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## VILLAINS AND THE REPRESENTATIONS OF EVIL IN J. R. R. TOLKIEN'S FICTION OF MIDDLE-EARTH

This paper aims to reveal the main elements of Tolkienian imagery behind villain characters and tries to reveal their unconscious content. We shall combine analysis of symbolic function with observation of purely narrative aspects. Our methodological point of departure is cultural studies, but we shall be assisted by comparative literature, which offers a higher degree of analytical precision. Finally, we shall be aided by literary genre studies, as most of Tolkien's imagery has been inspired by the folktale. This research is a journey through the fiction of J. R. R. Tolkien by way of the collective imagination, following its reflections in oral and written literary tradition. The analysis of this imagery will take us through psychology, anthropology, folklore as well as other disciplines. In our interpretation of Tolkien's work, we shall start with the two Ring novels: *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

Between the two works of the Ring, i.e., *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* there is a change in narrative tone that is clearly manifested in the figures of the villains. Sauron and Saruman, the main evil characters in Frodo's story, are considerably more dangerous than the trolls and the dragon Smaug in *The Hobbit*. Gandalf explains this circumstance to the dwarf Thorin, who wants to confront the Necromancer, in the following way: "Don't be absurd! He is an enemy quite beyond the powers of all the dwarves put together" (H, 37). An enemy of such dimensions as the Necromancer requires heroes with comparable epic stature. Because of this, elves, men and the magician Gandalf occupy an extraordinary place in Frodo's story.

### 1 Villains: Ourselves in Fin and Fur

Usually, in folkloric legends, a single supernatural character amasses the forces of evil. On the other hand, there can be several demonic and magical figures that help the hero. This second pattern is one we can apply to the novels of the Ring, which include a broad spectrum of figures with supernatural powers. These magi-

cal beings personify people's ancient fears. The characters of small mythology, such as dwarves, goblins and dragons, embody human fears and project their anxieties. This projection consists of attributing to another person or the environment what is inside us. These figures are release valves for fears originated by hatred, envy and egoism, in the same way that medieval witches were a means of representing fear of female sexuality and unorthodox ways of life. Tolkienian villains are part of the cultural language of fear, which verbalizes our anxiety created by the changing uncertainties of modernity in the face of a progressively more competitive and hostile environment. To that effect, Tolkien's fantasy moves away from the format of the folktale, where fear and death are repressed and only the satisfaction of desires counts.

The reader of fantastic fiction identifies himself, on the one hand, with the hero that suffers and emerges as the winner, and on the other, with the monster or enemy that has antisocial behaviour and transgresses the norms that govern communal life. According to Román Gubern, through the monster or enemy, the reader can free his aggression, his frustration, and himself from the restrictions and the regulation of social life by means of projection. The monster embodies our unconscious fears, our internal chimeras, and our repressed impulses. Through the monster, the reader can see in fiction all the lustful or destructive acts that he does not dare to do in real life. Then a paradoxical situation is created, in which the reader wants the victim to escape from the monster, but at the same time, for the monster to capture the sufferer, thus increasing the narrative tension (Gubern & Prat 1979: 44). Les Daniels explains this phenomenon when he examines the reasons for the failure of the film *Son of Kong* (1933), a sequel to the famous *King Kong*: "El hijo de Kong fue el monstruo más altruista jamás presentado en la pantalla, pero esto de volvió en contra suya. La función primaria de un malvado de ficción es la de expresar la agresividad reprimida del público" [Kong's son was the most altruistic monster ever presented on the big screen, but this fact turned against him. The primary function of a villain in films is to show the repressed aggressiveness of the audience] (Daniels 1975: 136; qtd. Gubern & Prat 1979: 45). This phenomenon of identification with the villain has also been observed in radio dramas. To a certain extent, female listeners identify with the "depraved woman", who is more seductive and attractive than the sweet, honest heroine (Klapper 1986: 189; qtd. Gubern & Prat 1979: 45). Following this logic of identification, the victory of the heroes over Sauron, Saruman and their armies represents the success over our socially unacceptable impulses, over the monsters of our minds. The death or banishment of the villains stands for our liberation from the feelings that we do not accept. The disappearance of these figures reintegrates us with the safe world of conscious thought.

The representation of evil in *The Lord of the Rings* follows a typical format in Christian theology, which is, like in Islam, receptive to the idea of evil, which is personified by Sauron. In most religions we find, on the other hand, an ambivalent God that contains the perception we have of ourselves, i.e., that good and evil coexist in our hearts (Burton 1988: 7–8). Ilúvatar (God) has only one face,

and it is positive, whereas Sauron and Saruman are relegated to the status of evil spirits.

In this article, besides villains, strictly speaking, we shall study the fauna of supernatural beings that populate Middle-earth.

## 2 The Villain Protagonists, Leaders of the Opposition

The attitude towards the quest determines the moral categorization of the characters. Those who promote it are virtuous and good, those who oppose it are wicked. The villains that Bilbo and the thirteen dwarves meet during their expedition to the Lonely Mountain act for their own benefit. On the other hand, many of the characters opposed to Frodo's quest are part of a warped network of Sauron's, made up by Gollum, the Black Riders, the orcs, Wormtongue, Saruman, etc. However, the villains of Middle-earth in general lack external motivation for their vile behaviour. Their thirst for evil is always due to inner causes. Here, the Ring fiction is told from the heroes' point of view, therefore anything that harms them is depraved and senseless.

In *The Lord of the Rings* all evil characters are punished: they perish or are banished from Middle-earth. There are no cases of conversion to the cause of good. The moral regulations of the novel are very clear-cut, so there is no possibility of ambiguity. The penalties that Tolkienian villains receive have pedagogical value: we recognise their fault by the way they are punished. At the end of their journey, they only obtain the opposite of what they wanted. They harbour their worst enemy in their hearts. They are the only reason for their own perdition. Moreover, their emotional dimness always benefits the hero, whose path toward success is certain. To that effect, we can apply Goethe's *Faust*, in which Mephistopheles says: "I am the Spirit that Denies, that always wills the Bad, and always works the Good" (v. 1336–1338; qtd. Lüthi 1987: 164). Tolkien's fiction borrows from the folktale and romance fantasy in general. These kinds of fiction demand that the villain suffer the worst punishment and that the hero be rewarded magnificently. The bearers of the Ring and their fellow travellers have social recognition in the worldly sphere and immortality in the Beyond ahead of them.

## 3 Sauron, the Eye of the Devil; and Saruman, the Wizard's Apprentice

The Devil is a Christian concern, a figure that helps us to explore the limits of human nature. A traditional saying asserts that "sine diabolo nullus dominus", without the Devil, there is no God. The Ring fiction is proof of this principle: Sauron is the catalyst who combines all the elements of the organic entity that is the land of Middle-earth. The idea of a figure that personifies evil as Sauron does is also favourably received in real life. The existence of natural disasters, of epidemics, of accidents that cost people their lives generates belief in an evil

force operating in the world. Many of the conditions that gave rise to the belief in Satan remain today.

Sauron is a fallen angel. Originally, he is an Ainur, which is an angelical spirit born in the mind of Ilúvatar (God). Melkor, the Ainu with greatest power and knowledge, captivates him at the beginning of the First Age and becomes the head of their followers. We find here a parallelism with the veterotestamentary Satan, who was originally absolutely faithful to Yaweh, but afterwards became the main antagonist of humanity. In *The Silmarillion*, it is explained that “Melkor became a liar without shame” (Tolkien 1979: 25). In the same way, it is said in the Bible that, “[The Devil] abodes not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it” (Saint John 8: 44). Sauron represents the spirit of modernity, which asserts its strength over nature, has dominated it, but is also destroying it. However, Sauron, not only destroys the things created by Ilúvatar, but he also wants to be the author of a new world conceived in his own image. In short, Sauron wants to supplant Ilúvatar. He represents evil in a generic state, whereas the rest of the villains that populate Middle-earth are embodiments of this concept of evil.

Sauron is in Middle-earth the leader of the opposition, the main villain that hinders the positive actions of Ilúvatar, creator of the world, and the Valar, its guardians and regents of the forces of nature. Sauron is conceived as a demon according to the Christian tradition, which makes him an opponent of God. Both are “murderer[s] from the beginning” (John 8: 44). The Satan of the Old Testament was originally an angel that proved humans’ loyalty to God. Afterwards, he became an accuser of man before God and finally a tempter. He is the Jewish Satan, who was never an adversary of God as is the Christian devil (Caro Baroja 1986: 114).

In medieval stories in which the Devil took part, tension arose between him and Jesus Christ, the Virgin or a saint. *The Lord of the Rings* is a more modern story in its formulation. On the one hand, the story is anthropocentric, because the conflict is between the Devil (Sauron) and the free peoples; on the other, and as a consequence of this homocentrism, the story is individualistic. The fight against evil is established between the individual and the evil powers. Gollum, Bilbo, Galadriel and Frodo are tempted by the Ring and they each have to defeat this temptation alone, without the help of saintly figures. To that effect, we must remember that Jesus Christ and many saints like St. Peter, St. Martin, St. Anthony and St. Madeleine were tempted by the Devil.

Nowadays it is believed that the world is morally neutral and that the devil is in our mind. He can be identified with the darkest aspects of our personality, which C. G. Jung calls “shadow”. However, in *The Lord of the Rings* he is not, like in most of modern fiction, a metaphysical or psychological concept, but is perfectly identifiable in the figures of Sauron and Saruman. In Tolkienian fantasy, evil is not a metaphor for the evil tendencies of the human heart, but is an incarnation that represents a force outside the individual.

The essential function of Sauron is to obstruct the kingdom of Ilúvatar. This is the same function that Satan has in the New Testament. The Hebrew word *Satan*

means “one who obstructs”. Later, he was represented as somebody that committed evil for the simple pleasure of causing harm. Both embodiments of evil, that of the Bible and that of the hobbit fantasy, use the possession of souls as a primary weapon. The Devil takes Christian souls through temptation and purchasing power; Sauron uses magical objects such as the Ruling Ring and the Palantíri. Both figures practise torture: the Devil in hell and Sauron through Melkor, who captures a group of elves and torments them in dungeons until turning them into horrifying figures.

In *The Lord of the Rings*, we find two kinds of representations of the Devil. The lidless eye, which corresponds to a learned formulation, emphasizes the destructive power of the Devil. This idea has had a long tradition in monastic and ecclesiastic culture in general since the Middle Ages. But in the popular imagination, this terrifying representation has been placed opposite a more trivial portrayal. The popular devil is less frightening, more stupid and easily deceived. There are many tales in folklore narrating how the Devil gets tricked. In oral tradition, he is embodied in figures such as giants and ogres, and also as animals such as dragons, snakes, etc. His appearance in animal form, except for the lamb (since Jesus Christ was the Lamb of God), can be explained by the fact that animals were sacred to pagan gods. Here we can apply the maxim *Omnnes dii gentium daemonia* (all pagan gods become demons); the gods of defeated religions become demons in the triumphant faith.

Similar to how the New Testament not only refers to the Devil, but also to the legions of devils led by Satan or Beelzebub, in *The Lord of the Rings* Sauron expands evil with his armies of orcs, with the balrogs and the Black Riders. Indeed, one of the traditional embodiments of the Devil is as a horseman wearing black and riding a black horse. These horses are winged and have the ability to fly. They seem like a parody of the eagles that help the heroes in several moments of Bilbo and Frodo’s stories. The fact that we initially ignore the identity of these horsemen makes them particularly troubling characters. The Black Riders are the spirits of kings, sorcerers and warriors from years past who are still alive thanks to the nine Rings of Power that Sauron had handed out among them. They are invisible, probably because of the Nine Rings, but are not capable of seeing the rest of the mortals in an ordinary way.

Sauron shares some features with two mythological figures. In mythological tradition, there are many gods that, like Sauron, only have one eye. Some of them, for example, Amaterasu, Apollo and Ra, represented the sun. Its importance in mythology comes from the fact that the sun is the source of life on earth. In Greek mythology the Cyclops, who built the palace of Olympus, was an enormous beast with only one eye. Odín, the god in Nordic mythology that inspired Tolkien, sacrificed an eye in exchange for being able to drink from the well of Mimir, which provided great knowledge. Because of this, he was usually represented with only one eye. The presence of a single eye in one’s anatomy is a symbol of second sight, which is magical. In the same way, it is generally believed that people who suffer some kind of mutilation of a limb acquire extraordinary faculties in the

remaining limb. That is, the strength that was in the absent limb is transferred to the other, several times multiplied, as a way of compensation.

The Viking king Ódín was the god of death, war and knowledge. Like him, Sauron has authority over the wolves and the ravens. On the other hand, the fact that he is embodied in a ceaselessly wandering eye that seriously disturbs the person who sees through the Palantíri, reminds us of the sorcerer Balor from Celtic mythology. This god of death had only one eye that killed whoever gazed upon it.

The main villains in Tolkienian fantasy, Sauron and Saruman, have extensive magical abilities. Both of them know the secrets of the divine blacksmith's trade and use the Palantíri for their depraved aims. This is a typical characteristic of the folktale, that the villains (witches, ogres, devils, etc.) naturally have these magical powers, whereas the heroes acquire them through magical objects given to them by supernatural auxiliaries like fairies or magicians. The hobbits receive magical help from the magician Gandalf, and the marvellous objects that the princess Galadriel gives them as presents.

Sauron and Saruman's eagerness to acquire forbidden knowledge involves a concept that is central to Judaic theology, which is that, behind knowledge (and also behind sex) is concealed sin. When Eve, influenced by the snake, persuaded Adam to eat the fruit of the tree of good and evil (i.e., knowledge), the first two people that God had created were banished from the Garden of Eden. This legend of the fall from a primitive paradise appears in the religious folklore of Egypt, India, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Mexico. However, only the Jews identified this fall with Original Sin. The Jewish creed has been so extreme in its will to regulate all aspects of human life that a religious historian has defined it as "El vestido más apretado con que se ha querido encorsetar jamás la vida" [The most tight clothes with which life has ever been confined] (qtd. Donovan 1985: 33). Mordor is also a lost paradise, because when Sauron turns it into his fortress, these lands, originally uncultivated and infertile, deteriorate even more, in contrast to the vegetative richness of other nearby regions.

Saruman is a magician who was loyal for a long time to Gondor and Rohan, but who later becomes an ally and vassal of Sauron, who represents the Devil in the universe of Middle-earth. The story of the man who sells his soul to the Devil in exchange for earthly power and wealth is deeply rooted in the Western spirit. The evocative force of the figure of Satan has powerfully contributed to it. This idea of the contract appears as early as in the Old Testament, where we find the germinal idea of this bond: "Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves" (Isaiah 28: 15). We can also find this idea of the pact in the New Testament in the words of the Devil to Christ when he showed him all the kingdoms of the earth: "And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me" (Matthew 4: 9).

The name Saruman derives from the Anglo-Saxon root of the Old English *searu*, which means *device*, *contrivance* or *art*. Saruman is an individual who plots, and

plotting corrupts people. Sauron and Saruman's wicked natures are related to their desire to achieve power. Both apply the famous Latin saying "Flectere si nequeo superos,/Acheronta movebo" [If I cannot make the gods bend, I will move the underworld]. In fact, these two figures are the conductors of all the evil characters of Middle-earth and those who lead the uprising against the free peoples.

Saruman is a Machiavellian character in the sense that he believes that the end justifies the means:

We can bide our time, we can keep our thoughts in our hearts, deploring maybe evils done by the way, but approving the high and ultimate purpose: Knowledge, Rule, Order; all the things that we have so far striven in vain to accomplish, hindered rather than helped by our weak or idle friends. There need not be, there would not be, any real change in our designs, only in our means. (Tolkien 1954a: 340)

This villain abandons the forms of diplomacy that he had used in the past; for instance, using his serpentine tongue to change the will of King Théoden, and trying to achieve his aims by exclusively warlike means.

In the same way that Frodo and Gollum make up an antithetical pair, so do Gandalf and Saruman. The latter follows a path that is the opposite of Gandalf's, who goes from being called the Grey to the White and to wearing a tunic of this colour. At the beginning, Saruman is named the White, but because of his pride during the War of the Ring calls himself the Many-coloured. In short, we notice that in Middle-earth the popular saying is true – the habit makes the monk.

Saruman, like Sauron, is a flat character or, in André Jolles' words, is not a character that acts but an "exécuteur de l'évènement éthique" (Jolles 1972: 193). Sauron, the main agent of evil, is not described in *The Lord of the Rings*; we only have access to a few of his statements. Because of this, it is necessary for the evil to be materialized, to personify it in lower ranking figures like Saruman, the narcissistic Gollum, and above all the orcs, the balrogs and other monstrous figures.

#### **4 Orcs: Sauron's Sleep Produces Monsters**

The orcs are created by Melkor at the beginning of the First Age, in order to parody the elves. As in the case of these creatures, the orcs are brave warriors that cannot die of natural causes. This is the only feature that they have in common – they differ in every other. Even the things the orcs produce are burlesque copies of what the elves make. The elves have a drink called Miruvórë, which is a tonic that tastes good. Orcs, on the other hand, have a drink that Merry and Pippin find very pleasant. In a similar way, the trolls are counterfeit ents.

The resource of creating parodic characters is a narrative practice that in folkloric studies is known as unsuccessful imitation. According to popular belief, God created the frog and the Devil, the toad. The latter has a swollen body, prominent

eyes, a huge mouth and an unpleasant croak. It is also believed that God created the goldfinch and the Devil, the owl; God, the dove and the Devil, the raven; God, the chamois and the Devil, the wolf that enjoys hurting other creatures, etc. In this way, it exemplifies the scarce creative power of the Evil One, who tries to imitate God, but without reaching the perfection of the divine work. Melkor also turns the dogs of Middle-earth into wolves that obey him. Likewise, Sauron creates the lycanthropes, which are beasts possessed by furious spirits. This kind of contrast is typical of the folktale, which uses it in several of the most widely known stories. In the tale of the kind and unkind girls, the unkind girl tries to obtain the gifts that a fairy in the body of an old woman has given to her kind sister. However, her lack of kindness when speaking to the fairy is harshly punished. Whereas the considerate sister was awarded with scented breath, and a gold coin for each word she uttered, the second girl henceforth emits fetid breath and disgusting reptiles from her mouth. The tale “The Gifts of the Little People”, or “The Old Woman who Was Skinned” are both based on cases of unsuccessful repetition.

Sunlight weakens the orcs. Because of this, they wander through subterranean caves and mines. Orcs were created in darkness and their life developed in it. They communicate in a rudimentary argot. They are cannibalists and are fond of killing. As happens in the folktale, bestiality exists more in human characters or those with a more animal physiognomy. Furthermore, the orcs worship the Devil. In Old English, *orc* meant “devil.” This word recalls the Italian term *orco* and the French *ogre*, which were applied to the fierce creatures in folktales. The hobbits sometimes call them *goblins*. Their physiques are hideous: stocky, with bent legs, long arms, dark faces, protuberant fangs, wide nostrils, deformed ears and slanted eyes that allow them to see in the dark. This representation of the orcs’ bodies reminds us of their connection with animality. Their corporal deformity is a visible sign of their inner perversity. The orcs use jagged, curved swords and scimitars, protect themselves with shields and often poison their weapons. They wear rough garments and heavy footwear. Their physical strength is extraordinary. They help Sauron to become Lord of Middle-earth (or of most of it).

The orcs embody the most negative aspects of machination and technological progress:

They make no beautiful things, but they make many clever ones. [...] It is not unlikely that they 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, and also not working with their own hands more than they could help. (Tolkien 1937: 70)

The orcs appear dissociated from their space in the novel. They are the only characters whose houses and towns we do not know about. The dwarves are not represented in their natural space either. However, we are given a description of the abandoned city of Khazad-dûm, the mansion of the dwarves (Tolkien 1954a:

386), and thanks to this we can form an impression of their habitat. The uprooting of the orcs is even greater if we consider that they have no family structure but are organized in military cells. There are no women or children among the members of this species. The orcs never appear alone, but always in groups, which signifies their lack of personal identity.

We can deduce the existence of three factions of orcs: the troops of Saruman from Isengard, those from Barad-dûr, and those from Moria. These groups are rivals: the orcs' wickedness does not allow them to live harmoniously with other members of their own species.

The orcs are represented as creatures that are possessed by the devil. They worship him. Their bodies have been deformed from torture and suffering. Like traditional representations of the Devil, the orc's complexion is dark and his eyes are as live coal. Darkness symbolizes the absence of light and goodness. They communicate in an orc argot of low linguistic level, very blasphemous. When they fight, especially when they retreat, they scream savagely. Their voice is stentorian and their laugh raucous. The light of elvish swords frightens them and pain drives them mad. They have frequent and sudden outbursts of rage. Any small obstacle can alter their spirits and arouse their aggression. In this way, for instance, when Bilbo and his companions are kidnapped by the goblins (orcs), the Great Goblin is enraged when he does not get the answer he expects from them. Then, "He jumped off his seat and himself rushed at Thorin with his mouth open" (Tolkien 1937: 72). When the cavern of the orcs becomes dark "The yells and yammering, croaking, gibbering and jabbering; howls, growls and curses; shrieking and shrinking that followed were beyond description. Several hundred wild cats and wolves being roasted slowly alive together would not have compared with it" (Tolkien 1937: 72). Demonic possession consists of a devil entering an individual's body and controlling their actions. Among the symptoms of possession are being abnormally tangled, having a ventral voice, and constantly using blasphemies and obscenities. Its effects can be seen in the form of fits or sudden outbursts like the ones we see in the orcs. Contemporary doctors have emphasised the resemblance between many symptoms of possession described in cases of witchcraft and those of epilepsy or pathological hysteria (Caro Baroja 1986: 63).

From a narrative technique point of view, the orcs provide the story with a crowd of villains that makes up an army against which the heroes can fight without any kind of moral scruple. Orcs reproduce sexually (although we do not know of any female orcs); but the film version of the novel treats them like objects, representing their reproduction as the result of an industrial process.

## **5 Dragons: Out of Space, Out of Time**

In the Old Testament, in the Book of Job, dragons appear as fire-breathing beasts. In the Apocalypse in the New Testament, the dragon is a symbol of evil. The tradition of dragon killers begins with Jesus Christ himself. In this way, we can

read in Psalm 91 “Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet” (13). The death of the dragon at the hands of the saint means the triumph of good over evil. The image of this victory has deep roots in the medieval imagination, so that they have over sixty saints who kill dragons. Saint George is the most famous. Apart from St. George, Jesus Christ himself is a killer of dragons, if we remember the aforementioned Psalm 91, in the part that says “The dragon shalt thou trample under feet”. As Claude Lecouteux has pointed out, victory over the dragon symbolizes the triumph over chaos and confusion, and the establishment of a new hero-governed order (Lecouteux 1999: 82).

The figure of the dragon is present in all popular, mythological and legendary traditions. Its complexity derives from this multiple presence. Originally, it was a snake with a large tail, and instead of a mouth it has a hole from which its tongue emerged. Human imagination and the mixing of traditions has given form to a much more complex creature (Amilien 1996: 249–250). However, despite the metamorphosis that happens with time, the dragon is generally represented as a big reptile with a big tail and an enormous mouth from which he spits fire, a feature that makes him similar to the Devil who is also a producer of fire. The dragon Smaug in *The Hobbit* and the spider Shelob in *The Lord of the Rings* are characterized by a bestiality that distinguishes them from the rest of the supernatural beings. The orcs, trolls, balrogs and other monstrous figures wandering about the scene of Middle-earth operate within a social sphere. The dragon is a very instinctive animal with a primitive mentality. The other characters are in the service of a much more elaborate form of wickedness where the desire to dominate other races prevails.

Dragons represent the forces that confirm taboos. In some popular folktales, they deny people’s access to well water, and inhibit the fertility of land and the production of food; in other stories they have kidnapped a princess and hindered her marriage to the hero (see Röhrich 1980: 205–209). In *The Hobbit*, we find a typical representation of the dragon as the keeper of a treasure. In this case, the beast hinders Bilbo’s access to wealth.

The dragons from the folkloric tradition have no history. They come from ancestral times and, like Smaug, can only be defeated by means of a physical fight. They represent the unconscious feelings of human psychology, the regression to an archaic previous state. They also embody the dangers of a particular epoch as James McGlathery has explained. In Babylonian stories, for instance, the dragon threatened people. He was the warden of wells and rivers, which can provoke floods and infertility. In Christian thought, the dragon is the Devil, the enemy of faith, according to the legend of St. George. In historical legends it is the enemy of the state, as in the Catalan story of Jofre el Pelós. In chivalric novels it is the hero’s rival and holds the maiden captive. In more modern representations, as it appears in newspapers and publicity, there exists the dragon of inflation, of unemployment, of war, of contamination or any other problem feared by people (McGlathery 1988: 3). In short, the figure of the dragon has maintained a con-

stant function throughout the centuries: it personifies people's fears and anxieties. To this effect, he has metamorphosed to express the specific fears of his time (Röhrich 1988: 3). Therefore, dragons, like giants and witches, are part of the grammar of the so-called cultural language of fear.

In the First Age, Morgoth creates the Great Worms called dragons. There are three kinds: giant snakes that walk on four legs, others that crawl and others with wings similar to those of bats that allow them to fly. Within each group, three types can be distinguished: the so-called cold ones with claws and fangs, and those that spit fire. These reptiles are protected by scales made of the strongest steel. Their teeth and nails are metallic and have exceptional consistency. They could destroy walls with their tails. The dragons' fluttering causes torrential winds and the flames from their mouths burn everything in their path.

Regardless of their physical strength, these animals have prodigious intelligence and supernatural sensory powers. Their sight is keener than a falcon's, their hearing is very acute and their sense of smell is very sharp, so that their enemies cannot pass unnoticed. We must remember that in folktales the ogre or demon with a very sharp sense of smell is a very recurrent motif.

Dragons, like orcs and wargs (wolves) prefer darkness to sunlight. Their blood is black and poisonous. Their breath smells like a combination of mud and sulphur. Their laugh is so raucous that it cracks the mountain and their voices are harsh whispers. Their eyes emit a ruby light and when they are angry they cast red lightning bolts. The darkness of their skin reveals their association with evil, in the same way that the darkness of the Devil's skin is an indication of his link with machination and modernity. The spider Shelob has a long iron claw in each of its legs.

Smaug is not the last dragon of Middle-earth. Gandalf explains, in a confused and contradictory way, that the Ring could be melted down with the fire of some old dragons that were more powerful, but in Frodo's time there is not "any dragon left on earth in which the old fire is hot enough" (Tolkien 1954a: 94). As Tolkien himself has stated: "The dragon had the trade-mark *Of Faërie* written plain upon him" (Tolkien 1997: 135). Like the dragons of popular legends and folktales, Smaug inhabits a far-off place, beyond the limits of civilisation. To arrive in the region where these antediluvian reptiles live it is necessary to make a long journey, to travel through disturbing lands and overcome tests of endurance. The dragon Smaug that appears in *The Hobbit* plunders the caves under mount Erebor and throws them out. Erebor is "The Lonely Mountain" in a plain east of the Mirkwood and North Long Lake. Around the Mountain, everything is charred and desolate.

*Smaug* is the past form of the Germanic verb *smugan*, which means "to squeeze through a hole." Smaug is a telluric dragon, not an aquatic one, because his dwelling is in the mountain, which is a lithic element. As Virginie Amilien has pointed out, stones and rocks are closely bound to death in Indo-European culture through the grave stone (Amilien 1996: 114). Before settling into the Lonely Mountain, Smaug kills the dwarves that built and inhabited the subterranean passages that

serve as the dragon's residence and warehouse for his treasure.

The dragons of the folkloric tradition usually appear connected to an aquatic environment, although they live in mountain. Normally, it is not flowing water, it is stagnant, usually a lake. The mountain of Erebor is near the Long Lake, as previously mentioned. Bard's arrow fatally wounds Smaug in the year 2941 and the dragon comes down to the lake and destroys the city of Esgaroth. When the water's level is low, his skeleton is visible.

The condition of *draconitas* includes the symbolism of the four elements: the scales remind us of his bond with the aquatic environment, the wings his connection with air, his long reptile tail his attachment to earth. Many of Smaug's features have been inspired by a human model. For instance, his greediness: "I ate six ponies last night and I shall catch and eat all the others before long" (Tolkien 1937: 213); his desire for flattery: "I am old and strong, strong, strong. [...] My armour is like tenfold shields, my teeth are swords, my claws spears, the shock of my tail a thunderbolt, my wings a hurricane and my breath death!" (Tolkien 1937: 216); equally, his intelligence, his liking for riddles, his immoderate greed, etc. forms a fully human psychology despite his bestial form. We can affirm that these supernatural creatures are human in their behaviour, but fabulous and legendary in their physical construction.

The dragon Smaug in *The Hobbit* speaks very politely, using many roundabout expressions, in a tone of superiority typical of the privileged class. His is an Orwellian double-speak, because his refinement when speaking contrasts with the brutality of his behaviour. Smaug is an indomitable and asocial beast, and does not allow any kind of regulation or limitation on his disproportionate aggression.

In Smaug's terrifying image, we notice the use of the first narrative laws outlined by folklorist Bengt Holbek, called externalisation (Holbek 1998: 442), according to which one's inner qualities are expressed by means of attributes or actions. The cruelty and wickedness of the dragon are expressed mainly through his external appearance. Smaug is gigantic, breathes fire, and emits foul vapours. His greed is expressed in his gold and diamond covered body, and in his habit of sleeping on his stolen treasure.

Smaug's passion for collecting jewels can be understood as a manifestation of coprophilia; that is, the characteristic tendency in childhood to be attracted to excrement. To Freud's disciples, gold and money are "copro-symbols" and the passion they arouse is the effect of the regression to the anal libido. This interpretation is based on Freud's approach, who states that "En las antiguas civilizaciones, en el mito, en el cuento, la superstición, en el pensamiento inconsciente, en el sueño y en la neurosis, hay establecida una relación de las más estrechas entre el dinero y los excrementos" [In ancient civilisations, the myth, the folktale, the superstition, the unconscious thought, the dreams and the neurosis there has been established a close connection between money and excrement] (Freud 1965; qtd. Cerdá 1985: 205). Coprophilia is a symbolic value that has enormous importance in the formation and social behaviour of human beings. There is in the adult an inclination to "collect" that is inherited from the child. However, this adult does

not collect objects, but money. His willingness to accumulate money has to do with a repressed and sublimated tendency toward anal eroticism (Cerdá 1985: 205). This theory of gold as scatological is nourished by several examples from popular legends and folktales. In some fairytales, the Devil gives gold to people who serve him, and it turns into excrement when he disappears. In Europe, there is also a superstition according to which the discovery of treasure is similar to the act of defecating. The tale “The goose that laid the golden eggs” also alludes to this excretory function (Cerdá 1985: 206).

Several motifs in the episode involving the dragon Smaug seem to be inspired by the medieval literary tradition. The one in which there is a small spot on the dragon’s stomach where the dragon can be fatally wounded reminds us of the heroic tradition. Thus, in the *Nibelungenlied*, the hero Sigurd has to kill the dragon Fáfnir by hitting a particular spot on his stomach. Like with Fáfnir, there is a bird that informs Bilbo about the dragon’s weak point. Finally, like the dragon in *Beowulf*, Smaug realizes immediately that somebody had stolen an item from his immense treasure.

Smaug receives a trivializing treatment, because he has been granted the capacity of language, a sense of humour, personal vanity and a liking for riddles. This treatment of the dragon figure is typical of modern versions of folktales and also of children’s narratives. This dragon is not a kind beast as are the wild animals in these modern stories, where they lose some of their potential to generate fear.

## 6 Associated Beasts: the Call of the Wild

In the fantasy of Middle-earth, evil often becomes incarnated in the bodies of antediluvian animals, some of them actuated independently of Sauron’s will; but as they attack the members of the Company, they become his indirect allies. One of these wild beasts is the spider Shelob the Great, who guards a pass in the mountains of Mordor called Cirith Ungol. Very few travellers dare to travel through this place because of the spider’s presence. However, Frodo and Sam do, because it is the only way to enter Mordor. This spider devours light. It emits a breath that not only blinds its enemies, but also erases their memory. The spider is as big as a rhinoceros. She has horns, her eyes glitter maliciously and her abdomen is swollen and phosphorescent.

In the folkloric tradition, spiders announce illness and misfortune. If you find one in a sick person’s room it means the person is going to die. This negative symbolism can also be found in *The Lord of the Rings*, where Shelob seriously jeopardises Frodo’s life.

Margery Hourihan has seen an image of feminine sexuality in Shelob. The pronoun “she” in the name of this monster suggests that she is the essence of femininity. In fact, sometimes it is simply called “She.” The fact that it is a spider suggests that the essence of femininity is animal, i.e., appetite and sexuality devoid of reason. Whereas female characters in novels are basically decorative and

do not have much importance in the storyline, Shelob makes a considerable emotional impact. “Shelob”, writes Hourihan, “suggests the fear which lurks deep in the unconscious, but because of the emphasis on her femaleness, her lair also suggests the passages of the female body, and the small heroes, Frodo and Sam, become engulfed in these dark, repulsive passages” (Hourihan 1997: 190).

The hobbits notice the presence of the monstrous spider because of the strong smell that comes to them from her den. In the description of this beast is emphasized the image of a grotesque pregnancy: “Great horns she had, and behind her short, stalk-like neck was her huge swollen body, a vast bloated bag, swaying and sagging between her legs; its great bulk was black, blotched with livid marks, but the belly beneath was pale and luminous and gave forth a stench” (Tolkien 1954b: 425). In addition, her body is soft and damp. Frodo pierces it with a sword, a weapon that has evident phallic connotations in a scene that also has clear sexual symbolism: “The blade scored it with a dreadful gash, but those hideous folds could not be pierced by any strength of men [...]. She yielded to the stroke, and then heaved up the great bag of her belly high above Sam’s head. Poison frothed and bubbled from the wound” (Tolkien 1954b: 429).

Shelob presents a disgusting image of feminine sexuality, in contrast to the Elf Queen Galadriel, who represents virginity and spirituality. So, on the one hand female virginity is paired with goodness, and on the other, sexuality with wickedness (Hourihan 1997: 191). The male fear of female sexuality has created throughout folklore and mythological tradition figures that embody these fears. Frequently, they are women with supernatural powers that seduce a man and afterwards assault or despise him. As early as ancient Greece we find the nymphs, spirits of the fields and nature in general that were very beautiful, so much so that mortals often fell in love with them. The water nymphs or undines of the Greco-Roman tradition are analogous to the nymphs. They seduced travellers and then drowned them. The German *lorelei* also lured young men to their aquatic dominion and strangled them. Witches have also been embodiments of the male fear of female sexuality.

Because of the spider’s symbolic content, and the elements added by the author, Shelob’s episode can be read as an allegory of the relationships between the sexes.

## 7 Trolls

In Tolkien’s fiction there are two kinds of giants with great relevance to the storyline. These are the trolls and balrogs. The figure of the giant has taken root in popular imagery. Numerous texts affirm that the first inhabitants of the earth were giants or gigantic men. Hesiod tells us that the Titans were born from the relationship of the angels with the daughters of Cain’s descendants. St. Augustine affirms that there were giants long before the arrival of the angels on earth. Many authors of the ancient world believed that Adam was the height of a giant. In antiquity and in the Bible the discovery of prehistoric animal remains played a decisive role because it suggested that those bones were from giants. In Europe, the meg-

alithic monuments were attributed to giants because people believed that they could have only been made with colossal strength (Lecouteux 1999: 24–25).

Trolls are demoniacal beings from Scandinavian folklore. They are particularly wicked to human beings. Originally (before the year 1000) they were described as giants in the folkloric tradition. Sometimes it is said that they inhabited castles where they kept fabulous treasures. This is the same race that appeared in the folktales of the Northern Men. The monster Grendel from *Beowulf* is inspired by them. Trolls are better represented than the dragon Smaug or the Balrog as the stupid giants in folktales, which are conquered by the hero, as we find them in tales such as “Jack and the Beanstalk” or “Petit Poucet”. Trolls are larger-than-life characters and, at the same time, are dull. Their primary personality is an expression of primitivism. Moreover, their stoutness and ugliness confer a grotesque identity to them.

The trolls that appear in *The Hobbit* become orcs in *The Lord of the Rings*. Trolls are stout, strong, ugly and stupid. They have thick skin made up of green hard scales that only the strongest metal weapons could pierce. Their blood is dark and their two feet have no toes. All the trolls, except the class called Ologhai, who are more intelligent, turn in stone when exposed to sunlight. Because of this, they are only found in shady places. In the folkloric tradition, this is a feature assigned to gnomes or trolls and also to dwarves. The petrification of trolls or ogres can be explained by the hero’s inability to beat them through physical combat. The sun is an auxiliary that in many stories provides the magical help that the protagonist needs to win. This help can be related to the fact that since the Bronze Age the sun was considered a divinity in many cultures (Amilien 1996: 87–88). Particularly in cold countries, in whose mythology our author found inspiration, the sun is highly valued as a supplier of light and heat. Solar light is also a symbol of knowledge; because of that, the inability to tolerate sunlight makes the orcs obscurantist beings. In fact, one of the orcs’ most distinctive features is stupidity. To avoid contact with sunlight they live in caves and under rocks. The relationship of the trolls to stones is analogous to that of the ents to trees, because they are created out of them. They are fond of killing by biting their enemies in the neck and they eat all kinds of meat. They only understand the Black Language and speak very little. Sauron compensates for their lack of intelligence by increasing their doses of wickedness. They constantly work in the service of evil creating armies for the dark lord. Their sense of military discipline makes it possible for them to sacrifice their lives while carrying out an order.

The chapter “Roast Mutton” in *The Hobbit* relates the meeting of Bilbo and the dwarves with the trolls. The latter are depicted according to a pattern that resembles the giants in folktales. They are characters with insatiable hunger and great voracity when it comes to providing themselves with new victims. These features reveal a childish and primitive psychology. The trolls are like big children, unable to restrain their appetites, living by the pleasure principle. These figures with no control over their desires are easily tricked by others who are smaller but more intelligent. This idea is recreated in the myth of David and Goliath.

The trolls keep treasures of stolen coins, weapons, clothes and food. In the folkloric tradition, we also find giants in charge of keeping hidden treasures, which are symbols of a lost power. These figures, giants and trolls, are members of defeated religions, that have seen how other more intelligent races dominate the regions that they had ruled before.

The other gigantic creatures with a certain anthropomorphic appearance are the balrogs. They are spirits of fire. They appear before the elves and men as big demonic beings wrapped in fire, and also use it as a weapon. They wear swords, whips and maces. These creatures cannot be killed by ordinary soldiers or with conventional weapons. Gothmog is the lord of the Balrogs, who kills Fëanor. In the stories of Frodo and Bilbo, the only Balrog that appears is the one that Gandalf defeats in Moria.

Another animal serving the cause of evil, although not gigantic, is the wolf. This mammal has been the main enemy of the European population throughout their history. It was called the “tiger of the West”. It always walks in the direction of the wind so that dogs cannot follow its trail. It is a cruel and unpredictable animal that moves in groups at an extraordinary speed. It is the only animal that directly attacks a person who is walking alone or has lost his way. He is a slayer of livestock and a carrier of rabies (Fossier 1995: 32–33). He is a threat to people as much as to livestock. Because of this, we can say that he defies the civilised forms of life as did the Vikings (who identified themselves with the wolf) and the Nazis (who described themselves as werewolves) (Thomas 1989: 116). In folkloric tradition, this animal is the favourite villain of many tales.

The relationship of the wolf to evil is very established in the popular imagination. Wolves have been popularly identified with the Devil, who often adopted this animal’s appearance. During the Middle ages, the Church encouraged the association of the wolf with the Devil, so that believers felt its real presence everywhere. Many hagiographies describe the miracle of the wolf tamed by the saint, as in the tale of St. Francis of Assisi and the beast of the Gubbio. It is generally believed that wolves have a predatory nature, but are also very cowardly. In folktales, it appears as a very menacing wild beast.

The wargs (wolves) are created by Melkor by corrupting the nature of dogs to serve his evil plans. The orcs ride them. The Rohirrim are afraid of them because they tear the horses’ bellies. The wargs are ghosts that only acquired bodily form at night: the sun destroys their evil power.

## **8 Villains from Inside: Psychology and Means of Composition**

We can establish the following correlation that is applicable to Tolkienian fantasy: the more space devoted to describe the external world, the smaller the space devoted to the inner universe of the characters. In the case of the villains, this inner being is only shown by means of their pernicious effects on the environment and the towns of Middle-earth. In the case of the heroes, the treatment of their

psychology is limited to establishing a game of temptation and fear of failure that the bearers of the Ring and their companions have to varying degrees. The villains of *The Hobbit* have a more hedonistic and childish psychology than those in *The Lord of the Rings*. A young reader can feel himself drawn towards certain antisocial acts of the protagonists of Bilbo's story. Instead, the evil characters in Frodo's story are the nightmares of an adult mind.

The wicked characters in Tolkien's fantasy and in romance fiction in general are characterized by their egotism, their desire to promote their interests at the expense of the legitimate rights of other people. The lack of generosity that characterizes them is also a lack of intelligence. In general, they are easily tricked. Thus, Bilbo escapes from Gollum thanks to sophistry in a game of riddles. The dragon Smaug boasts about his belly full of gold and diamonds, and when he shows it to Bilbo, the hobbit notices that he has an exposed hole on his left side that makes him vulnerable. The elves of the wood imprison Bilbo's friends, but the hobbit manages to liberate them thanks to the fact that their guardians are drunk. Frodo and Sam manage to escape the tower of Cirith Ungol disguised as orcs thanks to the fact that among the orcs that had imprisoned Frodo there were two rival factions fighting each other, causing several deaths. The villains' lack of control over their appetites causes them to fail. Bilbo and Frodo display much slyness to beat their different rivals. They are, to that effect, true tricksters. In tales from oral tradition, we often find this figure, because in a world where it is necessary to fight every day for subsistence, to be a rogue is more of a virtue than a defect. On the other hand, a disproportionate desire for riches or power is harshly punished. In this way, the romance establishes the degree to which personal ambition is acceptable.

In addition to being easily deceived, the lack of intelligence of villains is made evident in their inability to create and their inclination to destroy. The unskilfulness of villains is well exemplified in Sauron, the forger of the Ring, who does not naturally have the knowledge for this creative act, but learns it from the Vala Aulë. The inventive ineptitude of the orcs is reflected in the language they speak, which was not created by them, but borrowed from other peoples and impoverished to adapt it for their scarce communicative needs. In contrast to the villains' creative incompetence, which is clear in the orcs' impoverished language, others have an exacerbated linguistic creativity. For instance, Galadriel is known as the Lady of Lórien, the Lady of the Wood, the Lady of the Galadrim, the Sorceress of the Golden Wood, the Mistress of Magic, the White Lady and Queen Galadriel. The hobbits, particularly, really love language, as is shown by their liking for stories, poetry, songs and conversation.

Heroes, as we are explaining, are defined by their creativity. The hobbits and dwarves show great inventiveness in their songs. Both races are producers of books that record the incidents and exploits of their ancestors. The elves are even more creative. They are fond of music, poetry, art and science. It is said that they taught the trees to speak. They invented a white flour biscuit that preserves them for a long time and is very invigorating. They are called *lembas*, which means

“waybread”. They also have a metal called *mithril*, which is very light but still harder than steel. Even the most ordinary objects made by them are very beautiful. The cloaks they give to the members of the company change colour as they absorb the twilight, starlight or sunlight.

Villains in Tolkien’s fantasy are created following a Christian theology of evil, according to which all the creatures created by God are originally good, but their own actions turn them from the right path. In *The Lord of the Rings*, the villains’ desire for power is dissociated from greed. Sauron and Saruman do not aspire to live luxuriously. Their only ambition is to accumulate power. However, they do not use it to their own advantage, but only utilize it to destroy and distress other creatures.

The villains in *The Lord of the Rings* essentially share the same psychology or, expressed in another way, have in common the absence of distinctive psychological features. Their only ambition in life is to commit evil acts. They take pleasure in the suffering of other people and even more in their extermination. We ignore the psychological motivations of this behaviour that do not make them happy. It is unusual that the villains in Tolkienian fiction and romance in general, instead of acting in the service of good and harmony, devote themselves to activities that do not make them happier, that in the end will be their ruin. As much as they belong to the class of arachnids, trolls or orcs, villains deny outright all the beautiful things that bring the peace of noble feelings.

In *The Hobbit*, the dragon Smaug has a much more elaborate psychology. He is an intelligent dragon, fond of riddles, miserly, conceited and stubborn. All these qualities lack sense in a solitary and asocial being. However, from the narrative point of view they contribute to distinguish him from other villains such as, for instance, trolls. The trolls show a certain degree of civilisation as is revealed by the fact that there are stolen objects of all kinds in their caves: pots full of golden coins, weapons, articles of clothing and even a keg of beer.

The free peoples of Middle-earth have heterogeneous characteristics that mean in practice different forms of social organization. The elves, humans, hobbits, dwarves, ents, etc. constitute societies that are articulated in a characteristic way in very particularized spaces. On the other hand, the villains of Middle-earth, whether we refer to orcs, balrogs or trolls, are all gregarious, are organised by means of a rigid hierarchy and lack community bonds as distinctive features.

In order to create monsters, Tolkien uses known methods of composition that have a wide tradition in literature and the popular imagination. As Claude Kappler has pointed out, there is a collective unconsciousness from which individuals drink in order to create monstrous forms: “Una de las características del mito es la de ser repetitivo, bien se trate de una repetición idéntica, bien refundida. En ambos casos engendra un mito de la misma familia, pero de rama distinta. La [...] permanencia de las formas, lejos de expresar una banalidad ridícula, revela, por el contrario, la fuerza de los instintos más fundamentales” [One of the features of the myth is to be repetitive, whether it is an identical repetition or an adapted one. In both cases it generates a myth of the same family, but of a different branch. The [...] presence of the forms, far from expressing a ridiculous banality,

reveals, on the contrary, the strength of the most basic instincts] (Kappler 1986: 206–208). As far as the psychology of the monsters is concerned, it is an indispensable condition for the hero to acquire a mythical height equal to the villain's worst moral qualities.

### Conclusion

Monsters are a link between the world of people and the unknown. In Tolkien's fiction there exists a clear division between the beings created in God's image and those that have monstrous forms, which are invariably villains. As Tolkien's stories are inspired by medieval tradition, they confer as much prominence on monsters as on the heroes themselves. Monsters are typically medieval elements in a geography of the other world. They are a "normal anomaly", a mysterious testimony of the imagination and divine creation. To the ordinary man, they are, first of all, forms different from himself. In Claude Kappler's words, they are "el resultado de una organización no habitual de los elementos ordinarios de composición, de un amasijo diferente de la materia inicial" [the result of an unusual arrangement of the common elements of composition, of a hotchpotch different from the initial matter] (Kappler 1986: 132). Monsters are marginal characters that live beyond civilised space. In this way, for instance, the dragon Smaug lives in Lonely Mountain and Shelob in the Pass of Cirith Ungol.

Indeed, heroes mark the limits of what is considered normal. All the anthropomorphic beings that are bigger, uglier or stronger than the heroes are monsters, and are opposed to them. Those that do not fit the patterns of normality established by the hero belong to the fantastic world. To the ordinary man, monsters are forms different from him. The most relevant feature of the monster is to be different. Edward Said has pointed out that people often define themselves negatively, that is, as different from the others, those that live beyond our territory. A group of people that live in a small area establishes limits between their land and the territory that surrounds it. The familiar space is "ourselves" and the regions beyond are "the others". But usually we do not have an exact idea of how "the others" are (Said 1995: 54). The journey of the hero gets him in touch with the other, and the relationship with it causes open conflict between these two identities. It is in this way that the other becomes a monster as frightful as it is unknown.

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