

## THE DARK MAGE ARCHETYPE IN HARRY POTTER SERIES

Érika Morais Martins de Pádua (FALE - UFMG)

### RESUMO

O arquétipo do mago negro, noção baseada na teoria mítica de Joseph Campbell, está fortemente presente na literatura de fantasia. As diversas representações do arquétipo do mago negro refletem diferentes concepções sobre o papel do mal no gênero da fantasia. Na série Harry Potter, a trajetória do mago negro Voldemort revela uma visão contemporânea sobre a origem e a natureza do mal, além de descrever sua função na formação da identidade. O mago negro é o lado oculto do mago, a versão distorcida de suas ambições de poder e conhecimento.

### ABSTRACT

The dark mage archetype, a concept based on Joseph Campbell's myth theory, is deeply present in fantasy literature. The many representations of the dark mage archetype reflect different conceptions about the role of evil in the fantasy genre. In the Harry Potter series, the trajectory of the dark mage Voldemort reveals a contemporary vision of the origin and the nature of evil, and its function on the formation of self-identity. The dark mage is the hidden side of mages, a dark and distorted version of their ambitions of power and knowledge.

### 1. Introdução

Fantasy literature is a popular genre. The origins of this genre have roots in the oral tradition of legends and mythological tales, and as such, it involved an interaction between the storyteller and the audience. After the legends and myths were first registered in written form, the genre became even more popular and widespread. Fantasy narratives such as the tales of Faust or King Arthur were very popular during the late Middle Ages. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, fantasy literature had generated many variations and had reached a great popularity among readers, with fantasy authors such as Lewis Carroll, Jules Verne, H. Rider Haggard, and others. Books by these authors enjoyed great commercial success, and sold thousands of copies.

In the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, fantasy literature developed its archetypes even more and was consumed by the masses. Titles such as *The Coming of Conan the Cimmerian* (Howard) or *Tarzan of the Apes* (Burroughs) sold millions of paperback copies and so did many pulp fantasy magazines,

such as *Weird Tales* or *Amazing Stories*. Those magazines brought the tales of wizards, warriors, magic, and monsters to the masses. By the 50s and 60s, books such as *The Lord of the Rings* (Tolkien), the Narnia series (Lewis), and *A Wizard of Earthsea* (Le Guin), had sold millions of copies, and their influence in popular culture is still strong even in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This article follows Joseph Campbell's notion that the reason for the enduring popularity of fantasy literature is its archetypal subtext and its mythological roots, which echo the life experience of the reader. Of the many archetypes found in this genre, the dark mage is the most intriguing.

One of the greatest commercial successes in contemporary literature, the story of Harry Potter is a fantasy narrative based on a conflict between an Apprentice Mage and a Dark Mage. As the present article will show, this conflict, common in fantasy literature, has a different and contemporary twist in the Harry Potter series.

## 2. A teoria arquetípica

Because fantasy fiction is based on symbolic images and events, its study within a mythical framework may result quite fruitful. The fantasy genre is characteristically a literature of symbols, images, and motifs inspired in myths and legends that evoke a similar response in people from different cultures. The popularity of fairytales, legends, and myths, which are the inspiration of contemporary fantasy, is an important piece of evidence of this universal response.

A fairytale told in one culture may have a sister version in a diametrically different society. The only differences are that the characters and the settings are overlaid with the particular aspects of that culture. The basis of the story, though, is the same. Myth Criticism approaches this kind of literature assuming that the narratives studied contain a series of symbols, images, and references to myths and legends. This approach reveals and elucidates aspects that would not be noticed otherwise, such as the origins of the archetypes that govern contemporary fantasy fiction.

These ideas can be tracked back as early as ancient Greece. One of the first scholars to analyze, develop, and think about archetypes was Plato. Because of their ideal and primordial character, Plato called those "divine archetypes," in which the *eidōs* (Plato's word for Forms) is seen as a transcendental eternal Truth. Centuries later, the British anthropologist and historian of religion J. G. Frazer took another important step in the development of the concept of archetypes. Frazer's comparative study in folklore, magic, and religion, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (1890), had a tremendous impact on psychology and literature and became a reference in early anthropology. Frazer stated that myths were explanatory, being pre-scientific attempts to interpret the natural world. For Frazer, myth was a mode of thought, a way to perceive reality, to understand the

world. Archetypes, for him, were the general classifications of myth, or the basic ideas in which myths could be classified.

The universality and variety of archetypes is also present in the theories of the German psychologist C. G. Jung. A pupil of Freud, he diverged from his master's theories, as he perceived a "collective unconscious" in the human psyche rather than solely individual sexual neuroses behind dreams and behavior. Two decades after the publication of Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, Jung's *Psychology of the Unconscious* (1916) appeared, deeply influencing literary criticism—his is the most famous and popular concept of archetype we have today. Jung describes that while studying his patients' dreams and delusions, he recognized within their narratives structures and patterns that he called archetypes (Hark). For Jung, the archetype is an invisible part of the psyche; therefore, it cannot show itself consciously. It is better observed in dreams, and its occurrence in all humankind reveals patterns that are transcultural.

Joseph Campbell tried to elucidate myths under the light of Jung's concept of collective unconscious. Influenced by Jung's ideas, he developed a theory to identify a relation between the universal archetypes and literature. In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Campbell defines archetypes as "insubstantial images" (8), a constant presence in myths and fairytales. Campbell observed that many mythologies, ritual practices, folk traditions, and major religions have some themes, motifs, and patterns of behavior in common. He further concluded that an archetypal plot line within these myths remained constant from one culture to the next, that a universal mythic structure embedded mythology of every culture. In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Campbell identified and defined a series of stages through which the hero passes in his journey; the Hero Cycle.

The Hero Cycle is a *monomyth*, a primordial myth that can be identified in many mythological narratives, consists of the patterns of the hero's journey. The most common pattern of the cycle begins with the hero living his life unaware of an unimaginable world lying outside his village. A sudden invitation or the hero's own choice takes him out of his mundane world and launches him into an adventure, whose ending he does not envisage at the beginning. The adventure then goes through several stages. The hero often journeys in the underworld and meets various forces and entities he has to deal with. He may encounter a teacher along the way that will give him instructions about the new skills he will need to achieve his goal in order to succeed, and he might become conscious of what his goal is. The hero is challenged to his limits and he strives to overcome them, finally reaching a point from which he will come back forever changed. With his new powers and abilities, the hero goes back home, restoring society with his new knowledge.

Campbell's theory, being characteristically broad, universal, and transcultural, turns the study of archetypes in fantasy literature not only possible but also rewarding, because he also deals with the archetypes of characters—in his studies, he mentions the evil character, the dark father, the dark mother, the hero, the wise old man, etc. The archetype, for him, is a perennial narrative structure that can be found in different forms in all kinds of narratives.

### 3. The Dark Mage Archetype

The Dark Mage Archetype functions as the nemesis or the monsters in Campbell's Hero's Cycle, a force that tests the hero in his journey towards individuation. The Hero's Cycle, when applied to mages stories, become the journey of an Apprentice Mage towards individuation, knowledge and power. This Mage's Cycle, present in many fantasy narratives, is a more intellectual journey than the traditional Hero's Cycle, exemplified by classical narratives such as the Hercules/Heracles myth or the the Perseus versus the Minotaur story. In the Mage Cycle, the Dark Mage archetype plays a decisive role in defining the morality of the Apprentice Mage quest.

Dark Mage archetype has the dubious aspects of the tempter and the destroyer. By being a Tempter and seducing the hero to join his own view of reality or by displaying his force of destruction, he engenders fear, the true source of his power. The Dark Mage lives on fear, depends on it, and he is only truly defeated when he cannot inspire fear anymore. He is often wiser than the Apprentice Mage, and a match for the Wise Old Mage, but his power is unbound by ethics or moral limits. He represents the other side of the Mage Cycle, the underworld, and the challenge that must be overcome for the Apprentice Mage to grow.

The Dark Mage is the source of conflict of the story or drama in the fantasy narratives. His tremendous power has a reason the heroes would not have to pass through so many tests and sufferings to defeat a weakling. The Dark Mage must have more power than his adversaries do to generate the epic clash characteristic of fantasy works.

In fantasy fiction, the Dark Mage is usually the lord of a land of terror. This land is in a continuous process of being destroyed and rebuilt. A fantasy story usually begins with the forces of evil being gathered by the Dark Mage up to a climax in which there is a final war. The evil lord is destroyed—for the time being. An example of this is Sauron. In *The Lord of the Rings*, he is the lord of Mount Doom in Mordor, a terrible barren land where everything reminds the evil alignment of its master.

The Dark Mage archetype often appears as a nemesis of the main character throughout the fantasy narratives. Examples of these antagonisms between a magic user and his nemesis are Gandalf

and Saruman in *The Lord of the Rings* (Tolkien), Merlin and Morgan Le Fey in *Le Morte d'Arthur*, Ged and the Shadow in *A Wizard of Earthsea* (Le Guin), Candy Quackenbush and Christopher Carrion in *Abarat* (Barker), Taran and the Horned King in *As Aventuras de Pridain* (Alexander), among others. In the Harry Potter series, the nemesis is clearly Lord Voldemort, the most powerful evil mage of the magical world, whose role in the series will be later detailed.

The manifestations of the Dark Mage may vary, depending on the way he relates to the other characters of the story. In order to detail the different ways that the Dark Mage can appear, I will now analyze three different forms of the Dark Mage: Sauron and Saruman in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, and the Shadow in Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea*.

Sauron's dark tower is in the middle of a desert, where everything—plants, animals—is dead. There is no water, no signs of life—only ashes. The nature in his domain is a reflection of his own soul; Sauron is a creature of darkness, more a force of evil than a mere individual, and his only orientation is towards death and destruction. As the Tempter, he created magical rings to enslave the races of the Middle-earth, and as the Destroyer, he imposes his force upon the races that are not aligned with him. He is not described physically; his only feature is a gigantic eye that burns on top of his tower.

Although they are both representations of the Dark Mage Archetype, Saruman is different from Sauron. Saruman is a dark mirror of Gandalf, almost an evil doppelganger. He is described with the same characteristics of Gandalf: he has long white hair, long robe and beard, and a magical staff. However, he betrays Gandalf and even tries to seduce him into Sauron's side. As the Tempter, Saruman also enlists many human tribes of Middle-earth to fight alongside Sauron. When his seduction fails with Gandalf, he imprisons him and creates his army of Uruk-hai, turning into the Destroyer. Saruman's main concern is with power and he enlists Sauron's side to attain it.

Another variation of the Dark Mage is pictured in *A Wizard of Earthsea*. While under the guidance of the mage Ogion the Silent, Ged meets a mysterious witch girl who asks him if he can summon spirits of the dead. This girl, as a witch, an enchanter, represents also a dark power, in the form of the Tempter. Knowing Ged's temperament, she tempts him. Willing to prove to her that he can summon anything he wishes, Ged opens Ogion's secret Lore Books to find the spell and by performing it, he brings the Shadow, an evil spirit of darkness, to the room.

The Shadow is like "a black beast, the size of a young child, though it seemed to swell and shrink; and it had no head or face, only the four taloned paws with which it gripped and tore" (61). The Shadow is a presence of evil and although it only speaks in unintelligible whispers, the devious way it twists and harms Ged's life shows a wicked intelligence. The Witch and the Shadow are two variations

of the Dark Mage archetype, they are both characters of magic, and they are both bound to evil and to stop the hero in his journey.

The Shadow however is a peculiar variation of the Dark Mage archetype. It plays tricks on Ged, but does not perform magic. It is something ethereal, a force that can enter people's minds and control them. Like Sauron it is shapeless, it is not a living being, it does not manifest itself corporally. Therefore, its ambition and thirst for power are from another nature. The shadow is Ged's dark father, the dark instincts uncontrolled, the fear, anger, vanity, all that in one idea. The Shadow is the Destroyer and the Tempter, but its nature is inhuman.

## **7. The Dark Mage in the Harry Potter Series**

The story arc in the Harry Potter series is about Harry's personal transformation, just as Dumbledore's and Voldemort's are stories of personal transformation, and they all follow the mage path. The three main variations of the mage archetype mentioned above are clearly represented in the Harry Potter series by Harry (the Mage Apprentice), Dumbledore (the Wise Old Mage), and Voldemort (the Dark Mage). Their roles in the story become much clearer also under the light of the Tarot and the Mage Cycle, based on Campbell's theory of the Hero Cycle.

The final test of the Apprentice Mage, the climax of his journey, is a confrontation with an evil power. After going through a number of travails, the mage becomes strong enough to face his worst enemy. This enemy can be his nemesis or even the consequences of his own actions. In the Mage Cycle, the mage must usually fight his nemesis. Differently from heroes who conquer monsters by force, the mage must rely on his intelligence. Often, Apprentice Mages become Wise Old Mages, years after defeating Dark Mages, the evil versions of themselves.

The confrontation of the Apprentice Mage with his adversary corresponds to the apotheosis of the Mage Cycle. At that point, his true nature is revealed and he will be tested on all the knowledge that he gained during his journey, all the trials he went through constituting his background and its proper use helping him become a better and more powerful mage. Campbell explains how this confrontation between the hero and his nemesis is the reason for the tyrant's downfall:

The tyrant is proud, and therein resides his doom. He is proud because he thinks of his strength as his own; thus he is in the clown role, as a mistaker of shadow for substance; it is his destiny to be tricked. The mythological hero, reappearing from the darkness that is the source of the shapes of the day, brings knowledge of the secret of the tyrant's doom. With a gesture as simple as the pressing of a

button, he annihilates the impressing configuration. The hero-deed is a continuous shattering of the crystallizations of the moment. (CAMPBELL, 337)

The tyrant wants separation, and the hero brings the realization that separation is the one thing the world cannot afford to hold. Voldemort represents this crystallization of the old hierarchy of the mage society, he wants the magical power to remain only with the true bloods, mages born from wizards' parents, and he wants all of the mage society to be under his unconditional power. As tradition, he will be surpassed. Harry represents the new; the creative force that destroys and recreates what is stagnant. Harry's destiny is not only to defeat Voldemort; it is also to renew the magic world. His disregard for rules is an example of this part. Following the Apprentice Mage archetype in fantasy narrative, Harry Potter differs from other novices, as he wants to change the status quo of the mage society. It is not enough for him to become the Wise Old Mage; he wants to change the concepts in which the magical hierarchy is based.

What the Apprentice Mage has gone through up to the point where he faces his adversary, are a pale but efficient sample of what is coming up for him, of a much harder battle. In the Harry Potter series, the obstacles, tests, and events that require the Apprentice Mage's skills and abilities to overcome are but rehearsals of the fateful final confrontation with Voldemort. In the end of Harry's Mage Cycle, either the Apprentice Mage or the Dark Mage will win. Up to book five, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, Harry has been the one to win, and he will probably be the one to defeat Lord Voldemort forever.

In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, the final confrontation of the hero and his nemesis is described thus:

The hero, whether god or goddess, man or woman, the figure in a myth or the dreamer of a dream, discovers and assimilates his opposite (his own unsuspected self) either by swallowing it or by being swallowed. One by one the resistances are broken. He must put aside his pride, his virtue, beauty, and life and bow or submit to the absolutely intolerable. Then he finds that he and his opposite are not of differing species, but one flesh. (108)

The Apprentice Mage, following the path of the Wise Old Mage, and the Dark Mage are but opposite ends of the same spectrum. They are made of the same stuff, but their degrees of goodness and evil contrast sharply. The final encounter shows that their origins are the same, but the paths they chose to follow are opposite. Once the Apprentice Mage accepts his dark side, acknowledges that it also lives inside him, they become one, and the dark shadow of the Dark Mage disappears.

## 8. Lord Voldemort

As the nemesis of the apprentice mage hero, the Dark Mage character in the Harry Potter series is represented by Lord Voldemort, a powerful mage who has become an adapt of the forces of evil in the world of Hogwarts. He is ultimately driven by power, and his goal is to control both magical and mundane world. In this quest, principles are overlooked, people around him are reduced to pawns into his personal plans, and nothing can stand in the way of his pursuit for total control.

Voldemort is the dark wizard known by many names: The Dark Lord, He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, You-Know-Who, and Tom Riddle. Voldemort was born from a witch and a Muggle, and he later became a student at Hogwarts. His father disappeared after his mother revealed she was a witch, and his mother died after giving birth to Voldemort. He was raised in a Muggle orphanage. The childhood of a Dark Mage is usually very similar to the story of the apprentice mage—the Dark Mage was once an apprentice mage as well. Voldemort was an orphan just like Harry. Voldemort’s parents were a wizard and a Muggle—that means he was a “mudblood” himself, a condition he has been fighting against throughout the whole series so far.

At Hogwarts, Voldemort was sorted into Slytherin, but had to go back every summer to the orphanage he despised. He rearranged the letters of his former name, Tom Marvolo Riddle into “I am Lord Voldemort,” expecting it would cause fear on the other wizards. He murdered his father and grandparents, and after that, he disappeared. Lord Voldemort dealt with his childhood problems with a destructive manner, whereas Harry deals with it in a constructive manner, however hurtful it may seem. Voldemort denies his past, his name, and his origins. He despises in others everything he is. The Dark Mage is not in peace with himself; only the atonement with the Apprentice Mage will bring it to him. Years later, he began gathering followers. Many wizards and witches joined him because they wanted to share his power; others because of fear. His followers called themselves “Death Eaters” and freely used the Unforgivable Curses on anyone who defied them. They wore a sign, the “Dark Mark,” a skull with a serpent protruding from its mouth like a tongue, burned into their left inner forearm by their “Dark Lord.” The Dark Mage uses the instruments that work for him: he fears Harry, and he uses fear to control other wizards.

Voldemort as the Dark Mage is the antithesis of both Harry Potter and Albus Dumbledore; his function is to separate and to destroy. His main weapon is his tempter side; he seduces mages to follow his view of the world. He seduces manipulating the “pure blood” belief and prejudice of the mage society. He draws his allies among the racist mages that believe that only pure bloods, individuals that are born in pure mage families, should be allowed to perform magic. Voldemort uses this hate towards



Muggles and mudbloods to recruit allies to his devious plans. It is a clear metaphor of the racism, especially of the Nazism ideology, and it links Voldemort to Hitler and the Death Eaters as the Nazis, specially the SS, and the secret police of the Nazi Germany. Voldemort is an evil magic force, but his evilness is clearly based on a human weakness: intolerance.

## 9. Conclusion

O mago negro em “Harry Potter” apresenta uma nova caracterização e novos aspectos do arquétipo, distinguindo-se da caracterização tradicional presente em romances anteriores e mesmo nas lendas e contos de fadas. São aspectos que refletem nossa sociedade atual com os anseios do leitor contemporâneo. O principal desses aspectos é a humanização do mago negro; para o mundo de hoje a co-existência de tal personagem é imprescindível na trama por ter-se tornado uma realidade alternativa do mago aprendiz. É como se tivéssemos a oportunidade de conhecermos um Harry Potter que seguiu outros caminhos, que fez outras escolhas. O mago negro como fator que determina os limites da moralidade permanece vivo. O lugar do mago negro é a região da fronteira; seu papel é delimitar até onde o mal (ou o bem) pode ir. Estabelece um contraste diante do quais as qualidades do mago do bem são realçadas. Dependendo da história, os limites do mal são diferentes. Enquanto o mago bom salva a humanidade através de atos de restabelecimento da paz, o mago negro salva a humanidade de si mesma, da estagnação.

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