

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

Tolkien's created mythology has offered us a profound and insightful look into the very core of Middle-earth. The creation of the realm speaks of Tolkien's ingenuity to mastermind and conceptualise the field of creative linguistics, (such as the invention of the elven languages of Quenya and Sindarin) which '...lend Tolkien's work a unique dimension of realism' (Noel 6) and the genesis of a painstakingly written epic, The LOTR. What was his life's endeavour was also a reflection of his Catholic faith and his role as a mythmaker. His wondrously woven epic has in its centre a society that is made up of a multiplicity of races that form the essence and core of a well-wrought ancient mythological system. It is from his creative impulses that Tolkien has given life to a universe that parallels our own, and it is in this domain that the cosmic battle between good and evil takes place.

In '...the raw struggle between good and evil' (Fuller 24), the Orcs are recognisably the most common of all Sauron's servants and form '...the largest category of his mortal servants...' (Fuller 24). It is this neglected and marginalized race that I have found interesting to study and worthy of our scrutiny. The Orcs have long been associated with the stigma of evil, the Dark Tower Barad-dûr and Mordor, where the Dark Lord reigns supreme. Readers of Tolkien's The Hobbit, The Silmarillion and The LOTR would recognise the Orcs as an evil and destructive race. I hope to have shown that there is more to the Orcs than meets the eye in my study of one of the most interesting portraits of evil in The LOTR.

I began in my first chapter by highlighting Treebeard's speech of the 'free peoples' of Middle-earth. In his list, the Ent listed the major races of the realm in order of their appearance but left out the Orcs. In response to what W.H. Auden had said about speech as an indicator of intelligence and moral choice, I have argued that the Orcs are worthy to be considered as intelligent and emotional beings, and analysed in the view of their role and purpose in the novel. I began by describing the origin of the Orcs and how they appear to be '... the antithesis of elvishness' (Zimbardo 104). Critics blamed Tolkien for creating a story that is structured and stereotypical in the many '... overriding images of light and dark, black and white, good and evil...' (Petty 78). In the case of the Orcs, I pointed out that the detractors were wrong in judging Tolkien because even the Orcs were not clear-cut images of pure evil. Firstly, by highlighting their origin, I have shown that the Orcs are capable of achieving transcendence and affirmative actions that will debunk their image as mindless, evil slaves of Sauron. Secondly, in the race of the Orcs, Tolkien has shown his ingenuity in the treatment of the complexity of evil by adapting Manichaeism and Boethian philosophies. By using Tom Shippey's analysis of evil, I have argued that the full transcendence of the Orcs is not possible because of the Boethian limitation. Thirdly, with such a limitation, Tolkien also wanted the Orcs to be foils to the elves. Hence, what appears to be a race that is purely evil is by far more complicated. The first chapter, then, is aimed at broadening our understanding of the Orcs, (who at times only appear to be secondary images of evil) and validating their importance in the story. This chapter also attempted to prove the importance of secondary characters in The LOTR and to highlight that evil exists in varying shades and is not something that is absolute.

In my second chapter, I examined the complexities of the dynamic Orcs-elves-men interrelationship and the human and sub-human images in all the three races. My reasons for such an endeavour were to prove the importance of the Orcs in relation to the development of Tolkien's grand epic from this angle. My discussions dwelled on the central image of Man, a unifying image that consolidates the entire major races together, while drawing on our common experiences to associate and identify such an image. Thus, Tolkien's races such as the Orcs, elves, men, hobbits and dwarves are aspects of Man. In relation to the Orcs, they symbolise the fragmented image of humankind that is torn by the ravages of war, mechanized industrialization, deforestation and 'unrestrained science' (Curry 25). The human image in them evokes feelings of compassion and apprehension of their plight although the Orcs project images of evil and terror. Hence, The LOTR is also about '... the people in between. Those who do not really have a choice' (Jacobsen) and the Orcs perfectly exemplify such a predicament which demonstrates Tolkien's understanding of the human self.

In the tradition of *Coincidentia Oppositorum* (union of opposites) in modern literary works, Betty Pratt Barrett speaks of the universal fragmentation of humankind and how a longing to be whole is desired by Man for a harmonious existence (24). In the Orcs, Tolkien reconciles their fragmented existence with the inherent image of Man that is also predominant in the other 'free peoples' of Middle-earth. In doing so, Tolkien has shown that the Orcs represent a facet of humanity in all their physical deformities. Their plight is a universal one which seeks to redress the complexities of how one becomes evil. The human image that is ingrained in the Orcs is a subtle reminder of evil that exists

within Man. Since evil or sin also originates from Man, there is always an internal struggle being fought in the hearts of all mankind. In the Orcs, Tolkien has shown to us their loss of direction and the crippling powers of evil, but as influential as evil may be, good still exists in them. The human image serves to remind us that the Orcs are made in the image of Man and no matter how evil or wicked Man may be, there exists possibilities of redemption for Man through various acts of determination, courage, fellowship, perseverance and compassion. Thus, Tolkien's landscape of Middle-earth is fundamentally rich with 'human symbolism' (Dowie 267). It is a world in which Tolkien places importance on the role of Man and its universal image. Whilst the human image that lies within the Orcs denotes the fragmentation of mankind, Evil is also presented as recognisably human and not as a separate and distinct entity.

My third chapter discussed the appeal of The LOTR that comes not only from Tolkien's handling of the plot, characters, landscape and themes, all of which exude '...a quality of strangeness and wonder' (Urang 98), but also from the strong portrayal of evil. The appeal of the novel also stems from the Orcs being powerful physical images of evil. They are salient to the plot of the novel and are indispensable in complementing other images of evil. In this chapter, I have also discussed the two forms of evil, spiritual and physical and how there exists a form of dependence of spiritual evil (Sauron) on physical evil (the Orcs). The Orcs come across as an important image of physical terror because of their sheer physicality and pervasive presence throughout the epic. The Orcs are undoubtedly the most effectual servants of the Dark Lord due to their commanding presence. The Orcs also symbolise Sauron's authority and the spread of evil throughout

the realm. Their countless involvement in many events have shaped them into compelling physical images of terror which inadvertently transform The LOTR into an inspiring and riveting novel. My study of the Orcs as powerful physical images of evil also seeks to unveil the influential role of secondary images of evil in the novel. The Orcs are an example of Tolkien's ingenuity; they reflect the extent of his astute imagination in creating a host of characters, each unique in its own form and function. His creation of a wide variety of non-human characters like the Orcs justifies how:

Tolkien can evoke, often by turning to traditional literature, some images powerful in the minds of ages, such as Earthly Paradise. There is both ancient depth and a fresh inventiveness in his creation of non-human, non-animal creatures, elves, dwarves, Ents, fairies, that embody perceptions and impulses that the naturalistic novel has since laid aside. (Brewer 262)

Images of physical terror like the Orcs demonstrate Tolkien's ability to turn a race of creatures into effective and powerful characters prevalent in the novel. The portrayal of the Orcs also speaks of how 'Evil in Tolkien's world is both an absence of good and something that is always and necessarily present' (Blake, et al.). Similarly, the presence of the Orcs also symbolises the necessary existence of darkness that is essential for the aesthetic experience of art to be felt. In that, it is from the coexistence of evil and good, and the conflict that is generated from it that inspires the conceptualisation of art.

All foregoing analysis suggests that aesthetic experience at the higher, Elven experience *requires* the existence of darkness. Art is born not so much out of a *conflict* between good and evil, which implies victory by one side (a victory that is, moreover, predetermined in Christian doctrine) but from their *coexistence*... without the Fall, there could be no stories, no art of any kind. Indeed, not only may evil be a prerequisite for aesthetic experience and its production through art, but the origins of evil, as emblematically seen in “darkness profound,” may be linked to the sub-creative impulse itself. (Sly 118)

Through these chapters, my objective is to divulge some of the complexities of Tolkien’s treatment of evil and the motivation behind such a creation. From my findings, I have shown that the Orcs are creatures of circumstances and not entirely an immoral race. By analysing evil based on good, we see the Orcs in a greater perspective, one that encourages a deeper understanding of the character landscapes of Middle-earth. Thus, the fact that they are capable of affirmative behaviour while possessing some conscience of good would suggest that the Orcs are not absolute evil creatures. ‘Nothing is evil in the beginning, except by failure to choose good. Evil is not a “pre-determined” condition – not even in Sauron. Consequently, at no point are Good and Evil presented at absolutes by Tolkien, quite the contrary’ (The Irony of Evil: Shades of Evil). The quality of evil is not an inherent trait in them but remains a part of greater good. In studying the Orcs, we are encouraged to understand the aesthetic justification of evil and the Orcs as a colourful, varied and rich image that is made from the composite image of Man. From

being minor characters of mischief in children's fairy tales, the Orcs have grown in stature to be a formidable and salient image of terror in The LOTR. Their complementary role also addresses the importance of other portraits of evil that deserves our scrutiny. For a broader and more encompassing analysis of Tolkien's images of evil, I would like to suggest an in-depth study to be done collectively on all images of evil in The LOTR. A further suggestion would be a research on the different races and creatures in The Hobbit and The Silmarillion. In the light of my entire discourse, I hope my dissertation has provided sufficient enlightenment in understanding the complex nature and alignment of the Orcs. Their potent portrayal by Tolkien speaks of the understanding that is needed in comprehending the nature of evil that exists in multiple shades. It is by perceiving the Orcs in greater light that we are able to fathom their true sense of worth, and ultimately acquire a deeper and more profound understanding of Tolkien's The LOTR.