianity as it

emphasizes the likeness and proximity of Adam to the creator as seen in this verse. In his essay 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis', White (1967) argues that the contemporary ecological crisis, characterized by environmental degradation, pollution, and resource depletion, has its roots in Western Christianity's worldview and its solipsistic attitudes toward nature. White begins by examining the Judeo-Christian tradition's perspective on humanity's relationship with the natural world:

Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so. (Genesis:1.29-30)

By endowing everything on earth to the benefit of humanity, God lays the foundation for the ensuing outlook that is called anthropocentrism. Therefore, the Christian creed supplies the anthropocentric outlook the means to justify itself in declaring the master of the earth. White (1967) comments that Western Christianity, particularly in its interpretation of the Genesis creation story, has fostered a worldview that regards humans as superior to and separate from nature. According to White, this anthropocentric worldview, which grants humans dominion over nature, has encouraged exploitation and abuse of the environment for economic gain. This dominion is not only inclusive of plants: In Genesis God brings the animals to Adam so that he can name and domesticize them, which starts a master-slave type of relationship (Genesis 2:19-20). By detaching itself from the natural environment, humankind has assumed the role of master, but this also caused the formation of a notion which regards nature as a 'hostile' entity that needs to be tamed. When arrived from England to the wild landscape in the North America, Puritans saw nature as a frontier to be conquered as seen in the narrative of 'the Promised Land' (Genesis 12:1-7; 15: 18-21). In order to survive in a hostile and 'untamed' territory, these

newly arrived immigrants had to fight both the natives and the nature; a mindset which partly explains the birth of a power like the USA. Therefore, Puritans successfully combined Christian perspective that endowed human beings with a right to conquer and benefit from the natural environment with the colonial aspirations of the western civilization (Heimert, 1953).

The isolation and alienation of mankind to nature found reflections in the ecologically conscious arguments of early nature writers who were Transcendentalists in America and Romantics in England. Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Nature* (1836) and Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* (1854), celebrated the interconnectedness between humans and kindled early ecocritical thought (Barry, 2017). In England, Romantic poets William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge who collaborated on the famous collection of poems titled *Lyrical Ballads* emphasized the eminent place of nature in literature (Wordsworth & Coleridge, 1798). What both streams emphasize is that human beings are not primary actors rather they are an equal partner of an overarching frame called ecosystem. This was an open criticism towards humanist approach which placed human beings at the very centre of the universe placing special importance on humanity (Grudin, 2024). Joseph Meeker's seminal work *The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary Ecology* directly points to this function of ecocriticism. His book explores the ways in which literature reflects and shapes our attitudes towards nature and the environment. The central idea of Meeker's book is that humans can find ways to live in harmony with nature contrary to the traditional views of nature as a hostile force to be conquered and controlled (Meeker, 1997).

In terms of its historical progression, Ecocriticism can be divided into three main waves, each differing in focus, and style. The first wave ecocriticism primarily focused on literary representation of nature and the environment. It emerged alongside the broader environmental movement of the late 20th century (Buell, 2005). Critics during this period mainly examined how the depiction of nature was realized in literary works and sought to raise awareness (Garrard, 2004). Rachel Carson with her ground-breaking book *Silent*

Spring (1962) is an exemplary figure for the First Wave Ecocriticism. Carson aimed to raise awareness about the environmental threats such as cancerogenic synthetic pesticides used in agriculture and paved the way for later ecocritics.

The second wave of ecocriticism marks a shift in its focus. This period moves from merely examining literary text to understanding literature within its cultural and historical contexts. Scholars during this period examined the socio-political dimensions of environmental issues and explored how literature both reflects and shapes attitudes towards nature. Buell's book *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (1995) is considered as a foundational text in the second wave ecocriticism. This era also saw a growing emphasis on interdisciplinary approaches to ecocriticism, drawing from diverse fields such as sociology and anthropology. Buell (2005) in 'The Future of Environmental Criticism' explores the evolving field of environmental literary criticism and its potential directions in the future. Published in 2005, the essay reflects on the state of environmental criticism at that time and suggests possible areas for further development. Buell provides an overview of the history of environmental criticism, tracing its roots to the mid-20th century with the rise of the environmental movement and the emergence of ecocriticism as a literary theory. He discusses key themes and approaches within environmental criticism, including the examination of nature writing, the representation of landscapes and ecosystems in literature, and the exploration of environmental ethics and activism in literary texts. T. J. Burbery in his 2012 essay 'Ecocriticism and Christian Literary Scholarship, Christianity and Literature' also emphasizes 'the activist' side of Ecocriticism, by establishing a parallelism between it and other political branches like feminism and Marxism. By so doing, he also brings to foreground the interdisciplinary character of Ecocriticism (p. 192).

The third wave of ecocriticism continues to evolve, with a focus on global conjectures, environmental policies, and the intersections of race, gender, and class with environmental issues. Critics in this wave explore diverse literary traditions and deal with postcolonial and feminist theories to pinpoint environmental problems on a more global

scale. Rob Nixon's book *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011) examines how environmental destruction disproportionately affects marginalized communities. Nixon coined the term 'slow violence' to describe the gradual, often invisible harm inflicted by environmental degradation: 'Slow violence [...] is neither spectacular nor instantaneous; it is incremental, like the effects of toxic contamination, and sometimes not visible for decades or centuries' (p. 2). In other words, the damage done to nature by human beings best suits the term 'slow violence' as it is dissipated over a long period and hard to spot at first sight. Another contemporary ecocritic Ursula K. Heise explores the intersections of literature, culture, and the environment in a global context underlying the interdisciplinary side of the field. Her book *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global* examines how literature shapes our understanding of environmental issues in the era of globalization (2008).

These three waves of ecocriticism demonstrate the evolution of the field from its roots in literary analysis to a broader interdisciplinary engagement with environmental issues, reflecting changing perspectives on nature, culture, and society. However, there are some who criticize this division of waves. Lawrence Buell in his essay 'The Future of Environmental Criticism' (2005) opposes the idea of waves and saying that it is wrong to discriminate between waves. In fact, he even rejects the idea to call them as waves:

No definitive map of environmental criticism in literary studies can't herefore be drawn. Still, one can identify several trend-lines marking an evolution from a "first wave" of ecocriticism to a "second" or newer revisionist wave or waves increasingly evident today. This first-second distinction should not, however, be taken as implying a tidy, distinct succession. Most currents set in motion by early ecocriticism continue to run strong, and most forms of second-wave revisionism involve building on as well as quarrelling with precursors. In this sense, "palimpsest" would be a better metaphor than "wave" (p. 17)

At the centre of academic and scholarly writing on Ecology stands ASLE, The Association for the Study of Literature and Environment. It has been doing the production and dissemination of 'scholarly and artistic writing' on environmental issues since 1992. With a circle of scholars and writers, it delves deep into the problematic human and non-human relationship. It holds a biennial conference since 1993 and publishes material like fictional and scholarly writing through its journal ISLE in order to enhance environmental awareness. In the USA, WLA served as a platform for the development of Ecocriticism as a discipline and wider acceptance of it as a term (Burberry, 2012). Though Ecocriticism and green studies are sometimes used interchangeably, these terms are slightly different. Ecocriticism generally deals with literary texts and analyses themes, motifs and narrative styles in order to show ecological perspectives and is used as a term mainly in the USA. On the other hand, green studies cover a more political area that facilitates activism, environmental policies and are generally adopted in the UK (Buell, 2005; Barry, 2017).

1.2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The article ‘The Return of the King: Aragorn and the Second Coming of Christ’ by John Algeo, published in 2008, explores the parallels between Aragorn, also known as Strider in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, and the Prophet Christ in Christian theology. In Tolkien's legendarium, Aragorn is depicted as a messianic figure who returns to reclaim his throne bringing peace to Middle-earth, which is a direct reference to the Christian belief in the Second Coming of Christ. The article examines themes such as kingship, sacrifice, and redemption, drawing comparisons between Aragorn's deeds and the biblical account of Christ's return as a saviour.

Edmund Wilson (1956) in his essay ‘Oo, Those Awful Orcs’ criticized *The Lord of the Rings* for what he perceived as its juvenile nature, lack of depth, and escapist undertone. He famously referred to Tolkien's epic as "juvenile trash" and dismissed its popularity as a symptom of cultural regression. Philip Toynbee, a British writer and literary critic, was generally critical of J.R.R. Tolkien's writing. In his review of *The Lord of the Rings* published in *The Observer* in 1954, Toynbee expressed discontent for Tolkien's work, naming it as ‘juvenile trash’. He dismissed Tolkien's epic as a regression to childhood and tried to explain its popularity as a decline in literary tastes. Toynbee's 1954 review, titled ‘An Old Man in a Hurry’, was greatly dismissive of Tolkien's literary quality. He criticized the narrative's lack of depth, its shallow portrayal of good and evil, and what he perceived as an excessive emphasis on escapism. Yet, Toynbee's negative assessment contrasted sharply with the increasing popularity and critical acclaim that *The Lord of the Rings* received from literary circles.

The Australian critic Germaine Greer (1999) famously wrote:

[I]t has been my nightmare that Tolkien would turn out to be the most influential writer of the twentieth century. The bad dream has materialized... The books that

come in Tolkien's train are more or less what you would expect; flight from reality is their dominating characteristic. (Ch. 10)

Although cynical and wrought with a bit of humour, she accuses of Tolkien of being on the escapist side of the fantasy, a worn-out criticism about his works. Yet, she has to accept the truth that Tolkien achieved the status of 'the most influential writer of the twentieth century'.

The 1996 essay titled "Aspects of the Fall in *The Silmarillion*" by Eric Schweicher delves into how Tolkien uses the narratives of Noldorin and Númenor to convey themes of pride, corruption, betrayal, and loss, which are central to the broader mythological and theological tapestry of *The Silmarillion*. The essay explores Tolkien's inspiration from various mythologies, his own Catholic beliefs and how the concept of the Fall in his legendarium reflects on human nature and history.

Sophia Parrila's 'All Worthy Things: The Personhood of Nature in J.R.R. Tolkien's Legendarium' (2021) explores the concept of personhood within Tolkien's legendarium. The work analyses Tolkien's major books, such as *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion*, to present how nature is personified and imbued with agency and significance in his fictional world. Parrila examines various natural elements, including trees, rivers, and animals, to uncover the underlying themes of stewardship, and the importance of respecting and preserving the natural world. Through close textual analysis and literary criticism, the author sheds light on Tolkien's ecological concerns and the ways in which it enriches his narrative with deep layers of symbolism.

Lynn White, Jr.'s essay, 'The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis' published in 1967, argues that Christianity and its worldview have played a significant role in shaping humanity's relationship with the environment and ultimately contributing to the ecological crisis. White contends that the Judeo-Christian tradition's emphasis on human dominion over nature, as found in the Genesis narrative where humanity is instructed to

'fill the earth and subdue it', has laid the foundation for exploitation and domination rather than stewardship and harmony. White traces the historical development of this anthropocentric worldview, underlying the influence of religious beliefs, technological advancements, and economic systems on humanist attitudes towards nature. He criticizes the separation of humans from the natural world, viewing nature as mere resources to be exploited for human benefit without regard for the consequences. Additionally, White suggests that the rise of science and technology in the Western world further intensified this exploitation, leading to the development of industrialization and the abuse of natural resources on a global scale. White's essay argues that the roots of the ecological crisis lie not only in technological advancements but also in religious beliefs that have shaped human interaction with the environment. He calls for a re-evaluation of these negative attitudes and proposes a more ecologically responsible worldview which emphasizes reverence for the natural world.

Timothy J. Burberry's essay 'Ecocriticism and Christian Literary Scholarship' explores the intersection of ecocriticism with Christian literary scholarship. Published in 2017, the essay discusses how Christian perspectives can enrich and complement ecocritical approaches to literature. Burberry firstly dissects the historical and philosophical roots of both ecocriticism and Christian literary scholarship. He explores how ecocriticism emerged in response to environmental concerns and the need to reassess human-nature relationship in literature. Burberry (2012) claims that religious texts include ecological destruction, giving them as examples (p. 196). Furthermore, Burberry discusses the role of Christianity in shaping attitudes towards nature and the environment, highlighting theological themes such as stewardship and the oneness of all living beings. He argues that Christian perspectives offer valuable insights into environmental issues and can inform ecocritical readings of literary texts. Burberry then explores examples of Christian literature and biblical narratives that engage with ecological themes, the symbolism of the Garden of Eden in Genesis, and the ecological imagery in the Noah deluge and Sodom and Gomorrah story. Moreover, Burberry examines the potential for

dialogue and collaboration between ecocriticism and Christian literary scholarship. He suggests that integrating Christian perspectives into ecocritical analysis can enrich interpretations of literature by highlighting ethical dimensions, spiritual insights, and the theological significance of environmental themes.

Liam Campbell's article 'Nature' in the book *A Companion to J. R. R. Tolkien* (2014), delves into the portrayal of nature in Tolkien's works. Campbell examines how Tolkien's detailed and vivid descriptions of the natural world—including flora, fauna, and landscapes—contribute to the richness of his fictional universe. His article highlights the deep ecological themes and environmental awareness embedded in Tolkien's narrative, demonstrating how nature is not just a backdrop but a vital, animistic presence in his storytelling.

Len Sanford's (1995) article 'The Fall from Grace - Decline and Fall in Middle-earth: Metaphors for Nordic and Christian theology in *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion*' explores the rich tapestry of symbols within J.R.R. Tolkien's works that draw from both Nordic mythology and Christian theology. Sanford examines how themes of decline and fall are integrated into the narratives of *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion*. These metaphors are depicted through the loss of innocence, the power that corrupts and the redemption that follows. For instance, the stories of the Silmarils and the downfall of Númenor are given as the prime examples of these themes. The Silmarils represent the destructive nature of excessive desire and pride, while the fall of Númenor parallels the biblical story of Atlantis and serves as a cautionary tale against hubris. Sanford also delves into the Christian elements embedded in these tales, like the idea of a fall from grace and the potential redemption through humility and sacrifice.

1.3 TOLKIEN: THE FOUNDING FATHER OF FANTASY WRITING

J.R.R. Tolkien (1892-1973), full name John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, was an English writer, philologist, and academic, best known for his fantasy works, particularly *The Hobbit* (1937) and *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55) trilogy. Born on January 3, 1892, in Bloemfontein, South Africa, Tolkien spent much of his early life in England after his family moved back there following his father's death (Carpenter, 2013, p. 14). As a lover of languages, he mastered from a very early age many modern and archaic languages like Anglo-Saxon English, Greek, Latin and German; a merit which explains how he invented languages for each race dwelling in Middle-earth (Stenström, 2006). When living in a house near railroad tracks in Birmingham, words written on coal trucks caught his attention: This language was Welsh and inspired him as a child to invent new words and languages which he named 'Newbosh' (Carpenter, 2013, p.36). At King Edward's School, he first encountered classic languages like Latin and Greek which were taught heavily in the curriculum. This is also the period when he first met the literary works like *Beowulf*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and Andrew Lang's *Red Fairy Book* that would later inspire him during the composition of his legendarium. Another key figure in his intellectual improvement was Joe Wright who was a professor of comparative philology at Oxford. A self-taught philologist, Wright was the scholar who conveyed his love for languages to Tolkien. His encounter with Finnish myth Kalevala and Finnish language was also significant in the way to creating fictional Middle-earth. As H. Carpenter stated (1977), Finnish constituted the kernel for him to develop the language of Quenya or the language of high Elves in his cosmology (p. 58).

In 1914 summer, The First World War started and as many of his school mates did, Tolkien enlisted. He was stationed in western front where he served as a signalling officer. Two of his best friends and members of T.C.B.S, Rob Gilson and G. B. Smith were also serving in Somme, France and they died there in action. The horror, mud, cold, machine-gun fire and impending sense of death was ever present in the trench war until Tolkien was diagnosed with 'Pyrexia' or commonly known as trench fever (Carpenter, 1977, pp.

80- 81). According to Tolkien (2013), the impact of the Great War on his writing had been in a negative way and left a good deal of projects which he never returned (p. 42). However, Garth (2003) thinks otherwise and claims that without the great war, his imaginary world would lack significant elements like death and immortality; the fight between good and evil (p. 283). It was the start of the war when he began composing the first drafts of the Middle-earth: 'The voyage of Earendel' was the first piece of writing which he would later integrate into his fictional world. When he was hospitalized in England after falling ill at the Western front, he began working on 'The Fall of Gondolin' which narrates the downfall of Elves (Garth, p.47). Again, this time he began composing *The Silmarillion* an endeavour which could only be completed by his son Christopher.

After the Great War, Tolkien embarked on an academic career, holding various teaching positions in English language and literature, including at the University of Leeds and later at Pembroke College, Oxford. It was during his years at Oxford that Tolkien wrote and published his fantasy novels, earning him widespread acclaim and recognition. His first published work *The Hobbit*, published in 1937, introduced readers to the world of Middle-earth and its inhabitants, including hobbits, elves, dwarves, and dragons within a mythic context. His original plan was to finish *The Silmarillion* and publish it after *The Hobbit*, but the publisher opposed the idea claiming it was too complicated. Thus, he went on with the publication of *The Lord of the Rings* as a sequel to *The Hobbit*. It was published between 1954 and 1955 as three instalments, and is considered by many to be his *magnum opus* (Shippey, 2001, p. 12).

In 1997, Waterstone's poll selected *The Lord of the Rings* as the greatest book of the century. Another survey done by Daily Telegraph which wanted its readers to select the best book of the century produced the same results. Again in 1997, Folio Society asked its members to rank their favourite books ended with the same results (Pearce, 1998, p. 10-14). Zaleski & Zaleski (2015) writes that 'The British Library Association nominated *The Hobbit* for the Carnegie Medal for 1937, and in 1938 it won the Children's Spring Book Festival prize from the New York Herald Tribune' (p.254). Despite the negative

reception among some literary circles of his time, the selling figure of *The Lord of the Rings* steadily increased, securing Tolkien financially at the same time. According to Zaleski & Zaleski (2015) *The Lord of the Rings* was selling so well that the publisher Stanley Unwin had declared that it was ‘the most important and successful book in his firm’s history’ (p. 480). In 1957, Tolkien was selected to the Royal Society of Literature, and the same year Tolkien received the International Fantasy Award for *LR* (p.457). On March 27 1972, he travelled to London to receive the next day the CBE (Commander of the British Empire) from Queen Elizabeth (p.512).

The political agenda of his time was busy consequently there were political interpretations of Tolkien’s books which tended to view Middle-earth as an allegory of Second World War (Shippey, 2001, p. 158-9). Tolkien opposed the idea by stating in his letters that ‘There is no ‘symbolism’ or conscious allegory in my story’ (2013, p. 216-7). Again, in Letter 131 to M. Waldman (2013), Tolkien defied the allegations of allegory and instead emphasized the significance of myth and history in his books (p.122-135). His discontent for imperialism and totalitarianism is observable throughout his writing, especially in his isolating the idyllic Shire apart from ‘direct government control’ and surveillance (Pearce, 1998, pp. 96-105). Once again, Tolkien was repeating in his foreword to the second edition of *The Lord of the Rings* (1965) that he was a discoverer rather than a creator and it was not fictitious, it was a book of ‘history’ referring to his narrative known as *The Legendarium*. Tolkien’s deep love for his country and the physical parallelism is apparently decisive in the formation of ME as he wrote to the publisher Milton Waldman. In this letter, Tolkien was explaining his desire to create a mythic framework for England:

I was from early days grieved by the poverty of my own beloved country: it had no stories of its own (bound up with its tongue and soil), not of the quality that I sought, and found (as an ingredient) in legends of other lands. There was Greek, and Celtic, and Romance, Germanic, Scandinavian, and Finnish (which greatly

affected me); but nothing English [. . .] Do not laugh! But once upon a time (my crest has long since fallen) I had a mind to make a body of more or less connected legend, ranging from the large and cosmogonic, to the level of romantic fairy-story [. . .] which I could dedicate simply to England; to my country. (2013, p. 123)

In another letter dated 1956 to a Mr. Tompson, Tolkien (2013) again emphasizes his happiness in presenting the English culture ‘a mythology of their own’ (p.180). As he declares in the aforementioned letter, while creating his ‘mythopoeia’, Tolkien made use of the epic tradition of Europe and benefited from works like anonymous *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Finnish *Kalevala*, and specifically Old English *Beowulf* influence of which was heavier than any other literary work.

The effects of these epic-legends are quite apparent in terms of the languages and folklores of the dwellers of Middle-earth. His mythological realm is an amalgamation of all these diverse influences driven with a motive to provide a cultural background for his beloved England (Kilby, 1976, p.11). In a letter addressed to a D. Webster, Tolkien (2013) identifies himself to great extent with the dwellers of West Midlands of England which would also provide the topographical setting for his fictional Middle-earth, especially for the Shire:

For instance I was born in 1892 and lived for my early years in ‘the Shire’ in a premechanical age... I am in fact a hobbit, in all but size. I like gardens, trees, and unmechanized farmlands; I smoke a pipe, and like good plain food (unrefrigerated), but detest French cooking; I like, and even dare to wear in these dull days, ornamental waistcoats. I am fond of mushrooms (out of a field); have a very simple sense of humour (which even my appreciative critics find tiresome); I go to bed late and get up late (when possible). I do not travel much. (pp. 158-160)

Similarly, Garth (2003) writes about the geographical and topographical parallelism between Middle-earth and ours through the example of Tol Eressea and England analogy (p.109-127). Tolkien and his family spent four years in Sarehole which had the same mill as the one he creates in the Shire and Farmer Maggot in *FR* (1954) is the reflection of a real farmer in the neighbourhood who chased young Tolkien for stealing his mushrooms (Kilby, 1976). His deep love for trees and nature had its roots in those years and also constitutes a large portion in Middle-earth, as Frodo expresses in the beautiful land of Lorien: ‘... he [Frodo] laid his hand upon the tree beside the ladder: never before had he been so suddenly and so keenly aware of the feel and texture of a tree’s skin and of the life within it’ (*FR*, p. 601). In one memory, Tolkien remembers grieving for a willow tree that had been cut down for no reason in their neighbourhood (Pearce, 1998, p. 21). In *TT* (1954), Tolkien uses this incident to exemplify the damage Orcs do to the forest of Fangorn: ‘Some of the trees they just cut down and leave to rot -- orc-mischief that; ...’ (p. 729). In one of his letters (2013), he expresses his deep love for all the living things in nature and his sadness upon the mistreatment of non-living things as well as the mistreatment of animals (Letters 220). His love of nature was also fed by his discontent with the gloomy setting of urban Birmingham. Tolkien’s return to Sarehole in 1933 was a great disappointment due to the fact that ‘it had changed beyond recognition’ in environmental terms. This was partly due to the reason Birmingham, like the rest of England, had become heavily industrialized with its long smoke emitting chimneys (Carpenter, 1977, p. 114).

Tolkien’s religious belief is equally important in the way to evaluate his corpus as a whole. After their return to England, (ca. 1900) his mother Mabel converted to Catholicism which produced dire consequences for Tolkien family. For doing so, she received harsh criticism from both her own family and his late husband’s family who belonged to Anglican church. They not only turned their backs on Ronald and his family, but they also cut down the financial support. This demeanour of the relatives also had a bad effect on Mabel’s health who was diagnosed with diabetes (Carpenter, 1977, p. 25).

Unfortunately, at those times diabetes was an incurable disease and Mabel Tolkien died from a coma in November 1904. In a letter from 1941 to his son Michael, Tolkien described his love for his mother who died of ‘a disease hastened by persecution of her faith’ and bitterness toward those who scorned her for converting to Catholicism (Tolkien, 2013, p. 48). A similar case would emerge in future when Ronald and his fiancée Edith Bratt were on the verge of marriage. Edith was Anglican and Ronald wanted her to convert to Catholicism so that their marriage could be blessed by The Catholic Church. Although she consented to his will and did what he wanted her to do, this would later become a matter of resentment for her. The reason for this was partly her active role in her parish before becoming a Catholic and partly due to similar objection she experienced from her friends and relatives (Carpenter, 1977, p. 63). In her will, Mabel Tolkien appointed Father Francis Morgan, who was a parish priest in service in The Birmingham Oratory, as the legal guardian for her children (p. 32). Fr. Morgan not only supported financially the Tolkien orphans but he also became a religious guide for them. This huge and sympathetic clergyman remained a great Christian figure and a big influence for J.R.R. Tolkien in his later writings (pp. 27-28). Zaleski & Zaleski (2015) draws attention to this Christian figure who would be a significant character for Tolkien from many aspects:

This bespectacled, pipe-smoking, dog-loving priest descended like a fairy godfather upon Mabel and the boys, filling their straitened lives with hope and joy. He paid regular visits to their home, vacationed with them, offered financial help and paternal counsel, and generally brightened their days with his unrestrained bearlike warmth and goodwill. In later life, Ronald would credit Father Francis with teaching him the meaning of charity and forgiveness, and in his honour he named his first child John Francis Reuel (p.25).

As a Christian, Tolkien placed the never-ending struggle between good and evil at the centre of his writing. The religious and moral tone in his works is significant yet hard to define initially as Tolkien (2000) wrote in one of his letters,

The Lord of the Rings is of course a fundamentally religious and Catholic work; unconsciously so at first, but consciously in the revision. That is why I have not put in, or have cut out, practically all references to anything like "religion", to cults or practices, in the imaginary world. For the religious element is absorbed into the story and the symbolism. (p.172)

The effect of social clubs he joined as a member was also profound in his artistry and as well as his Catholicism. While studying at King Edward's School, Tolkien formed TCBS 'Tea Club and Barrovian Society' with his friends Christopher Wiseman, Rob Gilson and Geoffrey Bache Smith which aimed to testify for God and truth (Garth, 2003). Later on, when he began having a reputation as a writer, he and C.S. Lewis founded another group called 'The Inklings', a club gathering for religious discussions as well as for literary subjects (Carpenter, 1977, p.46). Therefore, the Catholic creed and Fr. Francis Morgan constituted a big space in Tolkien's life and its reflections can be spotted throughout his corpus as this study aims to present.

In conclusion, J.R.R. Tolkien's great impact on literature and popular culture is a direct result of his extraordinary imagination, linguistic abilities, and deep knowledge of mythology. His creation of Middle-earth, with its rich histories, languages, and peoples, has established the rules for fantasy literature, inspiring many writers who would follow his footsteps. Tolkien's academic contributions to philology and medieval studies, underline his scholarly potential and his passion to bring ancient languages and texts to daylight. Tolkien, with his works, managed to leave an indelible mark on both literary circles and the hearts of devoted fans. His career is a good example of how an academic

can combine his scholarly endeavour with creative writing, and how one individual's artistic passion and imagination can shape cultural scene for decades.



CHAPTER 2. ECOCRITICAL ANALYSIS OF TOLKIEN'S CORPUS

2.1. THE FALL NARRATIVE

Tolkien's concept of fall is central to his myth-making and follows in a parallel fashion to Christianity on the matter of absence of evil. His depiction of the themes of loss, degradation and exile are the result of both his religious and ecological concerns originated in the biblical fall narrative which epitomizes the spiritual and ecological degradation on earth. In his letters (2013), Tolkien expresses that all the stories and histories he wrote to construct Middle-earth were more or less about the concept of fall in the end (p. 124). He describes in another letter the affinity between his idea of cosmology and concept of fall: '... I do not expect 'history' to be anything but a 'long defeat' – though it contains (and in a legend may contain more clearly and movingly) some samples or glimpses of final victory' (2013, Letters 195). This sentence partly explains why his legendarium has the retrospective sentiment and nostalgia that everything once good eventually turns sour sooner or later. King Théoden, who mourns the death of his only son, voices such feelings in *The Two Towers* (1954): 'For however the fortune of war shall go, may it not so end that much that was fair and wonderful shall pass for ever out of Middle-earth?' (p.813) pointing to the fact that all which was once beautiful is prone to decay of time sooner or later.

Tolkien's writing reflects his belief that God intended goodness in everything He created and there is no way of speaking of an 'absolute evil'. The sentence in the Old Testament "Everything God created was good in the beginning" (Genesis, 1:31) becomes one of the recurrent themes Tolkien renders in his mythic creation. Everyone, even Sauron, was not bad in the beginning yet soon turned evil out of his 'lust for domination' or coercion (2013, *Letter 183*). Elrond explains in *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954), the impossibility of using the One Ring which corrupts everything in time, telling Gandalf that even Sauron was not created evil in the beginning (p.281).

A through observation of Tolkien's Legendarium reveals that no true depiction of evil can be seen; on the contrary all representation of evil forms are those that fell from

initially good beings. This is also true of the origin of the Orcs who were once Elves: They were “by slow arts of cruelty [...] corrupted and enslaved” (Tolkien, 1977, p. 47). According to the account given in the ‘Of the coming of the Elves and the captivity of Melkor’ chapter of *The Silmarillion* Melkor is responsible for the corruption and transformation of Elves into Orcs: ‘... and thus did Melkor breed the hideous race of the Orcs in envy and mockery of the Elves...’ (Tolkien, 1977, p.67). Again in ‘The Tower of Cirith Ungol’ section of *RK* (1955), Frodo gives the clue on the creation of this wicked race:

The Shadow that bred them can only mock, it cannot make: not real new things of its own. I don't think it gave life to the Orcs, it only ruined them and twisted them; and if they are to live at all, they have to live like other living creatures. (p. 1202)

Something started by Valar as fair as Elves soon turned by Melkor into evil creatures as Orcs. Thus, Tolkien’s legendarium emphasizes that Orcs are not incarnate beings, rather they are corrupt creatures although they were once created fair and good; just like our polluted earth that was once immaculate.

This argument brings forth the Augustinian reflections in Tolkien’s writing on the nature of evil opposed to the Manichean dualism (Wood, 2003). Evil cannot exist on its own as the negation of goodness because a totally good being like God cannot have created something evil. Christian theologian St. Augustine explains *privatio boni* by claiming that the design of God encompasses perfection therefore evil is the product of our free will and result of our distraction from the true path (Augustine, 387). In a parallel manner, P. Kreeft (2005) likens evil to a parasite perverting and polluting good. He establishes St. Augustine’s ‘privation of good’ theory on a logical centre claiming that naturally a ‘parasite’ has to depend on a good host in order to survive:

"Nothing is evil in the beginning" or by nature: Morgoth was one of the Ainur, Sauron was a Maia, Saruman was the head of Gandalf's order of Wizards, the Orcs were Elves, the Ringwraiths were great Men, and Gollum was a Hobbit. And whenever a parasite succeeds in killing its host, it also kills itself. So, if evil succeeds, it fails; it commits suicide. (p. 133)

The 'perfect' creation story narrated in the Bible begins with the account of how God creates the garden of Eden and how it gets deteriorated soon. (Genesis 2:8-10) Within this setting are created Adam and Eve to enjoy many delicacies in Paradise. However, the serpent tempts first Eve and makes her eat from the tree of knowledge although God forbids them to do so. She shares the fruit with Adam and they instantly become aware of their sexuality. The awakening [knowledge] leads them to become ashamed of their nakedness thus they cover their genitals with leaves. This event which is also referred to as 'The Original Sin' causes Adam and Eve to lose their innocence and immortality. Innocence is lost as this first disobedience signals the emergence of the rebellious side of human nature. As a result, creator punishes them in a way which has an ecological and geographical consequence as well as a divine one: They fall from Paradise into a scene where other non-human beings are mostly hostile and survival is a hard matter. Their expulsion to the earth means being mortal and vulnerable to wear, sickness and decay contrasting to the eternal life in a blessed realm (Genesis: 1-3). Moreover, in their fallen state, Adam will have to earn his food out of hard toil by tilling the earth for the rest of his days (Genesis: 17-19). Therefore, the exile of human race on earth is the result of our sinning nature.

As a Catholic, Tolkien held the belief that human beings would incline to evil which started with 'The Original Sin' and without the grace of God there would never be a final salvation. Starting with the loss of the beautiful realm called Paradise, human beings constant decline in terms of the quality of physical environment seems to continue for an

unknown amount of time. This is the main idea of the letter he wrote to his son Christopher (2013):

I do not now feel either ashamed or dubious on the Eden ‘myth’. It has not, of course, historicity of the same kind as the NT, which are virtually contemporary documents, while Genesis is separated by, we do not know how many sad exiled generations from the Fall, but certainly there was an Eden on this very unhappy earth. We all long for it, and we are constantly glimpsing it: our whole nature at its best and least corrupted, its gentlest and most humane, is still soaked with the sense of ‘exile’. (pp. 94-5)

Tolkien’s *The Silmarillion*, as a historical background, stands in this parallel structure to Genesis (creation) part of the Bible, Eden myth being at the centre of the narrative (Pearce, 1998). Tolkien writes in ‘The Music of Ainu’ chapter of *The Silmarillion* (1977) that the god figure Iluvatar designs the Ainur [angelic beings] as a germ of his thoughts just as God in the Bible declares that He created humanity in His ‘own’ image (Genesis:1):

For a long while they sang only each alone, or but few together, while the rest hearkened; for each comprehended only that part of the mind of Ilúvatar from which he came, and in the understanding of their brethren they grew but slowly. Yet ever as they listened they came to deeper understanding, and increased in unison and harmony. (p.15)

The creation story in ‘Of the Beginning of the Days’ section of *The Silmarillion* is therefore likened to musical harmony and peace: “But now Ilúvatar sat and hearkened,

and for a great while it seemed good to him, for in the music there were no flaws” (p. 29). The fact that divine being Ilúvatar creates the theme or music in a flawless fashion resonates Christian notion written in the Bible: ‘God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day’ (Genesis 1:31). Just like in our world is the case, perfect harmony in ME, however, is later broken by the discord of Melkor (Morgoth) who is the greatest of the Children of Ilúvatar. Melkor challenges the musical theme presented by Ilúvatar and tries to develop his own theme out of his pride which has a similar function in the emergence of the biblical Original Sin. Melkor’s discord continues for a while until Ilúvatar silences him with a final chord and then Ilúvatar takes them to the void and shows them their music which now begins to take physical shape as Middle-earth. Resemblance between the beginning of Middle-earth chronicle and Genesis continues: Ilúvatar, sends them, Melkor included, to the world so that they can develop their sub-creation which marks the beginning of time and also the struggle between good and evil (Tolkien, 1977, p. 28-30). Bryan Rosebury (2003) in his article ‘Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon’ underlines this parallelism between two creation stories:

The structural resemblances here to the Christian myth are already clear enough: Eru Ilúvatar is God, the Ainur are like angels, and Melkor is clearly shaping up for the role of fallen angel, Satan or Lucifer. The basic Augustinian apparatus in which nothing is created evil, but evil arises from the free will of created beings, is in place. (p.187)

The inherent linguistic allusions are plain to see: Ilúvatar means ‘father’ (Germanic=Vater) of all (Harper, D. 2023). The name of Melkor soon changes to Morgoth (enemy) after he destroys the Two Trees in Aman, steals Silmarils and wages war on the free people of the Middle-earth. The name of his counterpart in the Bible has the same etymology: Satan means enemy or adversary of humankind in Hebrew (Elwell, 1997).

When *The Silmarillion* is observed closely, it will be clear that Lucifer's being created as the greatest of the angels and then losing that position has a reflection through the characterization of Melkor. As recounted in the Bible, Lucifer or the fallen angel, rebels God out of arrogance and pride (Ezekiel 28:12-19; Isaiah 14:12-15). Thus, the fallen angel is removed from Paradise and is ever since associated with rebellion just like Melkor is the embodiment of coercion and tyranny in Tolkien's mythology. The first appearance of rebellion in Tolkien's writing is thus similar to that of Christianity and both of them have the theme of the disruption of perfection in both physical and spiritual terms.

The fact that both fallen angels are initially associated with light is noteworthy. Lucifer means 'morning star' or 'light bearer' in Latin (Merriam-Webster, n.d. Lucifer). In a parallel fashion, Melkor's fall from light into darkness is narrated this way in *The Silmarillion* (1977):

From splendour he fell through arrogance to contempt for all things save himself, a spirit wasteful and pitiless. Understanding he turned to subtlety in perverting to his own will all that he would use, until he became a liar without shame. He began with the desire of Light, but when he could not possess it for himself alone, he descended through fire and wrath into a great burning, down into Darkness. And darkness he used most in his evil works upon Arda, and filled it with fear for all living things (p. 45).

Melkor's breaking two lamps in Arda and his other violent deeds in ME produces geographical consequences; an epitome of how spiritual fall also leads to environmental degradation. The end of spring in Arda marks a change in the course of waters, results in the emergence of new lands and disappearance of some others (*The Silmarillion*, p. 50). Likewise, the capital city of Morgoth [a.k.a. Melkor], Angband is surrounded by ice and snow from two sides so that it stands unconquerable (p. 146). Furthermore, Melkor as the

embodiment of evil ever devises plots to corrupt ME in ecological terms: Valar aims to beautify ME before the awakening of the first born [Elves] by shaping its geography. However, their efforts are undone by Melkor as accounted in *The Silmarillion* (1977): ‘... valleys they delved and Melkor raised them up; mountains they carved and Melkor threw them down; seas they hollowed and Melkor spilled them’ (p. 35). With every opportunity Melkor aims to bring chaos and disorder to ME. During the battle in Angband to capture Melkor to get back Silmarils, the geography of ME gets deteriorated as the violent fight causes great turmoil:

[...] that and out of the deep prisons a multitude of slaves came forth beyond all hope into the light of day, and they looked upon a world that was changed. For so great was the fury of those adversaries that the northern regions of the western world were rent asunder, and the sea roared in through many chasms, and there was confusion and great noise; and rivers perished or found new paths, and the valleys were upheaved and the hills trod down; and Sirion was no more. (*The Silmarillion*, p. 302)

Tolkien narrates the first victory of Valar against Melkor as such in the third chapter of *The Silmarillion* (1977). During the siege of Utumno many battles are fought and this again caused the ground to shake like an earthquake, the ways of waters to change and lights of fires to appear. Meanwhile, the great sea that separates Aman from ME is widened and deepened. Again, this time the northern parts of ME become desolate places and Utumno, the stronghold of Melkor becomes a place filled with pits full of fire; a place similar to the depiction of hell in Milton’s epic *Paradise Lost* (p. 68). Such a scene of disorder is also seen in the evil deeds of Saruman and Sauron, whose industrial and militaristic ambitions ravage the land, turning once-beautiful landscapes into desolate wastelands. After yielding to the power of Dark Lord Sauron, Saruman establishes in

Isengard foundries, furnaces and arsenals turning his environment into desolation as told in *TT* (1954):

Thousands could dwell there, workers, servants, slaves, and warriors with great store of arms; wolves were fed and stabled in deep dens beneath. The plain, too, was bored and delved. Shafts were driven deep into the ground; their upper ends were covered by low mounds and domes of stone, so that in the moonlight the Ring of Isengard looked like a graveyard of unquiet dead. For the ground trembled. The shafts ran down by many slopes and spiral stairs to caverns far under; there Saruman had treasuries, store-houses, armouries, smithies, and great furnaces. Iron wheels revolved there endlessly, and hammers thudded. At night plumes of vapour steamed from the vents, lit from beneath with red light, or blue, or venomous green.

(p. 817-8)

Once a beautiful valley, Isengard, turns into a place of ruin and exploitation resulting from Saruman's ambitions for power and domination. As a master of engineering, Saruman's realm consists of arsenals, furnaces and smithies which are the consequences of his love for mechanization. According to Zaleski & Zaleski (2015), machinery had diabolical connotations for Tolkien, disobeying the will of God and eventually leading to fall:

Tolkien upped the ante, giving distrust of machinery a theological foundation. Just as art points to God, machines point to Satan—or, in Tolkien's legendarium, to the cosmic tyrant Morgoth and his followers. The monstrosity of machines lies in the hubris and pride of their inventors, who savage God's truth, beauty, and goodness with tools that bring ugliness, pain, and lies (witness the small lie that automation

improves upon handcrafted work and the great lie that power offers more than love). (p.421)

Evil beings in Tolkien's mythology are usually depicted being fond of killing machinery and gadgets similar to those caused destruction in the both World Wars. In *The Hobbit* (1937) Tolkien writes that Goblins (Orcs) 'invented some of the machines that have since troubled the world, especially the ingenious devices for killing large numbers of people at once, for wheels and engines and explosions always delighted them,' (*Hobbit*, p. 46). Similarly, the use of machine guns at the Western Front in WW1 was responsible for the merciless slaughter of soldiers from both sides. Garth (2003) claims that technology and machinery [culture] in ME represents a stand against 'life and nature':

Melko (who is better known by his later names Melkor and Morgoth) represents the tyranny of the machine over life and nature, exploiting the earth and its people in the construction of a vast armoury. With a brutal inevitability, the Gnomes, with their medieval technology, lose the contest. Tolkien's myth underlines the almost insuperable efficacy of the machine against mere skill of hand and eye. ...In the Hells of Iron, the higher arts and sciences are subsumed or crushed in the service of mechanical industry – endlessly repetitious and motivated by nothing but the desire for more power. (p. 209)

Garth's comment on the superiority of evil forces against Elves is quite descriptive of the truth. Although very wise and highly skilled in craftsmanship, they cannot compete with Morgoth in technical sense as they do not aim to coerce and dominate others. This is expressed with utter exactitude by Elrond in *FR* (1954) on the nature of Three Rings of Power: 'But they were not made as weapons of war or conquest: that is not their power. Those who made them did not desire strength or domination or hoarded wealth, but

understanding, making, and healing, to preserve all things unstained' (p.512). For Elrond, the Threes are not intended as war gadgetry like The One Ring of Sauron. The Rings of Elves are instead designed to foster goodness; that is why they fall short in preventing the ills of the One Ring which is designed by Sauron for war and chaos. Garth comments that The Great War is reflected through Tolkien's works not as a direct representation or allegory of evil forces like Nazism or Hitler but instead 'use of the tyranny of the machine over the individual'. So, Tolkien was indeed sorrowful for any single person who suffered from the cruelty of 'the War Machine' no matter from which side he was from (2003, p.75). Zaleski & Zaleski (2015) voice similar insights on Tolkien's discontent with 'mechanization' without taking sides:

The Allies, with their great engines of destruction, had become tools of Morgoth. World War II was drawing to a close, but Tolkien foresaw a greater one looming against the Machines, by which he meant not only mechanization but a panoply of evil acts and inventions epitomized by automation and automatism, by Satanic disconnection from soil, family, and faith. (p. 359).

Witnessing first-hand the destruction of the machinery in WW1, Tolkien rightly foreshadowed the rise of the machines and the tyranny of despotic regimes in the following decades, minimizing the individual to a mere figure in the death toll of both world wars:

As a literary creation, Melko is more than a winter-symbol or an abstraction of destructiveness and greed. He appeared in 1916 with remarkable timing. With his dreams of world domination, his spies, his vast armies, his industrial slaves, and his 'spell of bottomless dread', he anticipated the totalitarianism that lay just around the corner... But all that the totalitarian dictators did was to take to a logical

extreme the dehumanization already seen in heavy industry, and to exploit the break with the past that the Great War had introduced. In its capacity to warn about such extremes, fantastic fiction has the edge over what is called realism. ‘Realism’ has a knee-jerk tendency to avoid extremes as implausible, but ‘fantasy’ actively embraces them. It magnifies and clarifies the human condition. It can even keep pace with the calamitous imaginings of would-be dictators. Doubtless Tolkien had no intention of making political predictions, but his work nevertheless foreshadowed things to come... (Garth, 2003, p. 209-210)

The word choice for the Mount ‘Doom’ Frodo and Sam try to reach is also significant and connotative of apocalypse in this context. Zaleski & Zaleski (2015) write: “‘Doom’—Tolkien uses the Old English word a hundred times in *The Lord of the Rings*, registering its full range of meanings: a fate decreed, a judgment pronounced, a world destroyed’ (p. 431). Dark lord Sauron’s ambition from the beginning is to change Middle-earth according to his will and this means the ‘end’ for the free races dwelling there. Chance (2001) comments ‘The split self, division, homicide, symbolizes the quality of existence in the land ruled by Sauron, Mordor or Morðor, the Anglo-Saxon word for murder or slaying’ (p.61).

The fall of Noldor, particularly through the actions of Fëanor and his sons, tells about a situation akin to the fall of man in Genesis. Their rebellion against the Valar and the subsequent exile from Valinor echo Adam and Eve's expulsion from Eden. This section underlies themes of pride, disobedience, and the consequences of crossing the border as incarnate beings. Although being created as the highest in rank among the children of Iluvatar, soon Elves become estranged toward Valar and experience a gradual decline. They have the privilege of living close to divine beings in Aman and learn many crafts in first hand from them. This quality is apparent in their appearance and the things

they make. However, their immortality and their fondness for their artifice [Silmarils] and sub-creation also lead to their downfall. In his letter 131, Tolkien (2013) expresses that the main body of *The Silmarillion* is about the fall and exile of Elves which has a similar structure to the biblical story about the fallen angel (p. 125).

Fëanor, with his greed for precious metals and his headstrong character, plays a notorious part in the fall of Noldor. When provoked by Melkor against his half-brother Fingolfin to kill him, Fëanor is banished from Tirion by Valar. Melkor then kills Fëanor's father, steals the Silmarils and causes many tragic events narrated in *The Silmarillion* (1977). Fëanor takes an oath of vengeance that whoever holds possession of Silmarils, he will fight to the end whether it is Maia, Elf or Man. He makes his offspring do the same and follows Melkor to Middle-earth waging an endless and fruitless war causing his people to live a life of exile which reminds of the exile of mankind on earth.

After the great war that ends the dominion of Morgoth, Valar decides to forgive Elves and some of them return to Aman yet many remains in ME. T. Schick (2004) comments on this situation as follows: 'The elves that stayed – the Delaying Elves – decided that it was better to rule in Middle-earth than serve in Valinor. They longed for the West, however, and Sauron used this desire to gain their confidence and create the rings' (p. 36). Preferring to rule in ME than to serve in Valinor interestingly sounds like the famous line from J. Milton's *Paradise Lost* (2003): 'Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven' (p. 10). Those Elves who choose to stay in ME makes allusions to Lucifer and other fallen angels who opposes the will of divine being and build their own dominion [Pandemonium].

The corrupting nature of Silmarils is aligned with that of the One Ring: Fëanor's sons kill even their own relatives for the sake of retrieving Silmarils once at Alqualonde and the second at the Kingdom of Doriath which are known as 'kin slaying' (Tolkien, 1977). Kin slaying appears in the holy texts as the first killing on earth which is none other than the story of Cain murdering his brother Abel (Hebrews 11:4; Genesis 4:1-25). Upon

these tragic events Valar banishes Fëanor and his generations from Valinor; the equivalent of Eden; '[T]he Valar will fence Valinor against you, and shut you out, so that not even the echo of your lamentation shall pass over the mountains...' (1977, p.112). The geographical and ecological aspect of this punishment is of course easy to pin down. According to Verlyn Flieger, the whole of *The Silmarillion* is about the fall and ensuing degradation as she argues in her article 'An Unfinished Symphony' (2005) the pivotal character of 'Silmarils':

The whole narrative of *The Silmarillion* is a story of enterprise and creativity gone disastrously wrong. From the first rebellious theme of Melkor, Tolkien's invented world is characterized by strife and dissension wherever there should be harmony. The Music becomes discordant and operates as Fate. Fëanor's creation leads to his downfall. His Silmarils, the last of the light, are stolen by Melkor to become the Jewels in the Crown. Instead of shedding light, they engender darkness. (p.124)

As to Middle-earth, the shift from the early blessed days shining brighter to the darkness followed by the loss of Silmarils is apparent. Flieger comments that the reason for the fall of Fëanor and the Exiles is Fëanor's greed and obsession for the Silmarils which is one of the seven deadly sins in Christianity (2005). This is the warning by Ulmo to Turgon the Elf: "Love not too well the work of thy hands and the devices of thy heart" (Tolkien, 1977, p.125). Their rebellion against the divine power results in their expulsion from Valinor and being cast to Middle-earth which resonates the banishment of mankind from Eden. Both events result in an ecological as well as spiritual degradation in their aftermath as their time in ME is characterized by many wars, exiles and ecological destruction (Sanford, p. 15).

The departure of Elves appears through The Legendarium as a recurring and nostalgia evoking theme. As an Elf-lover, Sam Gamgee grieves for their departure in *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954): ““They are sailing, sailing, sailing over the Sea, they are going into the West and leaving us,’ said Sam, half chanting the words, shaking his head sadly and solemnly” (p.271). This is the eventual destiny that awaits the Elves in Middle-earth as their fate is bound to the fate of the Rings of Power. According to Elven queen Galadriel, if the One Ring is destroyed, three rings that Elves possess will diminish in effect and fade away. If Frodo fails his quest, Galadriel foresees, then all will be lost and the victory of Sauron will be fast and tremendous:

Do you not see now wherefore your coming is to us as the footstep of Doom? For if you fail, then we are laid bare to the Enemy. Yet if you succeed, then our power is diminished, and Lothlorien will fade, and the tides of Time will sweep it away. We must depart into the West, or dwindle to a rustic folk of dell and cave, slowly to forget and to be forgotten. (*FR*, p. 616)

In either case, there is no future for the Elves: Galadriel comments, as with the Return of the King Elessar [a.k.a. Aragorn], the Fourth Age will be remembered as ‘the age of man’. As a people living in exile, Elves are the ones depicted as being closest to the idea of Fall, as Legolas speaks in *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954):

`Nay, time does not tarry ever,’ he said; `but change and growth is not in all things and places alike. For the Elves the world moves, and it moves both very swift and very slow. Swift, because they themselves change little, and all else fleets by: it is a grief to them. Slow, because they do not count the running years, not for themselves. The passing seasons are but ripples ever repeated in the long long

stream. Yet beneath the Sun all things must wear to an end at last.' (Tolkien, FR, p. 642)

The case of Dwarves in *Hobbit* (1937) and *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55) is similar to the Fall of the Noldor and it epitomizes the sense of decay resulting from their greed for precious gems which is counted among one of the seven deadly sins in Christianity: 'Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have' (Hebrews 13:5). The miner Dwarves or Durin's folk, who become obsessed with the gems and all the wealth in their hands, are depicted in *The Silmarillion* (1977) as the greatest craftsmen in all the Middle-earth designed by Aule:

And Aulë made the Dwarves even as they still are, because the forms of the Children who were to come were unclear to his mind, and because the power of Melkor was yet over the Earth; and he wished therefore that they should be strong and unyielding. But fearing that the other Valar might blame his work, he wrought in secret: and he made first the Seven Fathers of the Dwarves in a hall under the mountains in Middle-earth. (pp. 58-62)

Living in the cities carved inside mountains, they grow wealthy with the precious gems and metals they produce in the mines. Especially Mithril becomes the reason for their wealth and downfall as well: A very rare and special mineral, Mithril is produced in Moria in limited amounts and traded with other races. But the Dwarves, in the depths of Khazad-Dum, dig up too deep out of greed till they awaken the demon Balrog who causes the destruction of the dwarves in Moria. Gandalf speaks about this in *FR* (1954):

Dwarves tell no tale; but even as mithril was the foundation of their wealth, so also it was their destruction: they delved too greedily and too deep, and disturbed that

from which they fled, Durin's Bane. Of what they brought to light the Orcs have gathered nearly all, and given it in tribute to Sauron, who covets it. (p. 564)

After this disaster, the remaining dwarves scatter around the Middle-earth living a life of exile which is a pale shadow of their prosperous and glorious days. Some of them, go to Erebor where Thrór has founded one of the greatest Dwarf kingdoms in Middle-earth. Yet, the second disaster happens in Erebor when Smaug, a fire-breathing dragon from north, invades the kingdom under the mountain, killing many and capturing the treasure. The surviving dwarves escape Erebor and live in the wilderness until a young dwarf prince Thorin Oakenshield unites them and reclaim their homeland of which account is told in *The Hobbit* (1937). Yet generally speaking, Dwarves' condition is in decline as a civilization with each blow they receive over the course of time. This decline is the main idea of his speech as Glóin tells Frodo about the things they achieved in Erebor after the dragon is killed in 'Many Meetings' chapter of *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954):

'We have done well,' he said. 'But in metalwork we cannot rival our fathers, many of whose secrets are lost. We make good armour and keen swords, but we cannot again make mail or blade to match those that were made before the dragon came. (p. 468)

Although on the surface level Smaug and Balrog seem to be the cause of their fall, the truth is other way around. The fall of the Dwarves is intricately linked to their covetousness for wealth and the environmental damage they cause in their pursuit of riches. The Dwarves are depicted as a secretive and industrious race, skilled in craftsmanship and mining, but their insatiable greediness for gold and precious gems often leads them to exploit the earth with little regard for the environment itself. There is a hidden yet undeniable parallelism between the greediness of the Dragon and the dwarves: As the story progresses Smaug is killed, and it gets a more serious problem with Thorin

as he becomes obsessed with finding the Arkenstone and keeping the treasure for themselves. Roac, the Messenger, foresees that Thorin's fate is shadowed by his obsession with gold: 'The treasure is likely to be your death, though the dragon is no more!' (*The Hobbit*, 1937, p. 190). So, his relationship with other races deteriorates as told in 'The Clouds Burst' chapter of *The Hobbit* (1937). During the Battle of Five Armies Thorin is killed along with his nephews Kili and Fili. Tolkien's portrayal of the fall of the Dwarves again exemplifies the pursuit of wealth, environmental degradation and the moral complexities. Their exploitation of natural resources are emblematic of broader themes like the corrupting effect of power. The ruin and wasteland left after their mining operations serves as a cautionary tale about the destructive consequences brought by the insatiable greed of human beings.

The destruction of Númenor, detailed in the 'Akallabeth' section of *The Silmarillion*, is the reminiscence of the biblical stories of the Great Flood and the Tower of Babel. The Númenóreans' hubris and their attempt to conquer death lead to their downfall, symbolizing the dangers of overreaching ambition and defiance of divine authority. The history of Númenor dates back to the Second Age of the Middle-earth when there is an alliance between Elves and Men against Morgoth. Valar gives the island Númenor to human beings as a present for supporting Elves in their war against Morgoth. After dwelling on this 'westest' point in all the Middle-earth, the Númenoreans build a civilization far advanced than any other human race has built. From many aspects, this islandic realm symbolizes Paradise for Númenoreans (Sanford, p. 15). But, as the lifetime of a mortal is not enough to enjoy that paradise and all the things they created, they begin to long for immortality. Soon this seclusion begins to deteriorate their relationships with the other habitants of Middle-earth where they begin exploiting and polluting. After their disobedience starts and they become obsessed with immortality, the once mild climate changes and becomes hostile towards the islanders: 'But all this was now changed; for the sky itself was darkened, and there were storms of rain and hail in those days, and violent winds...' (p. 325). While seeking immortality on the one hand, the corrupt ways of living

continue on the other hand as told by Tolkien in *The Silmarillion*: ‘But those that lived turned the more eagerly to pleasure and revelry, desiring ever more goods and more riches’ (p. 314). Upon Númenoreans turning rebellious against Valinor, Valar imposes a ban on the passage of Númenoreans preventing them to sail westwards to Aman.

The events causing the downfall of Númenor also owe much to Sauron’s deceit and temptation. In the second age, Sauron has begun gaining power and declared himself the King of Men. The enraged King of Númenor, Ar-Pharazon, moves with his mighty army to destroy Sauron. Seeing the power of Westernesse, Sauron changes his tactic and pleads forgiveness (Sanford, p. 15). He is captured and brought to Númenor, yet with his hideous character, he gains the trust of Númenoreans and in time poisons them against Valar who has imposed a ban on Númenoreans not to sail westward. As told in the ‘Akallabeth’ section of *The Silmarillion* (1977), Númenoreans begin worshipping evil lord Melkor and gets more and more estranged toward Elves and Valar. The last king of Númenor, Ar-Pharazon, with the incitement of Sauron, prepares a vast armada to attack Valinor. This threat, however, is prevented by the intervention of Valar who separates Aman from the physical world. Númenor is drowned by a deluge and Iluvatar gives Middle-earth the shape of a sphere. The catastrophe is accounted in *The Silmarillion* (1977) as follows:

And a great chasm opened in the sea between Númenor and the Deathless Lands, and the waters flowed down into it, and the noise and smoke of the cataracts went up to heaven, and the world was shaken. And all the fleets of the Númenóreans were drawn down into the abyss, and they were drowned and swallowed up for ever. (p. 327)

Their assault results in the downfall and destruction of Númenor along with Ilúvatar’s changing the shape and topography of the world and separating Middle-earth from Aman forever (p. 327). Therefore, Númenoreans’ sinful deeds result in firstly the isolation and then separation from divine being.

Tolkien (2013) states in one of his letters that Númenor is ‘his personal alteration of the Atlantis myth’ (p. 297). His involvement with Atlantis has its roots with a childhood incident which occurred many times during his Sarehole years according to H. Carpenter (1977). In this recurring dream, Tolkien used to experience huge waves that engulfed everything around him in a similar fashion to Noah’s deluge (Carpenter, p. 24). Tolkien describes (2013) this strange phenomenon to W. H. Auden in his Letter 163, ‘... the terrible recurrent dream (beginning with memory) of the Great Wave, towering up, and coming in ineluctably over the trees and green fields’ (p. 177-8).

V. Flieger (2005) in her article ‘An Unfinished Symphony’ draws attention to this parallelism between the Biblical Noah deluge and Atlantis myth which was first handled by Greek philosopher Plato. Once glorious and physically beautiful kingdom of Atlantis is swept by a huge deluge because of their immorality, arrogance and pride. Just like Atlantis, Númenoreans’ fall includes their love of machinery and technology which helped them to build a great civilization and a vast armada. As one of the seven deadly sins, pride finds its place in both stories which have the same religious undertone that rebelling against the will of God results in some sort of punishment and deterioration in physical environment:

Death was ever present, because the Númenoreans still, as they had in their old kingdom, and so lost it, hungered after endless life unchanging. Kings made tombs more splendid than houses of the living and counted old names in the rolls of their descent dearer than the names of sons. Childless lords sat in aged halls musing on heraldry; in secret chambers withered men compounded strong elixirs, or in high cold towers asked questions of the stars. And the last king of the line of Anarion had no heir. (Tolkien, *TT*, p. 949)

In this excerpt from *The Two Towers* (1954), Faramir tells Frodo how Númenoreans desired immortality bringing ill-fate to their civilization. Catholic writer J. Pearce (1998) comments that it is this desire of Númenoreans for immortality that brings destruction and wrath of Valar, because immortality is not something ‘natural’ thus it does not belong to this world (p. 92).

The second part of Númenoreans’ history has a striking resemblance to the story of ‘Noah’s flood’ in the Old Testament (Genesis 6:9). According to the biblical text, God becomes angry with humankind because all kinds of injustices fill the earth and He decides to destroy it with a massive flood. God commands beforehand prophet Noah to build an ark big enough for his family and a pair of each kind of animals so that they can start life again after he survives the disaster. Similarly, in Middle-earth, few Númenoreans who are called ‘The Faithful’ do not worship Sauron and Valar sends them images about the impending punishment so that they build ships to escape the great deluge. Led by Elendil and his sons, these faithful people survive the disaster and sail eastwards thanks to their skills as mariners. After they set foot on Middle-earth, they establish two kingdoms: Arnor in the north and Gondor in the south which are pale shadows of the former glory of Númenor. The dead tree at the citadel of Gondor symbolizes the downfall of Númenor and will only revive after the Return of the King as the tree was brought over the sea from undying lands. The parallelism between both texts emphasizes the idea that any rebellion whether in Middle-earth or in the biblical cosmos is punished accordingly and marks an ecological shift from divine grace to a lesser state. Moreover, the decline in the lifespan of Númenoreans stands as part of the divine punishment for their sinful deeds. On this subject, Tolkien (2013) makes an explanation in Letters 156 about how Númenoreans attracted the wrath of Valar and punished with a decline in the longevity of their lifetime which used to be three times longer than that of ordinary human beings (p. 171). Again, in the ‘Akallabeth’ section of *The Silmarillion* (1977), Tolkien touches upon this matter. In a similar fashion, the Bible gives the examples of long lifespan of first human beings [prophets] most of whom living up to nine hundred years of age (Genesis:5). After the

Noah's deluge the lifespan of human beings see a dramatic fall (Genesis:11) and the Bible gives the age of Abraham as 175 years (Genesis 25:7) and Moses as 120 years (Deuteronomy 34:7) exemplifying the fall. The likeness between Prophet Noah and Elendil is also striking: Both characters act like 'Second Adam' starting their race once again through their sons after the apocalyptic disaster [divine punishment] (*The Silmarillion*, p. 328).

As seen in the example of Númenoreans, Tolkien's works also emphasize chance of redemption and the possibility of repentance despite the pervasive presence of fall and corruption. Some of them like Númenoreans find redemption and regain their former state by shifting from oppressor to a steward role as seen in the third age of ME. Characters like Gollum, who is consumed by the Ring, still have moments of potential redemption, illustrating the complex interplay of sin and salvation. Boromir, similarly, finds redemption though late and dies as an honourable man although he yields to the temptation. These examples strengthens the Christian notion that although human beings fail to resist the temptation of Satan, there has been a constant struggle to find redemption and 'regain' that blissful realm (Sanford, 1995, p. 17). As human beings we still cannot forget that paradise or 'Eden' although it is long gone. Living in a shattered, broken and diseased world, we still long for Paradise because we remember those happy times in an unstained, immaculate setting before the fall (P. Kreeft, 2005, pp.87-90).

2.2. THE REPRESENTATION OF NATURE IN MIDDLE-EARTH

Tolkien frequently portrays nature in his corpus as a powerful being which is often beyond the control of mortals. Concept of nature in his legendarium is not a passive and static entity but instead it has its own will and personality (Wood, 2003; Kreeft, 2005). It is rather depicted as a theme in Middle-earth no less than a character, interacting with other characters and producing consequences. This is most evident in the ancient forests like Lothlórien and Fangorn in *LR*, where trees are conscious beings with their own will (Parrila, 2021). In *TT* (1954) Tolkien depicts Fangorn forest in an animistic way: ‘There was a silence, for suddenly the dark and unknown forest, so near at hand, made itself felt as a great brooding presence, full of secret purpose’ (p. 695). Similarly, the Old Forest near the Shire border is described as a sentient and hostile being, capable of influencing the thoughts and actions of those who dare to step into it. This depiction of nature aligns with animistic themes, presenting the natural world in ME filled with spirit and life.

During their journey South, Hobbits spend a few days with Tom Bombadil, a nature-loving character, and learn many things from him about nature and trees. He tells them how trees in the Old Forest are more than just trees. According to Bombadil, the trees are full of hatred against those who roam free ‘gnawing, biting, breaking, hacking, burning’ (*FR*, p. 364). A few pages later, Pippin describes the attack of Huorns and Ents where the power of Nature is emphasized:

That sent them mad. I thought that they had been really roused before; but I was wrong. I saw what it was like at last. It was staggering. They roared and boomed and trumpeted, until stones began to crack and fall at the mere noise of them. Merry and I lay on the ground and stuffed our cloaks into our ears. Round and round the rock of Orthanc the Ents went striding and storming like a howling gale, breaking

pillars, hurling avalanches of boulders down the shafts, tossing up huge slabs of stone into the air like leaves. (p. 832)

When the fellowship journeys south through the misty mountains in *FR* (1954) Mount Caradhras does not give way to the fellowship with storms and blizzards: ‘They say in my land that he can govern the storms in the Mountains of Shadow that stand upon the borders of Mordor. He has strange powers and many allies’ Boromir comments pointing to the fact that the storm is not an ordinary natural phenomenon but is a result of Caradhras’ anger to the fellowship (p. 534). In ‘The escape to the Bruinen river’ section of *FR*, the river is aroused by the command of Elrond and Gandalf in order to prevent Black Riders from capturing Frodo. Before they can take Frodo and the Ring, the riders are swept away by the roaring flood of the river (p. 456).

With its enormous power, nature has the potential to change the earth in Tolkien’s fictional realm. For instance, the transformative power of the sea plays a key role in Middle-earth, a world repeatedly refashioned by its waters in the wars between the Valar and Morgoth and in the destruction of Númenor, Tolkien’s 1930s version of Atlantis. The catastrophe following ‘The Fall of Númenor’ narrated in *The Silmarillion* (1977, ch.4) exemplifies this terrifying face of nature. Moreover, Paul H. Kocher (1972) in his book *Master of Middle-earth* draws attention to the power of nature that reshapes geographical entities in ME:

Of course, the maps of Europe in the Third Age drawn by Tolkien to illustrate his epic show a continent very different from that of today in its coastline, mountains, rivers, and other major geographical features. In explanation he points to the forces of erosion, which wear down mountains, and to advances and recessions of the sea that have inundated some lands and uncovered others. (p. 5)

Kocher elaborates on this active depiction of nature in Middle-earth by giving the example of Gandalf's opposing to the idea that they should cast the Ring into the sea. In Elrond's council, the wizard argues that there are many things beneath the sea and the sea itself is subject to change. But, the best example for Kocher is the deluge that causes the downfall of Númenor which is a striking reminiscence of the 'natural forces' (p. 6).

J. Garth (2003) also draws attention to the fact that topography in Middle-earth is more than just physical entities but they have more function. For him the sea divides Middle-earth from the Blessed Realm and destroys the Kingdom of Númenor therefore plays a divine role (p.222). Sea in ME is also the symbol of eternity, a symbolic bridge that reaches the Undying Lands where Elves and Frodo return over sea at the end of the saga (*RK*, p. 1328).

Although polluted and diseased through the course of time, Nature as a character in ME is ancient, wise, and more enduring than the fleeting cultures of men and elves. The most idiosyncratic and ecologically conscious characters in *The Legendarium* like Bombadil and Fangorn are as old as nature itself. Upon Frodo's question about his true identity, Bombadil tells Hobbits about himself:

Eldest, that's what I am. Mark my words, my friends: Tom was here before the river and the trees; Tom remembers the first raindrop and the first acorn. He made paths before the Big People, and saw the little People arriving. He was here before the Kings and the graves and the Barrow-wights. When the Elves passed westward, Tom was here already, before the seas were bent. He knew the dark under the stars when it was fearless - before the Dark Lord came from Outside. (*FR*, p. 366)

Fangorn, says Legolas, is very old even for the first-born Elves' reckoning. Aragorn adds Elrond's remark that Old Forest and Fangorn forest are somehow related and in elder days they were one (*TT*, p. 696). Fangorn remember that time with nostalgia when most of

Middle-earth was covered with vast forests: ‘here was all one wood once upon a time: from here to the Mountains of Lune, and this was just the East End’ (p. 724). The deforestation in a general sense is a common issue in ME. Tom Bombadil explains to Hobbits in *FR* (1954) that the Old Forest is ‘indeed ancient, a survivor of vast forgotten woods’ (p. 364). Just as it is the case in our own world, the tree population sees a constant decline for many reasons in ME. This situation is foreseen by Yavanna, the nature goddess as told in the creation section of *The Silmarillion* (1977):

But the kelvar can flee or defend themselves, whereas the olvar that grow cannot. And among these I hold trees dear. Long in the growing, swift shall they be in the felling, and unless they pay toll with fruit upon bough little mourned in their passing. So I see in my thought. Would that the trees might speak on behalf of all things that have roots, and punish those that wrong them! (p. 61)

The nature goddess says her beasts can save themselves from destruction as they can run whereas the plants cannot escape. She expresses her grief that the trees take long years to grow but are felled down easily in a very short time. Accordingly, evil beings in ME exploit and pollute environment as seen in the example of Saruman and Sauron who embody culture or technology against nature. Michael N. Stanton (2002) draws attention to the moral dimension of nature in Tolkien’s cosmology: “One’s closeness to and respect for nature is a measure of one’s goodness, as distance from and disrespect for nature is a measure of evil” (p. 17). Likewise, the races of ME are deliberately designed within a spectrum that reflects their harmony with nature or the coercing potential of culture. The Elves are mostly portrayed as harmonious with forests, Dwarves with mountains and Hobbits are associated with landscape (Campbell, p. 415). Again, the plains where Rohan riders live and breed horses are also designed by the author in accordance to their simplistic lifestyle and raw culture containing Anglo-Saxon traits.

When the Fellowship is about to leave Lothlorien, Elves dress their guests with elvish robes saying: ‘Leaf and branch, water and stone: they have the hue and beauty of all these things under the twilight of Lórien that we love; for we put the thought of all that we love into all that we make’ (*FR*, p. 622). Their cities and dwellings often blend seamlessly with the natural landscape. All the Elvish societies in ME to a large extent live among woods like Lothlorien and Rivendell where climate is mild. The interconnectedness of Elves with nature is so strong that sometimes the lines are blurred as Sam comments in *FR*: ‘Whether they've made the land, or the land's made them, it's hard to say...’ (p. 611).

Among the races of ME, Hobbits have the most special place and it is no coincidence that primary protagonists in *The Hobbit* and *LR* are always Hobbits. There is a stark contrast between Hobbits and other races that dwell in ME in terms of their proximity to the earth. This closeness is exemplified with the character of Samwise who is the gardener of Bilbo and Frodo. When departing from the land of Lothlorien, Lady Galadriel endows every member of the fellowship with a present suitable and Samwise is given a small box of fertile soil of Galadriel’s Garden. After the scouring of the Shire, Sam uses this gift to revive the landscape of the Shire and to heal the hurts done to nature (*FR*, p. 628).

In the second book of the *LR*, Merry and Pippin tell Fangorn about Hobbits and their ways of living, and Treebeard replies: ‘So you live in holes, eh? It sounds very right and proper...’ (p. 720). At their first encounter Treebeard welcomes them with suspect but later he is pleased to hear that they are a race who live in holes in the ground. The opening lines of *The Hobbit* (1937) again reveal their character through this closeness:

In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit. Not a nasty, dirty, wet hole, filled with the ends of worms and an oozy smell, nor yet a dry, bare, sandy hole with nothing in it to sit down on or to eat: it was a hobbit-hole, and that means comfort. (p. 3)

The closeness of Hobbits to earth finds its reflections in many instances in the trilogy. In the Tower of Cirith Ungol section of *RK* (1955), Samwise is tempted by the One Ring yet resists the allure of power and knows he is content with the simple and rustic life: ‘The one small garden of a free gardener was all his need and due, not a garden swollen to a realm; his own hands to use, not the hands of others to command (p. 1188). P. Kreeft in his seminal work *The Philosophy of Tolkien* (2005) makes a classification of the races in terms of their closeness to the earth and counts Hobbits as the more ‘natural’ than any other race (p. 66). In the foreword to *LR*, Tolkien (1954-55) describes Hobbits, underlying their environmentally friendly lifestyle:

... an unobtrusive but very ancient people, more numerous formerly than they are today; for they love peace and quiet and good tilled earth: a well-ordered and well-farmed countryside was their favourite haunt. They do not and did not understand or like machines more complicated than a forge-bellows, a water-mill, or a hand-loom, though they were skilful with tools. (p.226)

Traces of the time he spent in Sarehole can be seen in his depicting and naming the idyllic place of the Shire with all its pastoral landscape (Pearce, 1998, p.21; Zaleski & Zaleski, 2015, p.429). On this matter Tolkien (2013) wrote in his letter to R. Unwin in 1956: ‘The toponymy of The Shire, to take the first list, is a ‘parody’ of that of rural England, in much the same sense as are its inhabitants’ (p. 207). Pearce (1998) comments that all the wasteland of ME is a result of industrial waste while all the beautiful and stainless parts symbolize pre-modern and unmechanized lands. With all the ecological and simplistic modes of life styles, the inhabitants of Shire are a reflection of rural Western-Midlanders (pp. 115-6).

As the Hobbits journey south, the reader can easily feel the change in environment by comparing and contrasting the diversity in Tolkien’s fiction. In the first book of the trilogy, Merry guides Hobbits into the Old Forest and this literally marks the end of their

comfort zone and the beginning of many hardships: “There!’ said Merry. ‘You have left the Shire, and are now outside, and on the edge of the Old Forest’ (p. 343). From then on, the environment gets more hostile and defiled although the travellers temporarily find shelter at places like Lothlorien, Ithilien and Beorn’s house: ‘The lands ahead were empty of all save birds and beasts, unfriendly places deserted by all the races of the world’ (*FR*, p. 429). Accordingly, the stronghold of Elven Lord Elrond, Rivendell, is also called ‘The Last Homely House’ where it marks the beginning of wilderness. During their adventures, both Frodo and Bilbo get help, advice and refreshment in Rivendell: ‘but such was the virtue of the land of Rivendell that soon all fear and anxiety was lifted from their minds. [...] Health and hope grew strong in them, and they were content with each good day as it came, taking pleasure in every meal, and in every word and song’ (p. 518). Again, in Lothlorien where Elven lady Galadriel dwells their hurts are healed and weariness remedied: ‘... it seemed to them that they did little but eat and drink and rest, and walk among the trees; and it was enough’ (p. 609). After they leave Lothlorien and travel south on their quest, the landscape becomes more barren and desolate: ‘As the third day of their voyage wore on the lands changed slowly: the trees thinned and then failed altogether’ (*FR*, p. 633).

After the fellowship dissolves, they chase the orc pack who has captured Merry and Pippin. While on their trail, Legolas expresses this evil characteristic of Orcs as such: “‘No other folk make such a trampling,’ said Legolas. ‘It seems their delight to slash and beat down growing things that are not even in their way’” (*FR*, p. 672). Orcs cause disorder and destruction in the land of Rohan during the Battle of Helm’s Deep: “‘They bring fire,’ said Théoden, ‘and they are burning as they come, rick, cot, and tree. This was a rich vale and had many homesteads. Alas for my folk!’” (*TT*, p. 791).

The wasteland of Mordor stands as a vivid example of the destruction of environment in ME carries traces from Tolkien’s biography. Garth (2003) comments in his book *Tolkien and the Great War* that the horror in the trenches and destruction of the WW1 in general can be observed through Tolkien’s depiction of wastelands like Mordor

and Esgaroth (p. 12). The abused and damaged environment in Dagorlad leaves Frodo and Sam shocked:

Frodo looked round in horror. Dreadful as the Dead Marshes had been, and the arid moors of the Noman-lands, more loathsome far was the country that the crawling day now slowly unveiled to his shrinking eyes. Even to the Mere of Dead Faces some haggard phantom of green spring would come; but here neither spring nor summer would ever come again. Here nothing lived, not even the leprous growths that feed on rottenness. The gasping pools were choked with ash and crawling muds, sickly white and grey, as if the mountains had vomited the filth of their entrails upon the lands about. High mounds of crushed and powdered rock, great cones of earth fire-blasted and poison-stained, stood like an obscene graveyard in endless rows, slowly revealed in the reluctant light. They had come to the desolation that lay before Mordor: the lasting monument to the dark labour of its slaves that should endure when all their purposes were made void; a land defiled, diseased beyond all healing --unless the Great Sea should enter in and wash it with oblivion. (p. 899)

So, the acuteness in the description of the diseased land reminds the reader of the battle-stricken landscape in WW1 at the Western Front: Tolkien (2013) writes in a letter to L. W. Forster that ‘The Dead Marshes and the approaches to the Morannon owe something to Northern France after the Battle of the Somme’ (p. 249). This is the very scene, on their way through dark land, Smeagol depicts in *TT* in Dagorlad where a violent fight against Sauron’s army took place:

'All dead, all rotten. Elves and Men and Orcs. The Dead Marshes. There was a great battle long ago, yes, so they told him when Smeagol was young, when I was young before the Precious came. It was a great battle. Tall Men with long swords, and terrible Elves, and Orcses shrieking. They fought on the plain for days and months at the Black Gates. But the Marshes have grown since then, swallowed up the graves; always creeping, creeping.' (Tolkien, 1954, p. 895)

The supposed analogy between WW1 and the war in Dagorlad is quite obvious as the war Gollum talks about includes allies fighting on both sides and it lasts for a long time causing many casualties. As they get closer to the end of their adventure, the land itself becomes 'Apocalyptic' too (Campbell, 2022, p.418). In the last stage of their quest, even the air in the land of Mordor near mount Orodruin is poisonous and causes dizziness when Hobbits try to breathe (*RK*, p 1229). In addition to the burden of the Ring he carries, Frodo also has to withstand the poisonous effects of the environment that he expresses in *TT* (1954): 'I don't like anything here at all.' said Frodo, 'step or stone, breath or bone. Earth, air and water all seem accursed' (p. 986).

Overall, in Middle-earth cosmology, the complex plot structure and the multitude of characters is supported by a wide range of biodiversity which includes a rich flora and fauna. Biodiversity in Tolkien's cosmology contributes much to the narration process with all the details given about green pasture, hills and valleys. Bombadil tells Hobbits about the biodiversity in ecosystem which they realize to be a part of:

He told them tales of bees and flowers, the ways of trees, and the strange creatures of the Forest, about the evil things and good things, things friendly and things unfriendly, cruel things and kind things, and secrets hidden under brambles. (p. 364)

Like Hobbits, the reader learns from Bombadil that nature in both realms have character of its own separate from us. Some of the natural entities are friendly like Beorn and the eagles while some others like Saruman's crows and giant spiders in *The Hobbit* are hostile. Yet, Tolkien depicts evil places with equal picturesque quality as he gives emphasis to the beautiful sections in his secondary world (Campbell, 2022). Tolkien's depiction of nature includes not only the beauty but also the powerful elements in it. The evidence of this is the fact that Valar itself is an embodiment of natural forces. Each one of the angelic powers are intertwined with the representation of nature. Apart from Melkor, Manwe is the king of skies and winds, Varda (Elbereth) stars, Ulmo waters and Aule is the master of rocks, metals and precious gems (Campbell, pp. 414-6).

Overall, Tolkien's depiction of nature serves to highlight the value, beauty, and spiritual significance within his books, and also as a warning against the consequences of nature-culture divide. Consequently, natural entities in ME are sentient beings acting and reacting to the ecological problems. As S. Glotfelty (1996) comments, nature in ME is "an actor in the drama" rather than "just as the stage upon which the human story is acted out" (Glotfelty, xxi). His vivid and richly detailed natural settings not only enhance the mythic quality of Middle-earth but also reflect his own deep ecological worries. By this way, geographical properties and landscapes are designed accordingly for each specific race and their historical memories reflected through these qualities. Thus, the change in geography helps create a mythological effect inside Tolkien's narrative and also presenting the consequences of decline and fall in environmental terms.

2.3. THE CORRUPTING NATURE OF THE RING

Under this heading, the One Ring in J.R.R. Tolkien's corpus is analysed as a tempter with parallels to Satan in the Bible. This comparison highlights themes of temptation, corruption, and the seductive aspects of power. The One Ring embodies the theme of temptation, just as Satan plays the tempter role in the Bible. The Ring seduces its bearer by promising power, domination, and achievement of infinite desires while the Judeo-Christian tradition describes Satan as the greatest tempter. Apart from Adam and Eve, Satan tries to tempt Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11). Satan offers Jesus dominion and power in exchange for his worship, through abuse of human desire for power and dominion. The allusion lies in a way that both the Ring and Satan functions as a giver of power, finally leading to the corruption and spiritual downfall of the individual. Like Satan, the One Ring is a deceptive agent offering control but ultimately consumes those who constantly use it. Gollum, for instance, is completely enslaved by his desire to possess the Ring, losing his own identity and turning into a creature governed totally by his 'precious'. This is connotative of the biblical concept of sin as an enslaving force. Jesus says, 'Everyone who sins is a slave to sin,' (John 8:34) underlining how succumbing to temptation results in slavery and not liberty. The Ring's evil nature to corrupt the heart of those who uses it is paralleled by Tolkien to Satan's role in capturing souls through sin, promising fulfilment but delivering destruction.

Key characters in *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* face moments of temptation from this perspective. For instance, Frodo, Bilbo, Galadriel, and Boromir each confront at different levels the tempting of the One Ring, which promises power but ultimately leads to corruption and fall. Their struggles reflect the human condition and the constant conflict between free will and the seduction of evil. The thin line between succumbing to the temptation or resisting it is depicted in a much picturesque way in *TT* (1954):

For a moment it appeared to Sam that his master had grown and Gollum had shrunk: a tall stern shadow, a mighty lord who hid his brightness in grey cloud,

and at his feet a little whining dog. Yet the two were in some way akin and not alien: they could reach one another's minds. (p. 885)

It is hinted in the Rings trilogy that Gollum was a Hobbit before he fell (*FR*, p. 281), but in this above excerpt the parallelism Tolkien mentions is not a reference to their belonging to the same race. Although they are likened to a whining dog and its master, Tolkien depicts with dexterity the inner resemblance between these two characters. Having used the Ring and being exposed to its temptation, they can in a very nick of time yield to its corrupting power and swap roles.

The most diabolical being in whole of Tolkien's narration, Sauron, aims to tempt and corrupt others by giving them rings whose account is mainly told in "Of the Rings of Power and the Third Age" section of *The Silmarillion* (1977). Sauron approaches Elves in the beginning of the Second Age hiding his evil intentions and offers his help to Elven smiths of Eregion in their work of forging the rings of power. Gandalf recites the old Elven-lore about the rings of power of which last two lines are engraved on the One Ring in the tongue of Mordor. According to the legend, Sauron gives nine rings to mortal men who have been once mighty kings; seven to dwarf lords; three rings, forged by Celebrimbor, are given to Elves as told in *The Silmarillion* (1977):

However Sauron forges in Mount Doom the Ruling Ring in secrecy to dominate all other rings and twist the will of other races. Now the Elves made many rings; but secretly Sauron made One Ring to rule all the others, and their power was bound up with it, to be subject wholly to it and to last only so long as it too should last. And much of the strength and will of Sauron passed into that One Ring; for the power of the Elven-rings was very great, and that which should govern them must be a thing of surpassing potency; and Sauron forged it in the Mountain of Fire in the Land of Shadow. And while he wore the One Ring, he could perceive

all the things that were done by means of the lesser rings, and he could see and govern the very thoughts of those that wore them. (p. 335)

The last sentence explains the coercing nature of the One Ring: Sauron distributes the lesser rings in order to bind their will according to his desire. As a result, nine Kings who possess the rings become slaves to Sauron one by one and since then are known as the Ringwraiths. In other words, the fall of the Ringwraiths are the direct result of their yielding to the temptation by the Rings of Power. Seven rings of dwarves are either lost or returned to Sauron and in the end bring little good but much trouble to their former possessors. Only three rings of Elves remain unspoilt and hidden from the enemy, yet Elrond foresees that their fate are bound by the One Ring: ‘But maybe when the One has gone, the Three will fail, and many fair things will fade and be forgotten. That is my belief’ (Tolkien, *FR*, p.512).

As a magical ring, it gives unnaturally prolonged life to its keeper as seen in the case with Gollum. Gandalf in *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954) tells on the life stretching effect of the Ring: ‘He knows that it is a Great Ring, for it gave long life’ (p. 286). The One Ring gives an extraordinary long life to Bilbo too: In ‘A Long-Expected Party’ chapter of *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954), we are given the clue that he looks unnaturally younger than he really is:

And if that was not enough for fame, there was also his prolonged vigor to marvel at. Time wore on, but it seemed to have little effect on Mr. Baggins. At ninety he was much the same as at fifty. At ninety-nine they began to call him well-preserved, but unchanged would have been nearer the mark. (Tolkien, *FR*, p. 245)

In fact, it is obvious that Bilbo is not entirely happy with his young look; on the contrary, he complains about this situation saying that he feels really old inside: ‘Why, I feel all thin, sort of stretched, if you know what I mean: like butter that has been scraped over too

much bread.’ (*FR*, p. 257) Apparently, the line ‘stretched... over too much bread’ explains the problem with the Ring. It definitely endows long life to its bearer but this is not a joyful or a happy life but restless and tiresome one. With Tolkien’s own definition, the Ring is totally about magic and machinery and is designed to dominate and coerce, not to preserve and heal (*Letters*, 2013, p.124).

The One Ring is magical, powerful and has a coercive effect on the individual (Kreeft, 2005, p. 70; Kocher, 1972, p. 48) abusing their personal desires, corrupting the wearer over time. Boromir who burns with the desire to protect his city Minas Tirith is a perfect example of how the Ring corrupts and leads to fall (*FR*, p. 651). On the hill of Amon Sul before trying to take the Ring by force from Frodo, Boromir tries to convince him telling about his dream of using the Ring to bring order and peace to the Middle-earth:

Boromir strode up and down, speaking ever more loudly: Almost he seemed to have forgotten Frodo, while his talk dwelt on walls and weapons, and the mustering of men; and he drew plans for great alliances and glorious victories to be; and he cast down Mordor, and became himself a mighty king, benevolent and wise. (*FR*, p. 653)

Originally a noble character, Boromir’s great desire to rescue his beloved city leads to his fall. With the case of Boromir, Tolkien exemplifies the Christian morality that if one uses evil ways to a good end, they are very likely to end up turning evil (Peterson, 2015). Boromir ignores the warnings of the wise that the Ring will not yield to goodness and only answers to its maker Sauron. This is the biggest difference between Boromir and Faramir who tells Frodo that he will not take the Ring even if he finds it on the road. Faramir’s test with the Ring reveals he is much stronger in character than his brother Boromir (Sanford, p. 16) as he remarks: ‘I would not snare even an orc with a falsehood’ when Frodo asks whether he is trying to puzzle them during their interrogation in Ithilien (Tolkien, *TT*, p.

935). Faramir's salvation in the end comes through his high moral stance while Boromir and Denethor fall with their will to power in an immoral way even it is for a good purpose.

On the other hand, the tempting of Samwise is harsher as he already holds the Ring in his hand in the later chapters. In *The Two Towers* (1954), when Frodo gets stung by the giant spider Shelob just to remain unconscious for a while, Sam thinks Frodo is dead therefore feels obliged to take the Ring and continue the mission. As a tempter, the Ring immediately gives Sam images hard to resist:

Already the Ring tempted him, gnawing at his will and reason. Wild fantasies arose in his mind; and he saw Samwise the Strong, Hero of the Age, striding with a flaming sword across the darkened land, and armies flocking to his call as he marched to the overthrow of Barad-dyr. And then all the clouds rolled away, and the white sun shone, and at his command the vale of Gorgoroth became a garden of flowers and trees and brought forth fruit. He had only to put on the Ring and claim it for his own, and all this could be. (p. 1187)

Thanks to 'the Hobbit sense' which has no desire to dominate and coerce others, Samwise manages to remain intact as told in the following passage:

In that hour of trial, it was the love of his master that helped most to hold him firm; but also deep down in him lived still unconquered his plain hobbit-sense: he knew in the core of his heart that he was not large enough to bear such a burden, even if such visions were not a mere cheat to betray him. The one small garden of a free gardener was all his need and due, not a garden swollen to a realm; his own hands to use, not the hands of others to command. (p. 1187)

The impact of the Ring on the bearer is similar to the temptation of Satan who poisons minds. Even after the Ring is destroyed, at the end of *The Return of the King* (1955), Frodo feels deprived as much as he is happy that it is gone. Even after it is gone, the Ring has a 'lingering' effect on the minds of its former possessors: '...what's become of my ring, Frodo, that you took away?' 'I have lost it, Bilbo dear,' said Frodo. 'I got rid of it, you know.' 'What a pity!' said Bilbo. 'I should have liked to see it again' (Tolkien, *RK*, p. 1281). There is a distinction between being a ring-bearer and a ring-wearer yet both Frodo and Bilbo manage to keep the hazard minimum by rarely using it and also with their natural immunity against evil (Green, 1995). While Hobbits have a certain resistance against the poisoning of the Ring, tempting of Elven Queen Galadriel happens at a different level thus is worth mentioning:

And now at last it comes. You will give me the Ring freely! In place of the Dark Lord, you will set up a Queen. And I shall not be dark, but beautiful and terrible 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. (Tolkien, *FR*, p. 617)

Frodo offers the One Ring to Galadriel as he feels weak and broke - especially due to the loss of Gandalf - but for an instance she reveals a glimpse of what will happen if she takes the Ring and he sees a terrible yet at the same time a beautiful queen almighty. Yet, she resists the temptation of evil and remains as Lady Galadriel. As the example of Galadriel showcases, no incarnate beings in Tolkien's universe are exempt from the danger of the temptation of the Ring no matter how great they are. Even Gandalf himself is susceptible to fall and he gets angry when Frodo offers him the Ring saying:

'With that power I should have power too great and terrible. And over me the Ring would gain a power still greater and more deadly.' His eyes flashed and his face

was lit as by a fire within. 'Do not tempt me! For I do not wish to become like the Dark Lord himself'. (*FR*, p.289)

Saruman's downfall is again closely related to the corrupting nature of the One Ring. Tolkien tells in the fourth chapter of *Unfinished Tales* that Saruman is a wizard sent to Middle-earth along with Gandalf and Radagast, in order to help its inhabitants against the evil of Sauron (1980). He settles down in the Tower of Orthanc in Isengard as the head of the White Council and the greatest of Istari. Over centuries he serves the good with his vast knowledge and wisdom according to the will of Valar. Yet, the Wizards – Istari – are incarnate beings therefore have the potential to go astray as Tolkien noted in his letter 181 (2013). Gandalf explains in *FR* (1954) how a character once wise and great like Saruman falls:

'And here you will stay, Gandalf the Grey, and rest from journeys. For I am Saruman the Wise, Saruman Ring-maker, Saruman of Many Colours!'

I looked then and saw that his robes, which had seemed white, were not so, but were woven of all colours. and if he moved, they shimmered and changed hue so that the eye was bewildered.

'I liked white better,' I said.

'White!' he sneered. 'It serves as a beginning. White cloth may be dyed. The white page can be overwritten; and the white light can be broken.'

'In which case it is no longer white,' said I. 'And he that breaks a thing to find out what it is has left the path of wisdom.' (p. 501)

In this dialogue, Saruman scorns white colour describing it as only a 'beginning' and boasts to be colourful. But Gandalf opposes him saying that something that has started as white should not be changed into something else than its original nature. There is a parallelism between the way Saruman 'the white' tries to be colourful and the One Ring's ability to twist and change the true nature of things the creator intended.

After Saruman learns the finding of the One Ring from Gandalf, he devises a plot to capture the Ring and to become the ultimate power in Middle-earth. During this period, he follows a hideous policy by maintaining an alliance with Sauron and remaining on good terms with The White Council. He swims in both rivers not to provoke doubts and in secret he builds an army of Orcs equipped with many war gadgetry. He also breeds a new race which is called 'Uruk-hai' that is, unlike Goblins, resistant to sunlight and proved to be very effective fighters. This evil deed of him is again about distorting the perfect cosmic order of creation. Thus, Saruman defects the nature by also breaking the natural order of things designed by divine creator as Fangorn talks about this fact in *TT* (1954):

For these Isengarders are more like wicked Men. It is a mark of evil things that came in the Great Darkness that they cannot abide the Sun; but Saruman's Orcs can endure it, even if they hate it. I wonder what he has done? Are they Men he has ruined, or has he blended the races of Orcs and Men? That would be a black evil! (p. 729)

Saruman's desire for power grows bigger in time and he weaves his web in secret as told later by Gandalf: 'There I was at fault,' he said. 'I was lulled by the words of Saruman the Wise; but I should have sought for the truth sooner, and our peril would now be less'' (Tolkien, *FR*, 493). Saruman's betrayal is twofold: He not only delays and misleads Gandalf by hiding his desire for the Ring and Sauron's growing menace, but he also keeps Gandalf captive at Isengard when he has an urgent appointment with Frodo. Because of Saruman's treachery, Gandalf cannot meet with Frodo whose road is full of peril yet Aragorn assists him and saves the quest from disaster.

Saruman's and all evil being's love for machinery is a reflection of Tolkien's own dislike for the industrialization and ill-use of technology that caused many dismays like The World Wars and pollution in our modern era. Saruman with his satanic mind and use of technology, aims to bring disorder to ME (Shippey, 2003) Technology and magic like the Rings of Power, can be used to coerce the will of others. Lacking Gandalf's wisdom, Saruman wants to accelerate the work of bringing order to Middle-earth and one way to realize this involves forcing others against their will. This is why Saruman succumbs to evil ways and Gandalf remains unspoilt. As exemplified by the aforementioned characters in this chapter, there is a deep thematic resemblance between the One Ring in Tolkien's writings and the biblical description of Satan. Both themes serve as devices of ultimate temptation and corruption, illustrating the dangers of yielding to evil and subsequent ecological destruction. Tolkien, a devout Christian, designed his writing with those moral and spiritual messages, making the Ring a cause for corruption on the personal level ultimately leading to environmental degradation on the global scale.

CHAPTER 3. ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF TOLKIEN

Tolkien declared in his Letter 131 how he was discontent with allegory and that his writing was not an allegory of Christianity but any probable similarities are on the symbolic level (2013). Therefore, the parallelism is not one to one representation yet he designs the ecological aspect of his fictional realm as a place of harmony broken like ‘The Fall of Man’ story in the Bible. The perfect design of creation is corrupted by those who lack goodness in their doings in Tolkien’s cosmology. Tolkien's idea of sub-creation, where beings within the world engage in creative acts, again reflects the concept of fall. These acts are often marred by the fall, leading to flawed and imperfect creations like Orcs. The Silmarils, the Rings of Power, and other artifacts are examples of sub-creative works that are tainted by their makers' fallen nature.

The destruction of the One Ring is also about restoring balance to Middle-earth, allowing nature to heal from the wounds inflicted by war and industrialization. The Lord of the Rings desires to bring apocalypse to ME and the Fellowship tries to prevent Sauron from dominating Middle-earth by destroying the Ring. *The Lord of the Rings* as a quest narrative again contributes to the aforementioned ecological aspect of the book: The aim of Frodo and the fellowship is to destroy the Ring on the symbolic level but theirs is also a struggle to save the world and its inhabitants from the ailments of terror, destruction and pollution caused by evil forces in Middle-earth. ‘Pilgrimage’ or quest is common to all three works of Tolkien studied here: Almost all the protagonists set journey for a sacred goal, or save the world from an evil. In *The Hobbit* (1937), Bilbo’s motive is to help Dwarves reclaim their home and save Middle-earth from the destruction of the dragon. Similarly, Gandalf’s concern is to end the evil dominion of Smaug whom the wizard thinks has dwelled too long there posing a threat for every being. The Fellowship of the Ring again aims to prevent the ailment of Sauron by destroying the Ring which is his deadliest weapon. Gandalf expresses the ecological concerns of his to Denethor in *RK* (1955):

But all worthy things that are in peril as the world now stands, those are my care. And for my part, I shall not wholly fail of my task, though Gondor should perish, if anything passes through this night that can still grow fair or bear fruit and flower again in days to come. (p. 1034)

Gandalf summarizes the importance of the fact that as human beings we have the role of steward on this planet and need to behave accordingly. Though Denethor as the ruler of the men of Gondor, deems himself a high position, in fact Gandalf holds a much more honourable place as his concern is not about governing other people but caring for any growing or 'living' thing be it ill or good as Gandalf tells Denethor: 'Yet there are other men and other lives, and time still to be. And for me, I pity even his slaves' (p. 1094).

It is also significant in the way what Tolkien achieves with his writing is early examples of ecocentrism and nature writing (Campbell, 2022). The exploration of his works reveals how his writing echoes recent environmental discourses although his fictional realm seems unrelated to our world. As the popularity of his books increased over time, the ecocentric dimension of Tolkien's works, especially, *LR* and *The Hobbit* kindled a consciousness against the growing threat of climate change. R. Wood (2003) points to this fact: "[an] unapologetic defender of nature before environmentalism had yet been made into a cause" (p.28). Therefore, in the light of contemporary ecological concerns, Tolkien's Middle-earth offers profound insights into humanity's role as custodian of the natural world.

As their attitudes toward ecosystem differ from each other, the races in ME experience the fall and deterioration at different levels (Zaleski & Zaleski, 2015). This statement is very characteristic of Ents and Hobbits. Although not analysed under the Fall Narrative heading, the troubles Ents and Hobbits suffer is interesting in terms of showing the symbiotic character of the ecosystem. Hobbits have been given an environment friendly role in the narrative with their immune lifestyle likewise Ents are created by earth

goddess Yavanna in Tolkien's mythology in order to care the forests. Tolkien describes both races exempt from committing the crimes that lead to ecological fall which befalls upon other races in ME. Still, both races encounter trouble at different levels by evil forces in spite of their eco-friendly lifestyles.

Ents have to deal with Saruman's Orcs who destroy Fangorn forest. With a little bit of encouragement from Merry and Pippin, Ents get aroused to prevent devilry of Saruman. Fangorn voices the importance of this common sense in the face of ecological problems: 'likely enough that we are going to our doom: the last march of the Ents. But if we stayed at home and did nothing, doom would find us anyway, sooner or later.' (p. 743) Through Fangorn, Tolkien conveys the message that if we do not get into action to preserve the earth, we will most probably be late to save the planet. Similarly in Galadriel's mirror Sam witnesses the evil of Saruman at work in Shire:

'Hi!' cried Sam in an outraged voice.

'There's that Ted Sandyman a-cutting down trees as he shouldn't. They didn't ought to be felled: it's that avenue beyond the Mill that shades the road to Bywater. I wish I could get at Ted, and I'd fell him!'

But now Sam noticed that the Old Mill had vanished, and a large red-brick building was being put up where it had stood. Lots of folk were busily at work. There was a tall red chimney nearby. Black smoke seemed to cloud the surface of the Mirror (p. 613).

What Sam sees in the mirror turns out to be true as told in 'The Scouring of the Shire' section. As the great enemy is away in the southeast, four Hobbits take granted that the Shire is free from trouble yet they return from their quest to find a polluted and exploited Shire. With the help of Grima Wormtongue and other southerners, Saruman attempts to

turn the Shire into a land of industry, transforming its inhabitant into slaves. According to the accounts of Farmer Cotton:

[t]hey're always a-hammering and a-letting out a smoke and a stench, and there isn't no peace even at night in Hobbiton. And they pour out filth a purpose; they've fouled all the lower Water and it's getting down into Brandywine. If they want to make the Shire into a desert, they're going the right way about it. (*RK*, p. 1309)

Frodo and his friends immediately take action and organize an uprising defeating evil forces and redeeming their beloved homeland. Hobbit's homeland the Shire is threatened by evil although it is located far from the growing danger in Mordor: 'The wide world is all about you: you can fence yourselves in, but you cannot for ever fence it out (p. 313). Elven Gildor voices this reality in *FR* that everything in nature is in interaction and if something bad happens somewhere, everyone is likely to feel it.

With these two examples Tolkien emphasizes the fact that ecology is a holistic entity therefore as human beings we need to take action or precaution against environmental degradation no matter how far it seems. R. Wood (2003) touches upon this interconnected nature of creation: 'Everything—absolutely everything—deeply intersects and overlaps with everything else. To pluck even a single small strand of this vast cosmic web is to make the whole thing shimmer with endless rippling effects' (pp. 121-2). If there occurs a problem somewhere within the system, any single unit will be affected sooner or later. Tolkien draws attention to this unitarian aspect of eco system that necessitates the sensitivity of each inhabitant. By employing ecologically sensitive characters like Fangorn, Tolkien aims to place the idea that human beings must do within their power to protect and preserve natural world. After Saruman is defeated and punished for the damage he has given to environment, Fangorn draws attention to this fact saying: 'for to be sure Ents have played their part' with a rightful feeling of pride (p. 1272).

The Shire, for example, is threatened by Saruman's industrialization, reflecting Tolkien's concerns about the negative impact of modernization on the environment (*RK*, p. 1293). While Nature is represented by the pastoral Shire region in Tolkien's cosmology, Culture is contrasted to it through the use of technology which always result in some sort of oppression and destruction. Sauron, too, is a master of magic and technology worst of which is the Ring itself.

Still, Tolkien's writing has the existent sense of redemption and salvation although it is soaked with themes of decline and fall. The last part of the trilogy is about regaining the former glory by a saviour who is personified by Aragorn. Tolkien's *The Return of the King* (1955) definitely has connotations like the second coming of Jesus Christ and a cult of Messiah who will act as a saviour (Algeo, 2008). As a long expected leader who is believed to restore the former glory of Númenor, Aragorn matches greatly with the Messianic characterization of the Judeo-Christian tradition. For once glorious city of Gondor 'was in truth falling year by year into decay; and already it lacked half the men that could have dwelt at ease there' (*RK*, p. 1028). The return of the king Aragorn to Gondor is in a sense reminder of the second coming of Jesus Christ and re-establishment of 'The Kingdom of Heaven' in Christian theology (Matthew 24–25; Mark 13; Luke 21:5–26; John 14:25–29). The resemblance expands to cover the revival of the white tree of Númenor and the fact that Aragorn is also a master of healing like Christ who cures diseases and heals wounds.

Tolkien, thus, concludes his mythology in accordance with Christianity just like he begins with it: In spite of the tendency for fall and corruption, we human beings still have the chance to find redemption by correcting the wrongs we have done to both living and non-living beings. All we need to do is to rid of the anthropocentric mindset and remember our steward role embodied in the legendarium by characters like Gandalf and Galadriel who try to restore this balance using their knowledge and skill. Through characters like Tom Bombadil, who embodies a harmonious relationship with nature, or

the Ents, guardians of the ancient forests, Tolkien presents models of ecological stewardship to coexist with other beings.



CHAPTER 4. CONCLUSION

This thesis explored the textual and thematic parallelism between Christian theology and J.R.R. Tolkien's legendarium, focusing on the fall of man, personal level parallels, and biblical themes. Especially the sections analysing the concept of fall in Tolkien's writing is associated with Christian 'Paradise Lost' narrative. Both texts required an ecocritical reading as the loss of a divine place like 'Eden' also resonates the constant decline in the natural habitat of both our world and Middle-earth. The comparative analysis of both Fall Narratives shown that the decline in the quality of environment is accompanied by exiles, wars and ecological disasters. Just like the biblical story of fall shows, the fall narrative in Tolkien's legendarium signifies to not only the losing of the grace of God but it also denotes a physical and natural corruption. Therefore, this study made it clear that Tolkien drew inspiration from Christianity and integrated those elements into his rich and complex fictional world. This conclusion section consequently summarizes the findings and indications while underlining the significance of this study in grasping the interplay between religious scripture and literature.

Introduction part gave the background of Tolkien's fictional creation and the significance of his writing. Chapter one provided the ecocritical literary theory along with literary review section and biographic facts about the author which are essential to evaluate his works.

Chapter 2 delved into the textual parallelism by examining the concept of 'the Fall of Man' in Christian theology and its counterparts in Tolkien's fictional realm called Middle-earth. His major books *The Silmarillion*, *The Lord of the Rings* and partly *The Hobbit* reflect Tolkien's Catholic creed that how 'Paradise' is a realm which is lost as a result of our sinning nature. The analysis proved the existence of striking similarities between the narratives of Adam and Eve's disobedience and the fall of the Elves and Númenoreans. Both stories depict the results of pride, disobedience, and the ensuing corruption of an ideal realm. The aforementioned likeness allowed Tolkien to observe

themes of sacrifice, resurrection, and the eternal battle between good and evil through depiction of diverse characters.

The second header in Chapter 2 dealt with how nature is represented as a separate being rather than something passive to be benefited and exploited throughout Tolkien's major books and how it contributed to the overall ecocentric tone in Middle-earth. This animistic aspect is inserted by Tolkien to his corpus in order to remind the reader about the ecocentric viewpoint that we are not the privileged inhabitants in this world but an equal partner of the ecosystem.

The last header in this section is about the corrupting effect of the Ring. As a major theme in the trilogy, the One Ring acts as an evil agent like biblical character Satan who tempts and corrupts others. After the close analysis of Tolkien's works, it became evident that he regarded the Ring not only as a religious theme that leads to sin, but also as a diabolical gadget closely associated with technology which dominates individuals. The apocalyptic threat posed by technology and industrialization is embodied by the One Ring which acts as a corrupting symbol leading to fall at both ecological and personal levels.

Chapter 3 is spared for the critical evaluation where Tolkien placed his environmental concerns into his corpus. This section specifically focused on how Tolkien skilfully employed ecological and religious themes, merging them to create a rich and multi-layered narrative.

Moreover, this study opens new horizons for further exploration and analysis. Future research might cover any possible parallels and themes expanding the scope to other religious texts and myths that might have influenced Tolkien's work. Due to diverse limitations, some common themes and symbols are left out of this research yet can be subject of further studies from different angles. Furthermore, comparative studies between Tolkien's mythology and other literary works with religious themes could provide valuable examples from the broad landscape of religious symbolism in literature. The

question of how determining physical environment in controlling any narrative, be it sacred or literary, is also answered by this study.

In conclusion, this thesis has demonstrated the textual parallelism between Christian theology and J.R.R. Tolkien's legendarium from an ecocritical viewpoint. Through a comprehensive analysis of the fall of man, and some biblical themes in the legendarium, it has become clear that Tolkien's writings are partly founded on religious foundation inviting readers to contemplate, the nature of good and evil, moral ambiguity and the complexities of the human nature.

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