



Antagonists of Evil in the Works of J.R.R.Tolkien and Nato Davitashvili

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Abstract

The article deals with the main characteristics of the antagonists in Fantasy literature. Evil characters have always existed in different literary works. However, in fantasy literature the main antagonist is definitely evil. For the research are chosen two great fantasy writers of English and Georgian literature J. R. R. Tolkien and Nato Davitashvili. The comparison of Sauron (“The Lord of the rings”) and Samsala (“The story of Lile Iroeli”) indicates that both of them have some similar characteristics which can be presented in different aspects such as their origin, physical appearance, their naming, preparation for the great war and their defeating weapon. Tolkien, as a founder of fantasy genre has created the framework of fantasy characters that influences every fantasy author including Nato Davitashvili. Evidently, she took the main traits of antagonist character from Tolkien’s works which is the reason for similarity of features of the two antagonists, but the Georgian author has added many additional traits and elements from Georgian mythology which emphasize on the individuality of the author.

Keywords: antagonist, fantasy, demigod, evil, dark lord, J.R.R.Tolkien

Introduction

Antagonist is a necessary element of a literary work. It is a universal archetype that exists in any work of any culture and historical period. In literature, an antagonist is a character or a group of characters that presents an obstacle or is involved in direct conflict against protagonist or the whole society¹. In fantasy literature the main type of antagonist is a villain who is extremely evil and opposes not only protagonists but also the whole world, having evil intentions against both. J. R. R. Tolkien was the first fantasy writer who established the main characteristics of fantasy antagonist - Sauron (in “*The Lord of the Rings*”), thus influencing many other fantasy writers including the Georgian author Nato Davitashvili. This article discusses the main antagonists in English and Georgian fantasy works - Sauron (from “*The Lord of the Rings*”) and Samsala (from “*The Story of Lile Iroeli*”) and aims to discover the main characteristics and similarities between the antagonists of the two writers. The study is conducted with the descriptive methodology. It offers character analysis and a comparative study of the works of the two fantasy writers using structuralism approach.

¹Literary devices. Antagonist.<https://literarydevices.net/antagonist/>

Discussion

The first main aspect to be discussed is the origin of the antagonists of the two authors -Sauron and Samsala. They do not represent the antonym of God the Creator and neither are they the Original Evil or Satan. In “The Encyclopedia of Fantasy,” the main evil antagonist is presented by the name “Dark Lord” and, as explained, “The Dark Lord may not be explicitly a Devil or an Antichrist” (Clute & Grant, 1997, p. 250). Antagonists are only the servants of Dark Power. In the book “The Silmarillion,”² the first evil evoked in the world was Melkor, who was created together with other Ainurs³ by Eru⁴, before men and elves were created. Melkor’s turning to evil can be compared to the Biblical story of Satan’s rebellion against God. The creative power of Tolkien’s world is music. Illuvatar gave each Ainu the gift of music and ordered that all the Ainurs had to sing in harmony and create the beautiful music. He would sit and enjoy the tranquility and affinity of the Ainur and the theme inspired by him would overwhelm the whole world and fill it with harmony. They started singing and the world was filled with pleasant sound of music and the Illuvatar was sitting and listening to them. However, as the music progressed, Melkor, one of the Ainurs, started to interweave matters of his own imagining that were not in accord with the theme of Illuvatar; accordingly, “straightway discord arose about him and many that sang nigh him grew despondent, and their thought was disturbed and their music faltered” (Tolkien, 1998, p. 5). The sound of the theme inspired by Melkor went in contrast with the sounds of harmonic melodies inspired by Illuvatar. After several struggles, Illuvatar spoke:

Mighty are the Ainur, and mightiest among them is Melkor; but that he may know, and all the Ainur, that I am Illuvatar, those things that ye have sung, I will show them forth, that ye may see what ye have done. And thou, Melkor, shalt see that no theme may be played that hath not its uttermost source in me, nor can any alter the music in my despite. For he that attempteth this shall prove but mine instrument in the devising of things more wonderful, which he himself hath not imagined” (Tolkien, 1998, p. 4).

Illuvatar went away from that place together with his supporter Ainurs. Consequently, Melkor became the opposition. Sauron, who is the main Dark Power in “The Lord of the Rings,” is the servant of Melkor. Originally, he served Aule, the master of all crafts but he later turned to Sauron. That is the reason he is not mentioned in the story of Melkor’s separation from Eru. He appears later in the third age in the Middle-Earth, endeavoring to spread his influence over the place and become the Lord of the whole Middle-Earth. Therefore, Sauron is not the prototype of Satan or the rebelled Angel, but one of the “Dark Lords.”

In the books of the Georgian writer Nato Davitashvili, the main antagonist is called Samsala. The author has chosen the main ruling power from the Georgian Mythology - God the Creator, whose dwelling is in a castle on a very high mountain, above the clouds. Nato Davitashvili does not create any cosmogonic myths about the creation of her setting. She uses existed Georgian myths and develops them in her story, personalizing the mythological heroes

²“The Silmarillion” is a collection of J.R.R. Tolkien’s works that were edited and published posthumously by his son, Christopher Tolkien. It presents the ancient history of Middle-Earth and First Age and the cosmogony of the World of Arda.

³Ainurs—immortal holy spirits who existed before the creation of Tolkien’s Fictional world, similar to Angels. (Singular form: Ainu)

⁴Eru – supreme Deity of Arda similar to Biblical God, meant “The One” or “Only”. And the epithet “Illuvatar” meant “Father of All” in the Quenya language.

and developing them. God the Creator sent Buknai Baaduri the monk⁵ with other Demigods Kopala and Iakhsar to help people. The author does not mention the main evil character of her fictional world. Neither does she tell anything about the separation of initial good and evil or the rebellion of the opposing angels. It can only be seen that the underworld⁶ and the upperworld were governed by ten powerful Demons, and Samsala was one of them. Many of the Demons were full of power and witchcraft, but Samsala was the most treacherous and slyest and always wanted to be in a higher compared to others. He managed to do it after he deceived the other demons, nailed them to the Chalice of Grief⁷ as its eternal guards, and made himself as the prior of others. Samsala, as well as Sauron, is not the prototype of Satan. He is the Dark Lord, who tried to strengthen his power over Kolkheti⁸. Consequently, both antagonists are in a lower position than the Original evil spirit and they only represent his servants, one of the Dark Lords.

It is interesting to consider the names of the two antagonists. Sauron is a name invented by Tolkien, but Sumsala is an old Georgian word which means “Deadly poison.” The author has chosen this word to underline the evil nature of the antagonist. The literary critic Janet Brennan Croft in her article “Naming the Evil One: Onomastic Strategies in Tolkien and Rowling” discusses the naming of the evil heroes. She also explores how the characters of Tolkien’s stories deal with the naming of the personifications of evil. It is interesting to note that names of antagonists are often avoided to be uttered by other heroes.

“Among men there is a general tendency to avoid using the name *Sauron*. Aragorn will say the name, but more often he will use such terms as *The Dark Lord*, *The Enemy*, *The Mordor*. The men of Gondor avoid the name all the time, and will seldom even name the land of *Mordor*... Similarly, the Hobbits also avoid saying *Sauron* – even the narrator, when reporting Frodo’s thoughts, rarely uses the name. They generally say *The Enemy* (Croft, 2009, p. 8)

In “*The Story of Lile Iroeli*” the characters also avoid uttering the name Samsala. They mention him as *Dark Lord* and *Evil Spirit*, *The Underworld*, *The Abyss*. The reason for avoiding the naming of the antagonists is simple: “Name is the essence. It could summon the being or at least attract the being’s attention; as the old saying goes: “Name the Devil and his horns appear” (Croft, 2009, p. 5). This fact indicates that all the characters are afraid of naming the antagonists’ names for fear that it will draw the evil to their place.

Apart from the origin and name, the appearance of the antagonist should be mentioned. The main antagonist specifically differs from other evil characters in a fantasy story. He is always presented as being ugly because the author wants to strengthen the reader’s negative attitude towards him. Constant thinking about evil and being in the darkness and abyss has an influence on his appearance. Tolkien describes Sauron’s appearance as follows: “He brooded in the dark until he had wrought for himself a new shape; and it was terrible for his fair semblance had departed for ever when he was cast into the abyss at the drowning of Numenor” (Tolkien, 1998, p. 140). After obtaining his ring and restoring his power, he declared war against Gondor. Isildur cut his finger with the ring. “Sauron was for that time vanquished, and he forsook his body, and his spirit fled far away and hid in waste places; and he took no visible shape again for many long years” (Tolkien, 1998, p. 141). Then he gained his strength once

⁵BuknaiBaaduri the Monk - the most supreme demigod in Georgian mythology.

⁶In Georgian mythology the universe is devided into two parts: Underworld and Upperworld

⁷Chalice of Grief is a kind of bowl in NatoDavitashvili’s story. It is situated underworld, where all the grief and tears of the people leak as bitterness and by drinking this bitterness the demons get power.

⁸Kolkheti is a real spot on the territory of Georgian republic. This is the setting of “The story of LileIroeli”. That is the reason why this story is considered as an example of low fantasy.

more and held his position in Gondor. And after the time when Frodo Baggins destroyed the ring in the Mount Doom, “Sauron failed, and he was utterly vanquished and passed away like a shadow of malice” (Tolkien, 1998, p. 145). The book “The Silmarillion” depicts how Sauron’s appearance is changing gradually: instead of his attractive appearance he becomes ugly and disgusting, and finally only a shadow is left of him.

In the books by Nato Davitashvili, Samsala can be characterized as a negative hero with ugly visuality as well. The main similarity in the appearance of Sauron and Samsala is their eyes. The literary critic Edward Lense states that Tolkien took the personality of Sauron from the Celtic (or Irish) mythological character - Balor. Balor is not frequently mentioned in the Celtic mythology, but he is still a very special hero as a symbol of extreme evil. The eye is of great importance in his appearance, as it is a source of his power. Whoever looks into his eye during the battles suffers defeat, loses the power and even the largest army is overcome by Balor’s small army. The eye has a great power because when he is killed with a stone slung through the eye, his army becomes disintegrated – prodded along by the way the eye came out the back of Balor’s head and killed twenty-seven of his own warriors. The effect is much the same as when Sauron’s army scattered after the last battle at the Black Gate (Lense, 1976, p. 4). When Sauron realized that Frodo was standing at the edge of the gap in the Mount Doom overlooking the boiling fire and about to throw the ring in it, “Throughout his realm a tremor ran, his slaves quailed, and his armies halted, and his captains suddenly steerless, bereft of will, wavered and despaired, for they were forgotten (Tolkien, 1999, p. 240).

Besides having a destructive power, the eye has a controlling influence on others. It can look through the minds of other people and read their thoughts. Frodo saw Sauron’s eye in Galadriel’s mirror: “Suddenly the mirror went altogether dark, as dark as if a hole had opened in the world of sight, and Frodo looked into emptiness. In the black abyss there appeared a single Eye that slowly grew.”(Tolkien, 1999, p. 408). The yellow, flaming watchful eye was so horrifying that Frodo grew torpid and he realized that he himself was being sought by Sauron.

In his research “Sauron is Watching You,” Edward Lense points to one more feature of the Eye: It is a symbol of curse. He states that besides being “terrible”, the Eye can be compared to a “window to nothing”, full of hatred and despair, trying to drag all the mankind through it. “Sauron’s eye is so much worse than Barol’s, because Barol is merely a figure of death, Sauron- of damnation. That is why when Frodo felt the eye as he stood on Amon Hen, hundreds of miles from Mordor, he ‘lost all hope’ (Lense, 1976, p. 4.)

Samsala’s Eye has its own history. He was one of the ten demons being so sly and treacherous that he even tried to deceive the supreme demigod Buqnai Baaduri the Monk. He came up to him and offered him to involve in a fight with him and admit his own defeat. In return, he promised Baaduri the Monk to give him the nine demons under his obedience. The furious Demigod threw his firing whip over his head and Samsala lost his eyesight, he was not killed but lefts alive in order to show everyone that Demigods never make a deal with demons. “Samsala used his witchcraft and started to peer with his eye of mind” (Davitashvili, 2010, p. 107), but he can see through the eye only in abyss, he is blind on the earth. After having seen Samsala’s Eye, the daughter of Kolkheti governor describes it in the following way: “I could not see his face clearly, it flashed for a second and again darkened. The darkness could not cover only one eye, which was on his forehead. I thought Samsala himself was looking at me. I could not resist his freezing gaze and closed my eyes but it did not help. I could still see him with my eyes closed”(Davitashvili, 2010, p. 82). Samsala’s eye has a symbolic meaning. It is the third Eye, which he uses to see through people’s minds even from the abyss. From the main similarity of these two antagonists – the Eye – it can be concluded that Sauron’s Eye is the symbol of power and curse, and Samsala’s Eye is his mental ability, which distinguishes him from other demons.

One of the main characteristics of the epic fantasy is wars and great battles. The strategy and equipment for the war is similar to that of the Middle Ages. The characters of the books written by Tolkien and Davitashvili are involved in constant preparation for wars, which take place at the end of the stories. In both stories by Tolkien and by Davitashvili, the main antagonists accompanied by their helpers go to the dwelling place of the Dark Lord, and the armies of the antagonists go to attack and fight with the fellowship and the other warriors. The antagonist has a plan, and acts according to it. His main purpose is to become Lord of the region and to spread his power over it. Sauron attempts to become the ruler of the Middle-Earth. When he showed up to the Middle-Earth “he had fortified the land of Mordor and had built there the tower Barad-Dur and thereafter he strove over for the dominion of Middle-Earth, to become a king over all kings and as a God unto Men” (Tolkien, 1999, p. 130).

Sauron realized that he had to use witchcraft to fulfill his goal. This was the reason for creating the ring of power, but for his physical governance he needed an army. That is the reason why he started to prepare the army of orcs and trolls. Orcs were wild creatures. They were first bred by the Dark Power of the North in the Elder days. It is said that they had no language of their own, but took what they could of other tongues and perverted it to their own liking (Tolkien, 1999, p. 459). Sauron’s army mainly consisted of orcs. They were trained by him and were good warriors.

At the end of the Third Age a troll-race not before seen appeared in southern Mirkwood and in the mountain borders of Mordor... That Sauron bred them none doubted, though from what stock was not known. Some held that they were not Yrolls but Giant Orcs... Trolls they were, but filled with the evil will of their master: a fell race, strong, agile, fierce and cunning, but harder than stone” (Tolkien, 1999, p. 458).

Preparation for the final battle is also presented in “*The Story of Lile Iroeli*”. Buknai Baaduri tells the other demigods, Kopala and Iakhsar⁹ about Samsala’s preparation for war. He explains that the reason why the evil spirits are silent. They are preparing the weapons day and night and the Dark Lord is collecting his army and getting ready for the decisive war. If the citizens of Kolkheti don’t meet him properly prepared, they will have hard days. There is a chance that Samsala’s army will overcome the army of men, especially in the mountains and cliffs, where they run better than ibexes. Buknai Baaduri the Monk gives a plan to the Demigods: they must train the army as well and prepare the Children of Man for the last battle. Besides, the battles must be held in the lowlands, they must lure them out towards the South. Every boy in every community and family, who turns twelve years old, should start exercising in archery, fencing and leather belt jumping¹⁰. Some experienced warriors must be appointed in each village” (Davitashvili, 2010, p. 52).

Consequently, both antagonists are preparing for the special decisive step. In both stories all the creatures are involved in the final battle. The opposing sides do not consist of separate races, but the creatures are either on good or evil side. In Tolkien’s story Sauron is supported by all the dark powers including those kings of Rohan who were deceived by the Dark Lord. The fellowship of the ring is supported by men, elves, dwarves, ents and four hobbits. In the stories of Nato Davitashvili, good and evil fight against each other as well. On one side there is Samsala together with the evil Devis¹¹, the spirits of water, world and

⁹Kopala and Iakhsar – heroes from Georgian mythology, mighty warriors and demon-killers.

¹⁰Leather belt jumping – old kind of sport game in Georgia where one player strikes a leather belt and others try to jump high in order to avoid the hitting.

¹¹ Devi – one or several-headed ogre in Georgian mythology. Devis always were enemies for men, but some of them, who were cleverer, moved to higher mountains of village Roshkash and started to fight on the men’s side.

underworld. On the other side there are men, the Devis from Roshkash, the Demigods, dwarfs and the Dalis¹².

The Final Battle and its consequences are similar to the ending of folktale where the evil is defeated and the good gains victory. In “The Morphology of the Folktale” V. Propp gives several variations of the destruction of the antagonist in a folktale:

- 1) The villain is beaten in open combat.
- 2) He is defeated in a contest.
- 3) He loses at cards.
- 4) He loses on being weighed.
- 5) He is killed without a preliminary fight.
- 6) He is banished directly (Propp, 1968, p. 53).

Through the comparison of the plot of the stories of Tolkien and Davitashvili can be observed that the defeat of the antagonists is different from that of a folktale. Here the protagonist is not physically so strong as to fight against the Dark Power, and neither the Dark Lord would be strong, unless he used witchcraft. Sauron and Samsala can be defeated not in a physical battle, but by destroying the item that provides them with power. Sauron’s power is in his ring. He forged it in the “Mountain of Fire in the Land of Shadow” for special purpose. “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” (Tolkien, 1999, p. 138). Frodo is directed to destroy this very ring. At the edge of the fire pit he changes his mind as the Ring has an influence on him. He tells Sam: “I have come, but I do not choose now to do what I came for. I will not do this deed. The Ring is mine!” (Tolkien, 1999, p. 239). Frodo is tempted before destruction of the Ring, but in the development of the story the ring is destroyed together with Gollum.

The source of power for Samsala is the Chalice of Grief forged with Khalibian steel in the Black Fire of Abyss. The Dark Lord made it invisible for the demigods. All the grief and pain leaks as bitterness into the ground and accumulates in this bowl. Once a year all the evil spirits gather together at this bowl and each of them drinks a handful of bitterness to reinforce their power until the bowl is emptied. By drinking this bitterness, the evil spirits get inexhaustible energy that is enough for the whole year. Who will save the world? The one who has a divine light over his head, who will lead the way through the mist of darkness and destroy the Chalice of Grief with the sword forged with the Khalibian Steel. The destruction of the Chalice of Grief means the defeat of Samsala and the other evil spirits. In the abyss Lile Iroeli meets the temptation. The Dark Lord tries to influence on him, speaks to him with flattery, persuading not to kill him and encourages him to unite their power and become allies. Then he notices Rufia¹³, former demon, feels the danger that awaits him and tells Lile that nothing will be changed by breaking the Chalice of Grief. Although the evil spirits have drunk all the bitterness from the bowl, during the battle it has been refilled. After smashing the chalice all the liquid of bitterness will leak in the earth and destroy the whole world as well as Lile himself. Rufia calls Lile not to listen to the words of the Dark Lord and insists on breaking the Chalice immediately. Lile stikes his sword on the Chalice and fulfills his mission, but at the same time he feels all the pain and bitterness that was accumulated in the bowl.

One more thing to happen during the final battle is that before the destruction of the magic weapon the fellowship tries to attract the antagonist’s attention to the physical battle in

¹² The Dalis – a settlement in Davitashvili’s story where only women inhabitants live. Their purpose is to live and prove that they can survive without men.

¹³Rufia is reincarnated raven, in which former evil demon dwells. Rufia wants to revenge Samsala and is the helper of Lile Iroeli to defeat him.

order to make the protagonist unnoticeable for him. In “The Encyclopedia of Fantasy” John Grant states that in fantasy literature one of the peculiarities of the antagonist is his foolishness. “Plots of fantasies tend to be based on the assumption that evil understands good less well than good understands evil (Clute& Grant, 1999, p. 250). Aragorn tells about it to the other members of the secret meeting. They are obliged to fool Sauron and distract him from his kingdom in order to make it easier for Frodo to reach Mordor and the Mount Doom without being noticed by the Great Eye of Sauron. Gandalf agrees with his plan suggesting that that they should march out to meet the army immediately. “We must make ourselves the bait, though his jaws should close on us. He will take that bait, in hope and in greed, for he will think that in such rashness he sees the pride of the new Ring Lord” (Tolkien, 1999, p. 161). Sauron, who is planning to become the ruler of the whole Middle-Earth, is deceived by such a simple strategy. He directs all his power and attention towards Barad-Dur and only notices Frodo standing on the edge of the firing pit.

The dark lord was suddenly aware of him, and his Eye piercing all shadows looked across the plain to the door that he had made; and the magnitude of his own folly was revealed to him in a blinding flash, and all the devices of his enemies were at last laid bare. Then his wrath blazed in consuming flame, but his fear rose like a vast black smoke to choke him. For he knew his deadly peril and the thread upon which his doom now hung” (Tolkien, 1999, p. 239).

Certainly, it was a great mistake of Sauron. The fact of deceiving the Dark Lord can be noticed in Nato Davitashvili’s works as well. At the secret meeting Buknai Baaduri the Monk disapproved the idea of sending Lile to the Abyss full of evil spirits. He asked for help to Kaisa, who was granted with the supernatural gift of looking into the minds of other creatures. She would make Samsala believe that she was the very person who could break the Chalice of Grief. The Dark Lord would send his army to her dwelling place. This would be the only chance to empty the Abyss of the evil army and to clear the way for Lile to the Chalice of Grief (Davitashvili, 2010, p. 321). Samsala was defeated as well. He is tempted by Kaisa’s lie and he sends each evil spirit to Samshvilde where the final battle takes place.

Conclusion

From what has been discussed above it can be concluded that although the main antagonists of the two authors, J.R.R. Tolkien’s Sauron (*The Lord of the Rings*) and N. Davitashvili’s Samsala (*The Chronicles of Lile Iroeli*) are absolutely different, there is a similarity between them in several aspects: their origin is the same – both are identified as Dark Lords and not Original Evil or Satan. There is a similarity in their appearance. Besides ugliness, they have a common visual sign – the flaming eye. Tolkien took the concept of eye from Celtic mythological hero – Balor. Obviously it had influence on Nato Davitashvili and she gave the similar look to her antagonist but she developed the villain and, apart from controlling and cursing function, she gave an additional feature to the Eye – mental ability and the function of the “third” eye that looks through the minds of people and grants the villain a higher mental position. The names of both villains are avoided to be pronounced by other characters and they are often mentioned with common names such as “Dark Lord”, “Evil Spirit”. The name *Sauron* is created by Tolkien, but Nato Davitashvili used an old Georgian word for the name of his villain *Samsala*, which means “deadly poison” and strengthens the negative connotation of the name. Both stories depict the aspiration of antagonists preparing for the main battle where the oppositions are the Good and the Evil. Tolkien has united some invented creatures from his fictional world whereas Nato Davitashvili has selected the heroes from the Georgian mythology and has turned them into the literary characters of her stories. The source of power of both antagonists is the magic weapon. Frodo must destroy the Ring and Lile must break the Chalice of Grief in order to demolish the power of the villain and save the world. Therefore, it can be

stated that the antagonists in Georgian and English fantasy have similar features, although the differences between them indicate the individuality of the two authors.

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