

Researching J.R.R. Tolkien:
How Kalevala influenced his legendarium

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Abstract/Abstrakti

This thesis pursues to explain how the Finnish folklore epic Kalevala, collected by Elias Lönnrot in the 1800's inspired J.R.R. Tolkien. My hypothesis in this bachelor's thesis is that there is an underlying connection between the mythologies of Finland and Tolkien. The main question is how Kalevala influenced Tolkien's early legendarium and secondary question is what parts of his legendarium, like the characters of Túrin Turambar and Tom Bombadil can be traced back to Kalevala. Tolkien was a researcher of Nordic mythology and his first, but unfinished, fictional novella was an attempt to reform Kullervo poems from Kalevala into a prose narrative. Method of research used in this thesis is literature review.

Tämä opinnäytetyö pyrkii selittämään, miten Elias Lönnrotin 1800-luvulla kokoama suomalainen kansalliseepos Kalevala vaikutti J.R.R. Tolkienin legendaarioon. Hypoteesini tässä opinnäytetyössä on, että vanhan suomalaisen mytologian ja Tolkienin välillä on yhteys. Pääasiallinen tutkimuskysymykseni onkin: mitkä osat hänen fiktiivisestä tuotannostaan, kuten Túrin Turambarin ja Tom Bombadilin hahmot ovat johdettavissa Kalevalaan. Tolkien harrasti pohjoismaisen mytologian tutkimista ja hänen ensimmäinen, mutta kesken jäänyt, fiktiivinen teoksensa Kullervon Tarina oli yritys muuttaa Kalevalan runot 31-36, eli Kullervo runot, tarinamuotoon. Tutkimusmetodi tässä opinnäytetyössä on kirjallisuuskatsaus.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Motivation for this thesis

I chose the topic of Kalevala and Tolkien's legendarium after finding *The Story of Kullervo* and having read Kalevala years ago I became curious of what else, besides the obvious Kullervo, did Tolkien borrow from the Finnish folklore. After noticing that there is some, but not much previous research about this topic available I decided to carry on with this study. Particularly the similarities between Angband and Pohjola were an unsearched area as far as my resources allowed me to go and I only found brief mentions of the two. While researching I also noticed that studies of what influenced Tolkien are not as common than those of what is the meaning of Tolkien to literature and it seemed interesting to on take the less researched angle to the subject.

From an academic perspective Tolkien's works make a very interesting reading because of their depth in storylines and characters and brilliant imagination. He has created an entire world with its history, legends and religious systems. His works are worth researching because there are so many connections to different mythologies and history of Europe. While thinking about what to write I noticed that the connection between Finnish mythology and Tolkien is fairly unresearched field. Tolkien has often mentioned Kalevala as one of his inspirations, yet there are very few larger scale researches. There are some essays like Verlyn Flieger's *Tolkien, Kalevala, and 'The Story of Kullervo'* and *What Tolkien really did with Sampo* by Jonathan B. Himes but each focus on some character or object like Kullervo or Sampo. I decided to go deeper and take into account less researched characters such as Tom Bombadil. This thesis is in a way a summary of research done so far with my own additions to the chapter regarding Angband and Melkor as I found the subject mostly only mentioned in previous studies.

What further woke my interest towards this topic was a quote in the essay *Tolkien and Lönnrot as Mythmakers* where Flieger quotes some of Tolkien's letter to his son Christopher Tolkien "Finnish nearly ruined my Hon. Mods." (280) I think it is worth researching something that nearly made an Oxford student fail something as important as his hon. mods.

1.2. Materials used

The main primary sources of material for this thesis are *The Kalevala* in Finnish and in English, *The Story of Kullervo*, *Silmarillion*, *The Children of Húrin* by Tolkien, certain letters of J.R.R. Tolkien and

various essays of the topic on Kalevala and J.R.R. Tolkien. I have also used secondary sources which are all essays about Tolkien and Kalevala.

The Kalevala, The Story of Kullervo and Silmarillion are my most important materials as they are all quite directly related to one another. Túrin quite clearly is a counterpart for Kullervo and these three books are linked the most strongly by that one character.

The translation of The Kalevala I used is not the same as Tolkien used, since I did not have the option to use it but there are no differences big enough between these two translations, that would have affected my research as Tolkien did not use direct quotations from Kalevala in his works and both are full editions. I have used the 1989 translation by Keith Bosley and the Kalevala Tolkien had access to was translated in 1907 by W.H. Kirby (Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien, 249)

The Letters are Tolkien's own words and thoughts on the subject at the time he was working on the story and reading Kalevala and therefore they will work as references to what similarities can be found the two texts this thesis mainly focuses on. Kalevala references have been cited with (The Kalevala, poem number: verse-verse)

The character Túrin Turambar who appears in both Silmarillion and Children of Húrin is very like the character or Kullervo of Kalevala in his life story and characteristics. Silmarillion was also said by Tolkien in the Letters to be "the germ of Silmarillion" (Letters, 87) and therefore those two books and the Letters are my most important materials to support my claim. All the characters discussed in this thesis can be found from Silmarillion or Fellowship of the Ring, the first volume in The Lord of the Rings. I have also included previous studies and essays as my materials.

From the many biographies written about Tolkien I chose the one by Humphrey Carpenter because that is considered the authorised biography. From all the writers Carpenter was the one who had any kind of personal contact with Tolkien and he was given access by Tolkien's family to read the materials the author left behind. Carpenter also interviewed after Tolkien's family after the author's death.

This thesis focus is on Tolkien's relationship with Kalevala, but as stated in chapter 2.3 the Kalevala is not by any means the only source of Tolkien's inspiration. In his letter to Milton Waldman (Letters, 150) he lists for example Greece mythology as his inspiration and he was a researcher of Beowulf, an English epic and wrote many academic papers about it. According to the doctoral thesis made in the University of Oulu, *Constructive Mythopoeitics in J.R.R. Tolkien's Legendarium* by Jyrki Korpua, elements of the bible can also be found from his works. His lord of

the Rings saga can also be seen as post-world war literature with aspects of the real war where he served as a soldier and had ended not that long ago.

1.3. Structure of thesis

This thesis is divided into four sections. First section, chapters 1.1 to 1.3, is introduction and will list the materials used and what this thesis is about, the second section, chapters 2.1 to 2.3 will explain who Tolkien was, summarise Kalevala and discuss the origins of his mythology. Summary of Kalevala does not include citations as it is the main events Kalevala summarised for readers who are not familiar with it and the source for that is the whole book. Third section, chapters 3.1 to 3.4 is comparison of various elements and plot lines that can be found from Kalevala and Tolkien's stories and the fourth section, chapter 4, is conclusion and summary of the thesis. At the ends of the chapters 3.1 to 3.4 I have included summarised charts as comparisons of the topics discussed.

2. Background

2.1. On Tolkien

J.R.R. Tolkien is one of the most important figures in English literature. His most famous works, *Lord of The Rings* and *The Hobbit*, have been a source of many different adaptations on film, theatre and fanfiction over the decades. His mythology has even found its way to lyrics of bands and still continues to influence music groups. For example in 1974 Camel wrote a song "Nimrodel/The Procession/The White Rider" which is influenced by Lord of the Rings and Nightwish's song "Wishmaster" from the year 2000 features a lot of Tolkien references.

During his lifetime, he published 13 fictional novels and short stories, numerous academic theses and poetry and has posthumously published all the way to June 2017 when Beren and Lúthien, often referred to by Elessar in The Lord of The Rings, was released to the public. Even terms '*Tolkienian*' and '*Tolkienesque*' appear in literature research as terms for his literature and works that resemble his literature.

Tolkien became a student and later a teacher of English philology in the University of Oxford. While he was a student he started writing The Story of Kullervo, an unfinished story that was published long after his death in 2010. Most of the fictional novels by Tolkien have been published posthumously. He was a creative writer who, unfortunately, did not finish most of the books he started. His son Christopher Tolkien became the Lönnrot of his father's works and collected his notes and managed to form mostly coherent stories from them.

At the end of page 22 of the biography Carpenter states that Tolkien became interested in dragons and nature very early in his life, but he was even more fascinated by languages. He seemed to almost consider them as music and developed interests based on how the languages sounded. Latin and Greece were flowing languages and he enjoyed studying them. At King Edward's School, he also first came across what was to become his further profession: linguistics and the old English epic *Beowulf*, which he researched well into his adulthood as a student and professor at Oxford. During that time of his early life he started to develop his own languages with his cousins. Another feature of his imagination that lasted till the end of his life with his many different made up languages like Sindarin, Tengwar script and Quenyan. While he was a student at the Exeter College in Oxford he first found a book of Finnish grammar. He had discovered Kalevala while attending King Edward's School in Birmingham and he began studying Finnish grammar. (Carpenter 49) Eventually it became the base for one of his Elvish languages, Quenyan.

As told in the second chapter starting from page 24 in the book *The Inklings* by Humphrey Carpenter The Inklings were a group of literary men, including J.R.R. Tolkien, who gathered in The Eagle and Child pub near the Oxford city center, where they wrote and read their own works and discussed literature. In the same group was an author of Narnia, C.S. Lewis who was like Tolkien, a researcher of Kalevala and Norse mythology (*The Inklings*, 29) and the two researched the topic together and Lewis too published a poem based on Kalevala even before Tolkien.

2.2. Summary of Kalevala

Kalevala was collected from Karelian oral tradition by Elias Lönnrot. Lönnrot met Karelian rune singers who sang these stories to him while he wrote them down. It was first published in 1835.

Goddess Ilmatar shapes the land with its bays and hills and gives birth to a fully grown Väinämöinen, a demigod figure in Kalevala. Joukahainen challenges Väinämöinen and Väinämöinen famously sings him to a bog. To save his life Joukahainen promises his sister Aino to Väinämöinen. Aino drowns herself and Joukahainen fights Väinämöinen who is wounded and swims to Pohjola, where Louhi, the Northern queen saves him and helps him back to Kalevala after Väinämöinen promises to have the blacksmith Ilmarinen forge her the legendary Sampo, which can make endless amount of gold. Later Kullervo is born. Kullervo's uncle has killed Kullervo's father Kalervo and makes the boy who is developing with paranormal speed and has strength beyond his years his slave but later sells him to Ilmarinen, who makes his life a misery with his wife, the daughter of Louhi.

Kullervo kills Louhi's daughter and escapes with the intention of avenging his father. On the road home, he meets a girl and sleeps with her. He reaches home and is told the girl was his sister. A massacre happens and Kullervo kills himself after his sister has jumped to her death from a cliff. Väinämöinen decides to steal back Sampo and he gathers men to travel to Pohjola to take it back. Yet another battle happens and Sampo breaks and falls to the sea.

2.3 Origins of the myth

In this chapter I will discuss the origins of Tolkien's mythology, before turning my focus solely on the Kalevala. I find it necessary to briefly open the creation of his legendarium, a collection of his legends, because understanding it as a bigger unit helps understand certain parts of it when they are separated for closer inspection. Many of Tolkien's stories are connected to one another and he left many unfinished works behind. This causes the legendarium to be hard to follow at times and it is easier to understand specific parts of his legendarium if it is understood as a bigger unit first.

Tolkien's legendarium is a combination of many different mythologies, real life events and religious elements. He drew from his own personal experiences and texts he read and talked about with the other Inklings. Tolkien desired to create England a mythology and in the recent decades more and more studies, like Verlyn Flieger's study on Story of Kullervo, have been conducted to find out why. Tolkien did not just create stories, he created a universe with its own creation myth, gods, heroes, legends and religious systems on top of the adventure and faerie stories. When his works containing stories from Middle-earth are read in a chronological order instead of the order of publishing *Silmarillion* has the myth of creation as its first chapter and as the letter numbered 163 to W.H. Auden expresses, the Lord of the Rings trilogy is the conclusion where evil is destroyed in the culmination between good and evil. In the same letter to Auden Tolkien declares the following

"I mentioned Finnish, because that set the rocket off in story. I was immensely attracted by something in the air of Kalevala." (Letters, 214)

As a writer Humphrey Carpenter describes Tolkien's attitude towards his own works as follows

"[He talks] about his book not as work of fiction but as a chronicle of actual historical events.; he seems to himself not as an author who has made a slight error that must now be corrected or explained away, but as a historian who must cast light on an obscurity in a historical document." (Carpenter, 4)

There is a lot more underneath the surface of Tolkien's legendarium than most readers who read for fun see. Scholars have been very interested in finding out the story behind the creation. According to the introduction chapter by Jane Chance in a book *Tolkien and the invention of the myth*

"What catalysed this emerge was Tolkien's reading of other medieval mythologies or epic works of national identity, most especially Roman and Greek, Old Norse, Old English, and Finnish" (Tolkien and the Invention of Myth, 2).

Tolkien was familiar with the Scandinavian epic Edda and he describes for example Dale to be represented Scandinavian (Letters, 144). Tom Shippey argues in his essay *Tolkien and the Invention of Myth* that one reason for Tolkien to have developed a special interest towards Kalevala was its pathos. According to Shippey

"Old-Norse literature is notoriously the most hard-hearted in Europe" (Tolkien and the Invention of Myth, 155).

Kalevala however has tragic fates and lot of blood is shed, but the characters, especially the women are presented in a sympathetic light. Maidens weep when they must leave their homes and mothers worry about their sons. Tolkien has experienced war as a soldier and was an orphan so it might be one reason why this in a way tragic epic caught his interest and imagination.

3. Similarities between Kalevala and J.R.R. Tolkien's legendarium

3.1. Túrin Turambar and Kullervo

The similarities between Kalevala and J.R.R. Tolkien are quite easily recognisable in the character of Túrin Turambar, a warrior character in *The Silmarillion* and *The Children of Húrin*. The story itself is different from that of Kullervo, it's filled with adventures, magic and dragons but his life story beneath that is very similar and some very important details, like the deaths of their sisters and Kullervo and Túrin themselves are nearly exactly the same.

They are both described as fair in complexion and abnormally strong for their age. They are both sent away, Kullervo as a slave, Túrin for his own safety and they both escape. Unlike Kullervo who escapes slavery, Túrin is treated well, but he decides to flee to save his real father from Angband. The plotlines are linear almost to the end. They start to differ when Kullervo only kills for

personal revenge and Túrin becomes a war hero. A significant similarity however is that they both meet a woman who they do not recognise and who they fall in love with, in Túrin's case they even marry. The women eventually turn out to be their sisters. The similarity in these characters of the sisters is that they both kill themselves by jumping off a cliff, which then causes the main characters to commit suicide. These suicide scenes in both books are again nearly identical in plot and way the characters act and feel. Kullervo returns to his home farm and massacres his uncle's family who he holds responsible for the death of his entire family and then commits suicide. Túrin hears his wife is dead and in his anger, slays the messenger who he thinks is lying, but eventually realises he had told the truth and killing him was unjustified. At this point he loses his will to live and gives in to the curse he thinks has been upon him all his life and decides to commit suicide. He puts the hilts of the sword down and speaks to it.

"Hail Gurthang! No lord or loyalty dost thou know, save the hand that wielded thee. From no blood wilt thou shrink. Wilt thou therefore take Túrin Turambar, wilt thou lay me swiftly?" (Silmarillion, 271).

The sword answers to him:

"Yea, I will drink thy blood gladly, that so I may forget the blood of Beleg my master, and the blood of Brandir slain unjustly. I will slay thee swiftly." (271).

Túrin then precedes to throw himself on the blade and dies.

In Kalevala Kullervo returns to his home and takes an old sword from the house. In the same way as Túrin Kullervo has a conversation with the sword.

"Kullervo, Kalervo's son

snatched up the sharp sword

looks at it, turns it over

asks it, questions it;

he asks his sword what it liked:

did it have a mind

to eat guilty flesh

to drink blood that was to blame?" (The Kalevala, 36:390-398)

The sword answers him:

“Why should I not eat what I like

not eat guilty flesh

not drink blood that is to blame?

I’ll eat even guiltless flesh

I’ll drink even blameless blood.” (The Kalevala, 36: 401-406)

He then presses the hilt into the ground and throws himself on the blade and dies.

These two stories as can be seen from the passages above have very similar core. The character’s development and the plot structure are almost the same [see figure 1] and they confirm the words of Tolkien to Milton Waldman in a letter number. (Letters 143-161) of The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien. In the letter Tolkien discusses the origins of Silmarillion and mentions various ancient mythologies as his inspirations. Tolkien states that The Finnish mythology affected him greatly. Tolkien also compares the story of Túrin Turambar to that of Kullervo (and Oedipus and Sigur the Volsung). (Letters, 141, 150)

Kullervo	Túrin Turambar
Appearance: Fair and strong	Appearance: Fair and strong
Sold as a slave	Sent away to escape slavery
Strong from very young age	Strong from very young age
Wants to avenge his father	Wants to avenge his father
Flees his master Ilmarinen	Flees his foster father
Goes to find his family only to find an empty house	Goes to find his family only to find an empty house
Meets his sister, but does not recognise her	Meets his sister but does not recognise her
Sleeps with his sister	Marries his sister
Sister remembers who she is	Sister remembers who she is
Sister jumps off a cliff	Sister jumps off a cliff
Conversation with a sword	Conversation with a sword
Commits suicide by falling on the blade of	Commits suicide by falling on the blade of

the sword of a man he has just killed	the sword of a man he has just killed
Tragic character	Heroic and tragic character

Figure 1.

3.2. Fëanor, Ilmarinen, Silmarils and Sampo

Magical objects are a recurring element in both Tolkien's legendarium and world's mythology. Literature history has had a series of magical objects such as Sampo in Finland and Poseidon's trident in Greece. From Tolkien's mythology can be found objects such as The Ring and palantirs in Lord of the Rings and Silmarils in Silmarillion. Magical items influencing the life of their keepers are an element generally associated with fantasy and mythology even before Tolkien so it is not at all surprising that he decided to use this element often.

The blacksmith Seppo Ilmarinen of Kalevala is a godlike figure. Ilmarinen had a part in creating the world and he has supernatural skills to forge magical items. Ilmarinen wants to marry the beautiful Maiden of Pohjola and from Louhi's orders he creates Sampo, a mill that can make endless riches, as a payment for Louhi's daughter. Louhi, however, decided to break the pact and not give her daughter to Kalevala. Ilmarinen sees this as a theft and the men of Kalevala set on a journey to steal it back as it is wrongfully making the Northerners rich in money, wheat, salt and other possessions valuable for people living in a remote location where nothing grows. In this attempt to return it to its rightful owner Sampo breaks in a sea battle with Northerners led by Louhi and falls to the sea. The pieces of it eventually wash ashore and make the land of Kalevala itself rich.

Sampo, or sampolike objects are present in other Finnish mythology too, it is not limited only to the Karelian tradition of Kalevala. In some mythologies that are known to exist as an old oral tradition Sampo is for example said to be under the Polar Star and keep the world spinning, the thing that is in common with most of them is that it is an object located in the North and having magical abilities and somehow being connected to the world either by providing riches or being the force that keeps the world on its track. The Kalevala version being the most known collection of Finnish folklore has become the most widely spread and the most familiar.

In Tolkien's Silmarillion, chapter 7, Fëanor, a high elf and a skilled smith, forges three Silmarils to hold the light of the Two Trees.

“As three great jewel they were in form. But not until the End, when Fëanor shall return who perished ere the Sun was made, and sits now in the Halls of Awaiting and comes no more among his kin; not until the Sun passes and the Moon falls, shall it be known of with substance they are made.” (Silmarillion, 69)

As an elven smith, his craft is highly beautiful and magical and therefore sought after by many. After the Two Trees of Valinor are destroyed by a fallen god Melkor (later known as Morgoth but due to these events happening before the change of name in this thesis he will be referred to as Melkor), and Ungoliant, a lesser known malevolent entity of Tolkien’s lore, the Silmarils are the only sources of the trees left and it is said the fate of Arda (continent of Middle-earth) is tied to them. Melkor steals them when escaping imprisonment of the Valar, the other gods, in Valinor.

In an essay *What J. R. R. Tolkien Really Did with the Sampo?* Jonathan B. Himes claims Sampo to be the main source of inspiration for these gems. According to Himes in the first paragraph of his essay, Tolkien used for example the themes of paganism, stark moral and corruption caused by the endless riches provided by Sampo in the magical Silmarils. He also proposes that

“Tolkien refashions the skirmishes between Finnish provinces over the socio-economic supremacy afforded by the Sampo, into the world war among all races of Middle-earth for the moral and terrestrial stability offered by the Silmarils.” (69)

Sampo and Silmarils are both financially valuable in addition to being magical and cause degeneration in moral. Sampo quite literally forges wealth in the form of money and edible objects and Silmarils hold the last existing light of the Trees. Both Sampo and Silmarils cause characters in both mythologies to start stealing, fighting and even be ready to kill. All for the sake of having an object that can make one rich.

Fëanor himself is fiercely protective of the gems he sees as his greatest achievements and his children become enraged and decide to steal back their father’s gems. The gems, however, are hallowed by Valar not to be touched by the mortal men or evil and therefore do not recognise the children on Fëanor as their rightful owners and burn their hands. One is thrown to the fire and one to the sea. The last remaining one is retrieved by Beren and Lúthien and delivered to the gods where Ilúvatar throws it to the stars not to be found by anyone again. Like Fëanor, Louhi is also very protective of Sampo and like Silmarils, Sampo is locked deep into a mountain. Though Tolkien

did not use Sampo legend as it was written in Kalevala and the connection is less obvious that in the story of Túrin, the two stories are similar enough [see figure 2] to say that Sampo has been the inspiration to Silmarils.

Sampo	Silmarils
A mill able to create endless riches	Powerful gens containing the light of Valinor
Forged by Ilmarinen	Forged by Fëanor
Given to Louhi, witch of the North	Stolen by Melkor, the fallen witch god of the North
Stolen back	Stolen back
Ends up in the sea	End up in the sea, earth and sky
According to other Finnish mythologies it is connected to the Earth and its fate	According to a legend they are connected to fate of Arda

Ilmarinen	Fëanor
Godlike figure	Mythological creature (an elf)
Abilities to forge magical items others cannot - Sampo	Abilities to forge magical items others cannot - Silmarils, Palantirs
Ilmarinen is seen as one of the creators of the world	Lived with god in Valinor and created items that affected Arda

Figure 2

3.3. Angband and Pohjola

So far, I have been unable to find any previous larger studies of this section of my thesis. The topic has been mentioned in the book *J.R.R. Tolkien Encyclopedia: Scholarship and Critical Assessment* in the chapter *Finland: Literary sources* (205-207), but that mostly only discusses the themes of light and darkness being in a constant battle, a vital theme found in both Kalevala and Tolkien's legendarium and not so much the similarities between these two places as physical places. In my own reading of *Silmarillion* and *Kalevala* the similarities go further than being purely thematic.

Kalevala's Pohjola, sometimes referred to as Lapland in the English translation, is described to be a hostile land in the north. It is not a fortress like Angband but according to some of the legends it is fenced with a massive stone wall that rises to the skies. It is bare and rocky environment where nearly nothing grows and it is filled with monsters from the ancient mythologies. In general, it is considered to be a place where no one wants to go unless they have a very good reason in doing so. A poem 42 Stealing the Sampo described Pohjola as

"... dark Northland
the man-eating, the
fellow-drowning place." (The Kalevala, 42:8-10)

It is ruled by the northern witch, Louhi, the mistress of the north and her daughters. Though these two quotes from poem 7 makes Louhi seem like a fairly harmless old woman.

" A tiny wench of the North
a fair-skinned woman" (The Kalevala 7:133-134)

" Louhi, mistress of Northland
the gap-toothed hag of the North" (The Kalevala, 7:169-170)

In reality she is a devious and treacherous witch, with evil intentions and she makes the men of Kalevala who dare to venture out to the North to do her bidding as a payment for her daughter's hands for marriage. These deeds include slaying the Swan of the river of Tuonela (old Finnish version of the underworld such as Helheim in Scandinavian mythology and Hades' domain in Greek mythology) and usually betrays her promises. The treacherous nature of Louhi is one of the most important reasons the men of Kalevala are at war with Pohjola and decide to steal Sampo, given as a payment for Louhi's daughter, back from her.

Louhi could be seen as a counterpart for Melkor who shares the same covetous nature. Both are ready to use whatever means necessary to reach their goals, even if it means thieving, deceiving or even killing and are not afraid to use others to do their bidding for them either by deception or threatening.

Angband is much less known fortress of evil than Mordor, however some information of it can be picked up from various chapters of Silmarillion. According to J.R.R. Tolkien's Silmarillion's chapters of Túrin Turambar (chapter 21) and quest of stealing back Silmarils (chapters 13 to 19) Tolkien's Angband is a dark fortress in the Iron Hills in the north, originally ruled by Sauron, later

by Melkor and then by Sauron again. Melkor escaped the Valar with the Silmarils he stole and settled in the old fortress that was in ruins. The place is full of monsters such as the fallen Maiar, orcs (mutated elves that were enslaved and tortured) and other evil creatures from Tolkien's legendarium and it's not a place any protagonist goes to without a very good reason. The creatures have not been described in detail but what can be read from the text they include something that could be an early prototype of wargs or hellhounds, orcs, a dragon and snakes. Quite similar creatures than those living in Pohjola. The area where Angband is located is, like Pohjola, very hostile place where nearly nothing grows that can be accessed by waterways. Angband was lost when Númenor fell in the Second Age of Middle Earth.

The research of this topic could continue and I'm sure there are a lot of things I have overlooked, but based on even this short study there are similarities to found [see figure 3]. Tolkien's North is as dreary and miserable place as Pohjola and they are both ruled by an evil witch.

Pohjola	Angband
"Fortress"	Fortress
Full of evil	Full of evil
Ruled by Louhi	Ruled by Sauron Melkor/Morgoth and Sauron again
Considered to be a place where no one wants to go to	Considered to be a place where no one wants to go to

Figure 3

3.4. Tom Bombadil and Väinämöinen

Tom Bombadil is one of Tolkien's lesser known characters. He has only appeared in three chapters of Fellowship of the Ring and poem The Adventures of Tom Bombadil. According to Tolkien's letters on pages 174 and 178 he is not at all important character in Tolkien's legendarium, he plays no significant part in anything and he is in a way disconnected from the bigger picture. To my research he is still an interesting character because of his similarities to the main character of Kalevala, Väinämöinen. Previous study which I have used as my source in to this topic has been made by David L. Dettman and his theory has received criticism. Tolkien himself did not clarify if Tom Bombadil is based on Väinämöinen or are they just similar by accident so it can never be known for sure if the characters are similar by accident or did Tolkien intended Bombadil to be a

representation of Väinämöinen. Gergely Nagy criticises this theory in *Journal of Tolkien research*, Volume 4, Issue 1, Article 7: *Tolkien in the New Century: Essays in Honor of Tom Shippey (2014)*, edited by John Wm. Houghton, Janet Brennan Croft, Nancy Martsch, John D. Rateliff, and Robin Anne Reid, page 6. He claims that the evidence to support this theory is not very strong. Nagy states they are both described as singers and old and asks if that is enough. According to the article the parallels between the characters are not very convincing. I still decided to include this part in my study, because I find the characters worth researching.

In Finnish mythology Väinämöinen is one of the best known, iconic characters. He is tightly linked to the birth of the world itself. He is the first human to walk the earth and is the child of the creator, the air goddess Ilmatar. This is the first link to Tom Bombadil, who calls himself “the eldest” and in *Fellowship of the Rings* declares to the four hobbits Frodo, Sam, Merry and Pippin that he remembers the first rain and the first acorn and was in Arda, the continent of Middle-earth created by the Ainur, before the elves who are considered the oldest of the beings of Middle-earth. Väinämöinen and Tom Bombadil are both the oldest beings on their Earths since the gods created their lands.

The second similarity is that they are both above all else singers. Their voices have very abnormal powers and they can sing days on end without having any weariness. Väinämöinen famously sang young Joukahainen to a swamp and nearly drowned him when he challenged him to a duel and lulled the Northern folk asleep while Kalevala’s men attempted to steal back Sampo. The animals of the forest gathered round to listen to him sing and felt no hunger or fatigue and listened to him sing in almost trance like state.

The last part of that sounds very familiar to those who have read *The Fellowship of the Ring*. In Tom Bombadil’s house the hobbits, who are known for their love of food including second breakfast and elevenses felt no hunger and listened to his songs and tales from the past through the day until night fell in what could be described as a trance. (*Fellowship of the Ring*, 57). Like Väinämöinen, Bombadil could command the nature and beings around him with his songs; Old Man Willow released the hobbits and the air calmed when his song reached the tree (*Fellowship of the Ring*, 157) and his voice broke the stone burial mound the hobbits were trapped in, after Frodo summoned him with a song.

The previous study on this topic, essay *Väinämöinen in Middle-earth: The Pervasive Presence*

of the *Kalevala* in the *Bombadil Chapters of the Lord of the Rings* by David L. Dettman, published in 2014 in the book *Tolkien in the New Century: Essays in Honor of Tom Shippey*, states that even the meters of the poetic speech and songs of the two are similar. According to Dettman, Tolkien was aware of the original Finnish verse meter and used it as a basis for Bombadil's verses rather than Kirby's translation of *Kalevala*. (208) Dettman uses Tolkien's essay on *Kalevala* as his evidence when he states that even though Tolkien had used Kirby's meter in his earlier poetry he found it did not fit the English language properly. Dettman also states that

"In the essay on the *Kalevala*, Tolkien points out that meter of the Finnish *Kalevala* has considerable variation; and other have complained that the meter of Kirby's translation in English (and the earliest German translation of Schiefner, read by Longfellow) was over-regularised"

The two following quotations from *The Kalevala* and *The Fellowship of the Rings* will demonstrate how even though the number of syllables of every line differs from the other text and the topics, Tom Bombadil sings on the meadows without a care in the world and Väinämöinen sings to a hunted down bear. Bears were sacred animals in the olden days of Finland and it was customary to apologise for hunting them and have a feast, *karhunpeijaiset*, to help resume their soul to the circle of reincarnation (*karhuseura.net*). The tones of their songs are very different but the both characters have a somewhat singing rhyme to their words.

In this *Kalevala* verse Väinämöinen sings to a killed bear and tries to soothe its soul so it would not carry any grudge to the hunters when it returns to the forest. The song is originally written in the trochaic *Kalevala* metre consisting of 4 stressed syllables and 4 unstressed ones.

"My Beastie, my matchless one
honey-paw, my handsome one
don't be angry without cause!
It was not I that felled you:
you rolled off the collar-bow
yourself, toppled off the log
tearing your wooden breeches
 splitting your pine coat.
Autumn weather's slippery
and he cloudy days are dark:

golden forest cuckoo, fair

one with fur luxuriant

[...]

Go from here after all

from this little den, and go

under the famous roof beam

under the fair roof;

float upon the snow, like

water lily on a pool" (The Kalevala, 46: 107-118, 137-142)

in Bombadil's song the monotonic trochee has, according to Dettman, been broken and some variation has been added but "one can still hear the underlying trochaic meter". (209)

"I had an errand there: gathering water-lilies,

green leaves and lilies white to please my pretty lady,

the last ere the year's end to keep them from the winter,

to flower by her pretty feet till the snows are melted.

Each year at summer's end I go to find them for her,

in a wide pool, deep and clear, far down Withywindle;

they open first in spring and there they linger latest." (The Fellowship of the Ring, 165)

In the chapter *Bombadil's Meter* of his essay Dettman does not recognise Old English to be an influence even though Tom Bombadil's songs have similarities to Old English verse as well. Tolkien was familiar with this verse meter as well and it brings up the question were these characters meant to be parallel or did Tolkien just combine various sources he had and it turned out to be close to Kalevala meter?

Third similarity is between Tolkien's Goldberry and Kalevala's Aino. Väinämöinen was promised young maiden Aino as his wife for sparing the life of Joukahainen. In the poem 4 Aino however did not agree with the plan and dressed in her best clothes like her mother advised but instead of marrying Väinämöinen she drowned herself and became a daughter of the water. In the poem 5 Väinämöinen captured Aino in the shape of a fish but was unable to hold on to her and she escaped again. This part has some differences because where Väinämöinen failed Bombadil succeeded.

Goldberry is the river maiden, “daughter of the River” (*Fellowship of the Ring* 161) whose hair is golden like Aino’s and who is dressed in very beautiful green and silver clothing. According to Dettman’s study Goldberry was supposedly originally kidnapped or at least somewhat forcefully taken to his home by Bombadil. Whether they are married or he is courting her is not stated clearly in any of the chapters of *Fellowship of the Ring*. She is described to be dressed in colours often connected to water (green and silver) and that her gown sounded like “the wind in the flowering borders of the river” (*Fellowship of the Ring* 161) and her footsteps were like “a stream falling gently away downhill over cool stones in the quiet night”. (164). In general terms of European mythology she could be described a water spirit. Dettman states that the fact, that her clothing is described three times with detail and mentioned briefly three times to be a sign that she was based on Aino who was dressed in her finest and in blue, when she decided to end her life. (210) As mentioned in Dettman’s essay Goldberry is also serving the hobbit quests “a vegetarian version of the foods prepared at Kalevala feasts. White bread and cakes of honey are particularly associated with Väinämöinen’s unsuccessful courting of Aino: she reuses his advances, saying she is not interested in his [w]heaten bread or beautiful clothes he offers (4:26), and he later laments the loss of a bride who would have baked “loaves of bread” and “[c]akes of honey” (5:119-220)” (210)

With the context of Kalevala in mind this part of *The Fellowship of the Ring* can be read as Tom Bombadil and Golberry being what Väinämöinen hoped her and Aino to be; the eldest of the world living happily with his beautiful maiden. According to my knowledge Tolkien never made any clear connection between Tom Bombadil and Väinämöinen, but as figure 4 below summarises, there are enough similarities to make the conclusion there is a connection. Based on this study any exclusive conclusions can not be drawn. The characters have similarities but are they the same is a question that would need further research. Various mythologies of the world have had their rune singers and nature was very important in many cultures. Finnish culture saw the bear as its king of the forest and it was highly respected, Indians still worship cows and the ancient Celtic culture considered various animals as omens of either good or bad luck.

Väinämöinen	Tom Bombadil
Singer	Singer
Wise old man	Wise old man

Has magical abilities in his voice - can shape nature and command animals and people	Has magical abilities in his voice - can shape nature and command animals and people
First human to walk the Earth	First human in Arda
Demigod figure	Demigod figure
Fails to marry Aino, tries to kidnap a wife	Is sometimes said to have kidnapped Goldberry, his assumed wife

Aino	Goldberry
Daughter of the water	Daughter of the river
Dressed in blue and silver	Dressed in blue, silver and other colours of the water
Golden hair	Golden hair
Drowns and turns into a fish	Possibly a naiad
Escapes marriage	Possibly married
Väinämöinen tries to kidnap her	Possibly kidnapped by Tom Bombadil

Figure 4

4. Conclusion

As a conclusion, it can be said that the connection between Kalevala and the legendarium of J.R.R. Tolkien is very clear. Tolkien himself stated in many of his letters that some of the poems of Kalevala inspired him. He has made his interest in Finnish mythology known. The underlying themes (corruption, losing a family) are similar in some of the stories, such as the story of Fëanor and Silmarils discussed in this thesis. Tolkien has not, according to my findings, clearly commented on any specific thematic similarities, but they can still be traced from his texts.

One could also speculate did Kalevala have some influence over Tolkien's characters often being half orphans, orphans or otherwise mistreated characters. It is a common theme in many mythologies and Kalevala was most likely not the only inspiration for this recurring theme. In Kalevala, it is very rare for a character to have a happy childhood and both parents alive. Tolkien of course was also orphaned as a young boy himself and his childhood as described in his biography was always not very happy. He was placed from one guardian to another and he was deeply

affected by the death of his mother. That is one very possible explanation to why he first felt connected especially to Kullervo of all the characters. Tolkien was not like any other author, he did not take his works as light pieces of entertainment. He was walking in the footsteps of Elias Lönnrot who collected Kalevala instead of writing it. Tolkien did more or less the same. The Middle-earth mythology is invented by Tolkien instead of it being collected from many generations of people like Kalevala was, but like I and many other researchers have stated he drew from various mythologies and combined them. The core of both Kalevala and Tolkien's mythology is that they both are fictional and contain the whole cycle with gods, legends, history and the future of the world they speak of. Silmarillion begins with Ainur creating Arda and goes through various books all the way until the recorded history of Middle-earth ends and Kalevala begins with Ilmatar creating the world and ends with the rune singer Väinämöinen leaving and making way for Christianity.

The outcome of my thesis is, in short, that Kalevala has had a quite significant influence over Tolkien's legendarium particularly in these stories of Túrin, Fëanor and Silmarils. Since stories in Tolkien's legendarium are very connected I would say with more research this topic could be taken even further and more of his legendarium could be covered to find similarities. Tolkien himself described Kalevala to be "the original germ of the Silmarillion" (Letters, 87) In a future research for example the relation between Quenyan and Finnish languages, mentioned in chapter 2.1, could be a subject of a linguistic study.

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