

12

RECYCLING SHADOWS: TOLKIEN'S INFLUENCE ON ROWLING'S COMPOSITION OF VOLDEMORT AND THE DEMENTORS¹

Cido Rossi

*Recebido em 15 jun 2023.**Aprovado em 02 dez 2023.***Cido Rossi**

PhD. in Literary Studies – UNESP, 2011.

Professor of British Literature at the College of Sciences and Languages at UNESP, Araraquara, SP, Brazil.

Teaches at the undergraduate course of Languages and Literatures and at the Graduate Program in Literary Studies of the same institution.

Level 2 Productivity in Research researcher of the Brazilian National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) – process n. 311165/2021-4.

Leader of the research group Vertentes do Fantástico na Literatura (Dimensions of the Fantastic in Literature, UNESP/CNPq) and member of the research groups Estudos do Gótico (Gothic Studies, UERJ/CNPq) and Nós do Insólito (Us from In-solid, UERJ/CNPq).

Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/0428069285054155>.ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3930-1284>.E-mail: aparecido.rossi@unesp.br.

Abstract: The shadow archetype is one of the most productive in fiction, where it usually manifests through personifications, characters which embody its principles of haunting, permanent returning, questioning, and debt: the villains and the creatures of the dark. The

1 Título em língua portuguesa: “Reciclando sombras: a influência de Tolkien na composição de Voldemort e dos dementadores de Rowling”.

embodiment of the shadow is a compositional procedure that, in the case of Fantasy worlds, works by the means of creatively recycling and refiguring elements of previous personifications of the shadow. Thus, departing from a short theoretical consideration on Fantasy as the branch of the Fantastic that is the best place for dealing with the shadow archetype, we intend to demonstrate, as an example on how the two procedures of personification of the shadow work in fiction, the influence of Tolkien on J. K. Rowling's composition of the villain Voldemort and the Dementors in her *Harry Potter* series.

Keywords: Shadow archetype. Fantasy. Compositional procedures. Recycling. Refiguring.

Resumo: O arquétipo da sombra é um dos mais produtivos na ficção, na qual geralmente se manifesta por meio de personificações, personagens que incorporam seus princípios de assombro, permanente retorno, questionamento e dívida: os vilões e os seres das trevas. A incorporação da sombra é um procedimento composicional que, no caso dos universos de Fantasia, funciona por meio da reciclagem e refiguração criativas de elementos de personificações anteriores da sombra. Assim, a partir de uma breve consideração teórica sobre a Fantasia como o ramo do Fantástico que se mostra o melhor lugar para se lidar com o arquétipo da sombra, pretendemos demonstrar, a título de exemplo de como funcionam na ficção os dois procedimentos de personificação da sombra mencionados, a influência de Tolkien na composição do vilão Voldemort e dos Dementadores da série *Harry Potter*, de J. K. Rowling.

Palavras-chave: Arquétipo da sombra. Fantasia. Procedimentos composicionais. Reciclagem. Refiguração.

The Fantastic is in permanent change. From its inception in the 18th century British Gothic novel (FURTADO, 2018) to its establishment as a genre along the 19th century (TODOROV, 1975)

and its evolvement as a mode along the 20th century (BESSIÈRE, 1974), the Fantastic pervades virtually all manifestations and supports of fiction existent today due to its power of adaptation. It conforms to any fictional structure and to any fictional genre. It also adapts to any historical and sociocultural context, to the point its perception sometimes depends on the cultural repertoire of the reader/consumer/audience (ABREU RIBEIRO, 1983). As a mode (a way of doing, a modalization, a style, an aesthetics), the Fantastic is one of the most important tools for meaning generation and meaning subversion at the disposal of authors, artists, writers, and world modelers.

Like all major genre-modes of fiction, the Fantastic changes and adapts in a double way: from the outside and from the inside. From the outside it receives constant influences from the historical and social contexts, as well as different uses in the hands of fiction writers. It transits from the pages of books to the screens of movies, TV series, and videogames; to the images of graphic novels and card games; to the virtual world of the internet, and then it goes back again to literature. It is also in permanent encounter with the human conceptions of reality and unreality, which render it a philosophical issue beyond the realms of fiction. And from the inside the Fantastic is in a never-ending conversation with all the other fictional genres and modes, from Realism to Modernism, from the fairy tales to the Sci-fi, from the classics to the contemporaries.

And what does it say in all these conversations? The Fantastic preaches and offers the languages of the marvelous, the uncanny, hesitation, fear. It puts into question all certainties, all conventions, everything taken for granted, by simply reminding through its

techniques and themes that there is nothing solid, there is nothing permanently fixed; all (fiction including) is in-solid, transient, infixed, plastic, adaptable. The Fantastic is also a reminder that, before Realism and Positivism, before the Enlightenment, before any materialism, logics, and rationality, there is imagination, and imagination is within the basic definition of humanity, the very cognitive ability that makes humans different from other animals. Nothing exists in material reality before existing in imagination, so nothing becomes real before being fantastic.

Obviously, in some moment of the human history such a compelling force called up the attention of more philosophical and theoretical minds, which tried to understand, conceive, even define, its whithertos and whyfors. Thus, when we take the Fantastic within the fields of Theory, we find three major approaches: Tzvetan Todorov in his *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1975), David Roas in all his academic work but particularly in *Behind the Frontiers of the Real: A Definition of the Fantastic* (2018), and J. R. R. Tolkien in his academic essay “On Fairy-Stories” (2014).

For Todorov, the Fantastic expresses hesitation upon the limits between the natural and the supernatural. It is a means of perception, either by the reader, the narrator, or the characters, which depends too much on a previous and totally established idea of material reality (the solid, the fixed) that will serve as a background to emphasize the manifestation or not (and then the existence or not) of the supernatural. If the supernatural truly manifests, then the hesitation solves into the marvelous; if the supernatural is just a figment of imagination, then the hesitation solves into the uncanny (which is not exactly the Freudian uncanny). Rarely the

hesitation remains unsolved, but only in these cases Todorov finds the Fantastic pure, the Fantastic as a genre-mode of fiction — also known as the Todorovian Fantastic or the traditional Fantastic.

For Roas (2018), the Fantastic conveys an outburst of the supernatural within the natural, a direct manifestation of the unreal within the real. In both cases, a mimetic representation of the material reality is mandatory to the occurrence of the disturbing effect. It is a means of invasion, a transgression of the laws that sustain the fabric of material reality as understood either by the reader, by the narrator, or by the characters. It is an act of violence, a threatening to the status quo and to all other delusions of fixity and steadiness created by the Western metaphysics. The Fantastic is then an aesthetic effect of fear, more sophisticated than terror, horror, panic, or gore. Such conception gives back this genre-mode to its inception, the Gothic fiction, and renders it a contemporary development of the latter.

As for Tolkien (2014), the Fantastic is the only true reality, the source of everything and everyone: imagination itself. It is a means of meaning generation and meaning subversion since the author conceives the supernatural as an undetachable part of reality, a part that has been conveniently denied and suppressed by the economic and political forces that guide humanity since the Enlightenment and the industrial revolution. Such denial and suppression have the purpose of breaking the bonds between the human and the natural world, an essential disconnection to the maintenance of Capitalism, the social and economic system based on the dialectics of opposition and hierarchy adopted by the Western world. Resultant of this kind of dialectic relation is precisely the oppositional and hierarchical

separation between nature and culture in which nature must submit to culture. In this way of thinking, the Fantastic gets a double function: resistance against the Capitalist procedure of disconnection (which is also a means of depersonalization); and a metaphoric and symbolic way back, by the means of fiction, to the organic connection and balance between nature and the humankind.

Like all theories, these three approaches have their advantages and disadvantages at the same time they are complementary to each other. However, Tolkien's conception of the Fantastic updates the genre-mode from the inside in the very moment it releases imagination from the mandatory connection to the material reality the other two theories depend upon. With such a detachment, the Fantastic widens its boundaries by attaching another branch to its realms, this one independent either of hesitation or fear of the reader/narrator/character, but also a user of both feelings as narrative tools, not as narrative effects, so hesitation and fear are now *within* textuality, not without it. Fantasy is this dimension of the Fantastic.

In terms of structural and thematic conventions, Fantasy features the marvelous, the archetypal, the heroic, the quest pattern, and the epic (ALEXANDER, 1971), all enclosed in a mythic time and space detached from the historical chronology where the reader/consumer/audience is immersed (BAKHTIN, 1981). Due to the complexity of blending these architectural elements, Fantasy writers usually compose entire fictional universes developed in multiple volumes. In terms of rhetoric, Fantasy fictional universes might be arranged within four categories (MENDLESOHN, 2008): portal-quest, immersive, intrusion, and liminal.

In portal-quest Fantasies the plot starts in a realistic representation of the material reality and then the protagonist, as well as the reader/consumer/audience, crosses a threshold between universes and is taken into a Fantasy world (J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series is an example here); immersive Fantasies cast the reader/consumer/audience direct into a Fantasy world without any interface or reference to his/her material world (Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* is a perfect example of this rhetoric); intrusion Fantasies perform the collision (and its results) between a mimetic representation of the material world and the Fantasy world in a way the first is invaded by the second (Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson* series exemplifies this trope); liminal Fantasies, the rarest among the four categories, is quite similar to the Todorovian Fantastic since it depends upon the hesitation resultant of the relationship between the material and the Fantasy worlds, as well as the connection between the reader/consumer/audience and the storyteller (narrator, character, or the implicit author) — Lovecraft's "The Call of Cthulhu" might be an example of liminal Fantasy.

In terms of aesthetic effects, Fantasy is more effective than the traditional Fantastic since it is the individual and subjective mind of the reader/consumer/audience, his/her personal imagination, which gets in touch straightforward with the fictional universe created by Fantasy worlds. Such straightforwardness establishes stronger bonds of identification and a more powerful suspension of disbelief than the usually demanded by fiction. While the traditional Fantastic tends to detach the reader/consumer/audience from the text and make him/her look in a reviewing way to his/her own reality, Fantasy invites the reader/consumer/audience to go as

deeper as possible into the realms of imagination to find his/her own self, the singularity of his/her humanity.

An immersive experience no matter the rhetoric or aesthetics category it fits, Fantasy moves the reader/consumer/audience from the material reality that surrounds him/her to the inner and true reality of imagination where there are answers to the questions of life and death, practical ways of solving problems, philosophies of life, missions to be accomplished, everything that is missing or distorted in his/her material reality. In possession of such knowledge, the reader/consumer/audience comes back to the hard life he/she lives with an empowered self, which makes him/her stronger and more balanced to face the difficulties of daily life, as well as more confident of his/her own personal abilities and skills. Bit by bit, and as much as it is read/consumed/watched, Fantasy puts the reader/consumer/audience back in control of his/her own life, something discouraged by Capitalism. As Fantasy was also transformed into a Capitalist product along time, such re-empowerment of the reader/consumer/audience turns, in a *coup démoniaque*, into a direct reaction to and a questioning of Capitalism itself — made *from within* in both cases, which makes Capitalism clockwork to function differently, but without collapsing it. In this sense, Fantasy is a means of freedom and independence of the mind and soul, as well as a privileged tool of criticism.

With the reader/consumer/audience immersed in its realms — which might be an experience of totality — and (un)conscious of its therapeutic effects, Fantasy becomes a proper place for dealing with the archetypes that constitute human psyche, existence, and condition. One of these archetypes is *the shadow*, the dark side of

(un)consciousness. Either taken in a common, dictionaried sense, or as the Jungian concept (JUNG, 1980), the shadow is phantasmatic, something from the past that constantly comes back into the present to charge its debt, and debt is its synonym since the shadow is the result of repressions. It is “something that has been repressed and now returns” (FREUD, 2003, p. 147), the Freudian uncanny *per se*, but in permanent returning and not necessarily dependent on a detectable cause — the shadow doesn’t need a cause to be or manifest; it simply is. Readers/consumers/audiences and characters might come to terms with their personal shadow and find psychological balance, but the archetype, which is collective, belongs to and results from society and culture. It can never be solved or exorcized; it never disappears. It is there, a bequest, a specter always lurking through the gaps of the collective (un)conscious, just waiting for an opportunity to breaking out.

And “what is the being-there of a specter? what is the mode of presence of a specter?” (DERRIDA, 1994, p. 38). A possible answer for these questions is that the shadow, or the specter, only recycles itself (it is a principle of recycling), it reconfigures itself in different representations along time and space (it is adaptative), it transmigrates from one text to another in permanent repetition (it is phantasmatic), it is fluid and infixed like water (it is a principle of contamination), it can assume any form or appearance or symbol it wants (it is a shapeshifter; it is a cypher), it eternally survives because it is disembodied and doesn’t depend on materiality for anything (it is a phantasmagoria). As all archetypes, it is irreducible but in never-ending manifestation through uncountable symbols and conventions. The shadow haunts the Text (BARTHES, 1986) from within as a “teratological coinorporation”

(DERRIDA, 1990, p. 67). It is the principle of textuality, of which all literature, fiction, philosophy, and theory are effects; quite like Fantasy when understood as imagination itself (TOLKIEN, 2014): frightening and tantalizing at the same time, alluring, an emanation of Desire, the very pleasure of the Text (BARTHES, 1975).

In Fantasy worlds the reader/consumer/audience might stumble upon many representations of the shadow, including the ones of his/her own. Because it is usually personified by the villain, the protagonist nemesis (who might be the reader/consumer/audience nemesis as well), dealing with the shadow is always a dangerous, delightful, terrifying, and tempting experience, nonetheless. Obviously, villains are privileged and sophisticated manifestations of the shadow in Fantasy fictions, but they are not the only ones. Other specific characters, like the minions of the villains and the beings of darkness, are also shadow impersonators.

Something that calls attention in these personifications of the shadow is that, in one way or the other, they never truly die: defeating the villain or the beings of darkness doesn't mean the shadow was defeated. It keeps returning in diverse ways, beings, things, and every time it returns it either updates textuality or results in new texts, usually intertextual ones. Fantasy is the dimension of the Fantastic that better takes advantage of this characteristic to keep growing and evolving as a literary and fictional genre, and it does so in two ways: by producing prequels and sequels about the personifications of the shadow (reusing them), and by recycling and refiguring pre-existent impersonations of the archetype. In both ways the characters are given an afterlife through their remains, which guarantees their shadow condition.

An example of the first way might be found in one of the most important and canonical Fantasy universes ever created: Tolkien's legendarium. In the last volume of *The History of Middle-earth*, a collection of books edited by Christopher Tolkien containing unpublished texts written by the British author, there is an unfinished story entitled "The New Shadow". Though clearly a draft, this tale is Tolkien's attempt to create a sequel to *The Lord of the Rings*, as its first lines imply:

This tale begins in the days of Eldarion, son of that Elessar [Aragorn] of whom the histories have much to tell. One hundred and five years had passed since the fall of the Dark Tower [Barad-dûr, Sauron's stronghold], and the story of that time was little heeded now by most of the people of Gondor [the largest human kingdom], though a few were still living who could remember the War of the Ring [the battle that happens in the last chapters of the third volume of *The Lord of the Rings*] as a shadow upon their early childhood. (TOLKIEN, 2000, p. 410-411)

The plot of "The New Shadow" takes place more than a century after the conclusion of *The Lord of the Rings* and deals with a new threatening that grew up slowly and in secret among the people of Gondor: a devilish cult to Melkor conceived by a certain Herumor, of whom the story mentions only the name. The idea of a devilish cult to Melkor is something that sends the reader/consumer/audience of Tolkien's legendarium back to *The Silmarillion*, a collection of stories published posthumously that tells how Middle-earth was created and what happened in its first ages of existence. Melkor is one of the Valar, the deities responsible for shaping Arda, where Middle-earth is placed. Corrupted by greed and ambition, Melkor, also

known as Morgoth, sought for unlimited power and thus became the first Dark Lord who tried to conquer and submit all the free folk of this Fantasy world. He was defeated by an alliance among the other Valar, the elves, and the humans. Sauron, the second Dark Lord in Tolkien's legendarium and the archenemy in *The Lord of the Rings*, was Melkor's chief lieutenant.

It is quite interesting that Tolkien had a character from *The Silmarillion* in mind when he wrote "The New Shadow". If we consider *The Lord of the Rings* as the centrality of his Fantasy world, then *The Silmarillion* becomes a prequel in the same way "The New Shadow" is a sequel. This creates a cyclic composition between the beginning and the final developments of the legendarium that promotes the return of the past in the present as well as the generation-subversion of new and old meanings. Though the beautiful, emotional, and sad close of *The Lord of the Rings*, when order is reestablished upon Sauron's defeat, it was the shadow, the enemy, the villain that Tolkien had in mind for his masterpiece sequel.

This villain could be Herumor, the cult leader, and then we would have a new personification of the shadow in the legendarium. However, "The New Shadow" text makes it clear that what moved Herumor and his followers was the conceptual and idealistic inheritance left by Melkor, a villain of the dawns of Middle-earth now reused in a new text and context. Melkor was the spiritual inspiration for Herumor and the other cultists in their distorted understanding of sacred things: "The evils of the world were not at first in the great Theme [the song of creation sang in the "Ainulindalë", the first part of *The Silmarillion*], but entered with

the discords of Melkor. Men did not come with these discords; they entered afterwards as a new thing direct from Eru, the One, and therefore they are called His children, and all that was in the Theme they have, for their own good, the right to use” (TOLKIEN, 2000, p. 412). So, behind a new threatening there is the phantasmatic return of a much older threatening, and the shadow rises again on Middle-earth since “the roots of Evil lie deep, and from far off comes the poison that works in us, so that many do these things – at times, and become then indeed like the servants of Melkor” (TOLKIEN, 2000, p. 414).

We will never know how Tolkien intended to develop the plot of “The New Shadow”. Nevertheless, if we take into consideration Melkor’s destiny in *The Silmarillion* we may have a glimpse of what he could have written: Melkor was defeated but not killed; he was

thrust through the Door of Night beyond the Walls of the World, into the Timeless Void [...]. Yet the lies that Melkor, the mighty and accursed, Morgoth Bauglir, the Power of Terror and of Hate, sowed in the hearts of Elves and Men are a seed that does not die and cannot be destroyed; and ever and anon it sprouts anew, and will bear dark fruit even unto the latest days. (TOLKIEN, 2022, p. 244)

An anew sprout of Melkor’s lies is precisely what we have in “The New Shadow”, but with a worsening situation: there is a cult, which means there are rituals, invocations, summons, and possibly sacrifices. Though “a guard is set for ever on those walls [the Walls of the World], and Eärendil keeps watch upon the ramparts of the sky” (TOLKIEN, 2022, p. 244), there is nothing preventing Melkor’s return. What if, by chance or by power, he can hear the invocations

and summons and respond the sacrifices from the Timeless Void, the exterior darkness he was cast upon? If the answer were positive in Tolkien's mind, should he had developed "The New Shadow" and we would have another three-decker novel like *The Lord of the Rings*, the legendarium would be larger than it already is, and Fantasy would have grown and evolved with another masterpiece by the simple reuse of an old character.

Regarding the second way Fantasy takes advantage of the endless return of the shadow, the recycling and refiguring of pre-existent impersonations of this archetype, the examples are abundant, especially in the postmodern and contemporary contexts of fiction. Either as a refiguring — a parodistic tribute, a repetition with critical difference (HUTCHEON, 1985) —, or as a recycling, a total recall, Fantasy has been exploring these procedures of recasting and resurrecting personifications of the shadow as a means of genre survival, revival, and updating. It is precisely the repetition of such procedures that consolidated Fantasy as a major dimension of the Fantastic and one of the most important and stirring fictional genres of the 20th and 21st centuries.

Among the many possible examples worth exploring where these procedures might be found, a most representative is J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. A portal-quest Fantasy featuring an aesthetics that combines elements of the marvelous (magic, fantastic beings, the hero monomyth etc.) with a realistic representation of the material world (Britain of the 1980s and 1990s), *Harry Potter* is one of the most famous and influential Fantasy worlds of the 21st century. Like Sapkowski's *The Witcher* and Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* (a.k.a. *Game of Thrones*), it is one of the few contemporary

Fantasy universes that was able to create and maintain a lore, which is obviously inspired and inescapably influenced by Tolkien's legendarium — the first fictional lore after the traditional and cultural mythologies —, though such inspiration and influence can only be alleged upon a close reading.

Starting by the composition of the villain itself, Lord Voldemort is a remarkable antagonist: cunning, powerful, and mortally dangerous. Moved by greed and ambition “to conquer death” (ROWLING, 2020a, p. 549), he is an archetypal manifestation of the shadow in Fantasy. At the summit of his power over the magical folk of the series, when he had established himself as the Dark Lord and then referred as “You-Know-Who” and “He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named” (ROWLING, 2017) by others, a prophecy foretelling his downfall came to his knowledge pronouncing that

The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches... born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies... and the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not... and either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives... the one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the seventh month dies... (ROWLING, 2020b, p. 774, highlights in the original)

Two children were born in the end of July (“as the seventh month dies”): Harry Potter and Neville Longbottom. The parents of both had previously defied the villain’s power three times (“those who have thrice defied him”), but Voldemort chose the child born to the Potter family to “mark him as his equal”. One year after Harry Potter’s birth, Voldemort went to the Potter’s manor with the

single intention to kill “*the one with the power to vanquish*” him, as expected of any antagonist. He killed Harry Potter’s parents, but when he cast the Killing Curse (the Avada Kedavra) on Harry the spell rebound and hit him instead of the child. Voldemort didn’t die because he had already created horcruxes to protect his soul from death, but he lost his body and became, in his own words, “*Mere shadow and vapour*” (ROWLING, 2017, p. 316), “*less than spirit, less than the meanest ghost*” (ROWLING, 2020a, p. 549). From this moment on, and more than just a manifestation of the archetype, Voldemort turns into a recycled and refigured personification of the shadow, and it is through this turning that Tolkien’s inspiration and influence over Rowling’s Fantasy world becomes evident for the first time to the reader/consumer/audience who read/consumed/watched closely both fictional universes.

In *The Lord of the Rings*, we may find meaningful passages that clarify not only this inspiration and influence, but the recycling and refiguring procedures Rowling used in the composition of her astounding personification of the shadow. A way to start an interpretive exploration of these procedures is by the name of the villain, “*That name even you [...] have heard of, like a shadow on the borders of old stories. Always after a defeat and a respite, the Shadow takes another shape and grows again*” (TOLKIEN, 2004, p. 51). As the personification of the shadow, the villain’s name will always be “*a shadow on the borders of old stories*” that “*takes another shape and grows again*”.

In the plot of Tolkien’s masterpiece, Sauron, the archenemy and the personification of the shadow in that work, is sometimes referred as “*him that we do not name*” (TOLKIEN, 2004, p. 243). The

text of *The Lord of the Rings* also notes that Sauron does not “use his right name, nor permit it to be spelt or spoken” (TOLKIEN, 2004, p. 416). In addition, Sauron and Voldemort are referred as *the Dark Lord* by other characters in the fictional worlds they belong, being the epithet *Dark Lord* of common use in Fantasy fiction as a means of not pronouncing the name of the villain since this name is usually a source of fear or accursed — *Sauron* means “The Abhorred” in one of the dialectics of the Elvish language created by Tolkien, and in *Harry Potter* we are told that Voldemort bewitched his own name in a way if it is pronounced the villain will know who pronounced and where (ROWLING, 2021).

Another interpretation upon this question of the name is the classic one that comes from folklore and fairy tales, which states that calling someone by his/her proper, birth, or given name is a way of wielding authority, power, and control over that person — we are here in the philosophical realms of the power of the name within the core of identity (DERRIDA, 1995): as a means of protecting his/her real identity, the villain changes his/her name. Such a name changing works somewhat as follows: the power of the real name, which is immanent because endowed in the moment of its giving and thus a power that can be exerted only by others over the villain since the villain will not know about it until he/she becomes a villain, is transferred to another name, a name carefully selected by the villain himself/herself and totally under his/her control, so we have the power of the chosen name, which is a transcendent power because it is exerted over the others after the villain becomes a villain.

As the given name is also in the core of identity, and villains want to protect their primary identities (which they consider

fragile) by creating another to overlay the first, this one composed according to the principles of power and domination, we have then the reason why villains, who do not want to lose their power, always change their real names to other, safer, and more sounding names — *Sauron* is more remarkable than *Mairon*, Sauron's real name, and also a way of protecting it from others who may possibly exert power over him in knowing his real name, which is the name of a deity; the same happens in the case of *Voldemort*, a more remarkable name than *Tom Marvolo Riddle*, his real name, and also a way of protecting it from others who may possibly exert power over him in knowing his real name, which is the name of a non-pureblood² wizard. Also, the composition of the villain's name of these two characters is meaningful: while Sauron just changes the first three letters of his real name, Voldemort literally transforms his real name into a riddle (*Tom Marvolo Riddle*, when shuffled in an anagram, becomes *I am Lord Voldemort*). As his surname is Riddle too, we have a riddle within a riddle, a cypher, an enigmatic and mysterious being, but also someone arrested and lost in the maze of his own identities. In both cases, and because the implications of each case, he is mortally dangerous.

In this question of naming, a last element of interest specifically in the case of Rowling's villain is the expression "He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named", extensively used in *Harry Potter* to denote the personification of the shadow. Rowling clearly recycled Tolkien's reference to Sauron as "him that we do not name" in its arrangement.

2 In Rowling's Fantasy world, non-purebloods are wizards or witches who were born to parents of whom the mother or the father is a non-magic person. Voldemort, his followers, and other evil characters of the series despise them, though, ironically, Voldemort is one of them.

By minor changings in the original sentence phraseology, mere stylistic usages of personal pronouns and verb tenses — “him” became “He”, “that” became “Who”, “we do not” became “Must-Not”, and “name” became “Be-Named” —, Rowling created a remarkable indirect reference to her villain that helped to make it extremely popular even among those who never read the *Harry Potter* novels or watched their film adaptations (“He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named”, in its translated version into Portuguese, “Aquele-Que-Não-Deve-Ser-Nomeado”, was used in some Brazilian memes and political circles to refer to the man who was the president of the country between 2018 and 2022).

For sure these are minute details that only call the attention of the reader/consumer/audience who is proceeding a comparative close reading of Rowling’s and Tolkien’s Fantasy worlds. A more concrete demonstration that Rowling is recycling and refiguring shadows from Tolkien’s legacy in the composition of her personification of the shadow is the body of her villain.

As mentioned elsewhere in this text, Voldemort lost his body in his first attempt to kill Harry Potter. However, due to his horcruxes — magical objects, products of dark arts, that conceal part of the soul of the wizard or witch who made them; while these objects exist their owner is prevented from death —, he didn’t die and was transformed into a vaporous and shadowy form, a ghost hovering over the world which can “have form only when [it] can share another’s body” (ROWLING, 2017, p. 316). In other words, Voldemort’s soul endured and remained conscious and as cunning as ever. He just needed to recollect his body to bring back the rule of darkness over the magical folk, what eventually he almost did.

Exiled in the forests of Albania, Voldemort's ghostly shape was found by a former follower who helped him to create a new body for himself by the means of the dark arts. The ritual of this re-embodiment takes place in one of the last chapters of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, the fourth volume of the series, and is among the most notable scenes of Fantasy ever written. This is its result:

Voldemort looked away from Harry, and began examining his own body. His hands were like large, pale spiders; his long white fingers caressed his own chest, his arms, his face; the red eyes, whose pupils were slits, like a cat's, gleamed still more brightly through the darkness. He held up his hand, and flexed the fingers, his expression rapt and exultant. (ROWLING, 2020a, p. 542)

A body that was lost, a disembodied shape, a soul that endures, red eyes, a shadow that returns. Such compositional elements clearly demonstrate that Rowling is recycling and refiguring Tolkien's Sauron in the picture of Voldemort, for in *The Silmarillion* we are told that during a battle Sauron had the One Ring, an object he had infused great part of his power, cut from his hand. When this happened "he forsook his body, and his spirit fled far away and hid in waste places; and he took no visible shape again for many long years" (TOLKIEN, 2022, p. 282). His body lost and his spirit wandering in places unknown, Sauron's soul endured and, after a long time and through the powers of the dark arts, he took again a visible shape, a most terrible one:

There above the valley of Gorgoroth was built his fortress vast and strong, Barad-dûr, the Dark Tower; and there was a fiery mountain in that land that the Elves named Orodruin. Indeed for

that reason Sauron had set there his dwelling long before, for he used the fire that welled there from the heart of the earth in his sorceries and in his forging; and in the midst of the Land of Mordor he had fashioned the Ruling Ring. There now he brooded in the dark, until he had wrought for himself a new shape; and it was terrible, for his fair semblance had departed for ever when he was cast into the abyss at the drowning of Númenor. He took up again the great Ring and clothed himself in power; and the malice of the Eye of Sauron few even of the great among Elves and Men could endure. (TOLKIEN, 2022, p. 280)

What the text calls “the Eye of Sauron” is the last shape Tolkien’s personification of the shadow assumes before its complete obliteration (which happens in the end of *The Lord of the Rings*), and *shape* is the proper word here since Sauron is described in *The Silmarillion* as a shapeshifter who can transform into werewolf, wolf, serpent, and vampire (TOLKIEN, 2022, p. 165). The dreadful Eye of Sauron is a single, huge, and lidless eye writhed in fiery flames and placed on the top of Barad-dûr, the Dark Tower built near the Orodruin, a volcano also known as Mount Doom, in the Land of Mordor, Sauron’s realm. In *The Lord of the Rings*, we read: “The Eye was rimmed with fire, but was itself glazed, yellow as a cat’s, watchful and intent, and the black slit of its pupil opened on a pit, a window into nothing” (TOLKIEN, 2004, p. 364). In the same work, it is made clear that the Eye of Sauron is ever watchful and casts a red light that peruses the entire Land of Mordor as a devilish beacon: “A single red light burned high up in the Towers of the Teeth [...]. For many miles the red eye seemed to stare at them” (TOLKIEN, 2004, p. 648); “now and again a dull red light

flickered up under the lowering clouds” (TOLKIEN, 2004, p. 709); “now the orc-tower was right above him [...], and in it the red eye glowed” (TOLKIEN, 2004, p. 733).

Differently from Voldemort, Sauron never regains a physical body, and in this sense Rowling’s character is a step ahead of the one it recycles and refigures. On the other hand, Sauron could transform into a serpent, while Voldemort could not, even though he was surrounded by the signs of the serpent — he was the heir of Slytherin, the member of the Slytherin House at Hogwarts, a Parselmouth (someone who can talk the language of serpents), had a serpent as a pet, and his second body bared serpent features³. Sauron’s last visible shape was a red eye, a slit one, like those of the cats. Voldemort’s second and last body had also cats’ slit red eyes. Hardly could someone endure the red eyes of these personifications of the shadow since both, according to the Fantasy worlds they belong, could pierce flesh, mind, and spirit with them. If the eye is the window of the soul, as the popular saying goes, then these red eyes, cat-like as they are, eyes of sorcery and witchcraft, reveal that darkness, evil, sorrow, pain, corruption, destruction, and the void have mighty souls and are windows to nothingness.

A last but not least recycled and refigured personification of the shadow in Rowling’s *Harry Potter*, which is also inspired by Tolkien’s legendarium, are the creatures called Dementors. As stated elsewhere in this essay, other characters different from the villain may impersonate the shadow in Fantasy worlds, and sometimes

3 These are compositional elements of the character which are fully developed along the series. I can only summarize them here: Salazar Slytherin, the founder of the Slytherin House at Hogwarts, is Voldemort’s ancestral; the Slytherin House is one of the four student’s houses that compose Hogwarts boarding school structure (the others are Gryffindor, Ravenclaw, and Hufflepuff); Voldemort’s serpent pet is called Nagini.

they might be even more efficient than the antagonist in the prospect of keep the shadow returning. The villain can be defeated, as it usually is in fiction, but the shadow cannot. The shadow has many means of enduring, one of them is fostering immortality in malign creatures. That is precisely the case of Rowling's Dementors.

At the first time a Dementor appears in *Harry Potter*, which happens at the fifth chapter of *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, the third volume of the series, the name *Dementor* had not yet been mentioned in the text; even though, it is described this way:

Standing in the doorway, illuminated by the shivering flames in Lupin's hand, was a cloaked figure that towered to the ceiling. Its face was completely hidden beneath its hood. Harry's eyes darted downward, and what he saw made his stomach contract. There was a hand protruding from the cloak and it was glistening, greyish, slimy-looking and scabbed, like something dead that had decayed in water...

It was visible only for a split second. As though the creature beneath the cloak sensed Harry's gaze, the hand was suddenly withdrawn into the folds of the black material.

And then the thing beneath the hood, whatever it was, drew a long, slow, rattling breath, as though it was trying to suck something more than air from its surroundings.

An intense cold swept over them all. Harry felt his own breath catch in his chest. The cold went deeper than his skin. It was inside his chest, it was inside his very heart. (ROWLING, 2019, p. 88)

According to the same Lupin from the previous quotation (Remus Lupin, the Professor of Defense Against the Dark Arts at Hogwarts along the plot of *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*),

Dementors are among the foulest creatures that walk this earth. They infest the darkest, filthiest places, they glory in decay and despair, they drain peace, hope and happiness out of the air around them. Even Muggles [non-magic folk] feel their presence, though they can't see them. Get too near a Dementor and every good feeling, every happy memory, will be sucked out of you. If it can, the Dementor will feed on you long enough to reduce you to something like itself – soulless and evil. You'll be left with nothing but the worst experiences of your life. (ROWLING, 2019, p. 197)

Other characters from the third volume of the series also add important information that must be considered about the Dementors: Albus Dumbledore, Hogwarts Headmaster, warns that “It is not in the nature of a Dementor to understand pleading or excuses” (ROWLING, 2019, p. 97), and Sirius Black, a former prisoner of Azkaban and Harry Potter's godfather, tells that “Dementors can't see, you know [...]. They feel their way towards people by sensing their emotions” (ROWLING, 2019, p. 394).

Apart the information given by the narrator and characters from *Harry Potter* and considering every appearance and attack of Dementors along the seven books of the series, these creatures are sentient beings of darkness, immensely powerful ones, and not totally controllable. In terms of looks, they are giant figures, cloaked and hooded in black and fluttering fabric, that glide upon the ground and bring coldness to the places and to the hearts of human beings in their ways. Purely instinct, blinded, and rotten in their remnants of corporeality, they are guided by the emotions of others since they seem to not have their own, which also makes them feed upon the good feelings of humans. When they attack

to kill, they perform what the series calls the Dementor's Kiss, the act of a Dementor sucking out a person's soul until this person is left lifeless. Along the series these creatures are introduced as the guards of Azkaban, a prison for magic folk criminals, and they are at first under the control of the Ministry of Magic⁴, though, when Voldemort regains his body and starts reestablishing his rule of darkness over the magic folk, the Dementors change to his side.

Such compositional elements, looks, abilities, and personality imply the Dementors are a kind of undead, beings from the in between life and death, neither living nor dead. Like vampires, another sort of undead, they can only be in the Fantastic reality of the Fantasy world they belong by feeding upon other living beings, including the non-magic folk (who cannot see but can feel and be attacked by them). Emphasizing this interpretation are two facts on Dementors acknowledged by the series lore: no one knows how they came to be or how they reproduce (and whether they reproduce or simply spring out from darkness), and no one has ever killed one of them (no one knows even if they can be killed). Thus, it seems Dementors are immortal creatures, like other powerful undead of fiction (vampires, liches, specters, ghosts); they can be expelled using a charm (the Patronus Charm), but never killed or destroyed. They personify the endurance, the indestructibility, and the returning power of the shadow archetype.

The way the Dementors are described and affect other characters makes it clear their composition was inspired, recycles, and refigures the famous Ringwraiths (also called the Nazgûl, the Black Riders, and the Úlairi), the chief servants of Sauron from

4 The government of the magical people in Rowling's Fantasy world.

Tolkien's legendarium. The Ringwraiths were nine human kings who were presented by the Dark Lord with nine rings of power. Through the powers of the One Ring, which can control other sixteen rings, these kings were deceived and became slaves of Sauron. Immortals unless Sauron and the One Ring are destroyed, they are specters, undead in permanent craving for the power of the One Ring — specters, differently from ghosts, can interfere with materiality in Fantasy worlds. Evil and dangerous creatures loyal only to Sauron, they will kill anyone in the way of their intent or do something worst: transform the person into one of them.

The Ringwraiths are just mentioned in *The Silmarillion*. It will be in *The Lord of the Rings* they will fully appear and act in the story and, in its conclusion, it can be inferred they have been destroyed at the same time of Sauron's obliteration. Since the very moment Frodo Baggins, the main hero of Tolkien's masterpiece, leaves his home in the Shire, the Black Riders, tall figures cloaked in black and riding black horses, get in his track. On the path to Rivendell, Frodo's first major destination, they attack him and his friends at Weathertop, a hilltop which is the place of old ruins:

Over the lip of the little dell, on the side away from the hill, they felt, rather than saw, a shadow rise, one shadow or more than one. They strained their eyes, and the shadows seemed to grow. Soon there could be no doubt: three or four tall black figures were standing there on the slope, looking down on them. So black were they that they seemed like black holes in the deep shade behind them. Frodo thought that he heard a faint hiss as of venomous breath and felt a thin piercing chill. Then the shapes slowly advanced [...].

Frodo was hardly less terrified than his companions; he was quaking as if he was bitter cold, but his terror was swallowed up in a sudden temptation to put on the Ring. [...]. He shut his eyes and struggled for a while; but resistance became unbearable, and at last he slowly drew out the chain, and slipped the Ring on the forefinger of his left hand.

Immediately, though everything else remained as before, dim and dark, the shapes became terribly clear. He was able to see beneath their black wrappings. There were five tall figures [...]. In their white faces burned keen and merciless eyes; under their mantles were long grey robes; upon their grey hairs were helms of silver; in their haggard hands were swords of steel. Their eyes fell on him and pierced him, as they rushed towards him. Desperate, he drew his own sword, and it seemed to him that it flickered red, as if it was a firebrand. Two of the figures halted. The third was taller than the others: his hair was long and gleaming and on his helm was a crown. In one hand he held a long sword, and in the other a knife; both the knife and the hand that held it glowed with a pale light. He sprang forward and bore down on Frodo.

At that moment Frodo threw himself forward on the ground, and he heard himself crying aloud: *O Elbereth! Gilthoniel!* At the same time he struck at the feet of his enemy. A shrill cry rang out in the night; and he felt a pain like a dart of poisoned ice pierce his left shoulder. (TOLKIEN, 2004, p. 195-196, highlights in the original)

The Ringwraiths rise like the shadow itself and “So black were they that they seemed like black holes” in their “black wrappings”. Quite like the Dementors, which “drew a long, slow, rattling breath, as though it was trying to suck something more than air” (ROWLING, 2019, p. 88), the only sound heard from the

Ringwraiths is “a faint hiss as of venomous breath”, and their mere presence makes the others quiver in bitter cold. When Frodo cries “*O Elbereth! Gilthoniel!*” the tallest among them — that the story reveals to be their leader, the dreadful Witch-king of Angmar, which is the reason there is a crown in his helmet — hurts him with a Morgul blade (the knife in one of the creature’s hands). This is a darkness magical blade that has the power to leave its shards on the wound it produces, and these shards will crack deeper and deeper the victim’s body until they find his/her heart. Along this process the victim’s life is gradually sucked out and, if the wound is not healed in time, the person vanishes and is transformed into one of the servants of Sauron. In the same way, if a Dementor feeds on its victim long enough the person reduces into something like the creature itself, “soulless and evil” (ROWLING, 2019, p. 197).

In contrast to these similarities, while the Ringwraiths feature human and terribly clear form when seen in the Shadow Plane — a distorted spiritual subdimension ruled by Sauron and inhabited by all who were transformed into shadow beings by the One Ring; everyone who puts the One Ring on is taken to this subdimension, which is the reason the person disappears when wearing the object —, the Dementors display putrid bodies beneath their black cloaks. Also, the Ringwraiths cannot glide upon the ground, though they are hardly seen touching the soil since they are always riding horses or mounting dragon-like beasts along the story, and, unlikely the Dementors, they are in total allegiance to their master.

Though contrasting these elements are, they actually emphasize the procedures of recycling and refiguring Tolkien used by Rowling in the composition of the personification of the shadow in her Fantasy

world. The ultimate evidence that the Dementors are not only inspired by Tolkien's Ringwraiths, but also and mainly recycled and refigured Nazgûl to the point it wouldn't be mistaken to conclude that they are decayed Black Riders, what the Nazgûl would have become had they survived Sauron's obliteration, is depicted in the following passage from *The Lord of the Rings*:

'Can the Riders see?' asked Merry. 'I mean, they seem usually to have used their noses rather than their eyes, smelling for us, if smelling is the right word, at least in the daylight. [...].

'I was too careless on the hill-top,' answered Strider. '[...] For the black horses can see, and the Riders can use men and other creatures as spies, as we found at Bree. They themselves do not see the world of light as we do, but our shapes cast shadows in their minds, which only the noon sun destroys; and in the dark they perceive many signs and forms that are hidden from us: then they are most to be feared. And at all times they smell the blood of living things, desiring and hating it. Senses, too, there are other than sight or smell. We can feel their presence – it troubled our hearts, as soon as we came here, and before we saw them; they feel ours more keenly. Also,' he added, and his voice sank to a whisper, 'the Ring draws them'. (TOLKIEN, 2004, p. 189, highlights in the original)

Like the Dementors, the Ringwraiths sense the world and the living beings instead of seeing them with their eyes, and they do that not through emotions as the first ones but through shadowy shapes cast in their minds, which means their connection to the shadow is so deep that they can read it. Likewise, the presence of the Nazgûl is felt by humans, who will have their hearts troubled

by fear and despair in the same way the Dementors are felt by the magic and non-magic people.

With the example of the Dementors as recycled and refigured personifications of the shadow in Rowling's *Harry Potter*, we conclude our considerations and analysis in this article. We hope to have made it clear that the procedures of recycling and refiguring Tolkien are the compositional techniques used by Rowling in the creation of her villain and of her most dangerous creatures of the darkness. Nevertheless, these are examples taken from just one Fantasy world in comparison to another, a previous and most influential one. Now is Voldemort and the Dementors, once was Sauron and the Ringwraiths. Who will be the next personification of the shadow which, by the means of recycling and refiguring its predecessors, will manifest again and maintain the endless and undying returning of the shadow through Fantasy worlds, the realms of imagination, the true human reality? It is just a matter of time until it happens again in fiction.

REFERENCES

- ABREU RIBEIRO, Cleone A. C. L. de. A Ambigüidade do Fantástico em Literatura. *Revista de Letras*. São Paulo: UNESP, v. 23, p. 71-78, 1983.
- ALEXANDER, Lloyd. High Fantasy and Heroic Romance. *Horn Book*. December, 1971. Available on: <https://www.hbook.com/story/high-fantasy-and-heroic-romance>. Accessed on: 28 December 2022.
- BAKHTIN, Mikhail M. Epic and Novel. In: HOLQUIST, Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination*. Austin: University of Texas Press, p. 3-40, 1981.
- BARTHES, Roland. *The Pleasure of the Text*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1975.
- BARTHES, Roland. From Work to Text. In: BARTHES, Roland. *The Rustle of Language*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, p. 56-64, 1986.

BESSIÈRE, Irène. *Le Récit Fantastique: la Poétique de l'Incertain*. Paris: Larousse, 1974.

DERRIDA, Jacques. Some Statements and Truisms about Neologisms, Newisms, Postisms, Parasitisms, and Other Small Seismisms. In: CAROLL, David (Ed.). *The States of 'Theory'. History, Art, and Critical Discourse*. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 63-94, 1990.

DERRIDA, Jacques. *Specters of Marx*. The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International. New York; London: Routledge, p. 38, 1994.

DERRIDA, Jacques. *On the Name*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.

FREUD, Sigmund. *The Uncanny*. London: Penguin, 2003.

FURTADO, Filipe. *Demônios Íntimos: a Narrativa Fantástica Vitoriana* (Origens, Temas, Ideias). Rio de Janeiro: Dialogarts, 2018.

HUTCHEON, Linda. *A Theory of Parody*. New York: Methuen, 1985.

JUNG, Carl Gustav. *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980 (The Collected Works of C. G. Jung, vol. 9).

MENDLESOHN, Farah. *Rhetorics of Fantasy*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2008.

ROAS, David. *Behind the Frontiers of the Real: A Definition of the Fantastic*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

ROWLING, J. K. *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. London: Bloomsbury, 2017.

ROWLING, J. K. *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. London: Bloomsbury, 2019.

ROWLING, J. K. *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. London: Bloomsbury, 2020a.

ROWLING, J. K. *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. London: Bloomsbury, 2020b.

ROWLING, J. K. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. London: Bloomsbury, 2021.

TODOROV, Tzvetan. *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975.

TOLKIEN, J. R. R. *The Lord of the Rings*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2004.

TOLKIEN, J. R. R. The New Shadow. In: TOLKIEN, Christopher (Ed.). *The Peoples of Middle-earth*. (The History of Middle-earth, vol. XII). Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, p. 409-421, 2000.

TOLKIEN, J. R. R. *On Fairy-Stories*. London: HarperCollins, 2014.

TOLKIEN, J. R. R. *The Silmarillion*. New York: William Morrow, 2022.